

PROGRAM NOTES: the **Mariposa Yosemite Symphony Orchestra's**
7 PM JULY 1st Independence Day Spectacular! Concert
The Great Lawn, the Wawona Hotel in Yosemite National Park.

Notes by Les Marsden,
MYSO CEO, Founding Music Director and Conductor

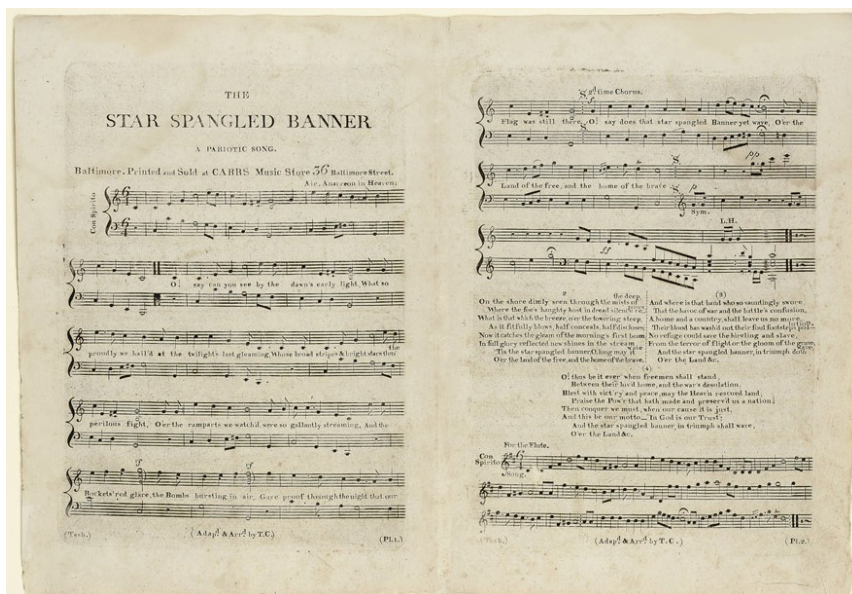
America: Still There - Fantasy on a Tune by
John Stafford Smith (2019) by Les Marsden
 (1957-)

For years the MYSO performed my 2003 treatment of "The Star-Spangled Banner" but I wanted to come up with something a little fresh, less formal, more fun, less bombastic – and finally, I hope I did. Much of the initial statements and development revolve around the upward-ascending notes associated with the words "...land of the free..." as you'll hear right from the initial bar; that motif recurs as something of an ingredient in the melting pot of the piece.



America: Still There references Francis Scott Key's line "...that our flag was still there," from his poem which Key's brother-in-law appended to an existing bawdy English drinking song. But it goes deeper than that, to me: I want to think that America's heart is still there. Her HEART, nearly buried by so much hatred, attempted manipulation of our great nation, so much ugliness, such horrible

selfishness in the minds and souls of so many people in this country, and it's my fervent belief that we must all do what we can to restore America's magnanimity, her kindness, her welcoming embrace of others, her leadership, her true greatness—her compassion for others and for EACH other. That, to me: is the true



America: the positive American spirit. And so, I've hoped to capture some of the many dimensions of that spirit—but especially our optimism, good humor, and yes, ultimately: the sort of “pageant and pomp and parade” which John Adams envisioned would be observed in celebration of our annual national birthday. We, the inheritors of the nation Adams, Jefferson, Madison, Washington and Franklin created – and so many others, willingly sacrificing their lives and those of family members, their well-being, their professional lives – in order that we might inherit this great democratic republic.

As for that tune? Englishman John Stafford Smith (1750-1836) composed "Anachreon in Heav'n" in 1778 (with words by Ralph Tomlinson) as a bawdy drinking song for Britain's elite Anacreontic Society. The song saluted 6th Century BC Greek poet Anacreon's obsession with love and wine and that tune was well-known on both sides of the Atlantic, though of course: derisively here. A month after the British burned the White House (and much of DC) during the waning months of the War of 1812



At left: a photo of that very flag which Francis Scott Key saw in 1814, and which I was honored to see in 1999 at the Smithsonian.

(1812-1815,) lawyer Francis Scott Key was briefly held aboard a British ship in Baltimore harbor, a witness to the September 13-14, 1814 bombardment of Fort McHenry. By dawn the failed attack ended but Key wrote a poem questioning the uncertainty of the young country's survival: "oh, say does that Star-Spangled Banner yet wave?" Titled “Defence of Ft. M’Henry”(sic), Key’s brother-in-law Judge Joseph Nicholson realized that poem’s words fit the 36-year-old song “Anachreon in Heav’n” like a glove. And so on September 17 1814, just three days after Key wrote his poem: Nicholson printed it (anonymously) as the new lyrics to

the existing song. Bingo: the US had an anthem, though it wasn't made official until 117 years later—in 1931—by an act of Congress. I've seen that actual 15-star battle-torn flag in person: the very banner which inspired Key as it flew over Ft. McHenry in 1814, in Washington, DC - in the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of American History. Once 30 by 42 feet, it was worn down by battle and time to 30 to 36 feet. John Stafford Smith - musicologist, composer, organist, lay-vicar of Westminster Abbey—died in 1836 (at age 86,) 22 years after his tune became the anthem of by-then-60-year-old America. What greater shame could befall a proper Englishman?!

