

TWO'S ACCOMPANY:
UNDERSTANDING ACCEPTANCE THROUGH ANIMATION

by

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ABSTRACT

Animation as a medium has broad appeal based on its ability to convey stories in universal ways. This art form bridges cultural barriers that allow relationships to form through shared interests. Music also shares similar traits. Based on the global understanding of music and its history of use in film, the conclusion is the acceptance of different musical tastes can parallel acceptance of differing ideologies. When clashing ideological beliefs cause societal conflict, it is essential to remember that friendships cultivate through commonalities. The purpose of this study is to create an animated short film that presents the story of two very passionate characters who overcome distinctions in their preferred musical genres to form a companionship. Producing this film involved creating environments, writing characters with opposing personalities, and developing a musical score that accentuates the characters' emotions and actions.

To my mother, father, and my whole family. Thank you for teaching me to serve God in all that I do and believing in me. I love you all.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

An Optical Poem, directed by Oskar Fischinger, is an abstract animated film illustrating animation's impact on transferring non-concrete thoughts to an audience. *An Optical Poem* showcases many geometric shapes of varying colors, moving synchronized to *Franz Liszt's 2nd Hungarian Rhapsody*. Fischinger's objective in producing the film was to show non-objective imagery and not visually represent the music performed. A narrative structure was not present in *An Optical Poem*. For Fischinger, the technique of matching instrumentals to visuals helped audiences understand "the nature and meaning of his "universal," absolute imagery" (Moritz). Fischinger's body of work still inspires the creation of conceptual animations, such as the interactive Google Doodle made in honor of his 117th Birthday, which allows users to create personal music while seeing motion graphics appear in sync (Hong). Like Fischinger, my goal in creating an animated short film was not to epitomize imagery and music but to depict the abstract ideas of interpersonal relationships and cooperation in a simplified way.

The medium of animation continues to exemplify the art of visual storytelling. Two crucial ways the medium of animation showcases effectiveness in relaying visual information are worldbuilding and subject matter. Bill Kroyer, an award-winning animation and computer graphics director, stated the following about the worldbuilding attributes of animation:

Animation uses and expands upon almost every other art form, including drawing, painting, sculpture, acting, dance, photography, and cinematography, as well as architectural, costume, and set design, to name a few. But most significantly, animation

allows all of these art forms and the very world they exist in to be completely created by the artist (Cantor and Valencia iv).

An animator can take different artistic media with applied imagination and combine them to form a more significant meaning than separately. An animator also has absolute control over the materials chosen to create visual representations, reaching audiences uniquely in contrast to live-action film. The live-action film *The Last Airbender*, directed by M. Night Shyamalan in 2010, is an example of the physical limitations of depicting human manipulation of natural forces such as earth, air, fire, and water. Compared to the source material, the animated television series *Avatar: The Last Airbender*, fans' critical backlash plagued *The Last Airbender* film. In his review of *The Last Airbender*, film critic Roger Ebert claims that animation has a function to "make absurd visual sights more plausible." Ebert further states given the nature of the source material; it is unlikely for effects to be "rendered plausibly in live-action" (Let's Hope It Is). Animation can reach a broad audience because of its versatile nature; this makes it an ideal art form for conveying narratives and emotions in a visually conceptual way.

The audience of the animated content is also crucial as it directly correlates to the visual media message. Ian Friend, a senior lecturer in Animation and VFX at the University of Gloucestershire, conducted a study on the relationship between transnational character design and its respective audiences. Professor Friend classifies the audience into four archetypes: pre-school, tween, teen, adult. Based on his case studies from animation industry practitioners working on international co-productions, he concluded the following:

The changes that animation designers made during international co-productions worked to naturalize their animation for an intended overseas viewer demographic, and gave the international audience (regardless of archetype) familiarity with content and agency to relate to the domestically co-produced animated work (Friend).

Consideration of an intended audience when designing the visual elements of an animated show or film creates a relationship between the viewer and the content. The viewer forms “empathy and identification” with media and can draw comparisons to their personal experiences in real life (Wells 233). Based on this connection, the viewer is interested in animated media, making what was shown memorable. Considering the factors of animated subject matter and its audience, I created an entertaining short film, with moral undertones, to appeal to all ages while teaching a lesson. This film, *Two's Accompany*, is a 2-D digitally animated short story that conveys an underlying message that developing friendships through acceptance with people of differing ideologies can lead to mutually beneficial collaboration.

