# [LAW & ORDER: ORGANIZED CRIME Composer Ruth Barrett on Crafting the Show’s Score and the Just-Released Season 1 Soundtrack](https://www.givememyremote.com/remote/2022/11/09/law-and-order-organized-crime-season-1-soundtrack-ruth-barrett-interview/)

November 9, 2022 by [Marisa Roffman](https://www.givememyremote.com/remote/author/marisa/)



***(Photo Courtesy of Ruth Barrett.)***

From the start, LAW & ORDER: ORGANIZED CRIME was a different kind of LAW & ORDER series.

Yes, the show centered on Detective Elliot Stabler ([Christopher Meloni](https://www.givememyremote.com/remote/2021/06/04/svu-organized-crime-benson-stabler-romance-mariska-hargitay-christopher-meloni/))—who spent a dozen seasons on LAW & ORDER: SPECIAL VICTIMS UNIT—but the show was designed to tell longer arcing stories rather than the more episodic tales of the other series within the L&O universe. The show also had a different look, with none of the signature “dun dun”s, and a visceral, often gut-wrenching (or heartbreaking) score.

Now, that score has helped OC reach a new milestone for the franchise: its first publicly released soundtrack. The 14-track album—which is [now available for purchase](https://amzn.to/3DXctgQ), as well as streaming on [Apple Music](https://music.apple.com/us/album/law-order-organized-crime-season-1-original-series/1650691928?at=1l3vpUI&ct=LFV_cd2cca30ce599ad09d8bd66c9e3a168d&itsct=catchall_p1&itscg=30440&ls=1), [Amazon Music](https://amzn.to/3ht5fK5), [Spotify](https://open.spotify.com/album/0fsu3wYthDHNgL5Axbg3Bi), and [more](https://lnk.to/LawandOrder-oc)—was crafted by the U.K.-based composer Ruth Barrett (whose credits include THE TERMINAL LIST, SANDITON, and BLOODLANDS), who has been with the show from the start.

Here, Barrett talks about finding the right sound for ORGANIZED CRIME, the release of season 1’s soundtrack, changing the music for the arcs, and more.

**How familiar were you with the Stabler character and the LAW & ORDER world before you started in season 1?**  
**Not familiar. Obviously, I knew the brand, because it’s so famous, and knew the music and the identity of the show, but I hadn’t really seen that much of it. So luckily, I didn’t know quite how much anticipation there was for Stabler coming back. I just knew the premise of it and I knew that there was this big history.**

Then I just thought, okay, well I’ll just go in and see—just watch the new episodes. I didn’t really watch any of the old ones, but just learned a little bit about what that relationship was between him and Benson and just generally what kind of a guy he was.

I tried to keep it fresh and responded instinctively to it. And that’s what [executive producer] Arthur Forney and the producers are basically encouraging me to do. So I was just coming in with ideas about what I felt Stabler’s character is; the heroism in him. He always means well and wants to do good, but underneath there’s this raging—someone who goes against the system and wants to do things his own way.



***LAW & ORDER: ORGANIZED CRIME — “What Happens in Puglia” Episode 101 — Pictured: (l-r) Mariska Hargitay as Captain Olivia Benson, Christopher Meloni as Detective Elliot Stabler — (Photo by: Virginia Sherwood/NBC)***

I knew I wanted to capture both the heroism of him and his wild side, because I could already see that as soon as he came onto the screen [in the series premiere]. Not having even seen much of him before, I was like, yeah, he’s totally electrifying to watch and just has such a massive screen presence that’s a real gift. [Meloni’s] performance says it all, really.

The other interesting thing about the story was [what happened to his wife](https://www.givememyremote.com/remote/2021/04/01/law-order-svu-organized-crime-crossover-kathy-dies-elliot-olivia-reunite/): that it was starting from this place of grief, as well, and what that would do to him as a character. And then meeting Benson in that first scene. I didn’t realize how iconic that [first scene with the letter](https://www.givememyremote.com/remote/2021/09/16/organized-crime-whats-in-the-letter-elliot-olivia-svu-ilene-chaiken-interview/) [would be] and why that drove everyone crazy. [*Laughs*.] I just knew that I had to create a feeling between these people of history, and what ifs, that feeling of heartache between two good friends of what would have happened if we had been together. Which you can just see, because the chemistry on screen [between Meloni and [Mariska Hargitay](https://www.givememyremote.com/remote/2021/04/02/mariska-hargitay-christopher-meloni-elliot-olivia-reunion-svu-organized-crime/)] is just so apparent. So that music came almost instinctively and fairly easily.

We were also under a huge deadline to come up with music.

