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Archival Research and the Study of the Concert Presentations of Film Music: The Case of John Williams and the Boston Pops

Abstract:

Film music has increasingly populated the concert programs in the last twenty years. Yet, the presentation of the film-music repertoire in concerts is a corner of the film-music field that has received little scholarly attention. Archival research combined with the study of audio-visual documents in particular is the key to reconstruct the story of the presentation of film music in concerts. As a case study, I present the findings of the research that I conducted in Boston, U.S.A., in 2010 and 2011. Its aim was to demonstrate John Williams's seminal contribution to the legitimization of film music as a viable concert repertoire during his tenure as conductor of the Boston Pops Orchestra—"America's orchestra". The results showed very convincingly that John Williams's association with the most trend-setting and visible orchestra in the U.S.A. has been a major force and a seminal influence for the acceptance of film music as a legitimate concert repertoire.

Keywords:

John Williams; Boston Pops Orchestra; Film music in concert; Arthur Fiedler

Methodology:

Case study of John Williams as proponent of film music as concert repertoire

*Archival Research and the Study of the Concert Presentations of Film Music:
The Case of John Williams and the Boston Pops*

Emilio Audissino, University of West London

'It is possible that I can bring prestige to the best film music by presenting it in a concert format. Only one half of one percent of the music written in the nineteenth century is anything we ever hear today; surely there must be at least that percentage of good music written for films.' John Williams¹

One of the points of my PhD dissertation was to demonstrate that John Williams has been the most influential promoter of film music in concert because of his dual career as a pre-eminent composer of symphonic film music and as conductor of the world-famous Boston Pops orchestra.² The research was carried out in two archives, the Boston Symphony Orchestra Archive—home of the Boston Pops—and the WGBH Media Archives, both in Boston, Massachusetts. At the BSO archives attention was focused on concert programs, newspaper clippings, and photographs from the concerts, while at WGBH I viewed most of the episodes of the TV program *Evening at Pops*, Boston Pops' regular television rostrum from 1969 to 2004. The scope of the research was to compare Williams's attitude to film music with that of his predecessor, Arthur Fiedler, in order to demonstrate how the perspective on film music changed significantly during the Williams tenure. The study of concert programs and newspapers clipping (interviews, news reports, concert reviews, etc.) made it possible to reconstruct the policy of each conductor, but the role of audiovisual materials in both archives—the TV shows and audio recordings—was fundamental as they facilitated a full understanding of the differences in the musical offerings. Access to the music library was not permitted,³ so the study of audiovisual material was the only way to find out what a musical arrangement that was listed in the program sounded like. I have published some of the findings elsewhere, specifically: how Williams's conductorship of the Boston

¹ John Williams quoted in Richard Dyer, "John Williams Bows In," *Boston Globe*, January 11, 1980.

² Emilio Audissino, "Neoclassical Hollywood Music. John Williams e il recupero dello stile classico di Hollywood", PhD dissertation, University of Pisa, Italy, 2012, 221–369.

³ Scores and other performance materials are not stored in the open-access BSO Archives and therefore they are not among those resources that researchers are allowed to study.

Pops dovetailed with his parallel career in Hollywood;⁴ how the Boston Pops case was very influential in establishing the now increasingly fashionable custom of having films or sections of films accompanied live in film/music events;⁵ and how the Williams/Boston Pops relationship provides the ideal opportunity to observe what the typical forms and formats are in which a piece from a film score can be adapted for concert performance.⁶ In this article the research forms a case study that exemplifies the importance of audiovisual archives in tracing the history of the concert presentation of film music.

The Boston Pops: An Essential Background

The Boston Pops Orchestra—founded in 1885, formed by Boston Symphony Orchestra's musicians minus its first chairs, and performing in the Spring season and during Christmas time—has always had a major role in the consolidation of the American–music repertoire. As David Tomatz notes, “The influence of the Boston Pops is quite astonishing when you consider that practically every orchestra in America now does pops concerts in the formula developed by Arthur Fiedler through the 1930s and 1940s. . . . By performing popular music so wonderfully, by setting such a high standard, they've set a standard for the entire industry.”⁷ Since the outset, the mission of the Boston Pops has been to bridge the gap between the classical and the popular repertoires and to introduce the concert–going experience and the sound of a symphony orchestra to wider audiences. The European influence was strong throughout the initial period: the first seventeen conductors were all European–born. The first American–born conductor was Arthur Fiedler (1894–1979), who was appointed in 1929 and held the position for fifty years, until his death on July 10, 1979.⁸ An advocate of popular music, Fiedler was the right person to fulfill the Pops' mission, noting: “There's nothing wrong with playing light music. You don't always read Milton, Shakespeare, and Schopenhauer. You can enjoy Mark Twain.”⁹ During his record-breaking tenure,¹⁰ the

⁴ Emilio Audissino, *John Williams's Film Music. 'Jaws,' 'Star Wars,' 'Raiders of the Lost Ark,' and the Return of the Classical Hollywood Music Style* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press), 183–196.