I wrote *Two's Accompany* based on my personal experiences in forming friendships. One of my core principles as a Christian is my belief that all people have value. The acceptance of individuals helped me discover commonalities that led to our future relationships. The combination of personal experiences and spiritual beliefs informed the development of the characters in my short film.

Another method the director used in making *Two's Accompany* was the Animation Pipeline. The Animation Pipeline is a series of four major stages in producing an animated short film (Cantor and Valencia 154-155). The director adjusted this pipeline to fit a traditional

animation workflow, including digitally drawing every image seen at 24 frames per second (Paperless Animation). The principle steps of the overall production pipeline included Development, Pre-Production, Production, and Post-Production. Development involved formulating the premise of the film. The second stage of Pre-Production consisted of forming the visual style of characters, settings, and props. Production involved incorporating designs and concepts from the previous phases with backgrounds and moving images. The production stage also entailed refining the animation with additional visual effects and rendering it out for a fully polished look. As the last step, Post-Production involved adding sound effects, music, titles, and credits to the film and marketing and distribution of the completed product.

Synopsis of Film

Two's Accompany is a story about an introverted and structured veteran military musician named Philip Avery whose only wish is to play his violin and compose music in solitude. His new neighbor Aleah Jones interrupted his routine, an extroverted and disorganized college student drawn to him by his music. Aleah decides to join Philip's violin practice with her trombone. After they both meet, conflict breaks out due to their contrasting musical styles. By accepting each other's perspectives and shared passions for music, they can create a harmonious melody. Major influences on my film include the animation style of United Productions of America (UPA) short films, famous musicians Jascha Heifetz and Melba Liston, and the film *The Odd Couple* (1968).

CHAPTER TWO: INSPIRATION FROM PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

Faith

My film reflects Christian values due to my belief in those teachings' ability to encourage others to treat one another with respect. This short subject also contains principles shared with many peoples, faiths, and ideologies. Joseph Campbell, a comparative religion and folklore theoretician, refers to the idea of common cultural beliefs as the Monomyth, or universal story (Sullivan et al. 10). Campbell explains the Monomyth hero follows an "adventure...represented in rites of passage: separation – initiation – return" (Campbell 23). The "separation" part of the journey represents leaving one's home for a place with supernatural or foreign qualities. The "initiation" aspect entails facing significant challenges while winning an important victory. The voyage's "return" portion symbolizes going back home with newfound power gained from the hero's quest. Two's *Accompany* applies the Monomyth within its theme: mutual understanding of humanity's commonalities leads to enduring friendships. To elaborate, both protagonists must leave their apartments (separation) to initially meet each other (initiation) and gain respect and admiration for each other's musicianship (return).

Although my beliefs informed the film's development, there was a time where trepidation inhibited outwardly expressing my faith. The following statements are my interpretation of the teaching of my church. I am not speaking in the representation of my denomination:

Specifically, the Christian denomination I am from is Apostolic Pentecostal. Some of the core facets of my faith include believing that God is the only eternally existing deity.

Furthermore, God revealed himself to humanity through Jesus Christ: the essence of God

manifested in human form. People receive salvation, or eternal life with God, by following the plan stated by the Apostle Peter: “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” (*English Standard Version*, Acts 2:38).

With these beliefs, I felt that my faith had a connotation of exclusivity. With this nature, I felt that others would refuse to be my friend based on following this belief system. My fears of expressing faith parallel a survey conducted by the Pew Research Center on American society’s views about religion. According to the study, “four-in-ten U.S. adults say there is at least some conflict between their own religious beliefs and mainstream American culture” (“Views about Religion”). While on the job with non-religious co-workers, I would feel upset at their derogatory comments about Christians or secular activities. My college peers’ opinions caused uneasiness as I would hand out flyers for Campus Ministries International, a Christian organization at the University of Central Florida. However, the acceptance of people is an example of compassion towards others. Jesus Christ instructed his followers to “love one another: just as I have loved you” (John 2:34). It is a Christian value to show love to others regardless of race, gender, sexuality, and religion. The fear of expressing individual convictions also gave me the anxiety of being perceived as a dogmatic, prejudiced, or closed-minded person. With this apprehension, I would allow companionship aspirations to alter my behavior to mirror persons that I wanted to make my friends

