

A SONG IS BORN

MUSIC SCORES & CONDUCTOR'S NOTES

Complete production music package for the Musical Director and ensemble

Script Version	Revision 6 — April 13, 2026
Based on	A Song Is Born (1948) — Goldwyn / Hawks / Wilder & Monroe
Music includes	'Flying Home' by Lionel Hampton & Benny Goodman (1939)
Reference Venue (example)	Mandell Weiss Theatre, La Jolla Playhouse — adapt to your venue
Written for the Stage by	Daniel Pettus

THE FUNDAMENTAL RULE: This play is not a play with music in it. It is music that contains a play. The band is never background. Every cue is a character speaking. Treat it accordingly. FOR TABLE READ: Piano alone is sufficient. All cues are written to work as piano reductions. The full ensemble expands on the framework, not the other way around. ON FLYING HOME: 'Flying Home' (Hampton/Goodman, 1939) is essential. All three appearances must be distinctly felt: revelation (Cue 8), battle (Cue 14), joy (Cue 16). Same song — entirely different emotional temperature each time.

I. HOW TO USE THIS DOCUMENT

This package contains everything the Musical Director and ensemble need to prepare and perform *A Song Is Born*. It is organized as follows:

Section I	How to use this document. Overview and philosophy.
Section II	Ensemble voicing chart. Instrumentation guide. 1948 film equivalents.
Section III	Master cue sheet. All 16 music cues with key, tempo, duration, and function.
Section IV	Cue 4: Boogie Woogie — full score notes, build sequence, left-hand ostinato.
Section V	Cue 6: Honey's Blues — vocal lead sheet notes, accompaniment guide.
Section VI	Flying Home — complete structural breakdown for all three appearances.
Section VII	Chord charts for all primary cues. Concert pitch. Transposition reminder.
Section VIII	Cue-by-cue conductor's annotations (Cues 1–9).
Section IX	Cue-by-cue conductor's annotations (Cues 10–16). Includes climax coordination.
Section X	1948 Jazz Style Guide. Period vocabulary per style. What to play, what to avoid.
Section XI	Staging & music synchronization. Critical coordination moments with director.

A note on Revision 6: Scene 11 (*An Inn Near Kingston*) is substantially expanded — now running 12–14 minutes with three simultaneous musical threads (Honey's phone call underscore, Hobart's bungalow monologue, and the Bragg closet march intercut). Scene timing for Cues 10 and 11 has been updated accordingly. All other cues are unchanged from prior versions.

II. ENSEMBLE VOICING CHART

The 1948 film assembled Benny Goodman, Louis Armstrong, Tommy Dorsey, Lionel Hampton, Charlie Barnet, and Mel Powell — the greatest concentration of jazz royalty ever on a single soundstage. This stage version cannot replicate that assembly. It honors it. The ensemble should be sized to the budget and venue, but the roles are fixed.

Fig. M1 — Ensemble Voicing Chart: Instrumentation, doubling, show role, and 1948 film equivalents.

MINIMUM VIABLE ENSEMBLE (5 pieces): Piano + Double Bass + Drums + Trumpet + Alto Sax. All 16 cues are playable with this configuration. The MD should distribute additional parts accordingly. **IDEAL ENSEMBLE (8–12 pieces):** Add trombone, second trumpet, tenor sax, baritone sax, and vibraphone for *Flying Home*. The vibraphone is the Lionel Hampton tribute role and is strongly recommended for the climax. **ON BENNY GOODMAN:** In the film, Goodman played Professor Magenbruch — the hard-of-hearing academic. On stage, the actor playing Magenbruch need not be a musician, but the alto sax/clarinet chair in the band carries Goodman's legacy implicitly.