⁵ Emilio Audissino, “Overruling a Romantic Prejudice. Forms and Formats of Film Music in Concert Programs”, in *Film in Concert, Film Scores and their Relation to Classical Concert Music*, ed. by Sebastian Stoppe (Glücksstadt, Germany: VWH Verlag), 25–44.

⁶ Emilio Audissino, “Film Music and Multimedia: An Immersive Experience and a Throwback to the Past”, in *Jahrbuch Immersiver Medien 2014: Sounds, Music & Soundscapes*, ed. by Patrick Rupert-Kruse (Marburg, Germany: Schüren Verlag), 46–56.

⁷ David Tomatz quoted in Daniel B. Wood, “Bang–Up Centennial at the Pops,” *Christian Science Monitor*, April 30, 1985.

⁸ Allen Hughes, “Arthur Fiedler, 84, Conductor of Boston Pops 50 Years, Dies,” *New York Times*, July 11, 1979.

⁹ Arthur Fiedler quoted in *Boston Pops. The Story of America's Orchestra* (Boston MA: Boston Symphony Orchestra Inc., 2000), 37.

¹⁰ Besides holding the position for fifty years, Fiedler recorded with the orchestra the RCA Victor 78rpm *Jalousie* (1938), which at the time was the first orchestral recording to sell more than one million copies; through radio broadcasts and regular TV shows he made the

Boston Pops made an important contribution to the popularization of such American music as John Philip Souza's marches and Gershwin's concert music, and pioneered the symphonic presentation of jazz, American standard songs, and even pop music (with orchestral arrangements of The Beatles' and Bee Gees' hits).

The Pops had adopted a three-part program since their inception, and Fiedler renewed the formula by making each of the parts the site of different types of music:

It struck me that this general public was snobbish about what they called "classical" music, and the "classical-minded" crowd was snobbish about music which they called "popular" with an air of condescension. Accordingly, I laid out programs in three sections planned so as to provide something of interest for the greatest variety of tastes in the course of an evening. . . . Usually the first part [of the program] has some good music in it, the middle part is a soloist, and the last part is gumdrops—which people like and which I think are perfectly all right and I have no shame about it.¹¹

The "gumdrops" in the third part included the most popular and up-to-date pieces: show-tunes from Broadway musicals—which would increasingly replace the traditional excerpts from operas and operettas—jazz, marches, Leroy Anderson's symphonic miniatures (e.g. *The Typewriter*), orchestral versions of popular songs, and, eventually, film music.

Arthur Fiedler and Film Music

In the 1970s film music began to be increasingly programmed, though Fiedler would select film music akin to the pop-song repertoire typically featured in the third part of the programs.

Insert Table 1 here. Film music programmed during Fiedler's Last Years (1975-1979)

As can be seen in Table 1, above, Fiedler preferred fairly recent pieces (apart from "A Summer Place" and "Smile," the works in the sample are all less than ten-years old) that had enjoyed a successful performance in the easy-listening record charts ("Lara's Theme" and the theme from *Love Story* are such instances), or commercially appealing songs that had been used in a film's soundtrack (e.g. "Raindrops Keep Falling on my Head"). Consider Nino Rota's theme from *Romeo and Juliet*: this English-flavored modal piece would probably not have been programmed if it had not been previously

Boston Pops the orchestra with the greatest media exposure; on the occasion of the out-door Fourth of July concert celebrating the bicentennial of the Independence in 1976, 400,000 people gathered to listen to Fiedler and the Boston Pops, the largest audience for a symphonic concert at the time. *Boston Pops*, passim.

¹¹ Arthur Fiedler quoted in *Ibid.*, 36.

adapted into a successful song titled "What is a Youth?"¹² Film music was seen as a sub-category of contemporary pop music and it was typically arranged to conform to the "pop/pops sound" that one would expect in the third part of the program. Indeed, as can be seen from the June 14, 1978 concert below (guest-conducted by Norman Leyden), film music is grouped in the "gumdrops" section and all the entries are custom-made arrangements, in this case by Leyden himself.

Insert Figure 1 here. Concert Program, June 14, 1978 (Courtesy BSO Archives)

In 1977 the unprecedented sales of the *Star Wars* symphonic album and the extraordinary success of the "Star Wars Concerts" with Zubin Mehta and the Los Angeles Philharmonic engendered a greater general attention for traditional symphonic film music as opposed to pop film music.¹³ As a consequence, from 1978 onward an increase in the quantity of film music can be observed in the Boston Pops programs. For example, Hollywood composers Henry Mancini and Johnny Green were invited to conduct the Orchestra in film-music concerts at Symphony Hall. In the post-1977 seasons Fiedler gave more importance to film music in terms of *quantity*, but there was not a corresponding adjustment in the level of *quality*. Regardless of the origin of the music—Broadway, Hollywood, pop charts—Fiedler still had new pieces arranged according to his idea of popular music and in the standard Pops style, which in his last years consisted of a thick texture and was either loud and band-like or old-fashioned sentimental and easily hummable.

