

***John Williams, dernier des symphonistes ?* International Conference**
Université d'Évry Val-d'Essonne Paris-Saclay / Université de Versailles
Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines, December 7-9, 2022
organized by Chloé Huvet and Grégoire Tosser (RASM-CHCSC)
in collaboration with Anaïs Fléchet (CHCSC)

Call for Papers

A tutelary figure of film music, primarily associated with spectacle and wonder, science fiction and major cinematographic franchises, the American composer John Williams will celebrate his 90th birthday on February 8, 2022. This event offers an opportunity to look back on an abundant and multifaceted career, spanning several major periods in the history of cinema, at times of significant transformations in audiovisual technologies, from Dolby Stereo and multichannel sound in 1977 to the digital transition at the turn of the years 1990-2000. Although the seventh art occupies a major place in his career, Williams has also composed many works for the concert stage, political sphere and sporting events. An overview of his whole work attests to the mastery of numerous musical styles, in very diverse contexts.

While major publications – mainly in the English language – have recently been devoted to the composer (Audissino 2021 ; Audissino 2018 ; Lehman 2021 ; Webster 2018 ; Moormann 2010), French research specifically dedicated to Williams has been developing for the past fifteen years (Huvet 2022 ; Tylski 2011 ; Cathé 2007 ; Guido 2006). This international conference aims to bring together scholars from different countries through multidisciplinary contributions on Williams' music that will take stock of these recent developments while offering renewed perspectives. This scholarly event thus wishes to cover a broad spectrum relating to Williams' work in all its richness and diversity, through a plurality of approaches, methods and objects; it is open to musicologists and musicians as well as to specialists in film and media studies, fine arts, English and American studies, literature, sociology or philosophy.

Our keynote speakers will be **Emilio Audissino**, Senior Lecturer in Media and Audiovisual Production at Linnæus University (Sweden), author of *The Film Music of John Williams. Reviving Hollywood's Classical Style* (2021) ; and by **Frank Lehman**, Associate Professor of Music at Tufts University (USA), author of *Hollywood Harmony: Musical Wonder and the Sound of Cinema* (2018).

Possible themes for papers include (in a non-exhaustive way) :

- **biographical aspects** of the composer's career

- **favoured forms and writing techniques, in cinema and outside the 7th art** : scherzos (*Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*, 1989 ; *Star Wars : Episode VII – The Force Awakens*, 2015... ; *Scherzo for piano and orchestra*, 2014) ; fugues (*Jaws*, 1975 ; *Star Wars : Episode VII – The Force Awakens...* ; *Prelude and Fugue*, 1965) ; propulsive and circular ostinatos, like the “Ludlow motif” (Frank Lehman) which appeared in *Jurassic Park* (1993) and permeated the action set pieces of all of his subsequent films ; audiovisual pantomime showcasing mickey-mousing ; sound atmospheres and textures ; orchestral, thematic and melodic writing, rhythmic design and kinetic virtuosity, Williams' harmonic language and their transformations during different creative periods...

- **musical relationships with the audiovisual aesthetics of Classical Hollywood Cinema** – in particular the scores of Max Steiner, Franz Waxman, Dimitri Tiomkin and Erich W. Korngold – **and the next generation of American composers** (Bernard Herrmann, Jerry Goldsmith...)

- **evolution of Williams' composition methods and writing in the light of the profound mutations film technologies have undergone** : relationship between music, dialogues, foley and sound effects ; music and digital editing ; place of the synthesizer ; post-production work ...
- **references to folklore and popular music**, reinterpretation of the Americana *topos* consolidated by Aaron Copland
- « **Johnny Williams** » the *jazzman* et **jazz integration** within his scores
- **quotations, pastiches, parodies and nods** to European and American “classical” music
- **distinctive contributions to the sci-fi genre**, from the television series *Lost in Space* (1965-1968) and *Land of the Giants* (1968-1970) to *War of the Worlds* (2005)
- **musical reinterpretation of the swashbuckler and adventure film tradition** : *Jaws* (1975) ; *Indiana Jones* saga (1981-2008) ; *Hook* (1991) ; *Far and Away* (1992) ; *The Lost World : Jurassic Park* (1997) ; *The Adventures of Tintin : The Secret of the Unicorn* (2011)...
- **singular contributions to the thriller, fantasy and horror genres** with regard to the *topoi* associated with vampires (*Dracula*, 1979), destructive telekinetic manifestations (*The Fury*, 1978), isolation and psychological violence (*Images*, 1972), or to magic and witchcraft (*The Witches of Eastwick*, 1987 ; *Harry Potter 1, 2 & 3*, 2001-2004)
- **Humor in Williams's scores, parody and comedy**, from *Daddy'O* (1958) to *The Adventures of Tintin : The Secret of the Unicorn* (2011), not to mention his works for the concert stage (*Tuba Concerto*, 1985...)
- **music, history and politics** : musical representations of the President of the United States (*JFK*, 1991 ; *Nixon*, 1995 ; *Lincoln*, 2012) ; historical films (*Amistad*, 1997 ; *The Patriot*, 2000), or which narrative takes place during one of the two World Wars (*Schindler's List*, 1993 ; *Seven Years in Tibet*, 1997 ; *Saving Private Ryan*, 1998 ; *War Horse*, 2011 ; *The Book Thief*, 2013) ; films dealing with terrorist attacks (*Black Sunday*, 1977 ; *Munich*, 2005)... Outside cinema, *Celebration Fanfare* (1986), written for the 150th anniversary of Texas's Declaration of independence ; *Celebrate Discovery* (1990) commemorating the 500th anniversary of Christopher Columbus's arrival in America ; or *Air and Simple Gifts* (2009), composed for the presidential inauguration ceremony of Barack Obama, could be studied.
- **music and sporting events** : *Olympic Fanfare and Theme* (1984) for the Los Angeles Olympic Summer Games ; *Summon the Heroes* (1996), for the Atlanta Summer Olympics ; *Call of the Champions* (2002) for the Olympic Winter Games in Salt Lake City...
- **recurrent collaboration with a director** : Steven Spielberg, George Lucas, J.J. Abrams, but also Rick Altman, Chris Columbus, Alan Parker, Mark Rydell, or Oliver Stone
- **reception** of Williams' music in the press and fandom