Piano	Felix (actor/pianist or offstage double). Carries boogie woogie, <i>Flying Home</i> , and quiet Scene 16 solo.
Double Bass	Rhythm section anchor. Bowed for Cue 9 (uneasy note). Walking lines throughout.
Drums	Full kit. Brushes only for Cue 6 (Honey's blues) and Cue 11 (inn). Sticks for everything else.
Trumpet (lead)	Primary melodic voice. Muted for Cues 2, 4 build, 6 response. Open for <i>Flying Home</i> head.
Alto Sax / Clarinet	Goodman chair. Carries Cue 7 (late night solo). Clarinet optional for Dixieland passages.
Tenor Sax	Inner voices, sax soli. First solo instrument in <i>Flying Home</i> if no vibraphone.
Trombone	Low end color. Cue 6 final chord only. March feel for Cue 10. Shout chorus reinforcement.
Vibraphone	Lionel Hampton tribute. Strongly recommended. <i>Flying Home</i> head in unison with trumpet.
Baritone Sax	Optional. Adds weight to shout chorus. Useful if budget allows 10+ piece ensemble.
Guitar	Optional. Period-appropriate rhythm comping. Do not overplay. Listen first.

III. MASTER MUSIC CUE SHEET

All 16 cues listed with scene reference, style, key, tempo, duration, dramatic function, and production notes. Climax and finale cues are marked.

Fig. M2 — Master Cue Sheet: All 16 music cues, sorted by scene appearance.

Quick-Reference Summary

Total music cues	16 named cues, ranging from 8 seconds (sting) to 3 minutes (Flying Home full)
Estimated music time	Approximately 22–26 minutes of underscoring and performed music total
Dominant key	Bb major (jazz standard default; Flying Home, boogie woogie, Honey's blues)
Secondary keys	C minor (opening/ominous), F minor (unresolved blues Sc.12), Eb major (ballad)
Primary styles	Boogie woogie, slow blues, swing/jump, Dixieland, ballad/cool, march
Climax cue	Cue 14: Flying Home (Scene 15) — full chart, $J=200$, bass drum fall bar 8
Finale cue	Cue 16: Flying Home reprise (Scene 16) — $J=208$, house lights rise final chorus
Featured vocalist	Honey Swanson (actress) — live, unprocessed, Cue 6 only

All 16 Cues

Cue 1 — Opening Stillness	Scene 1. Low C on piano. Pre-show through first lights. Barely present. ~15 sec.
Cue 2 — Ominous phrase	Scene 1. After 'Look like it.' 4 bars, C minor, low. Like a court verdict. ~8 sec.
Cue 3 — Amused figure	Scene 2. After Gench counts the handshake. G major Dixieland phrase. ~8 sec.
Cue 4 — Boogie Woogie	Scene 3. Felix plays. Full build from piano solo to ensemble. Bb major. $J=168-180$. ~2:30 min.
Cue 5 — Traveling to nightclub	Scene 3→4 transition. Jazz traveling phrase. 10 seconds. Band reconfigures.
Cue 6 — Honey's Blues	Scene 4. Full house band under vocal. Blues, Bb. ~2:30–3 min. Live, unprocessed.
Cue 7 — Late night sax	Scene 5. Solo saxophone. Barely audible. Through Honey's final image. ~90 sec.
Cue 8 — Flying Home (preview)	Scene 6. Piano plays the head — 16 bars only. Stop cold before bridge. Silence. $J=200$.
Cue 9 — Uneasy bass note	Scene 8. Single bowed bass note, low C. Sustained through Tony's phone call. ~2 min.
Cue 10 — Determined march (Bragg)	Scene 11. Bragg in closet. Jaunty, staccato, inevitable. 60–90 sec. (Extended Rev 6)
Cue 11 — Sustained note (inn)	Scene 11. Hobart and Honey in dark. Single note, barely breathing. Stops on lamp. (Extended Rev 6)
Cue 12 — Blues (unresolved)	Scene 12. Outside inn. F minor. Long, aching. No resolution. Fades into morning.
Cue 13 — Honey's melody (ghost)	Scene 13. After Totten exits. Nightclub blues, half-remembered. Stops on Joe's fist.

Cue 14 — FLYING HOME (battle)	Scene 15. Full ensemble. $\text{♩}=200$. Maximum volume. Bass drum bar 8. Climax.
Cue 15 — Quiet piano	Scene 16. Felix alone. Not a performance — music thinking to itself. ~2 min.
Cue 16 — FLYING HOME (finale)	Scene 16. Full company. $\text{♩}=208$. The joyful version. House lights rise on final chorus.