John Williams and Film Music

After a painstaking search for Fiedler's successor, Hollywood composer John Williams was appointed Boston Pops' new musical director on January 9, 1980.¹⁴

Insert Figure 2 here. Cover of the Program Booklet during John Williams's First

¹² Lyrics by Eugene Walter. The song is also known as "A Time for Us" or "Ai Giochi Addio."

¹³ On the musical impact of *Star Wars*, see Audissino, *John Williams's Film Music*, 77–85.

¹⁴ Williams's appointment came quite unexpectedly to most observers: he had very little experience as a concert conductor at the time - certainly the least experience among the other candidates - but his 1979 appearances as a guest conductor made a strong impression on the orchestra and BSO management. A committee for the "Future of the Pops" was formed as early as April 1979 with the scope of searching for candidates to succeed the increasingly ailing Fiedler. The members of the orchestra were asked to rate each guest conductor with expressly designed questionnaires, so as to prepare a list of potential successors. After Fiedler's death, the process had to be expedited and in October the committee produced a shortlist: John Covelli, Erich Kunzel, Mitch Miller, Harry Ellis Dickson, and John Williams. In December the committee ranked the short-listed names according to their score in the survey: Williams jumped to the top position, having received the highest ratings in every entry of the evaluation questionnaires filled in by the orchestra members. See Ellen Pfeifer, "A Diary of the Pops Decision: How John Williams Got the Job," *Boston Herald American*, January 13, 1980; Richard Dyer, "Williams is Candidate for Fiedler's Job," *Boston Globe*, January 6, 1980; Richard Dyer, "Mix Design and Mystery, You Get a Pops Maestro," *Boston Globe*, January 10, 1980.

Season, 1980 (Courtesy BSO Archives)

While several film composers had more or less regularly conducted film–music concerts before—Miklós Rózsa, Henry Mancini, Alfred Newman, and Elmer Bernstein coming to mind—this was the very first case of a Hollywood composer being given the leadership of such an important musical institution. Williams had already appeared on the Pops' stage twice as a guest conductor and on both occasions had given a foretaste of his idea of film music's place in concert programs.

Insert Figure 3 here. Concert Program, May 25, 1979 (Courtesy BSO Archives)¹⁵

Focusing on the film-music entries in the program for Williams's first Boston Pops concert is quite revealing. One is a piece by a leading composer of art music who also wrote for films, Walton's *Henry V*, and its placement in the first part of the program—usually reserved for art–music classics—is a meaningful prefiguration of Williams's future policy. In the second section Williams presented a Broadway piece (*Fiddler on the Roof*) in his own Academy Award–winning 1972 arrangement for violin and orchestra, complying with the Boston Pops tradition of featuring a soloist in the middle part of the program. Finally, in the third part, Williams presented his own film output. Nine months later, in his first press conference as newly appointed Pops conductor, Williams described his plans for the Pops and the goals that he wanted to achieve, one of which was the renewal of the repertoire.¹⁶ The poor quality of the arrangements had been a notorious issue in the last Fiedler years, to the extent that orchestra musicians would not hesitate to call them “trashy.”¹⁷ Part of this renewal of the repertoire consisted of the introduction of more musically–challenging and philologically–faithful arrangements, as the music critic Richard Dyer notes:

He [Williams] has also commissioned new orchestrations of Broadway tunes and hewed to a generally higher standard than prevailed in the last Fiedler years—Williams likes to have older music, and current music, orchestrated in the style of its own period rather than gussied up into an omnipresent and rootless “Pops” style.¹⁸

¹⁵ The May 26 concert had an alternate middle part, featuring Mozart's Horn Concerto n° 2 in E Flat (K417) along with Williams's *Excerpts from Fiddler on the Roof*.

¹⁶ John Williams quoted in Richard Dyer, “Q & A with John Williams. Pops Conductor Talks about His New Beat,” *Boston Globe*, April 27, 1980. Already in Williams's first season, as much as one third of the circa sixty pieces presented consisted of completely new material never performed before by the Pops: see Ellen Pfeifer, “Williams: ‘I Never Intended to Conduct in Public,’” *Boston Herald American*, April 28, 1980.

¹⁷ See Anon. “Boston Pops Members Reveal They Hated Fiedler, His Music”, *Journal Inquirer*, August 10, 1984, and Constance Gorfinkle, “Why John Williams Changed His Mind,” *The Patriot Ledger*, August 8, 1984.

¹⁸ Richard Dyer, “John Williams. Bringing Hollywood Magic to the Boston Pops,” *Ovation*, June 1983, 43.