Aaron Copland (1900 – 1990): An Outdoor Overture (1938)

We've featured quite a bit of Copland's music at our "Indy" concerts over the past 20 years, from Lincoln Portrait, the Four Dance Episodes from "Rodeo," Fanfare for the Common Man, Appalachian Spring; and more; why not?

Few composers epitomize the sound of America more vividly than Copland - and he indelibly established himself in the 1920s and is still rightfully regarded as the "Dean of American Music." Brooklyn-born and raised, he was the youngest of five children of Lithuanian Jewish parents who immigrated to the US from Russia, changing their last name



of "Kaplan" to "Copland." A rail-thin, bookworm fascinated by his older sister's piano practice, by age 15 Copland decided to be a composer. In 1921 he left for Paris to study for three years with the legendary Nadia Boulanger, who trained more great musicians than any other teacher in history. They remained close for 60 years until her 1979 death. She cited Copland as the most important and accomplished of all her pupils. His early avant-garde compositions of the late 1920's and early 30's gave way to his personal philosophy of populist humanism, which asserted in a more accessible, "American" sound. His music became more harmonically simple, accessible, melodic. El Salon Mexico, John Henry, 1938's Billy the Kid ballet, his 1939 film score Of Mice and Men, 1940's Our Town and the simple beauty of Quiet City and Danzon Cubano brought Copland huge popular appeal. He struck a new high after the December 7, 1941 attack on Pearl Harbor with Lincoln Portrait—and also the ballet Rodeo, both in 1942. In 1938 Copland composed An Outdoor Overture for the mid-winter concert of the High School of Music and Art in New York City, as part of a campaign by that school's Music Department head Alexander Richter to establish "American Music for American Youth." Richter directly petitioned the great Copland - who, (as he himself noted) found the "argument irresistible. The extraordinary development in recent years of the school orchestra in our country, and particularly in the

public high schools, had convinced me that our composers could and should supply these enthusiastic young people with a music commensurate with their emotional and technical capacities...here was an opportunity too good to be missed.”

Copland actually interrupted his work on *Billy the Kid* to write *An Outdoor Overture*; the piece took him less than three weeks to compose, with the orchestration occupying one more. Copland and Richter agreed when Copland played the work through at the piano that it had a certain “outdoor” sound, and thus its title was born. The piece begins with a large, open and optimistic gesture – that develops into an amiable, grand yet understated trumpet solo. The first theme of the allegro is built around repetitive notes – which are turned into a second (more deliberate) march tune that takes on the qualities of a canon (think only of a tune overlaid upon itself such as “*Row, Row, Row Your Boat*.”) A third, slower – and truly lovely tune in the flute is then year, repeated by the clarinet – and then strings. And then: a NEW march: an it’s always reminded me of the sort of incessant marches one finds in Shostakovich; that section builds until we have a recapitulation of that trumpet solo, though now for strings: before the major tunes of the overture are combined, leading to a grandiose finale. It’s wonderful, it’s all-American – and it’s Copland through and through.

Dr. Phillip Smith: Armed Forces Salute

Local treasure Phil Smith (1955 – 2013) served for many years as composer, conductor, instrumental musician and arranger for the United States Army Bands. His *Armed Forces Salute* continues to be played by US Army Bands and of course, the MYSO. Phil’s original arrangement included: “*Army Song*” (“*The Army Goes Rolling Along*”), “*Anchors Aweigh*” the official song of the US Navy, “*Marine’s Hymn*” (“*From the Halls of Montezuma*”) and “*Wild Blue Yonder*” the official song of the US Air Force.



Phil (*above right*) was the MYSO’s Principal Tuba Player from our inception and created wonderful original musical works and arrangements not only for US military forces (and the MYSO) but also for the Mariposa County High School Grizzly Band – an organization he shaped into an award-winning and nationally-recognized force. His *Armed Forces Salute* honors the courage and sacrifice of all those who serve in our defense past and present.

But there were a few problems with this piece, as Phil readily acknowledged. He wasn't an experienced symphonic orchestrator; he originally composed his MYSO version for single woodwinds – including Baritone Saxophone, rarely found in a symphony orchestra – and only a single violin line, with no parts for second violins or (in some sections) no acknowledgement of French horns! He had a bit of a challenge with the alto clef (used by violas) and so we had to try to guess at his intentions – even with Phil present to advise us! His generous spirit always deferred to my interpretive suggestions, and one year, he realized that he had completely forgotten to include *“Semper Paratas”* – the official theme song of the US Coast Guard - the (then-)fifth branch of the military. Rather than fit it in by placing it in its recognized “official” place as the military requires, Phil just tacked it onto the end of the piece – and several other of the military pieces weren't where they really belonged, either.