IV. CUE 4 — BOOGIE WOOGIE

This is the play's first great musical detonation. Felix climbs through the window, crosses to the dusty piano, sits down, and plays. Everything changes. The professors are on their feet before they know why. It is the play's thesis statement delivered in sound — that music bypasses the brain and goes straight to the body.

Fig. M3 — Cue 4: Boogie Woogie. Left-hand ostinato, 12-bar form, scene build sequence.

Conductor's Notes — Cue 4

Key	Bb major
Tempo	J= 168 — this is the floor. Felix may push to 180 by the climax of the cue.
Form	12-bar blues, repeated as many times as the scene requires (approximately 5–6 choruses)
Duration	~2 minutes 30 seconds. Follow stage action — stop when Felix lifts his hands.
Dynamic arc	Piano alone (mf) → full ensemble (fff) → sudden stop on Felix's cue
Stop cue	Felix's hands come off the keys. All musicians stop on his downbeat. Silence.

The Left Hand Is Everything

The boogie woogie left hand is not accompaniment — it is the engine. It must be locked in from the first bar and never waver. The walking bass pattern (root–3rd–5th–7th ascending in Bb) creates the physical sensation of something that cannot be stopped. This is precisely the effect required: the professors' bodies begin moving before their minds have processed what is happening.

Felix must know this pattern cold before the first rehearsal. It cannot be approximate. If the left hand falters, the scene dies.

The Build Sequence

The ensemble builds gradually over 90 seconds. Establish clear entry cues for each instrument:

Bar 1	Piano alone. Left hand establishes. Right hand begins blues riff.
Bar 5 (approx.)	Double bass enters walking pattern. Professors start to stir.
Bar 9	Muted trumpet enters — single-note commentary, not melody. Professors exchange glances.
Bar 13	Full rhythm section. Drums enter with brushes first.
Bar 17	Full ensemble. All horns. Sax section adds inner voices. Professors on feet.
Bar 21	Felix transitions to Dixieland two-beat feel. Jerome demonstrates clap pattern.
Bar 25	Bebop fragment — trumpet plays 4-bar chromatic phrase. Professors startled by the future.
STOP	Felix's hands off the keys. One beat of silence. Hobart breathes. 'I need to make some calls.'

V. CUE 6 — HONEY'S BLUES

Honey walks to the microphone. She nods to the pianist. And she sings. This is the play's first emotionally serious moment. The music must feel overheard, not performed. The audience is in the bar at 2am. They did not buy a ticket to hear this. They just happened to be here.

Fig. M4 — Cue 6: Honey's Blues. Vocal lead sheet notes, accompaniment guide, the bent note.

On the Song Choice

The director and MD should select an appropriate period blues for this cue. Suggested options include 'Am I Blue' (Harry Akst, 1929), 'Trouble in Mind' (Richard M. Jones, 1924), 'Stormy Weather' (Harold Arlen, 1933), or a period-appropriate original composition. The song must satisfy three dramatic requirements:

Requirement 1	It must be about wanting something you cannot name and losing something you did not know you had.
Requirement 2	It must contain a bent or unresolved note in the second chorus — the moment Hobart stops writing.
Requirement 3	It must sound possible for this actress to have sung it in a bar at 2am. Raw is better than polished.

The Bent Note — A Critical Moment

DIRECTION TO SINGER: Do not resolve the bent note. Approach the 5th (F) on beat 3, bend down approximately a half-step, and hold. Do not resolve to Eb or Bb. Let it hang in the air. The silence after is as important as the note. DIRECTION TO BAND: During the bent note, all accompaniment pulls back to nothing. Do not fill. The note hangs alone. Resume accompaniment only when Honey releases it. STAGING NOTE: Hobart writes 'Beautiful.' He stares at it. Crosses it out. Writes the scholarly substitute. He looks up again. These are three separate physical beats timed to the bent note and its aftermath.