Film music could be an instrumental force to renew the repertoire, and Williams made this point from the outset:

Without wanting to sound pretentious, I think that film is going to engender a lot of important music. The audio–visual thing that films represent is after all still in its infancy. . . . I don't think any of us can have any idea where the audio–visual combination can lead. The Pops can be a wonderful forum to pick up and re–examine the best bits of what has already been done.¹⁹

Acknowledging film music as an important part of the concert repertoire did not simply mean increasing the amount being played: it also meant approaching it with a different attitude.

Fiedler's and Williams's contrasting attitudes to film music can be exemplified by the former's treatment of one of the latter's best known film works, *Star Wars*.²⁰ In 1978 Fiedler programmed the "Main Title" from *Star Wars* and the following year recorded the piece during the very last recording session of his life. However, the piece was not the original version but a rather incongruous arrangement by Newton Wayland and Richard Hayman titled "Theme and Dance from Star Wars".²¹ Similarly, Williams's shark theme from *Jaws* was recorded, in the same session as the *Star Wars* "Theme and Dance", in a bombastic, over-excited rendition that neutralized the piece's ominous nuances and, compared to the film version, featured emphasized percussions and synthesizer touches.²² But why make arrangements rather than using the originals? *Star Wars* was written for full symphony orchestra—perfectly fitting the Pops roster—and it was readily available for rental: between 1978 and 1979 there were around 400 performances of the "*Star Wars* Symphonic Suite" – Williams's concert arrangement distributed by Warner Bros. Music.²³ Having excluded the unavailability of the performance materials and the unsuitability of the original instrumentation, the only explanation for the "Theme and Dance" arrangement seems to be a matter of taste: with Fiedler ensuring that the material conformed to the simplified pop sound he deemed

¹⁹ John Williams quoted in Dyer, "Q & A with John Williams."

²⁰ I have already discussed this in Audissino, *John Williams's Film Music*, 188.

²¹ "Theme and Dance from Star Wars" was released in the CD *The Arthur Fiedler Legacy. From Fabulous Broadway to Hollywood's Reel Thing*, Deutsche Grammophon, 2007, 477 6124, with the deceptive title "Star Wars: Main Title" and without any mention of the arrangers' names, thus passing it off as the original version. It can be heard at this YouTube link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cm5soVF-iQU>, accessed October 1, 2015.

²² The "Theme from *Jaws*" can be found in the CD *The Arthur Fiedler Legacy. From Fabulous Broadway to Hollywood's Reel Thing*. Incidentally, in the booklet, Johanna Fiedler reveals that "everyone [in the orchestra], Papa included, loathed [the "Theme from *Jaws*]." (9). I think this is quite apparent when listening to their rendition.

²³ William Livingstone, "John Williams and the Boston Pops. An American Institution Enters a New Era," *Stereo Review*, December 1980, 76.

suitable for the third part of the program.

If Fiedler considered film music akin to pop music, Williams thought that the film-music repertoire could provide pieces akin to concert music. Accordingly, he did not merely look for trendy pop pieces but also for musically interesting pieces, noting that “it is light stuff, but very hard to do”.²⁴ Music from the Jerry Bock and Sheldon Harnick musical *Fiddler on the Roof* provides a good example of the differences between a “pop piece” and a “musically interesting piece.” A medley arranged by Jack Mason used in Fiedler's era has a mostly static and homophonic texture, the idea being to highlight the *popular* tunes so that they could be instantly recognized. By contrast, as detailed above, for his first Pops concert Williams brought to Boston his own medley based on his arrangement for the film version of the musical.²⁵ The idea here was not merely to present the popular tunes, but to do this in a way that was as *musically challenging and interesting* as possible, including contrapuntal writing and even a virtuoso cadenza for solo violin—written for Isaac Stern.²⁶ Further evidence of this change of approach can be seen in the main theme from *Rocky*, played regularly in the Fiedler era under the name “Gonna Fly Now”, but from 1982 listed instead as “Theme from Rocky”. This is another indication of the gradual passage from a conception of film music as a sub-genre of pop music—“Gonna Fly Now” sounds like a song title and indeed refers to the film's theme song—to a conception of film music as a concert repertoire in itself—the use of “Theme from...” aligning film music with the tradition of concert adaptations of applied symphonic music, such as ballet, incidental music, and opera.

Williams also approached film music with an unprecedented philological care, presenting the original versions—not only for film-music classics like Korngold's, but also for contemporary works like Goldsmith's—whenever possible.²⁷ If the original was not available, Williams commissioned an arrangement based on the authentic orchestration, reconstructed from surviving orchestral parts and from the film's original music track, such as with Alexander Courage's commission to reconstruct Conrad Salinger's orchestration of “Singin' in the Rain” and “The Trolley Song” from *Meet Me in St. Louis*.²⁸ The idea was to show that all music—film music included—can be good

²⁴ John Williams in Constance Gorfinkle, “‘Light Stuff’ is Hard Work,” *The Patriot Ledger*, January 15, 1985.

