

Screen Composers Guild of Ireland
Pre-Budget 2019 Submission and comments on Section 481.

The Screen Composers Guild of Ireland is a newly formed professional association representing the status and rights of screen composers and the craft of creating original music for visual media including Film, TV and Gaming. This is a submission to the Department of Finance for consideration in Section 481 review and the upcoming finance bill.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS:

SCGI calls for the Irish Music for Screen sector to be recognised as a unique and valuable creative sector residing between music and audiovisual industries, for funding to be set aside specific towards development and capacity building in this sector and strategic support in assisting this sector to gain access to international markets.

SCGI calls for the return to full funding for Screen Ireland, we believe this is imperative for the continued growth of audiovisual production in Ireland. We also call for the recognition of the valuable role guild organisations play as participants in industry and sectoral development and the value of funding these organisations.

SCGI joins IMRO in calling for the inclusion of Music in the Cultural test for Section 481 and that music for screen be included as a participating voice in the ongoing review of Section 481. SCGI also calls for further investment in attracting post-production elements to Ireland.

SCGI asks that all state funders of domestic audiovisual content support and incentivise the use of original music where possible and ensure realistic levels of funds are set aside within production budgets provisions for music, along with the inclusion of music composer in key creative personnel.

SECTION 481 and Music for Screen

Section 481 has been seen to act as a stimulus for the development of the Irish film industry since its inception and has reaped obvious success to date. It has also provided opportunities for domestic creative talent to develop skills and capacity and to grow their sector. It is our experience, however, that the creative element of music is not receiving the level of benefit financially nor as a stimulus for development, to the extent it could be, nor to the same level that other elements have benefited.

Reviewing the funding decisions for 2017 and 2016¹ we would estimate that at most only 20 - 25% of productions in receipt of Section 481 funding have a music contribution from an Irish based composer or songwriter. We feel this is too low a return for our sector.

Location Ireland:

Co-productions have used Ireland as a location for production while post-production including music department consequently has gone to partner territories according to the funding and spend requirements. This would be true of all the recent large scale, high value productions based in Ireland such as Vikings, Ripper Street and Nightflyers. In the case of these and other larger budget productions the music department roles are numerous including orchestras and other performers as well as music editors, engineers, orchestrators, arranger, mixers, consultants, managers, sound designers and the backend revenue on IP return is large. We feel with the drive to attract productions to locate in Ireland, music as a primary creative element has been overlooked, along with the cultural capital and economic return potential that music carries within it and the opportunities it offers the wider Irish music performance, publishing and service industries.

We would like to see Section 481 incentive being used to attract more post-production to Ireland for productions locating elsewhere and to help drive the promotion of Ireland as a destination for great music for screen. We would also like to see access to training or performance opportunities for Irish composers and musicians where the music department spend is with a partner territory and production is here. We believe by supporting the use of Irish music performers and by offering composers new training opportunities this will help grow our reputation in this area and offer valuable networking and credited experience to composers and performers.

Music and Music Composer in the Cultural Test:

The two main partner territories for co-production with Ireland have tax incentives which include music as an overtly mentioned element for receiving credit to achieve the financial incentive threshold, both Canadian and UK tax funding award points for employment of a regional based composer. Whilst Ireland's Section 481 cultural test can be seen to be open to allowing multiple ways to collect credit, having an overt mention of the music component would bring us in line with our partner territories. Looking at an overview of co-productions between Canada and Ireland between 2012 and 2016², in 17 of the productions listed only four have Irish music contribution and only two of these a composer. This falls well below an acceptable level. We believe that not having music directly included, overlooks the potential for music composed and performed in Ireland to be used within audiovisual productions and to carry valuable cultural capital and financial return with the opportunity to bring this music to a world stage.

Domestic Situation and the role of funders including BAI, Section 481, Broadcasters and Screen Ireland:

We believe that all public funders can play an important role in supporting the use of original composed music in visual media. We are seeing a worrying trend in productions towards the over reliance of non-Irish, precomposed music libraries, either because of access to broadcaster blanket license agreements or because real or perceived lack of sufficient funding* for productions excludes the use of original music.

This trend is seen to have multiple negative effects for the original music for screen sector; These include loss of opportunities for directors to develop skills in working with composers, limiting domestic opportunities for composers to enter the market and gain crucial credited experience. A loss of opportunity for local audiences to hear locally scored and performed music and a loss of opportunity for local performers who are hired by composers to perform scores (this ranges from individual performers in all genres including orchestral). In addition there is substantial loss to the Irish economy in terms of cultural capital within music and the IP revenue return.

As original TV and Film productions gain more opportunities to travel to international broadcasters we are also losing the opportunity to transfer Irish music abroad and hence the global reputation that can be gained from this. Productions relying on broadcaster blanket licenses are running into copyright licensing issues with consequent costs when they go to distribute outside of the domestic broadcaster, an issue that could be solved by using original score which is licensed to travel with the production.

We feel that public funders and broadcasters are in a unique position to support and create industry awareness towards the value of using original composed music in productions by applying more scrutiny to music sources on applications and looking to ensure spend meets international accepted levels of percentage spend on music to overall budget.

Kind Regards,

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References:

1: Department of Finance Section 481 decisions.

2: Data from Telefilm CA co-production directory
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