He had always hoped to overhaul the piece to correct those “few problems” – but unfortunately didn't live to do so. As he grew weaker and weaker under the years of strain from esophageal cancer, I told him I'd love to make those alterations – an offer he readily sanctioned. And so here it is, at long last: I've not only corrected and re-orchestrated the piece, but have also added the tune of the now-recognized sixth branch of our US Military: the Space Force, founded in 2019, six years after we lost Phil - and have added ITS tune (*“Semper Supra”*) in its official place, as well as presenting all the tunes in their proper sequences as decreed by the US Military. I've done so to honor a remarkable man, a loyal friend, a wonderful musician – and a truly great American. Phil attributed his cancer to his exposure to Agent Orange while serving in the Vietnam War – but only allowed a small amount of bitterness to color his long battle with cancer.

As we play, please stand when you hear the tune of the branch with which you or a family member is associated. We're grateful for your service to our united America. And I'd like to personally dedicate this work in perpetual memory of one of the most dedicated and best Armed Forces veterans I've ever been privileged to call my friend – and the man who touched the lives of so many: Dr. Phillip Smith.

Richard Rodgers (1902-1979), arranged/orchestrated by Robert Russell Bennett (1894 – 1981): *Concert Suite from the (1952) TV documentary series “Victory at Sea” and ensuing 1954 feature film.*

In the 1930's/40's, Richard Rodgers composed 30 Broadway shows with lyricist Lorenz Hart including *On Your Toes* (with that show's *"Slaughter on Tenth Avenue,"*) *Babes in Arms*, *I'd Rather Be Right*, *The Boys from Syracuse*, *Too Many Girls*, *Pal Joey* and *By Jupiter*. Many of their songs became pop standards as well. Following Hart's early death in 1943, Rodgers teamed with Oscar

Hammerstein and one of Broadway's most successful teams was born. Their 11



musicals - including *South Pacific*, *Oklahoma!*, *The King and I*, *Carousel* and *The Sound of Music* - continuously play internationally. Their legacy began with *Oklahoma!* (and as a sidebar, I starred in more productions of THAT show alone than I can remember during my own professional career.)

Rodgers' score for "Victory at Sea," the award-winning 26-part WWII documentary which originally aired in 1952 on NBC is considered a landmark of the genre. But it's very important to give credit where due. Rodgers (*shown at left in 1948*) merely contributed 12 brief piano-scored tunes which were symphonically developed and

orchestrated by Rodgers' long-time orchestrator Robert Russell Bennett. Bennett (*at right*) brilliantly, imaginatively wove Rodgers' twelve brief tunes into a 13-hour score with the most memorable sections including "Song of the High Seas," "Submarines in a Calm Sea," "Beneath the Southern Cross," "Guadalcanal March," "Theme of Growing and Building," "Fiddlin' Off Watch," "The Sunny Pacific Islands," "The Approaching Enemy," "The Attack," "Death and Debris," and "Hymn of Victory" all included in this spectacular symphonic concert suite which the Kansas City-born Bennett (NOT to be confused with the similarly-named British-born, later New-York-based composer *Richard Rodney Bennett!*) later composed for orchestral concert performances. Although, both men ultimately died in Manhattan, 33 years apart!



Erich Wolfgang Korngold (1897 - 1957): *The Sea Hawk* (1940) Concert Suite arranged by Jerry Brubaker

Ask me the name of the greatest film composer from Hollywood's Golden Age and I'll readily respond with the name of Korngold. And believe me, the competition is pretty remarkable - with Max Steiner, Bernard Herrmann, Franz Waxman, Miklos Rosza and Dimitri Tiomkin close behind. But if you want to consider (especially) the excitement of sheer swashbuckling verve, delivered with a brilliant mastery of



styles (that somehow, just always seem to have a dash of Viennese “operaticism” at their core) give me Erich Wolfgang Korngold any day. But beyond even THAT, he was incredibly well-trained, well-studied - a natural born composer for whom even the most complex structure was child's play, a terrific tunesmith and someone with the instincts, taste and judgment of - yes, a genius.

He had it all. And knew exactly what to do with it.

Like a Beethoven, like a Mozart - like all truly great composers: his

personal voice is always recognizable, no matter how well-served and diverse a style he may have adopted at any moment for the job at hand.