This experience brings up another point in my thesis theme: acceptance does not mean agreeing with something. The Oxford English Dictionary defines “acceptance” as “patient or

resigned endurance or toleration of a difficult, unpleasant, or trying situation or event” (“acceptance”). An example of this is found in the *SpongeBob Squarepants* episode “Just One Bite,” where SpongeBob is trying to get Squidward to eat a Krabby Patty. For those unfamiliar with the *SpongeBob Squarepants* television series, a Krabby Patty is an underwater fast-food sandwich, identical to a hamburger in appearance. During the episode, after initially tasting the Krabby Patty, Squidward furiously tells SpongeBob, “Why... this Krabby Patty may be the most...Disgusting excuse for a sandwich that has ever been my displeasure to have slither down my throat!” (“Just One Bite” 00:04:00-00:04:55). Subsequently, SpongeBob concludes that although he strongly disagrees with Squidward’s choice to dislike Krabby Patties, he accepts it (“Just One Bite” 00:06:32-00:06:59). With these examples in mind, sharing my experience as a Christian became less intimidating. I realized that I was not trying to change people’s minds or force my beliefs upon them: I was merely sharing my own positive experience. The two protagonists of my film reflect this idea of acceptance.

The two main characters in my film, Philip and Aleah, both love and admire a distinct music genre. Philip adores Neo-Classical while Aleah adores Bebop Jazz. The characters want respect for their talents and passions. Their aspirations parallel my desire for acceptance for the way I express my beliefs. Unless I am willing to accept and respect others, I may not mutually receive approval. My perspective relates to the golden rule: treat others the way you want to be treated (Blackburn 160). The golden rule, deeply connected with my values, informed developing the characters’ personalities from *Two’s Accompany*. Through considering the subtle morals within the film, the audience could gain multiple applications to different life situations.

Art is impactful when inspiring thoughts or actions with the viewer. My artistic goal is for the audience to achieve a positive outlook from my values from my film.

Healthy Friendships

Two's Accompany contains the theme of establishing healthy friendships. Initially, I made several mistakes in forming relationships. The faults I exhibited included not listening during conversations, speaking over others, and blindly or purposefully imitating my associates' actions regardless of whether their behavior was against my morals. Subsequently, I discovered applying those traits to relationships resulted in temporary acquaintances. My self-esteem also suffered because of my actions. Primarily, I focused on gaining affirmation from others to form relationships rather than seeking validation from God. With counsel from close friends and God, I understood that changing my beliefs was unnecessary to understand contrasting viewpoints.

Once I took the time to listen to and understand others' experiences and beliefs, I gained their respect. I realized the convictions of people were valid regardless of my agreement on a specific issue. I decided not to deny the experiences of others. A new mindset of tolerance helped me appreciate what I have in common with individuals, without either of us changing our values. I am hopeful that society's focus on similarities will form the bridge of acceptance and respect. Granted, developing companionships with other people is not always successful. I have broken relationships based on individuals' world view being contrary to my own. However, I still respected these persons and took the time to listen to their perspectives. By understanding contrasting ideas, a person empathizes with the opposing side while reaffirming their own

beliefs. I hope that audiences can watch *Two's Accompany* and conclude that healthy relationships feature mutual respect and understanding.

Films with Themes

When I was younger, most of the animated media that I viewed contained subtle morals. This type of cinema impacted me the most because I learned something applicable to my life beyond the viewing experience. *The Lion King*, produced by Walt Disney Feature Animation in 1994, is a film that teaches values in an entertaining and not pretentiously didactic way. *The Lion King* shows the lion cub Simba's life and manhood journey as king of the Pride Lands (Ebert). During the film, Simba receives wisdom from Rafiki, a shaman baboon of the Pride Lands. Rafiki tells Simba, "the past can hurt...you can either run from it or learn from it." ("The Lion King (1994)", 01:08:12-01:08:21). With this theme from the film, I realized past mistakes are opportunities to learn. Messages like these inspired me to create uplifting art that helps people understand facets of life. *Two's Accompany* consists of concepts to connect the story to reality.

