

John Williams' Film Music

Julie Eagleton at the Barbican

Composer and conductor John Williams has had a special ongoing relationship with the London Symphony Orchestra since 1977, when they first joined forces to create the majestic film score for the movie *Star Wars*. He obviously felt very much at home as he walked out onto the Barbican stage to rousing applause from the capacity audience, here to see him conduct the LSO as part of the *Inventing America* season. For the next two hours all present were treated to some of the most memorable themes in cinematic history.

The suite from *Star Wars* brought the first half to an exciting climax. George Lucas, the director of the film, originally intended to use only classical music for the film such as Holst's *The Planets* suite, but Williams suggested an original score and so it was, the biggest selling film track of all time, selling over four million copies, was created.

What is so amazing is that film themes played

unaccompanied by the movie usually lose most of their lustre, but with Williams' scores the music is strong enough on its own to conjure up the visual magic of the moving image. I'm sure that most people would have been visualising the mean Darth Vader or Harrison Ford's Hans Solo at the helm of the spaceship during this piece, film memories that have been etched on the brain forever.

The Devil's Dance, from the movie *The Witches Of Eastwick*, mischievously opened the second half and then straight into the soundtrack from *Close Encounters Of The Third Kind*. Williams had been briefed to create a signature theme using a combination of five notes. This he did with eerie effect as, in the movie, the aliens communicated with earth by using music. The music would be relayed from the mother ship to the earth using these five notes over and over again which resulted in this score.

Film Director Steven Spielberg has always been a prominent figure in the life of John Williams. He has provided the music for almost every film that Spielberg has ever directed with the exception of *The Color Purple*. These have

included *Jaws*, *Superman*, *Indiana Jones* and *Schindler's List*. Undoubtedly his most popular collaboration with Spielberg was the music from *ET*. Before conducting this piece, he treated the audience to an anecdote about his good friend Spielberg. One day in the Hollywood studio where they were shooting the movie, Williams had to lay down a certain track. The film sequence was running high up on a large screen behind the orchestra, to aid the process, but after several takes, Williams still could not match the music to the action in one particular scene. Upon seeing his distress, Spielberg told him not to worry and said that he would edit to fit in with Williams' music! For someone who has received 36 Academy Award nominations, won five Oscars and 16 Grammy's for his music, he still seemed genuinely surprised at this gesture.

As the Barbican audience demanded several encores, the beautiful haunting *Schindler's List* theme guaranteed a standing ovation and the evening was brought to a spectacular rollercoaster finish with the image of hero of all heroes, Indiana Jones left prominent in the mind. □

STOCKHOLM, CULTURAL CAPITAL '98

Julie Eagleton Reports

Named Cultural Capital of Europe 1998 by the European Union's cultural affairs ministers, Stockholm is the 14th city to be presented with this accolade. Athens became the first in 1985 when Melina Mercouri, cultural affairs minister of Greece, launched the concept in the early Eighties. The yearly tradition has continued ever since and the eyes of Europe, and indeed the world, will be on Stockholm this year.

With its external beauty and its rich, many-faceted cultural life it is no wonder that this city will play host to such an event. Stockholm has more theatres than most European cities, with around 70 stages for music and theatre, more than 60 museums and 1,500 active artists and craftspeople. There will be a million and one exhibitions, projects and displays encompassing art, design, theatre, dance, cinema, photography, music and various crafts.

I was recently in Stockholm and took time out to explore the myriad of events planned. Here is just a taste of what will be on offer.

Archipelago will undoubtedly be the biggest contemporary art project of the year, with a budget of £2 million, 100 international artists and forty exhibitions. The idea is to display new Swedish and international art in spaces where one wouldn't usually expect to see it. Seven large spaces have been acquired from some of Stockholm's best institutions, including museums and an electricity plant at the Skansen outdoor museum, an unusually beautiful building, currently used as a warehouse. As well as one-artist shows, there will be a few themed exhibitions such as *Swedish Mess*, where artists will work on the basis of a Swedish phenomenon, such as 'Nordic light'.

Stockholm's subway (tunnelbana) will have the world's biggest ever photographic exhibition and 19 of the city's underground rail stations will be transformed into huge photo galleries. Some of the world's most

renowned photographers will take part including Helmut Newton and Annie Leibovitz. During the winter months ice and snow will replace traditional paint as artists and architects create ice sculptures, and a snowman parade will be organised for the children.

Sweden's most famous ballet company, The Cullberg Ballet, was founded more than 30 years ago by Brigitte Cullberg. To celebrate her 90th birthday she will be honoured with a performance of *Romeo and Juliet* on an outdoor stage at Vita Bergspåken, a park in the Södermalm district. Japanese culture will have strong influence on the festival, including performances by the *Tokyo Ballet* at the Royal Opera, a Buddhist monk choir, the *Hiroshima Symphony Orchestra* and a Kabuki production at the City Theatre. Two of the world's most celebrated directors will also be visiting for the festival. Canada's Robert Lepage will be a guest director at the Royal Dramatic Theatre and America's Robert Wilson will stage a new production, still to be announced, at the Stockholm City Theatre.

Celebrating its 100th anniversary at the National Museum of Art is the most famous glassworks, Orrefors. Situated in South-Eastern Sweden, the company is one of the top innovators in glass design and its products are sold world-wide. The exhibition will reflect the history of the glassworks and will display work by its best known artists.

One of Sweden's most internationally famous exports were the pop group *Abba*. After working on the musical *Chess*, Bjorn Ulvaeus and Benny Andersson will bring their musical *Kristina Fran Duvernala*, based on the novels of Vilhelm Moberg, to Stockholm for its long awaited city premiere.

Stockholm is promising its visitors a range of events unlike anything ever experienced before. The city will be transformed into a full blown international arts arena so that people from all over the world may come to visit and most importantly participate. □