Furthermore, this symposium also intends to **reflect on and define the legacy of John Williams, his aesthetic and stylistic influence in contemporary audiovisual productions**. In his book *La musique de film*, Pierre Berthomieu rightly notes: “John Williams' model produces many imitators [...]. Little by little, a Williams generation is arising, with musicians like Alan Silvestri, James Horner” (Berthomieu 2004, 22-23). At a time marked by synthesized and electronic sounds, scoring for a large symphony orchestra still seems to be favored by some musicians, including James Newton Howard, John Ottman, Michael Giacchino, Marco Beltrami, Alexandre Desplat,

Fernando Velázquez or Dario Marianelli. Their scores need to be studied more precisely in order to identify any relevant common points.

Proposals focusing on John Williams' contemporaries, working in the blockbusters of the last two decades, in particular, are thus strongly encouraged. Comparative studies will be particularly welcome, but analysis may also focus on a particular composer and his own corpus of works. The following questions could be at the heart of paper proposals:

- Which composers would form this “Williams generation”? What aesthetic codes do they use in their scores? To what extent do these musical devices trace a strong genealogy with Williams, and what musical traits are specific to these composers?
- How did these composers approach, alter, deconstruct or even distort the signature themes of great franchises initiated by John Williams? Papers could explore *Star Wars*' spin-offs and extended universe (scores by Michael Giacchino for *Rogue One*, 2016 ; by John Powell for *Solo*, 2018 ; music from video games and television series, etc.) ; the *Jurassic Park* franchise (scores by Don Davis for *Jurassic Park III*, 2001; by Michael Giacchino for *Jurassic World*, 2015, *Jurassic World: Fallen Kingdom*, 2018 & *Jurassic World: Dominion*, 2022) ; the *Harry Potter* saga (2001-2011), on which Patrick Doyle, Nicholas Hooper and Alexandre Desplat worked, then James Newton Howard on the *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them* prequels (2016-2022); but also *Superman* and its multiple sequels (from the 1978 film to *Batman v Superman: Dawn of Justice*, 2016).
- Within the long-standing relationship between Williams and Spielberg, what are the significance and stakes of the scores not written by the composer? Do they follow the same musical path, or do they rather aim to break away from it? The scores of Quincy Jones for *The Color Purple* (1985), of Thomas Newman for *Bridge of Spies* (2015), or of Alan Silvestri for *Ready Player One* (2018) can be studied in this regard.

Proposals including a **title** and a 300 to 500-word **abstract**, along with a **short biography** of the author(s) should be sent to the conference organizers, Chloé Huvet (chloe.huvet@univ-evry.fr) and Grégoire Tosser (gregoire.tosser@univ-evry.fr), no later than **May 10, 2022**. The conference committee will assess abstracts anonymously and give their answers in June, 2022.

Abstracts and papers can be in **English** or in **French**. The duration of each presentation is 30 minutes (including audiovisual excerpts), followed by a Q&A period.

Conference Committee :

- Pierre Berthomieu, Université de Paris / EPE / Université Paris Diderot
- Céline Carencu, Université de Lorraine
- Pierre Couprie, Université d'Évry Val-d'Essonne Paris-Saclay
- James Deaville, Carleton University (Ottawa, Canada)
- Anaïs Fléchet, Université de Versailles Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines Paris-Saclay
- Brigitte Gauthier, Université d'Évry Val-d'Essonne Paris-Saclay
- Réjane Hamus-Vallée, Université d'Évry Val-d'Essonne Paris-Saclay
- Laurent Jullier, Université de Lorraine
- Inès Taillandier-Guittard, Université d'Évry Val-d'Essonne Paris-Saclay

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