While discussing universal conflicts, author Karen Sullivan stated: "Buddy Stories...focus on the strengths and contrasts of the characters to overcome adversity and become friends." (19). *Two's Accompany* utilized the concept of "Buddy Stories" as the conflict style between its protagonists. The misunderstanding faced by the characters is the central conflict within the story. In the film, Aleah's actions positively influence Philip by showing him how to learn to appreciate different musical styles that are not his own. When Aleah initially comes into the story, her eccentric actions of playing her trombone are perceived as abrasive towards Philip because it distracts him from practicing his music. Aleah's primary character trait

is that of obliviousness to how her actions affect others. For instance, Aleah practices her music improvisation at a noise level suitable to her. However, the volume level is too loud for Philip to practice his violin peacefully. The impetuosity of Aleah in communicating her musical passions cause her to unintentionally ignore Philip.

Another idea of my thesis film is the desire of Aleah and Philip to be heard. Philip yearns for affirmation as a great musician. However, Philip is not the type of person that draws attention to himself. Philip is very introverted and structured. When Aleah inadvertently breaks Philip's routine, he immediately is discomforted. Philip's main issue comes after he tries to fix the situation. He has found the source that has caused him annoyance: Aleah's performance. Philip tries to get Aleah's attention to tell her to be quiet but is unable to because of how focused she is on performing. Philip then shouts in an outburst of frustration for the perception of Aleah's ignorance towards his pleas. Philip's aggravation saddens and surprises Aleah as he directs her to leave his apartment.



*Figure 1: Still from Two's Accompany illustrating Philip attempting to retrieve his sheet music.
Source: Brian Phinn*

Once Aleah exits, Philip slams his front door in frustration for being distracted and having his apartment invaded. Philip's action causes his music stand to fall and his sheet music to fly out the window, as shown in Figure 1. Sheet music is a symbol of who Philip is as a person: someone who does his best. When the music goes out of the window, Philip's heart sinks at the possibility of losing a part of himself forever. This notion prompts him to go outside to search. Philip's journey to find his sheet music is a visual metaphor. Going outside of conventional thought might be the only way to discover the solution to a problem. Aleah broods on the sidewalk from Philip's rejection. She soon discovers a piece of sheet music that she can see had the same melody Philip was playing earlier. She then tries to give it back to Philip to make amends for upsetting him earlier. Aleah's actions allude to the concept that effort is

necessary for the acceptance of people. With a story containing various themes, the creator can relate to a broader audience, having a more significant impact.

CHAPTER THREE: APPLICATION OF THE ANIMATION PIPELINE

Utilizing the Animation Pipeline was extremely crucial in completing *Two's Accompany*. The production pipeline offered techniques to employ abstract ideas toward a visual narrative. This method also provided the structure needed to plan the completion of my film promptly. Within the following subheadings, I will discuss how each aspect of my movie is related to the production process.

Identity & Character Design

To find the identity of my film, I had to look at my past experiences for inspiration. By defining the characters and story in producing the movie, I possessed the foundation for expanding on visual elements in subsequent production phases. Within this process, I remembered times when I struggled to express myself in making friends because I was fearful of not being accepted based on my religious beliefs. Through embracing the differences of people, I was able to gain long-lasting relationships. These ideas translate to my story in that both characters, Philip and Aleah, want their musical talents respected. However, they cannot gain that appreciation until they begin to value each other's differences and similarities in music. The knowledge of developing friendships was the core aspect of creating the character's motivations. In addition to the characters' personalities, I also considered the characters' visual representations.



Figure 2: Early Concept Drawing of Philip and Aleah.
Source: Brian Phinn

To allow the audience to relate more to the protagonists, I designed them both as humans, as illustrated in Figure 2. Philip has an introverted personality with a tall and lankly appearance. Furthermore, giving him these physical attributes helped in making his actions more exaggerated and wackier. Philip's movements are also exact, which alludes to his military background. Making Aleah short and slightly stout allowed me to contrast her appearance with Philip's. Aleah's skirt symbolized her femininity and likened her agility to that of a shuttlecock in flight during a game of badminton. Aleah's actions in the film are generally fast and impulsive, which

complements the bebop music she plays. The differences in the characters' race and gender mainly show that tolerance and friendship are universal themes.