The man was one of those few true child prodigies of music history, in the mold of Mozart and Mendelssohn. Moravian born, he was raised in Vienna from an early age, where his father Julius became one of the most influential, powerful – and feared music critics of the day. The kid was precociously, staggeringly talented; by age 10, that OTHER Jewish, Bohemia-born, Viennese-resident music genius Gustav Mahler proclaimed young Erich a *fellow* genius. Korngold, who had been composing since the age of 7, was a remarkable pianist with an incredible ear and was producing extraordinarily mature scores across all genres of concert music by the age of 10, including chamber music, solo piano, ballet scores, even cantatas; his operas ***Violanta*** and ***Der Ring des Polykrates*** were produced when he was still in his teens and his masterpiece in that genre: ***Die tote Stadt*** – first performed when he was only 23: remains in the active repertoire to this day, well over a century later. THIS was a brilliant musician. After negotiating the difficult period of precociousness, he moved into the life of a successful adult musician – composing and conducting to acclaim; his operas’ popularity in the German-speaking world challenged only by those of Richard Strauss.

And it was with those operas that Korngold achieved his greatest fame. They're still remarkable to experience - and in some ways his film scores are operas without words, unless you count those of the actors speaking from the screen.

In 1934 he was enticed to try his hand at composing film music in Hollywood: the overblown all-star, at-times-miscast epic version of Shakespeare's *A Midsummer*



Night's Dream for Warner Brothers, for which he adapted Mendelssohn's incidental music of a century earlier. He returned to Europe, but then came back to Hollywood - bouncing between continents AND between concert and film music until tragically: the March 12, 1938 Anschluss began. By a fortunate stroke of fate for the Korngolds, Hitler's troops marched into Austria and annexed it while Korngold, wife and their younger son George were safely in Hollywood. Due to their fame, the entire family had been literally targeted by the Nazis and Erich's homes in Vienna and the Alps were ransacked. Erich's parents (remember dad Julius I mentioned above?) just BARELY escaped Austria just one day after the Nazi invasion, with Erich's elder son in tow. And so: the entire clan was reunited in Hollywood.

Due to the tragedy of World War II, a return to Europe was out of the question so long as the Nazi regime had the famous composer in its sights - and so, Korngold's career was to be in films, where he had become somewhat ensconced. He would eventually compose 20 film scores - each one a brilliant gem and they're all tremendous scores, but I feel he was particularly inspired when writing for the films of the frequently swashbuckling Errol Flynn* - including the wonderful scores to *Captain Blood** (1935,) *Anthony Adverse* (1936,) *The Prince and the Pauper** (1937,) *Another Dawn** (1937,) **THE** classic version of *Adventures of Robin Hood** (1939,) *Juarez* (1939,) *The Private Lives of Elizabeth and Essex** (1939,) the MAGNIFICENT *The Sea Hawk** (1940,) *The Sea Wolf* (1941,) *Kings Row* (1942 - featuring, inarguably: Ronald Reagan's best performance,) *The Constant Nymph* (1943,) the absolutely haunting *Between Two Worlds* (1944,) *San Antonio** (1945,) *Devotion* (1946,) *Of Human Bondage* (1946,) *Deception* (1946,) and *Escape Me Never** (1947.) He served as music director or adaptor on a few more, and even made one appearance as an actor in a film: the fairly inaccurate Wagner bio-flick *Magic Fire* (1955) - in which Korngold briefly appears as the conductor Hans Richter. I've included a link to that brief excerpt with the video links at bottom - and no, Korngold (*at right, in the role*) didn't usually sport that Richterian facial hair!



Kennedy Center Honors – John Williams Tribute - The music of John Towner Williams adapted by Paul Lavender (2004.)

I thought this extremely unique piece from 2004 would make a great little teaser to end our concert's first half, whetting the appetite for much of the second half. My notes on John Williams and the inspiration for, and impacts of his talent and "sound" are explored in the repertoire notes for the second half. From the score's notes by Paul Lavender on this piece:

"Every year since 1978, the Kennedy Center Honors in Washington, D.C. has recognized the extraordinary talents of our most prestigious artists and their lifetime contributions to American arts and culture.

Likened to British Knighthood or the French Legion of Honor, the Kennedy Center Honors...brings together the arts, entertainment and political communities for a gala weekend of festivities including the familiar televised concert from the Kennedy Center Opera House. The honorees are treated to an evening of film tributes, stage performances and appearances by fellow artists and friends.

In 2004, the entertainment industry was thrilled with the Honors' recognition of one of their most revered colleagues, composer John Williams. Also honored were opera legend Joan Sutherland, actors Warren Beatty, Ossie Davis and Ruby Dee and pop idol Elton John.



At the gala concert, tribute host Steven Spielberg (*at right in the photo at left with Williams*) saluted his longtime friend and collaborator by pointing out

"John Williams is an American treasure and his musical voice has become a distinctive part of our culture. Have you ever heard a 7-year-old hum the first nine notes of Darth Vader's theme?