Accompaniment Philosophy

Piano	Sparse left-hand comping only. Root-5th voicings. Do not occupy the vocal register. No fills during phrases — only at phrase ends.
Bass	Half-note walking. One note per half-bar maximum. Do not rush. Listen to Honey before the bar and play after.
Drums	Brushes only — on the snare and ride. No hi-hat accents. Quarter-note click feel, not swing emphasis.
Trumpet	Muted (plunger preferred). Respond to phrase ends only. No fills during singing. One short phrase per chorus maximum.
Sax	Tacet during all vocal phrases. Solo only on head repeat (if any). Soprano preferred — lower register than vocal, less interference.
Trombone	Tacet throughout. Enter on the final long chord only. Hold until Honey releases.

VI. FLYING HOME — COMPLETE STRUCTURAL BREAKDOWN

'Flying Home' was composed by Lionel Hampton and Benny Goodman in 1939 and first recorded as a big band hit by the Lionel Hampton Orchestra. It became one of the defining recordings of the swing era — the moment when jazz stopped being background and started being an event. Its three appearances in this production trace the entire emotional arc of the play. The MD should know it inside out.

Fig. M5 — Flying Home: Full structural breakdown, three appearances, motif notation, chord voicings.

Three Appearances — Three Emotional Temperatures

Cue 8 — Scene 6 (Revelation)	Felix plays the head — 16 bars only. Stops cold before the bridge. The professors hear it for the first time. Tempo $J=200$. The abruptness is the point. Silence after. This is the moment the play announces its own ending.
Cue 14 — Scene 15 (Battle)	Weapon. The music defeats the gangsters. Bass drum falls on bar 8 of the shout chorus. Maximum volume. Maximum drive. Tempo $J=200$. Felix cannot slow down for any stage action. The music is the action.
Cue 16 — Scene 16 (Joy)	Not triumph, not relief — pure joy. Slightly faster ($J=208$) because there is more air in it now. The whole company plays. House lights rise on the final shout chorus. Miss Bragg sits down on the third step in.

Song Form — Full Performance (Cues 14 & 16)

HEAD A1 (16 bars, Bb)	Main riff in unison — vibraphone and trumpet. The iconic call-and-response motif.
A2 (16 bars, Bb)	Head repeated with full harmonization. Sax section adds inner voices.
BRIDGE B (8 bars, Eb)	Modulation to the IV chord. Tension builds. Horns sustain.
A3 (8 bars, Bb)	Return to head, abbreviated. Leads directly into solos.
SOLOS (2 choruses)	Tenor sax (or vibraphone) first, trumpet second. Improvised within form.
SHOUT CHORUS (16 bars, Bb)	Full ensemble fortissimo. THIS IS WHERE THE BASS DRUM FALLS (Cue 14, bar 8).
CODA (8 bars)	Ritardando on final 4 bars. One final riff hit. Full ensemble stop.

The Bass Drum Moment — Critical Coordination

THE CUE: Bar 8 of the shout chorus = bass drum falls on the actor playing Joe's head. HOW TO COUNT: The shout chorus begins on a clearly defined downbeat following the trumpet solo. All musicians must agree on bar 1 of the shout chorus in rehearsal. Bar 8 is not approximate — it is bar 8. THE SOUND: The BOOM of the drum impact must be incorporated into the music — the musicians absorb it as a hit on the downbeat of bar 9. Do not stop. Do not flinch. The BOOM is the downbeat. BACKUP: The sound design team should have a pre-recorded BOOM as insurance. If the mechanism fails, the recorded BOOM plays on cue and the musical response is identical. REHEARSAL: Do not attempt this coordination until the full ensemble and the technical director are present. Rehearse the shout chorus bar count at least 10 times before adding the physical mechanism.

VII. CHORD CHARTS — PRIMARY CUES

Concert pitch chord charts for the four primary harmonic cues. Bb instruments (trumpet, tenor sax, clarinet, soprano sax): read each chord one whole step higher. Eb instruments (alto sax, baritone sax): read each chord up a minor third.

Fig. M6 — Chord Charts: Cues 4 (Boogie), 6 (Honey's Blues), 12 (Unresolved Blues), 14/16 (Flying Home).