The movement style of the drawings also played a significant role in the character design. Deviating physical attributes in character design, such as 4-fingered hands and minimum clothing details, allowed me to produce drawings faster. Simplistic character design and limited animation were conscious decisions relating to the United Artists of America (UPA) studio art style. The animated short film *Gerald McBoing Boing* (1950), directed by Robert Cannon, shows the UPA style, consisting of bold black outlines on characters while “using more exaggerated key frame poses” for broad character acting (Collington 154). The following sections will detail Philip and Aleah's personality influences.

Philip



*Figure 3: Still from Two's Accompany illustrating Philip being distracted.
Source: Brian Phinn*

The character of Philip came from aspects of myself. Like Philip, my surroundings influence my temperament. Whether working at home or college, noisy distractions, such as loud music or conversations, cause me to work less efficiently and feel irritated. This idea is visually shown in the film when Philip cannot practice his violin because musical notes, representing Aleah's music, pester him, as seen in Figure 3. Frustration also happens when others misunderstand my thoughts through discourse. Giving Philip these qualities helped me show the audience how far he can grow by learning a different perspective from Aleah.

The origins of Philip's structured nature came from his military background in the U.S. Army Orchestra, a division of The United States Army Band "Pershing's Own." (The U.S. Army Orchestra). Historically, the U.S. Army teaches discipline and organization skills to all recruits

during basic training (War Dept., 43). Before being drafted into the Army, Philip was carefree and happy as his violin skills developed. During World War II, Philip conformed to the strict disciplines ordered by the U.S. Army Orchestra. It is important to note that the U.S. Army Orchestra's timeline in Philip's backstory is not historically accurate as string instruments incorporation in the Army was in the 1950s (Army Dept., 10). Philip's military experience changed his personality by making him more reserved and less open to outside influences. After leaving the Army, Philip felt that it would be better to close himself off from the world while still practicing music. During this time, Philip's motivation for continuing with the violin came from his grandmother and musician idol, Jascha Heifetz.

Philip's grandmother, Ethel Ruth Banton, was a significant influence in Philip's life. When Philip was at the age of 6, Ethel, a concert pianist, showed Philip the joys of playing music and gave him his first violin, which he plays in the film. When Philip was eight years old, Ethel took him to see a 16-year-old Jascha Heifetz in concert with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra in Chicago, Illinois, on 23 November 1917 (Maltese). Philip was astonished at how a teenager, not much older than himself, could perform at such a caliber. This encounter with Jascha Heifetz inspired Philip to practice his violin diligently while studying classical music during his formative years. Providing these influences for Philip helped the character associate music with love, family, and dedication.

Aleah



*Figure 4: Still from Two's Company illustrating Aleah unintentionally disturbing Philip.
Source: Brian Phinn*

My goal in creating Aleah's character was an extroverted personality with hints of curiosity and energy. My niece Saniya, a perfect reference for those character traits, heavily influenced Aleah's character. Most of my interactions with my niece were when she was between 3 and 9 years old. During this time, I noticed that she had a lot to say and wanted acknowledgment of her perspective. However, she had trouble listening to my viewpoint because she saw me as a child rather than her "adult uncle." Saniya would continue to state her point without considering my opinion. Her behavior demonstrated oblivion to my emotions. Although our disagreements caused my irritation, Saniya gained amusement from the arguments. This experience of trying to convey a point of view to someone not willing to listen influenced the

trait in Aleah's character. Her ignorance of how her actions of loudly playing trombone helped create conflict with Philip in the story, as shown in Figure 4.

Making her a college student was a very personal choice for me for two main reasons. The first reason has to do with her mindset. At the age of 21, she is entering adulthood, and her mental constructs are being formed and challenged. At this time in her life, her current ideologies could change, for better or worse. In this story, Aleah is welcoming to others but soon learns that listening to their perspective is essential in forming long-lasting relationships. I felt that establishing her at this age would reinforce the point that young adults are more open-minded and can understand people with different ideologies. This conclusion draws from a study on the correlation between musical tastes and age. Based on the research documented by Morris B. Holbrook and Robert M. Schindler, "Some Exploratory Findings on the Development of Musical Tastes," preferences in popular music peak in early adulthood, "at about the age of 24." (124).

The second reason Aleah is a college student is to give the character a sense of relatability to the young adult demographic, including myself. As viewers of my film see Aleah, I want them to empathize with her feelings and goals. By viewing her character facing similar struggles of making friends, the audience believes healthy relationships are possible for themselves.