Or, seen a group of kids jumping into a pool going "Dah-duh, Dah-duh, Dah-duh, Dah-duh?""

Lavender briefly quotes six memorable tunes from *Star Wars*, *Jaws*, *Superman*, *Harry Potter*, *Raiders of the Lost Ark* and my favorite of Williams' output to date: *E.T.* And you'll find my biographical notes on Williams below.

And there's one final quotation I'd like to leave you with. In honoring John Williams at the 2016 American Film Institute's Life Achievement Awards, Steven Spielberg noted:

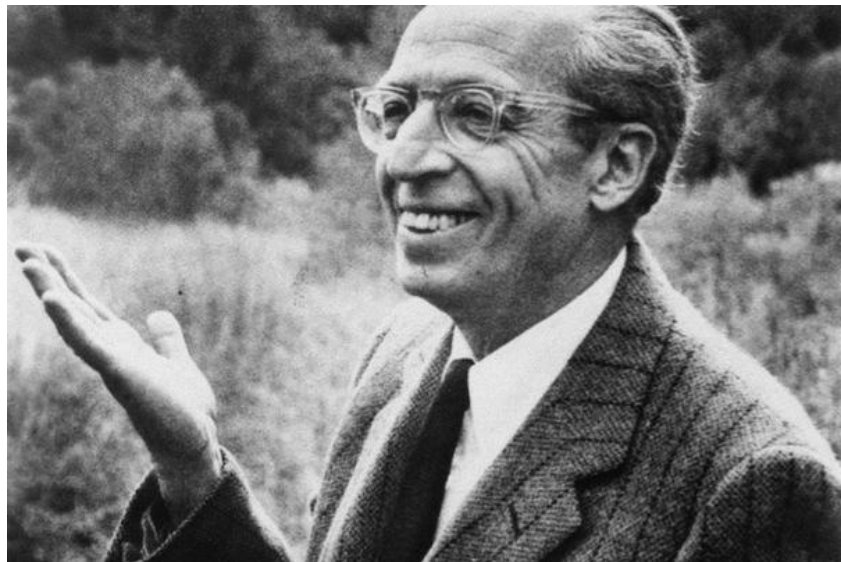
"Without John Williams: Bikes don't really fly. Nor do brooms in quidditch matches. Nor do men in red capes. There is no Force. Dinosaurs do not walk the earth. We do not wonder. We do not weep. We do not believe."

Aaron Copland (1900 – 1990): Fanfare for the Common Man (1942)

(Please see my notes for Copland's An Outdoor Overture above for my biographic musings on the composer.)

Arguably, Copland's most universally-beloved piece — Fanfare for the Common Man, was to have been a mere tossaway: Copland was one of 18 composers commissioned by the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra's music director Eugene Goossens to write brief patriotic fanfares for the orchestra's 1942-43 season.

Copland's made an immediate impression, becoming one of the most oft-played works of ALL music. A populist, Copland was inspired by a speech FDR's Vice-President Henry Wallace made in 1942 in which he referenced "the century of the Common Man." You know this piece and will recognize it will from its ubiquitous use in film, TV, commercials,



Internet presence and really: everywhere there the need for a remarkably effective audio attention-getter! Brief, impressive—and a field day for our brass and percussionists.

By this time, Copland had become a well-known and beloved American composer, with three symphonies to his name: the "Organ" Symphony of 1924, the "Dance" Symphony of 1929 and the 1932-33 "Short" Symphony. To confuse things a bit, Copland didn't actually think of his self-named "Dance" Symphony to be a real symphony, and dropped it from his numbering system.

Which brings us to his ACTUAL Third Symphony (and there's a reason for this!) In 1941 he began sketching a new symphony, to be his third. This was at the

height of his “populist” period, and this new one was the first to be written in a traditional four-movement form, the first to utilize key signatures – and Copland adopted his now-simpler, less-outré style. And in doing so, I feel he composed THE great American Symphony – though for the purposes of these notes on ***Fanfare for the Common Man*** (1942) I will simply say that the entire symphony is just remarkable – and I hope you seek it out. With that as prelude, I’ll now just jump to the transition from the third movement to the fourth. That final movement really defies traditional structure, and is in no way akin to sonata form – but is simply amazing to behold both on the page and in the ear. It begins with a quiet quotation in the flutes of: ***Fanfare for the Common Man*** – and though he began sketching out this symphony the year BEFORE he wrote the ***Fanfare***, he didn’t complete it until 1945-46, well after the ***Fanfare*** had become world-famous. SO: he then brilliantly develops that fanfare motif into a massive full-orchestra statement, and then utilizes it as the motif for the entire final movement, also interpolating – ingenuously – material from the previous movements as well as new material. And it’s simply: amazing, both from a musicologist’s analytical view AND as a listener – either experienced or one new to the world of “classical” music. It’s also a hugely demanding symphony from the viewpoint of a music director – both in terms of numbers of musicians necessary to pull it off, and sheer difficulty in getting it right. But it is a work which demonstrates the full power, intellect and beauty of Copland’s mind – and again, I urge you to seek it out!