Transposition Quick Reference

Concert Pitch (C instruments)	Piano, guitar, bass, trombone, flute, violin — read as written
Bb instruments	Trumpet, tenor sax, clarinet, soprano sax — read up one whole step (concert Bb7 = read as C7)
Eb instruments	Alto sax, baritone sax — read up a minor 3rd (concert Bb7 = read as G7)
F instruments	French horn — read up a perfect 5th (concert Bb7 = read as F7)

Key Chord Voicings for Rhythm Section

The following voicings are recommended for the pianist and guitarist. All in concert pitch.

Bb7	Bb – D – F – Ab (root position dominant 7th — workhorse chord of the show)
Bb9	Bb – D – F – Ab – C (add 9th; pianist's color chord for solos and intros)
Eb7	Eb – G – Bb – Db (IV chord; bridge of Flying Home, chorus of blues)
F7	F – A – C – Eb (V chord; turnaround only; resolve to Bb7 on beat 1)
Fm7	F – Ab – C – Eb (tonic of Cue 12; play with restraint — this is sorrow, not drama)
Bb13	Bb – D – F – Ab – G (final shout chord of Flying Home; full ensemble, fortissimo)
C7(#9)	C – E – G – Bb – D# (Hendrix chord; the unresolved sting in Cue 2; do not resolve)

VIII. CONDUCTOR'S ANNOTATIONS — CUES 1–9

Detailed interpretation notes for every cue from the opening through the proposal scene. Tone, dynamics, character, and precise stage coordination.

Fig. M7 — Conductor's Annotations: Cues 1–9. Entry cues, stop cues, dynamic arcs, character notes.

CUE 1 — OPENING STILLNESS (*Scene 1*)

The opening note is the most important note in the show. It is one note — a low C, barely touched on the piano. The audience should be unsure whether they heard it. The musicians are visible and still from the moment the house lights dim. Their presence before the first sound establishes the central contract of the evening: the band is always here, always aware, always a beat ahead.

Instruction to pianist: Press the low C key silently, let the damper pedal sustain the room resonance, then release. Do not strike. Do not add harmony. One note. One.

CUE 2 — OMINOUS PHRASE (*Scene 1 — after 'Look like it'*)

Four bars. C minor. Low, inevitable. Like a court verdict being read. The MD should think of this as the first time the band speaks in its own voice — not accompanying the scene but commenting on it. The C7(#9) voicing on the final chord: do not resolve it. Let it sit.

CUE 3 — AMUSED FIGURE (*Scene 2 — after Gench counts the handshake*)

This cue is the band's first editorial comment. They know about Hobart and Miss Totten. They have always known. The figure — a brief Dixieland-adjacent phrase in G major — should sound like the band suppressing laughter. It is eight seconds of played subtext.

CUE 4 — BOOGIE WOOGIE (*Scene 3 — Felix at the piano*)

See Section IV for full score notes, build sequence, and left-hand ostinato.

CUE 5 — TRAVELING TO NIGHTCLUB (*Scene 3 → Scene 4 transition*)

Ten seconds of jazz traveling music — cool, forward-moving, club-appropriate. The band reconfigures from platform positions to nightclub bandstand positions during this cue. The MD counts the ten seconds. The prop crew rolls tables. Hobart crosses downstage. The world changes.

CUE 6 — HONEY'S BLUES (*Scene 4 — nightclub, Honey at microphone*)

See Section V for full vocal notes, accompaniment philosophy, and the bent note direction.

CUE 7 — LATE NIGHT SAXOPHONE (*Scene 5 — Foundation, late night*)

The saxophone in Scene 5 is the Foundation's unconscious. It knows what Hobart doesn't yet know — that he is falling in love — and it says so in the only vocabulary that escapes the conscious mind. The sax should

be barely audible. If the audience can hear it clearly, it is too loud. The effect is of music coming from somewhere in the building, not from the stage.

CUE 8 — FLYING HOME (PREVIEW) (*Scene 6 — Felix at the piano*)

Felix plays the head — 16 bars. Stops cold before the bridge. This is the first time the audience hears Flying Home, and they don't get to hear enough of it. That incompleteness is the point. Two beats of silence after the stop. Do not resolve. Do not add a tag. The silence is the professors' reaction.