²⁵ Williams was the arranger, musical director, and composer of additional music for the film version of the Broadway musical—*Fiddler on the Roof*, Norman Jewison, 1972—for which he won his first Oscar. Renowned violinist Isaac Stern was the soloist in the film's music track.

²⁶ Mason's arrangement (“*Fiddler on the Roof* – Medley”) can be heard in the CD *The Arthur Fiedler Legacy. From Fabulous Broadway to Hollywood's Reel Thing*, Deutsche Grammophon, 2007, 477 6124. Williams's arrangement (“Excerpts from *Fiddler on the Roof*”) is featured in *That's Entertainment*, Philips Records, 1981, 416 499–2. They can be heard on YouTube:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kvUC3JMNtcU> (Mason's);

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Lo6MLSCcbw> (Williams's), accessed October 5, 2015.

²⁷ Concert program, June 21, 1981. Programs Collection, 1981 Season, Boston Symphony Archives.

²⁸ Premiered on May 12, 1981 and May, 4 1982 respectively. Other similar reconstructions of

music, regardless of its genre, as Williams explained: "There is far more difference between playing a Haydn Symphony and a Richard Strauss tone poem than between playing a Strauss tone poem and a Duke Ellington arrangement".²⁹ As already noted from his first Pops concert, another sign of Williams's different perspective was the placement of film music, which began to appear in the first part of the program that was previously reserved for art-music classics. This move had significant implications, with film music put on the same level as concert music

Insert Figure 4 here. Concert Program, May 7, 1980 (Courtesy BSO Archives)

As can be seen in the program from May 7, 1980, above, Korngold's own concert version of his *The Sea Hawk Overture*—one of those examples of symphonic film music which Williams aimed to rediscover—was heard at the very opening of the concert, a place usually occupied by traditional overtures from operas. As expected, film music was prominent in Williams's inaugural Boston program as musical director (April 29, 1980):

Insert Figure 5 here. Concert Program, April 29, 1980 (Courtesy BSO Archives)

The concert opened with the overture from *The Cowboys*, expressly adapted by Williams from his own film score following André Previn's advice,³⁰ And a soloist—violinist Isaac Stern—was also featured in the first part playing "Excerpts from *Fiddler on the Roof*", the Williams medley discussed above. The second part included a film-music classic, William Walton's "Spitfire Prelude and Fugue" from *The First of the Few*, and a world premiere of Williams's concert suite for narrator and orchestra from his own score for *The Reivers*; actor Burgess Meredith, who had served as voice-over narrator in the film, delivered the spoken parts. After a few selections from Broadway and a symphonic version of a recent pop song, the third part ended with two musical previews of the upcoming new *Star Wars* film, *The Empire Strikes Back*. To further mark the Hollywood linkage of the new conductor, a special treat closed the concert: *Star Wars* robots C3-PO and R2-D2 made a surprise appearance on the Symphony Hall stage, with C3-PO borrowing Williams's baton to conduct the "Main Title" from the film, and R2-D2 chiming in with beep cadenzas.³¹ Table 2 provides an overview of the film-music pieces featured during the Williams tenure (1980–1993):³²

Hollywood music were commissioned to Angela Morley, Morton Stevens, Sid Ramin, and Herbert W. Spencer.

²⁹ John Williams quoted in Richard Dyer, "Williams, Pops in Harmony," *Boston Globe*, August 19, 1984.

³⁰ Foreword to "Overture from *The Cowboys*", full orchestral score, "John Williams Signature Edition", Hal Leonard, 04490061.

³¹ *Evening at Pops*, WGBH–Boston Symphony Orchestra, episode EAP–08–80, taped on April 29, 1980, WGBH Media Archives, Evening at Pops Collection, Boston MA, U.S.A. The concert program read: "Intergalactic visitors may be expected to join the festivities at any time." Programs Collection, 1980 Season, Boston Symphony Archives.

³² A few remarks on the table. Selections from musicals are not included, as well as orchestral

Insert Table 2 here. Film music programmed in the Williams Tenure (1980–1993)

Multimedia Presentations of Film Music

Another film-music-innovation of the Williams era was the combination of live music and projected film clips in what I have termed “multimedia film pieces” and “multimedia concert pieces.”³³ During his first press conference, Williams declared his will to “experiment with electronic and mixed-media music,”³⁴ restating the point in a 1981 interview:

What does excite him . . . is a vision of music and film combined, a sort of new symphonic device. “I saw the most amazing thing in London. It was Abel Gance's great silent film, *Napoléon*. . . Five and a half hours of incredible film. It is playing in London with a soundtrack of classical music, Beethoven, Brahms, everyone, such an alluring film. I know that it is supposed to be unnecessary to combine music with vision, almost tasteless. But this is the way a movie should look and sound!”³⁵