Here’s a YouTube link to a performance of the entire symphony which really gets it just right – Leonard Bernstein conducting the New York Philharmonic. But if you’re impatient, and against my advice(!) you can skip ahead to the beginning of the final movement, which begins at the 29:15 mark.

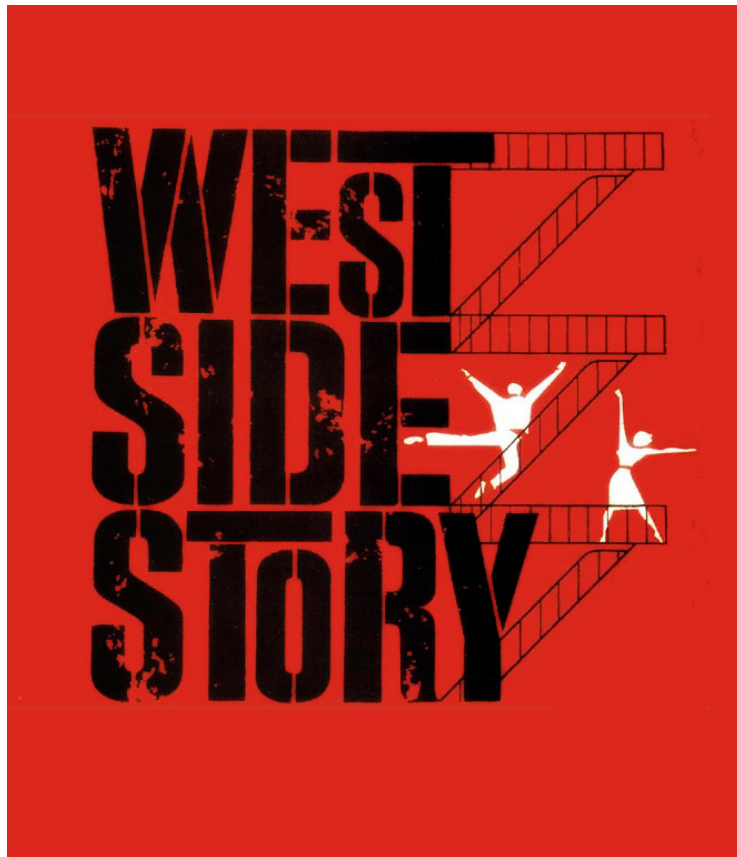
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pfqCo_vuMsl

Leonard Bernstein (1918 – 1990): *West Side Story* (1957/1961) *Concert Suite* - arranged by Jack Mason

Leonard Bernstein was – in my opinion: the most remarkable all-around musician America has yet produced. His bursting onto the scene as an emergency replacement conducting the New York Philharmonic in late November 1943 at age 25 with NO rehearsal to fill in for a suddenly-ailing Bruno Walter – broadcast nationally on the radio, a triumph so great it was splashed across the front page of the New York Times the next day – has



become the stuff of legend. (I've got a rare broadcast recording of that live concert and it **is** electrifying!) Lifelong friend of Copland (and so many others) and an astonishing polymath in the field: a truly gifted conductor of unparalleled communicative-interpretive skills, a composer of incredibly wide range not only within the field of "concert" music, opera and operetta, but also on Broadway and in film (1954's ***On the Waterfront***) to boot, a gifted pianist who effortlessly conducted from the keyboard – and one of the best educators and theoreticians of music we're lucky to have preserved via countless hours of Harvard Lectures, Young Peoples' Concerts and other venues. I count so many of his concert works among my favorites – from the just-so-wonderful ***Candide*** (particularly in its final



incarnation – with the best of all possible libretti at last!) to the three symphonies, the ***Serenade after Plato's "Symposium"***, ***The Dybbuk***, ***Chichester Psalms***, and more.

Hard to believe that this vibrant musician and man I first became aware of while a child via the latter era of his "Young Peoples Concerts" – would now be 105 years old. Dead for 33 years, though it seems like only yesterday. But while the man may be gone, we celebrate one of those Broadway (and consequent film) masterpieces in this concert: ***West Side Story***. The great, lasting musical with lyrics by the then-

young Stephen Sondheim shows no sign of slowing down. Back in 1957, it was a brilliant idea: to update Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* to the (then-contemporary) Upper West Side of Manhattan – not far from where I'd later live only 30 years later, near today's Lincoln Center, with the Jets and Sharks replacing the Capulets and Montagues – and Tony and Maria as the star-crossed lovers. Conceived, directed and choreographed by Jerome Robbins, every number in the musical was a hit – and would become standards of pop and jazz, to this day. A monster hit on Broadway, it ran for 732 performances, with the London production running even longer. The (original) 1961 film version was nominated for 11 Academy Awards, winning 10 – including best picture. And the film was remade 60 years later in 2021, directed by Steven Spielberg.