Key	Bb major
Tempo	J=200
Duration	16 bars only — approximately 19 seconds
Stop	Bar 16, cold. No ritardando. No tag. Two beats of silence.

CUE 9 — UNEASY BASS NOTE (*Scene 8 — telephone call with Tony*)

A single bowed low C from the double bass, sustained through the entire phone call scene. This is Tony Crow entering the room before Tony Crow enters the room. It is not scary — it is wrong. Something is wrong and the bass knows it. Do not add vibrato. Do not add harmony. The note should feel like a held breath. It releases on the beat that Honey takes the phone back.

IX. CONDUCTOR'S ANNOTATIONS — CUES 10–16

Detailed notes for the play's second half, including precise staging coordination for the climax and finale. These cues require the most rehearsal with the full production team.

Fig. M8 — Conductor's Annotations: Cues 10–16. Includes bass drum coordination and finale timing.

CUE 10 — DETERMINED MARCH (BRAGG) (*Scene 11 — Bragg in the Foundation closet*)

Miss Bragg is on her knees in a dark closet, working a door latch with a coat hanger, with the patience of a woman who has outlasted two floods. The march should reflect her exactly: precise, staccato, jaunty, utterly certain of itself. It does not hurry. It does not doubt.

Revision 6 note: Scene 11 is now substantially longer (12–14 minutes). The march runs up to 90 seconds and must be timed to the closet action — it stops on the sound of the latch clicking open. Coordinate precise stop cue with stage management during tech.

Key	C major (or Bb — bright and military)
Tempo	♩=126. March feel. Two-beat. Staccato articulation throughout.
Duration	60–90 seconds. Stop on latch click. Miss Bragg does not do ritardando.
Instrumentation	Clarinet lead, snare drum, trombone staccato. Keep it lean.

CUE 11 — SUSTAINED NOTE (INN) (*Scene 11 — Hobart and Honey in the dark*)

A single sustained note — the harmonic equivalent of the dark bungalow. It should be barely breathing. This note carries Hobart's entire monologue ('she is like music that you hear once and cannot locate again'). It should feel like the room itself is holding its breath.

Revision 6 note: This cue is longer than in prior versions. The monologue has more room to breathe. Do not rush it. The sustained note must last for the full length of the scene's dark exchange. It stops precisely when Tony turns on the lamp.

Pitch	Concert F (or Eb) — warm, unresolved, hovering
Duration	Follow stage action — variable. May run 2–3 minutes in Rev 6.
Volume	Barely audible. If you can feel it more than hear it, that is correct.
Stop cue	Tony's lamp goes on. Stop on the beat of the light.

CUE 12 — BLUES THAT DOESN'T RESOLVE (*Scene 12 — outside the inn*)

The play's emotional nadir. A man in a dressing gown, alone outside, his world slightly destroyed. The blues should feel long, slow, and aching — but it must also feel honest, not theatrical. This is not a commentary on Hobart's sadness. It is his sadness, expressed in the only language adequate to it.

Key	F minor
Tempo	♩=60. Slow. Patient. Not sentimental.
Duration	Follow scene. Does not resolve. Fades as morning light begins for Scene 13.
Voicing	Piano and bass only. Or solo piano. Trumpet enters only on final bars if any.

CUE 13 — HONEY'S MELODY (GHOST) (Scene 13 — after Miss Totten exits)

The nightclub blues from Scene 4, half-remembered. It should feel like something Hobart can't quite reach — just beyond the edge of hearing. The MD should think of this as the orchestra playing from inside Hobart's head, not from the stage. When Joe's fist hits the door: cut off. No warning.