The first attempt at combining music and film clips can be traced back to the opening episode of the 1983 season of *Evening at Pops*, titled “John Williams Special.”³⁶ Williams and producer William Cosel decided to have some musical pieces coupled with video inserts, Cosel noting that “we want to break with the traditional concert

arrangements of pop songs from the films, since these were widely featured during the Fiedler era and therefore do not represent an innovation to be singled out. Both the concerts conducted by Williams and those by guest conductors are included. The presence of “Colonel Bogey’s March” might be controversial: the music was composed in 1914 by Alford (alias of F.J. Ricketts) as a military march. However, it became famous after the composer Malcolm Arnold included it in his score for *The Bridge on the River Kwai* and consequently came to be widely identified with the film. “Title Song from *E.T. The Extraterrestrial*” is the piece later known as “Flying Theme from *E.T. The Extraterrestrial*”. Similarly, “Excerpts from *E.T.*” is what is now known as “Adventures on Earth.” The “Main Title” from *Star Wars*—probably Williams’s most famous piece—recurs quite rarely in the programs, strangely enough. This can be explained by the fact that the piece was and still is typically played as an encore, and there are no systematic archival recordings of the encores presented in each concert. This hypothesis is supported by the few documented cases—like the inaugural concert of April 29, 1980—and my own attendance at a large number of Williams concerts at Boston’s Symphony Hall from 1999 onward.

³³ “Multimedia concert pieces” are pieces of music illustrated by projected film clips; “multimedia film pieces” are film clips accompanied with live music. See Audissino, “Overruling a Romantic Prejudice”, 39–40.

³⁴ Annalyn Swan, Abigail Kuflik, Lea Donosky, Ron LaBrecque, “Boston Strikes Up the Band,” *Newsweek*, January 1980, 86.

³⁵ M.R. Montgomery, “John Williams’ Quiet Side,” *Boston Globe*, March 18, 1981.

³⁶ *Evening at Pops* “John Williams Special,” WGBH/Boston Symphony Orchestra, episode EAP-19-83, taped on June 15, 1983. WGBH Media Archive, Evening at Pops Collection.

format on TV Instead of a straight performance show, we decided to experiment with one visual show.”³⁷ Instead of the usual voice-over presenter (William “Bill” Pierce), the show used video clips of Williams himself introducing the music and a little behind-the-scenes footage showing the rehearsal of Vivaldi's concerto for four violins. Williams's “Gloria” (from *Monsignor*) was illustrated by bucolic videos of the Berkshire mountains—the Summer home of the Boston Symphony in western Massachusetts—and a little documentary on the Norman Rockwell Museum in Stockbridge was accompanied by Chaplin's “Smile” from *Modern Times*. “America the Dream Goes On”—a celebratory Williams piece for singer, chorus and orchestra—closed the show, accompanying images of Rockwell's paintings. The intention was to include video clips in other episodes of the program, but this idea fell through, as Williams explained:

The *E.T.* music conveys the spirit of flight, and it desperately needs some supporting footage on the Pops show. . . . Cosel was interested in matching footage from *Fantasia* with *The Sorcerer's Apprentice*, but found it was too expensive and did not synchronize properly with the Pops version. He also put in a request to Steven Spielberg for clips from *E.T.* but never heard from him. . . . [Cosel explained that] “In the future, I would still like to occasionally do more interpretative, visual pieces—and do them better.”³⁸

The show was not a live multimedia event—there was no projection during the concert—but an audio-visual coupling made later in post-production, as would happen in other *Evening at Pops* episodes in the following years such as the 1990 Steven Spielberg special with the director himself as host.³⁹ The first truly live multimedia event was “A Gala Celebration of John Williams,” the opening night of Williams's last season as Pops conductor in 1993.⁴⁰ Actor Richard Dreyfus hosted a program section titled “Composing for Film: A Behind the Scenes Look.” First, the barrel chase sequence from *Jaws* was screened with dialogue and sound effects but no music, and then the sequence was screened again with Williams conducting the Boston Pops to the film. A second multimedia piece was offered: an eight-minute medley combining live music from *Star Wars* (“Main Title”), *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (“Escape from the Temple”), *Jaws* (“The Shark Theme”), *Superman the Movie* (“The Flying Sequence”), *Star Wars* (“The Binary Sunset”), and *E.T.* (“Bicycle Chase and Finale”) with clips from the related films projected on a big screen over the stage.⁴¹ This concert can be seen as

³⁷ William Cosel quoted in Fred Rothemberg, “Boston Pops Alters Concert Look in Wake of the Video Revolution,” *Orlando Sentinel*, July 16, 1983.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ *Evening at Pops*, WGBH/Boston Symphony Orchestra, episode #1302 “Maureen McGovern and Steven Spielberg”, taped on May 9, 1990. WGBH Media Archive, *Evening at Pops* Collection.

⁴⁰ Concert program, Boston Pops, May 12, 1993. Programs Collection, 1993 Season, Boston Symphony Archives.