In his *West Side Story log*, Bernstein would write: “I am now convinced that what we dreamed all these years *is possible*; because there stands that tragic story with a theme as profound as love versus hate, with all the theatrical risks of death and racial issues and young performers and ‘serious’ music and complicated balletics – and it all added up for audience and critics.” I can echo his words: *West Side Story* remains sadly relevant considering today’s racial distrust and division. I do wonder if we’ll ever learn that respect for differences and love can be greater powers than nearly any others. In any event, this wonderful suite from West Side Story includes (after the brief introduction) the tunes *I Feel Pretty*; *Maria*; *Something’s Coming*; *Tonight*; *One Hand, One Heart*; *Cool*; and *America*.

**John Towner Williams (1932): Theme from E.T
– the Extra-terrestrial, arranged by James Ployhar**

I think it’s safe to say John Williams is the greatest composer of film music of our time. First off, he’s received more Academy Award nominations in ANY category (a staggering 51 nods over the past 50 years – with five wins) than any other person. When you stop to consider the extraordinary number of iconic film tunes AND his incredibly skilled use of underscoring exhibited over the past 60+ years, it’s really amazing:

Jaws, Star Wars, Jurassic Park, E.T., Schindler’s List, Superman, Close Encounters of the Third Kind, Indiana Jones, Harry Potter and many more. And while each and every film’s scoring needs have been individually AND specifically met brilliantly, his entire output still carries an unmistakable “John Williams” sound. I think some of his lesser- or unknown film and concert scores should be just as well-



known as the blockbusters: *The Reivers, The Cowboys, The River, Witches of Eastwick, Born on the Fourth of July, Empire of the Sun, Lincoln* – his many instrumental concerti – particularly the wonderful *Tuba and Viola Concerti*, the *First Symphony* and *Hymn to New*

England. And then there’s the legacy of television work – including the classic

1960s *Lost in Space* main title, recently recycled for the series reboot! Born in New York, his jazz-drummer father moved the family to Los Angeles when “Johnny” was 16; the boy continued to use that name even into his 30s after becoming a jazz pianist himself, or more specifically: “Little Johnny Love” Williams. I kid you not!

But first, he was to become an arranger, conductor and composer while serving in the US Air Force; after leaving the service he studied at the famed Eastman-Rochester school in New York, and at the prestigious Juilliard School in Manhattan, where his principal studies were in composition and as a concert pianist under the great Rosina Lhévinne. Moving BACK to LA in the 1950s, (where he continued his studies at UCLA,) he became a valued studio musician (mostly jazz piano) and established a great relationship with Henry Mancini – most notably, on Mancini’s classic *Peter Gunn* TV series. He worked under some of the remaining names of Hollywood’s Golden Age of musicians, musical directors and composers.

Branching out to become a fledgling orchestrator, arranger and composer working at first to fill television’s insatiably hungry need, he then moved to film, where, after 20 years of toil, he finally reached his greatest blockbuster status in 1975 with Steven Spielberg’s *Jaws*. That relationship with Spielberg has been incredibly successful, and one of my very favorite products of it is 1982’s *E.T.* The complete score is about 75 minutes of at-times emotionally-charged operatic dimensions, with Williams’ (characteristic) use of leitmotifs in the vein of Wagner. To me, and just as Spielberg captures longing, loss, giddiness, ecstasy – and an incredible range of other emotions in his film, Williams matches him at every step of the way in this, one of his finest scores. The *Theme from E.T.* is only the tip of the iceberg – but what a gorgeous overview it is!

John Towner Williams (1932 -): The Empire Strikes Back Medley (arranged John C. Whitney) and Star Wars Epic Part II (arranged Robert W. Smith)

So – as noted above, Williams began composing scores on his own, eventually establishing a remarkably successful artistic relationship with Steven Spielberg. And yes, though his score for *Jaws* in 1975 really caught the public’s attention, Williams made an even greater impact with his scores for the *Star Wars* films, beginning in 1977. Conceiving those film soundtracks as lush-Romantic period style, fully-orchestral scores in a time in which film music had become increasingly pop, electro-pop, modernist or small-ensemble centered, Williams deliberately modeled his *Star Wars* scores on the style of the great golden-age composer Erich Wolfgang Korngold (see above), who had created some of

Hollywood's greatest swashbuckling scores in the 1930s and 40s. And most specifically, upon Korngold's score for the 1942 "Kings Row." (Listen to this Youtube link of Korngold's main title to that film for the similarity of style and sound) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tysCiL1-24w>