CUE 14 — FLYING HOME — BATTLE (Scene 15 — the climax)

Critical Coordination Sequence

The following events must be coordinated with the director and technical director before technical rehearsal:

Felix's downbeat	Flying Home begins. All musicians enter together. No ramp-up — full force from bar 1.
Bar 8, shout chorus	Bass drum falls on Joe's padded head. BOOM. Absorbed as bar 9 downbeat.
Bar 12, shout chorus	Professor Elkon grabs the rug. Monte goes up and comes down on the beat.
Bar 16, shout chorus	Hobart exits the main room, heading for the side room.
Bar 20 (approx.)	Hobart bursts into the side room. Tony releases Honey's wrist.
Bar 22–24 (approx.)	Tony swings. Hobart ducks. Right cross. Tony goes down. Brass hit on impact.
End of chorus	Hobart stands over Tony. D.A. Harris arrives. Music resolves to final hit. Stop.

MD'S RESPONSIBILITY: Know the bar numbers cold. Call them silently in your head throughout the shout chorus. The technical cues are triggered to your bar count, not the other way around. REHEARSAL PROTOCOL: Run the shout chorus bar count in isolation (no drama, just counting) with the full ensemble at least 5 times before the first technical rehearsal. Then with the stage manager calling cues. Then with the actual physical gags.

CUE 15 — QUIET PIANO (Scene 16 — after the arrest)

Felix sits at the piano and plays something soft and slow. Not a performance — music thinking to itself. This is the production's exhale after the climax. It must feel private, even in a full house. The audience has just seen a bass drum fall on a gangster's head. They need this as much as the characters do.

CUE 16 — FLYING HOME — JOY (Scene 16 — the finale)

Cue 16 vs. Cue 14 — The Crucial Difference

Flying Home appears twice in quick succession — first as the battle cue and then as the finale. The audience has just heard this music destroy the gangsters. When it returns, it must feel completely different. The notes are the same. The feeling is not.

Cue 14 is driven	It has somewhere to be and it will not be stopped. Purposeful. Forward. Relentless.
Cue 16 is free	It plays because it wants to. Because the people in the room need it to. Because music exists.
Tempo difference	♩=200 (Cue 14) vs ♩=208 (Cue 16). Subtle but intentional. Faster here means lighter, not more urgent.

Dynamic arc	Builds with the house lights. fff on the final shout chorus as the lights reach full.
Miss Bragg's moment	She sits down on her third step into the room. On that step, the music should feel as if it has been waiting for her specifically.

X. 1948 JAZZ STYLE GUIDE

This production is set in 1948 New York City — the most musically consequential year of the 20th century. Bebop was arriving from Harlem and Kansas City, rewriting every assumption about what jazz could do. Swing was still the dominant popular form — the music of ballrooms and radio hours and Hollywood soundstages. Blues was being played in every room, in every city, by people who had never heard the word 'genre.' Dixieland was alive and breathing. These styles coexisted in 1948 not as museum exhibits but as living languages spoken simultaneously in the same city, sometimes in the same club, sometimes in the same song.

The music in this production should never sound like a reconstruction. It should sound like something happening right now — because in 1948, it was.

Fig. M9 — 1948 Jazz Style Guide: Vocabulary, technique, reference recordings, and what to avoid per style.

On Period Authenticity

The goal is not strict historicism — it is lived authenticity. The musicians should understand what each style means emotionally and physically, not just technically. A boogie woogie player in 1948 is not playing an exercise in historical reconstruction. They are playing because it makes the body move and the heart lift. That is what the professors feel when Felix plays. The audience must feel it too.

Boogie Woogie	Physical, locomotive, joyful. The body responds before the mind does. Heavy left hand. The engine.
12-Bar Slow Blues	Weighted, searching, honest. The lyric is always about something you can't have. Space between notes.
Dixieland	Celebratory chaos. Collective improvisation. New Orleans marching band meets brothel piano.
Swing / Jump	Propulsive, riff-based, communal. The music makes a room of strangers into a community.
Bebop (one glimpse)	Fast, complex, cerebral — and also transcendent. A glimpse of the future. Scene 3 only.
Ballad / Cool	Space and silence as much as sound. Restraint is sophistication. Don't fill. Listen.
March (Bragg cue)	Precision and determination. Staccato. Miss Bragg does not do ritardando. Ever.