⁴¹ *Evening at Pops*, WGBH/Boston Symphony Orchestra, episode #1601R, taped on May 12,

the inaugural experiment of Williams's long series of multimedia presentations.⁴²

Williams led the Pops for fourteen seasons, leaving the position at the end of 1993 to concentrate more on composition and his private life,⁴³ but agreed to lead the orchestra in the 1994 season as its "laureate conductor"—a title he still holds. During the transition period he conducted most of the concerts and helped the committee as a musical consultant in their search for a successor,⁴⁴ eventually selecting Keith Lockhart in 1995. Williams's innovations and repertoire have been maintained under Lockhart, with film music remaining a staple of the Pops programs, albeit with a slight tendency for it to return to the third part.⁴⁵ Laureate conductor John Williams has made regular appearances each year, increasingly specializing in film–music programs.⁴⁶

Conclusions

The renewal of the Pops repertoire with film–music pieces was not an easy task, and Williams met the same highbrow criticism that Fiedler had already faced in his attempts to bring popular music into the concert halls. For example, Fiedler had a tense relationship with Boston Symphony Orchestra artistic director Serge Koussevitzky who "remarked, when the orchestra arrived at Tanglewood to begin the Summer festival [after the Pops season], how they 'sounded like the Pops' and worked to put them back into 'shape'"⁴⁷ and who also "once rudely 'disinvited' Fiedler from conducting a BSO concert because he had seen Fiedler's name on a Symphony Hall poster announcing a Frank Sinatra concert."⁴⁸ Similarly, Williams—in 1984 referred to as "the much–maligned composer–conductor"⁴⁹—received harsh criticisms during the years from the "cultural guardians" of symphonic concerts, such as this 1988 concert review from the *Los Angeles Times*:

John Williams brought his lackluster music and conducting to Orange County for the first time over the weekend Away from the

1993. WGBH Media Archives, Evening at Pops Collection.

⁴² On John Williams and multimedia concert presentation, see Audissino, "Film Music and Multimedia", 48–51.

⁴³ Richard Dyer, "Pops' Williams to Retire in '93," *Boston Globe*, December 20, 1991.

⁴⁴ Richard Dyer, "Williams to Stay on as Pops Adviser," *Boston Globe*, February 4, 1994.

⁴⁵ For example, film music was gathered in the third part in the following concerts, of which the section title is provided: July 12, 1997: "A Tribute to John Williams"; May 14, 2003: "Hooray for Hollywood"; July 7, 2001: "A Boston Pops Film Festival"; May 14, 2004: "The Gershwins in Hollywood." Programs Collection, 1997, 2001, 2003, 2004 Seasons, Boston Symphony Archives.

⁴⁶ A rare exception in the post–2000 period is the concert of May 24, 2003, in which the central part—between two film–music sections—featured Mozart's violin concerto no. 3 in G, K 216. Programs Collection, 2003 Season, Boston Symphony Archives.

⁴⁷ Andre Speyer, "Pops Goes the Orchestra," *The Berkshire Eagle*, July 19, 1984.

⁴⁸ Richard Dyer, "Stars and Stripes Forever and Ever," *Boston Globe*, April 28, 1985.

⁴⁹ Peter Moss, "A John Williams Triumph at Bowl," *Herald Examiner*, September 15, 1984.

glamorous images, his music sounds threadbare, endlessly repetitive, overblown and heavily indebted to serious composers. . . . As a conductor, Williams is a determined student of the metronome school, using mechanical arm gestures, occasionally injecting scooping movements with both hands and apparently, when really engaged, pumping both arms alternately as if climbing a ladder. . . . The Pacific Symphony played as if it were one big characterless studio ensemble. No one, from soloist to whole orchestra, marred the placid surface with vitality, interpretation or real expression. . . . Nonetheless, many in the audience seemed to adore Williams. Little pockets of fans gave him the now–Pavlovian standing ovation.⁵⁰

Williams famously abruptly resigned from his Boston Pops post in 1984, the reported *casus belli* being a disrespectful lack of discipline—an orchestra member had hissed a Williams piece during a rehearsal—but the real issue was his different attitude toward popular music and film music.⁵¹ This 1984 crisis was once again symptomatic of the uneasiness, if not hostility, that may arise when classically-trained musicians have to deal with popular music. Williams eventually withdrew his resignation, instead defusing such potential conflicts by making the popular repertoire more and more musically interesting and stimulating by treating popular music with the same attention to detail and serious commitment normally applied to art music. He explained:

When I was in Europe last winter I heard a concert by the Vienna Philharmonic conducted by Lorin Maazel, a concert of Strauss waltzes and other light things. The musicians were smiling and having a good time, but there was also seriousness in their faces as they played with felicity, subtlety, and perfection of ensemble. There isn't an English word to express that attitude of combining seriousness and fun, though there may be one in German, but that's what I think the Pops should be. And that's what I'll strive for—everyone having a wonderful time and making an exemplary musical presentation.⁵²

Yet in the long run, just as Fiedler's contribution to musical education was eventually acknowledged,⁵³ so was Williams's. When he stepped down from the Pops conductorship in 1993 his talent was widely recognised, Richard Dyer observing that “When he conducted . . . the Tchaikovsky Concerto . . . he did a better job than some Boston Symphony guest conductors who come to mind, and there's more than one celebrity recording of a popular concerto that would have been better if John Williams

⁵⁰ Chris Pasles, “John Williams Brings Bland Offerings to the Art Center”, *Los Angeles Times*, April 4, 1988. Thanks to Andrea Laclaustra for sending me this review. Further examples are given in Audissino, *John Williams's Film Music*, 134–44.