As an artist, I create content representing people from different backgrounds with respect and authenticity. To achieve this goal, I based my film's characters on my experiences with other people. By seeing themselves represented, my audience identifies and forms a community with the artform. For that reason, I wanted to make Aleah's character an African American woman to emphasize diversity and show that tolerance and friendship are universal themes. With this

objective in mind, I researched a historical figure to reference in my story to incorporate their positive traits for Aleah to admire. It was, for this reason, I also based her character on Melba Lisbon.

Melba Lisbon was an African American jazz trombonist and composer, one of the first female soloists to play in the big bands in the 1940s and 50s (Louise). She faced many struggles to perform in the different groups, such as indifference from the venues she would play for unequal pay (Price 162). However, she still made a significant impact on many musicians through her musical compositions and arrangements. Having Aleah based on this prolific figure gives me a reference point for Aleah's goals as a musician who wants to influence people worldwide with inspiring and beautiful music. With Melba as a hero to Aleah, I felt it appropriate to give Aleah a trombone to play bebop music.

Narrative Influences

My primary narrative influence was *The Odd Couple* (1968) film, directed by Gene Saks, with the screenplay by Neil Simon. The story is about two divorced friends, Oscar and Felix, who begin living together but hate it because of their differences. Felix is a neurotic, obsessive-compulsive cleaner, and Oscar is a messy, carefree person. Once Oscar evicts Felix from his apartment, he relents and then searches for Felix. The two comrades reconcile, realizing they became better people by learning to accept each other's faults and values. The idea of contrasting personality types appealed to me, so I adapted it for Philip and Aleah's characteristics. Oscar and Felix's reconciliation and character growth are qualities I also added to the protagonists.

The *Dennis the Menace* television series, produced by DiC Animation City from 1986 to 1988, and *Troubled Waters*, written by Cayla Massarelli, were two other influences for my thesis. *Dennis the Menace* involves the titular character Dennis trying to help his elderly neighbor, Mr. Wilson, while inadvertently harming Mr. Wilson. Despite Mr. Wilson's pleas for Dennis to leave him alone, Dennis continues to assist, oblivious to the trouble he accidentally causes. *Troubled Waters* involves a tiny robot and small nymph-like being who must work past their differences to save themselves from a tremendous flood. In comparison to *The Odd Couple*, both narratives feature neighbors trying to show each other good intentions that inadvertently annoy or confuse each other. The critical effect that *Dennis the Menace* had on my story was the character dynamic that people from two different generations can have interacting together. *Troubled Waters* impacted the film through the act of collaboration that both characters have when faced with conflict. While character dynamics were crucial in pushing the narrative

forward, the animated short *Gerald McBoing Boing* (1950), directed by Robert Cannon, was the foremost guide I referred to in developing *Two's Accompany*.

Gerald McBoing Boing and United Productions of America (UPA)

Gerald McBoing Boing, based on the children's book of the same name by Theodor "Dr. Seuss" Geisel, tells the story of Gerald McCloy. Gerald is a boy born with the ability to only speak with noises rather than words. His teacher, peers, and father are dismissive of him because of their inability to understand Gerald's distinct way of communicating. Subsequently, Gerald chooses to run away after believing his voice caused people not to want him around. As he is about to stowaway on a train, a radio station's talent scout catches him. The talent scout invites Gerald to use his sound-making talents to help create Foley for his radio show. After Gerald premieres his vocal skills on the radio program, he has newfound success and acceptance from his town and parents. The struggle for acceptance Gerald experiences in this film parallels the creation of the United Productions of America (UPA) studio.

Artists from UPA were initially a part of the Walt Disney Animation Studio and grew weary of the conventional way of making cartoons. When their employer refused their new ideas of changing the establishment, they chose to form their studio to have creative freedom. Accepting others makes them feel valued. Without acceptance, the future UPA artists did not believe the Disney Studio wanted their talents. Creative acceptance at UPA allowed the artists to create art that inadvertently inspired other studios to make similar artistic choices.

This idea of validation relates to my thesis's core theme, which deals with making friendships by accepting other people with differing ideologies. The characters in my film want

respect for what they do as musicians. When they come together initially, Aleah values Philip's performance but imposes her version upon Philip without recognizing his initial response. Although she does this without malice with the idea of sharing her musicianship, she still imposes her talents upon Philip. By doing this, Aleah is showing nonacceptance through her ignorance of how her actions affect Philip. Philip predominantly disproves Aleah's performance because he perceives it as too loud and distracting from his violin practice. Philip's disapproval also stems from his reserved nature created from past experiences in the military.