What the Year 1948 Actually Means

In February 1948, Charlie Parker recorded 'Donna Lee.' In June, Louis Armstrong's All Stars performed at the Nice Jazz Festival — the first major international jazz festival. Dizzy Gillespie was touring with a big band built on bebop harmonics. The radio still played Tommy Dorsey. Times Square still had clubs where swing was the only language. The tension between what jazz had been and what it was becoming was electric — and the professors of the Totten Foundation, cataloguing it all, were sitting in the middle of that electricity without knowing it.

The One Rule About 1948

In 1948, the musicians who appear in this play were real people in real rooms, playing music that had never existed before and would never exist again in quite the same way. Louis Armstrong was 47. Benny Goodman was 39. Lionel Hampton was 35. Tommy Dorsey was 42. They were not yet legends. They were working musicians at the absolute peak of their powers.

Play it like that.

XI. STAGING & MUSIC SYNCHRONIZATION

The following moments require explicit agreement between the Musical Director and the Director before technical rehearsal. Music and staging are interdependent at these junctures — changing one changes the other.

Complete Synchronization Chart

Cue 4 STOP	Felix lifts his hands. All musicians stop on his downbeat. Felix is the conductor for this moment.
Cue 5 DURATION	10 seconds from Felix's last note to nightclub amber. MD counts. Crew rolls tables. Hobart crosses DS.
Cue 6 ENTRY	Honey walks to the mic. Band establishes groove minimum 30 seconds before she appears. No rushing.
Cue 6 STOP	Song ends. Tony materializes. No caesura — the world simply continues.
Cue 7 STOP	Honey closes her eyes. Saxophone stops. Do not anticipate the close.
Cue 8 STOP	Bar 16 of Flying Home head — stop cold. Two beats of silence. Do not resolve.
Cue 9 RELEASE	Honey takes the phone back. Bass note releases on that beat.
Cue 10 STOP	Closet latch clicks open. March stops on that sound. Not before.
Cue 11 STOP	Tony turns on the lamp. Sustained note stops on the beat of the light.
Cue 12 END	Scene 13 begins. Blues fades — do not resolve. Let morning light replace it.
Cue 13 STOP	Joe's fist hits the door. Cut off on the first impact. No warning.
Cue 14 BAR 8	Bass drum falls. BOOM absorbed as bar 9 downbeat. Do not stop. Do not flinch.
Cue 14 END	Tony is led out. Final hit. Stop. Music does not resume until Felix's quiet piano.
Cue 15 TRANSITION	When Miss Bragg appears in the doorway, begin transitioning toward Cue 16.
Cue 16 FINAL	Miss Bragg sits. Hold 8 beats after final note. Release together. House lights full.

ON FOLLOWING ACTORS: When the script says a cue follows an actor (Felix lifts hands, Honey closes eyes, Tony turns on lamp) — that is not approximate. The musicians watch the actor. Not the MD. Not the stage manager. The actor. ON THE STOP CUES: A hard stop in jazz is as musical as anything else. The silence after Cue 8 (Flying Home preview stopping cold) is as important as the music. Hold the silence. Don't move.

A FINAL NOTE TO THE MUSICAL DIRECTOR

The musicians in this production are not in the pit. They are on the stage. They are named in the program as themselves. They are a chorus, a conscience, and a punctuation mark. They respond to the action. When the play is funny, they swing. When it aches, they slow.

In 1948, Howard Hawks assembled the greatest concentration of jazz talent ever put on a soundstage and reportedly hated every minute of it. Armstrong, Goodman, Dorsey, Hampton, Barnet, and Powell, all in one room — and the director of *Bringing Up Baby* couldn't hear what was in front of him. The music outlasted his indifference. It is still playing.

What we cannot have is what they had: those musicians in that room. What we can have is the spirit of what they made — music that bypasses the brain and goes straight to the feet, straight to the heart, straight to whatever part of a person remembers being alive.

Nine years in a library. Two days of something that turned out to be more important. That is the show. Play it like it matters. Because it does.

*Music Scores & Conductor's Notes — A Song Is Born
Written for the Stage by Daniel Pettus | Revision 6, April 13, 2026
Reference Venue: Mandell Weiss Theatre, La Jolla Playhouse — adapt to your venue*