⁵¹ On the 1984 crisis see Audissino, *John Williams's Film Music*, 189–191.

⁵² Livingstone, “John Williams and the Boston Pops”, 76.

⁵³ John Rockwell, “Exponent of Populist Music,” *New York Times*, July 11, 1979.

had conducted it.”⁵⁴ Veteran BSO musician Harry Ellis Dickson declared: “I love his great seriousness. . . . I’ve learned a good deal from him. He taught me to value music that I would have looked down upon. He once said that a tune by Jerome Kern can be as beautiful in its way as a song by Schubert. And he is right.”⁵⁵ The *Boston Globe* described Williams's overall contribution in these terms:

He brought his own missionary zeal to the cause of film music, and not just his own. Some people complained that he played too much of his own music; but when he *didn't* put some of his own music on a program, more people complained that he hadn't. His ear told him when an arrangement was dated and needed to be replaced; he and his team were as alert as Fiedler was to what was going on around him and what the Pops could use. He could also clean an arrangement up in less time than it would take someone else just to rehearse. He believed that serious composers should be encouraged to write light music, so the Pops commissioned new pieces nearly every year. . . . He wanted mainstream conductors to lead the Pops, and Leonard Slatkin and Roger Norrington did. . . . With producer William Cosel he brightened up the look of “Evening at Pops” just as much as he brightened up the sound of the Pops. . . . A man connected to some of the most profitable projects in the history of show business turned out personally free of show-biz phoniness; you can't imagine him on a talk show, discussing his personal problems or even his next projects. People like that, and they trusted him. Williams conducts Pops music because he honestly believes in its value and its role in American life. . . . John Williams once said that he has spent his life as a working musician, and he has. It has been a life that has made a difference, that still makes a difference, because everything he does is always just a little bit better than it needs to be. That's just the way John Williams is.⁵⁶

As regards film music in concert, BSO's music historian Steven Ledbetter stated: “Williams became a leader in bringing music from classic film scores by his admired predecessors—including Erich Wolfgang Korngold, Franz Waxman, David Raksin, and Bernard Herrmann—into the concert hall.”⁵⁷ Indeed, other orchestras soon followed in

⁵⁴ Richard Dyer, “Williams and the Art of Pops,” *Boston Globe*, December 20, 1991.

⁵⁵ Harry Ellis Dickson quoted in Ellen Pfeifer, “Passing the Baton,” *Boston Sunday Herald*, May 9, 1993.

⁵⁶ Richard Dyer, “The Williams Years: Knowing What Counts,” booklet for the “Opening Night at Pops. A Gala Celebration for John Williams,” May 12, 1993, 33–34. Programs Collection, 1993 Season, Boston Symphony Archives.

⁵⁷ Steven Ledbetter, “John Williams: Six Decades and Counting,” booklet for the “Opening Night at Pops. A Gala Celebration for John Williams,” May 12, 1993, 30. Programs Collection, 1993 Season, Boston Symphony Archives.

his footsteps, as Williams himself admitted in a 2000 interview.⁵⁸,” *Variety* recently reported on the current phenomenon of “multimedia films,”⁵⁹ stating that “after years of looking down their collective noses at film music as unworthy of performance alongside, say, Beethoven or Wagner, orchestras from the Chicago Symphony to the New York Philharmonic are jumping on the bandwagon, playing classic film scores 'live to picture' in growing numbers.”⁶⁰

This notable expansion of film music in concert programs in the United States and then worldwide can be seen as a direct consequence of Williams's tenure with the Boston Pops. The felicitous encounter of America's most successful film composer and America's most famous orchestra—both committed to bringing the symphonic sound to the masses—created the ideal conditions and the most visible forum possible for film music's legitimization. Williams is much celebrated for what he has done for music in films as a composer; this research demonstrates that he should be equally celebrated for what he has done for film music outside of the films as a conductor.

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⁵⁸ Williams quoted in Jon Burlingame, “From Hollywood to Boston,” in *Boston Pops*, 22.

⁵⁹ See Audissino, “Film Music and Multimedia”, 51.

⁶⁰ Jon Burlingame, “Live Movie Concerts A Cash Cow for Orchestras,” *Variety*, April 29, 2015.

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