**Season 1 was crafted in a whirlwind, both it being the still relatively early days of the pandemic and the quick turnaround for episodes. How did the process of crafting the score differ here compared to the other projects you’ve done?**  
**Well, extreme speed and panic. I’m used to that anyway.**

They reached out to me having heard my work on a Netflix show called COLLATERAL; they just thought, “Hey, let’s just see who this woman is in southeast London and check her out.” We had a really, really good meeting, and Arthur and I hit it off.

I got the job on February 24, the day before my birthday…And I knew the air date was April 1. Getting your head around not having written anything and then having five weeks until it’s actually going on air, and then there’s one every week after that…that was something completely new [for me].

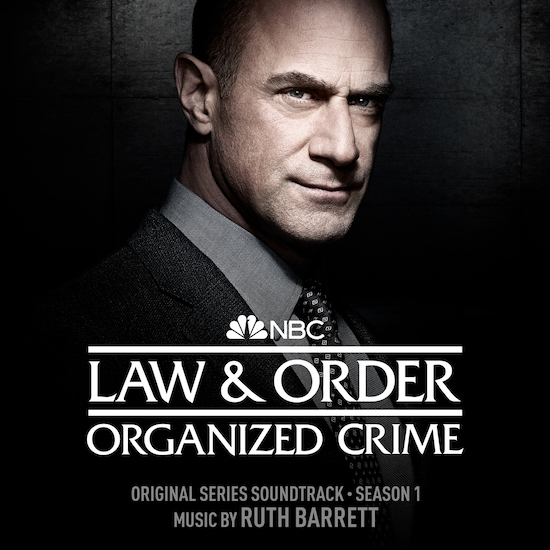
All of the ways people have gotten used to working remotely meant that there were no barriers to using a UK[-based] composer, because we already had the system set up so that we could communicate really easily. It’s just literally I never sleep because LA is eight hours behind. [*Laughs*.]

Having five weeks to create the soundtrack, to discover what the sound was…I said from the start what I wanted to do is create really powerful themes, recognizable themes, that viewers can latch on to as the story progresses. So it was slightly different to SVU, in that the story arc has a longer story; it wasn’t just a story of the week. There were going to be these two characters in Stabler and his nemesis.

So already I had [the thought], “Okay, so Stabler is the angel, then [Wheatley](https://www.givememyremote.com/remote/2021/12/02/law-and-order-svu-richard-wheatley-trial-organized-crime/) is the devil. And I’m going to create these two sound worlds.” And Stabler is quite religious as well, so his theme is going to be kind of uplifting, powerful, and heroic. And Wheatley’s going to be taking you down into the snake pit.

I had that concept, and then it was about building up what these melodies are and creating the sound. I knew I wanted to use all these musicians, which is also a new thing…because of the time [frame for turning episodes around]. But because of the pandemic, everyone had set up studios at home. I was able to send things to the musicians and they’d send it back quite quick. So we actually got this amazing conveyor belt of music making going between all the musicians, which gives it that sound.

As you’re working on season 3, are you still utilizing all of those same elements for production of the score?  
Yes, definitely. I’m still recording musicians. There’s still a lot of live elements in there. That’s the signature of the [show] and I just want to keep that going. And what’s so great is that the audience has really responded to that music. So that also spurs me on, you know?



***Credit: Lakeshore Records***

**When it came time to put together the soundtrack that was just released, how did you select which tracks would be included?**  
**B [known as** [@UndeniableOps on Twitter](https://twitter.com/UndeniableOps)], who started off as a fan of the show, and has since become kind of an assistant, he’s been helping me out. He knows all the themes so well. And it was him that chose those tracks. And he actually edited suites, with the best bits from all the themes, to create those tracks. So it’s actually created by a fan, which is so great, because it’s a really hard thing to choose, and it’s great that he knows what the fans are gonna like, and what they’re gonna respond to.

**As you noted, there are a number of themes on the soundtrack, and on the show in general. What is the approach with that? Do you know you need to craft a theme for a character or relationship and go from there, or is this decision made after you’ve created the music?**  
**Some things really jump out as really needing themes, like Benson and Stabler. I didn’t think, “Oh, this is the love theme,” when I first wrote it, but it developed across the series, and then got its identity. And then there’s more of it.**

Stabler and Wheatley and [Angela](https://www.givememyremote.com/remote/2022/02/18/law-and-order-organized-crime-angela-wheatley-motherhood-tamara-taylor/), the main characters have their themes. And then there’s the more music of the show, the kind of roller coaster moments. The chases and things that still can be linked thematically, but they’re more like the adrenaline rides.

But across the soundtrack, I think we’ve represented the main arc of the storyline. So the Benson and Stabler [love theme], the Wheatley chase, Kathy’s theme being quite an emotional theme. And then some of the darker, more gritty tracks.