Figure 5: Still from Two's Accompany illustrating Aleah leaving Philip's apartment after their misunderstanding. Source: Brian Phinn

As with the forming of UPA from the refusal of the ex-Disney artist's ideas, Philip and Aleah's refutation of each other causes their separation, as shown in Figure 5. The distance established between Aleah and Philip's causes introspection of each other's talents and desires.

Once outside the apartment, Aleah sees Philip's music and sympathizes with his frantic search efforts. She physically sees how important it is to him. For this reason, Aleah earnestly attempts to return his sheet music. After being dismissed a second time, Aleah realizes that the way she is communicating is not working, as shown in Figure 6. At this point, Aleah realizes that Philip's sheet music is as significant to him as bebop music is to her, discovering the common ground that they share. Although she may not like classical music as much as Philip, Aleah chooses to help a fellow musician by showing her appreciation of his talents. She decides to play Philip's music at her apartment to understand his music style better and get his attention.



*Figure 6: Still from Two's Accompany illustrating Philip dismissing Aleah as he searches for this sheet music.
Source: Brian Phinn*

When Philip hears his music being played by Aleah for the first time, he is shocked and surprised that someone found his music. Before he can get upset and demand his music back,

Philip considers that despite the way he dismissed Aleah, she took the time to understand his music composition. Feelings of remorse for his actions change to a new admiration for Aleah and her musical skills. At this point, Philip takes the step to accept her musical style by playing his musical score in a bebop variation, as pictured in Figure 7. As Disney initially dismissed the future UPA artist's ideas and later accepted and incorporated them into their films, so too did Philip initially reject Aleah's bebop music and eventually embrace it as valid.



Figure 7: Still from *Two's Accompany* illustrating Philip and Aleah playing each other's musical styles in harmony. Source: Brian Phinn

Set Design Influences

Utilizing the visual style of *Gerald Mc Boing Boing* as a template for my film, a 1950s Chicago Southside urban neighborhood was a natural choice for the setting. Further affirming

this decision was Chicago's rich music history dating back to The Great Migration. The Great Migration refers to the period between 1916 to 1970, when African Americans relocated to Chicago and significantly contributed to jazz and blues (Grossman). In addition to the time, the environment design borrowed heavily from the look of *Gerald Mc Boing Boing*. To elaborate, featured within the short are backgrounds with "large flat colors used to emphasize mood and misregistered outlines to reveal the artist's expressive techniques" (Collington 131). What influenced the UPA artist's techniques were Cubism and the desire of artists to deviate from Realism in the design. While I admire the angularity of Cubism, the choice of Selective Realism with the set design of my backgrounds allowed set dressing and props to be recognizable. As applied in my film, Selective Realism refers to simplifying representations of reality while visually representing abstract thoughts to convey emotions while advancing the narrative. For instance, when Philip screams in frustration at Aleah, as pictured in Figure 8, the background of Philip's apartment changes to a saturated yellow and orange to reflecting his exasperation with being ignored. The outside environment is a balance of both warm and cool colors. When both characters go outside for the first time in the film, it is a turning point in their respective mindsets and is also when they find balance in respecting each other's musical tastes.



Figure 8: Still from *Two's Accompany* illustrating Philip yelling in frustration with the background reflecting his emotions.

Source: Brian Phinn

Plot Devices

Split-screen and sheet music are the two primary plot devices featured in my film. The purpose of having the split-screen in multiple shots is to show what my main characters are doing concurrently and give an exposition of their similarities and differences. I have seen this technique used in such films as *Pillow Talk* (1959), directed by Michael Gordon, where the use of it showed two to three characters on the phone simultaneously. *Wat's Pig* (1996), directed by Peter Lord, is another example of split-screen that influenced me by revealing how two twin brothers were separated at birth and lived two drastically different lives. I want to use a split-screen to bend reality by having Aleah break the screen frame by climbing over it to reach into Philip's apartment, as shown in Figure 9. The actions in this shot are an example of "cinema of

attraction,” a term derived from Tom Gunning, film theorist, referring to a film’s ability to “rupture a self-enclosed fictional world for a chance to solicit the attention of the spectator.” (63). As Aleah climbs to gain the attention of Philip, her spectacle attracts the focus of the audience. This plot device also helps show Aleah’s willingness to take risks and push boundaries.