It was Korngold's opulent, Wagnerian sound which Williams unashamedly adapted for *Star Wars* so brilliantly well that caused a revolution of sorts in film scoring—a return to the symphonic sound first evoked in Hollywood by the great film composers Max Steiner, Franz Waxman (with whom Williams actually worked in the 50s/60s,) Miklós Rózsa, Dimitri Tiomkin, Bernard Herrmann and of course: Korngold. My favorite Williams scores include those for the *Harry Potter* films, *Jurassic Park*, the lesser-known *The Reivers* (1969,) *Star Wars*, *Jaws*, *Superman*, *Indiana Jones*, *Lincoln*, and to me – best of all: his remarkable score for *E.T.*

John (Towner) Williams (1932 –) *Highlights from Jurassic Park* (1993 – 2022) Arranged by Calvin Custer

Jurassic Park has become the third-most long-lived franchise (1993 – 2022) - at 29 years and counting - represented by tonight's Williams scores. *Jurassic Park* is second ONLY to the 46-years-and-counting *Star Wars* franchise of 1977 - to literally the present, and the second-place *Indiana Jones* films (42 years, from 1981 – 2023.) "Jurassic World: Dominion" opened only last year, but it'll take some extraordinary event to END that series – which really, like Star Wars: seems set to continue for the next many decades or longer.

This "***Highlights from Jurassic Park***" ***Suite*** really hits all the familiar, beloved music sequences from that movie, and it's hard not to be moved – especially by the sounds of wonder, majesty – and sheer joy Williams creates.

Please see the information about John Williams above – and prepare to be impressed by the majestic grandeur, terrified by the dangerous viciousness and relieved by the ultimate corralling (at least until the NEXT installment!) of resurrected dinosaurs: as interpreted by a great American composer.

John Philip Sousa (1854–1932): *The Stars and Stripes Forever—March* (1896), as orchestrated by Les Marsden Sousa—one of America's truly pre-eminent musicians, was born in Washington DC and between the ages of 6 to 13 was trained on violin, voice, piano, cornet, baritone horn, flute, trombone, alto horn as well as in harmony and composition. At 13 he was apprenticed to the US Marine Corps Band by his father, a trombonist in the band. Sousa was a real catch when – years later, he began working in a theatre pit orchestra; he learned to conduct while performing duties on multiple instruments. In 1880 he made an

impressive return to the US Marine Band which he had left as an apprentice: now at 25 he was its music director and conductor!

He led the “President’s Own” Marine Band during the administrations of five presidents from Rutherford B. Hayes to his own (initial) 1892 retirement from military service during Benjamin Harrison’s presidency. (He later re-enlisted in the active reserves at age 62 during World War I, but due to his age performed his service stateside.) At his own request, Sousa received that initial discharge from the Marine Corps because he realized the lucrative career open to him on the public circuit, leading his own band. He conducted his own farewell concert at the White House on July 30, 1892, receiving his discharge the following day. He immediately created his own, famed John Philip Sousa Band – which during its ensuing 39 years under his direction, played nearly 16,000 concerts internationally, to extraordinary acclaim. The Sousa Band made a great many early cylinder and later disc recordings in the early days of sound reproduction and those best-sellers helped to spread the fame of this magnificent musical organization wide and far, and internationally as well.



Sousa’s masterpiece, designated in 1987 as the official National March of the United States – closes this concert as it’s closed every MSO Independence Day Spectacular! Concert in our history. In 1896 Sousa was returning home on an ocean liner from a successful European concert tour when he received word that his band manager and good friend David Blakely had died back in America. Sousa ruminated aboard ship about the loss of his friend and his bittersweet joy of homecoming manifested itself in a march honoring Blakely. Ironically, the first four notes of this triumphant march quote the initial notes of the medieval Latin chant “Dies Irae” or “day of wrath.” Sousa mentally composed the march aboard ship, then set it to paper – scoring it for band when he reached home—without changing a single “mental” note. Thus he produced his greatest, most brilliant and immediately-successful march, and that’s saying a lot. He composed 136 marches and many other works including ballets, operettas and theatre-pieces. He was also a distinguished trapshooter and successful novelist. He composed (nearly unknown) words to this march:

*“Let martial note in triumph float –
and Liberty extend its mighty hand.
A flag appears ’mid thunderous cheers –
the banner of the Western land...”*

Ironically, ***The Stars and Stripes Forever*** was the last music Sousa heard. He died of heart failure on March 6, 1932, in the Abraham Lincoln Hotel in Reading, PA the day after conducting a rehearsal of the piece.

Our July 1st MYSO “Independence Day Spectacular!” Concert will be held on Saturday, July 1st from 7:00 – 9:00 (or later!) on the Great Lawn of the Wawona Hotel, four miles north of the South Entrance to Yosemite National Park. Tickets are not required – the concert is free though a \$10 donation is suggested.

For more information, visit <http://MYSO.live>