**There were certainly no lack of intense moments in season 1.**  
**It’s intense. I really wanted to make it intense and that’s my husband’s elements in there. And I just wanted that craziness in there, because I just think Stabler is crazy in a good way. He’s just got this extra energy. superpower of, “I’m gonna go get him.” And he’s gonna go above the call of duty to get what he wants. Sometimes he makes mistakes, and I think it’s great if the music just goes there. It’s not for the faint-hearted, some of it.**

**What collaboration process—or feedback—did you have with the writers and actors?**  
**Not a lot. [***Laughs*.] To be honest, I’ve worked with Arthur Forney. He’s the hotline, he knows what works. So those initial demos, [it was myself] and Chris Newlin—who was the music editor at the time—we played and then played it for Arthur. And then Arthur, he really loved it, but he just wanted it to be bigger. So just have more boom booms and more pads. Just even bigger and more meaty. But he really liked the melodies there.

Now, we just have meetings with him every week where we present the music and he will say what he thinks. You can change it pretty quick. But there wasn’t really a time to get much [input]…I think we’ve had the thumbs up from Chris Meloni. It would be lovely to know what they think of the music.



***LAW & ORDER: ORGANIZED CRIME — “What Happens in Puglia” Episode 101 — Pictured: (l-r) Adam Harper as Carl, Autumn Mirassou as Maureen Stabler, Kaitlyn Davidson as Elizabeth Stabler, Jeffrey Scaperrotta as Dickie Stabler, Nicky Torchia as Eli Stabler, Allison Siko as Kathleen Stabler, Christopher Meloni as Detective Elliot Stabler — (Photo by: Virginia Sherwood/NBC)***

**Is there a particular track on the soundtrack that’s your favorite?**  
**I suppose it probably would be the Kathy [song, “She’s Gone (Kathy’s Theme)”], just because I really love the vocal in it. It was one of the first pieces I wrote for the show, and I just really loved the simple emotional hit of it. That’s probably my favorite.**

I know it won’t be other people’s [favorite]—they’ll be like, “The ‘[Benson & Stabler] Love Theme’”! [*Laughs*.]

**Three seasons in, what have you learned about crafting music specifically for this show?**  
**How to write epic music even quicker than ever before. [***Laughs*.]

A lot about storytelling, through working with Arthur—how to tell that story and where to bring the music in and out, and how to connect the characters. Which I think I had a good sense of, but now it’s the craft of doing an episode every week. You really get a good instinct. Arthur has incredibly quick instincts, and he has all nine [Wolf Entertainment] shows in his head. He does all of them and knows music from all.

It’s all about that, and not being scared to sort of reinvent things, as well. I want to keep it fresh. I want to bring in the sprinklings of themes that people have heard before for the fans. I’m really quite fastidious about that, so if there is talk of Kathy or relationship themes from the past, then I like to use those themes…I put it there for a reason. Because people who know that theme, it just gives you that [extra emotion]. That’s why I love Kathy’s theme, because it just gives that kind of heartache and emotion straightaway, but without kind of banging you over the head with it.



***LAW & ORDER: ORGANIZED CRIME — “Ashes to Ashes” Episode 208 — Pictured: (l-r) Lolita Davidovitch as Flutura Briscu, Vinnie Jones as Albi Briscu, Michael Raymond-James as Jon Kosta — (Photo by: Will Hart/NBC)***

But then you need new themes. So the other thing I’ve learned is how to create when it doesn’t work. When you got to Albanians, one of the editors was like, “Well, this music doesn’t really work. We need something new, [the season] 1 music’s not working.” The Albanian stuff had to be a ton more badass. Really gritty, really upped the stakes. That was fun bringing all these new flavors in, [discovering] what is Albanian [music]? What does that sound like? And I did research on Albanian folk music: I found this polyphonic chant that was a part of their traditional music, and I put some of that into it [the music]. And Albie’s theme was a really old Albanian folk song and I rearranged it, just to make it have that authenticity. I think it helps let the audience into that world and make it more believable by doing that.

**In success, is the hope to release soundtracks for later seasons, too?**  
**Yeah, so that is on its way. [Season 2] will be released soon, I think. The plan is to release it before the end of the year.**

**Without spoiling the context of the scene, what is the upcoming music you’re most excited for fans to hear?**  
**There is a new theme for** [Tia [played by Ayelet Zurer]](https://www.givememyremote.com/remote/2022/11/07/law-order-organized-crime-all-that-glitters-photos/) that’s quite nice—Tia’s theme. Tia does get her own theme.

***LAW & ORDER: ORGANIZED CRIME, Thursdays, 10/9c, NBC***

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