Figure 9: Still from *Two's Accompany* illustrating Aleah crossing the visual plane to enter Philip's apartment. Source: Brian Phinn

The sheet music is a visual representation of Philip’s need for structure in his music writing and performance. Due to the distraction of Aleah’s trombone playing, Philip's inability to perform his music is a visual metaphor of not being able to express himself. When the sheet music is lost after it flies out the window, it is only a result of his actions of slamming the door; a visual conceit of losing himself in yelling at Aleah. When Philip finds out Aleah has found his

music through hearing her perform, the non-diegetic sound draws his attention and shows that not only is someone trying to help him despite his actions, but is taking the time to understand him. This idea subsequently helps Philip develop his empathy and admiration towards differing ideologies, as shown through performing a bebop arrangement of his sheet music for Aleah, who loves bebop.

Music & Sound

Music and sound are two major features in my film. *Two's Accompany's* musical score serves two purposes: a means of communication between characters and the representation of ideologies. Because the film takes place in the 1950s, I felt the necessity to feature two contrasting music genres popular during the time-period: Bebop (1940-1955) and Neoclassicism (1920-1950). Aleah features the voice of bebop music performed on trombone and Philip the sound of neoclassical music played on the violin. By having the characters communicate with musical instruments, the dialog is universal, appealing to a broader audience.

Using differing musical styles, I am stating that subjective ideologies are comparable to musical preferences. Although the characters have differences in their musical tastes, they can eventually compromise through their shared respect and acceptance of each other's artistic skills. Furthermore, music represents the characters in their personalities. Aleah's nature is shown as bright, loud, and energetic with the fast tempo style of bebop played on a trombone. In contrast, Philip's calm and relatively quiet personality is shown by performing a neoclassical composition on the violin at his slower pace.

The overall film score contains very little orchestration to emulate the simplicity of the score of *Gerald Mc Boing Boing*. In contrast, the film's opening musical sequence includes a full orchestration to complement the film's plot as a satire of a television sitcom. Influences for the opening sequence's sound include the theme music of *Leave It to Beaver* (1957-1963) and *The Honeymooners* (1955-1956).

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Creating *Two's Accompany* has been an experience that taught me the process of directing a production and how to make a film with an impactful message. Within the creation of the film, I was able to apply the skills of self-introspection to develop characters' motivations. Understanding this skill allowed me to write and animate their actions to support the film's overall theme. The process was very iterative, involving eliminating elements within the film that did not relate to the message I wished to convey. The method of creating this film also mirrors the resolution that the two protagonists reach within the story. As both Philip and Aleah reach an accord by performing in harmony, I applied different faculty, peers, and industry professionals' diverse perspectives to create *Two's Accompany*. From a suggestion to change a character's motivations to reference for style influences, the insight given from my collaborators affirmed the beneficial nature of combining ideas.

One of the most significant successes in completing this project was the clarity of the narrative. I gained understanding from my audience on plot elements that pushed forward the story within various production stages. An example of this was the placement of the characters in the frame. To elaborate, Philip and Aleah remained on opposite sides whenever simultaneously on the screen. This method subconsciously informs the audience of the characters' conflicting perspectives. The character positions on camera only switch when their viewpoints begin to evolve.

Additionally, I learned how to successfully assume the director's role through developing content and assets for the film with my colleagues. Two of my classmates, Alyssa Garoogian and Amber Hilson, designed a background for the project based on a style guide and detailed file

formatting instructions that I created. Supervising the work of others from my production taught me communication skills in conveying different ideas. Directing my assistant animator, Jesus Evangelista, was an enriching experience. Within two weeks of my instructions, Jesus was able to replicate my style while maintaining the timing of the character acting.

While completing *Two's Accompany*, I learned how to tell a visual story with moral undertones. Developing the film also reignited my passion as a visual storyteller to understand life experiences to inform my content. During the film's post-production stage, I plan to submit my film to as many film festivals as possible. Simultaneously, I will develop a story artist portfolio, consisting of storyboard sequences from *Two's Accompany* and future projects, and apply them to children's animation studios. The purpose of doing this is to share my perspective with others to inspire community and collaboration worldwide.

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