

Notes on the Program

Home Alone in Concert

John Williams has been the pre-eminent composer of Hollywood film music for more than four decades. The son of a film studio musician, he grew up studying first piano and then trombone, trumpet, and clarinet. When his family moved to Los Angeles, in 1948, he began working with the jazz pianist and arranger Bobby Van Eps. During the early 1950s, he did a stint in the US Air Force (conducting and arranging for bands) and studied piano at The Juilliard School with Rosina Lhévinne for a year. Later that decade, he was a composition pupil of Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco and Arthur Olaf Andersen.

Williams orchestrated numerous feature films in the 1960s and by the 1970s emerged as an important film composer in his own right. Ronald Neame's *The Poseidon Adventure* (1973) marked one of his first incontrovertible successes, but his breakthrough came two years later with the Steven Spielberg blockbuster *Jaws*. Williams became

that director's composer of choice, providing music to mirror, support, and advance the action and emotional states depicted in his films. A selective list of Williams's scores for more than 20 Spielberg films includes many "must-hear" entries, including *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, *E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial*, *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom*, *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*, *Jurassic Park*, *Schindler's List*, *Saving Private Ryan*, and *Lincoln*. The composer concurrently maintained close working relationships with other leading directors, including Alfred Hitchcock (*A Family Plot*), Oliver Stone (*Born on the Fourth of July*, *JFK*, and *Nixon*), and Rob Marshall (*Memoirs of a Geisha*).

Apart from Spielberg, the director-producer with whom Williams is most identified is George Lucas, creator of the *Star Wars* series. It began as a trilogy: *Star Wars*, in 1977 (retitled *Star Wars: A New Hope* upon

IN SHORT

John Williams

Born: February 18, 1932, in Flushing, Queens

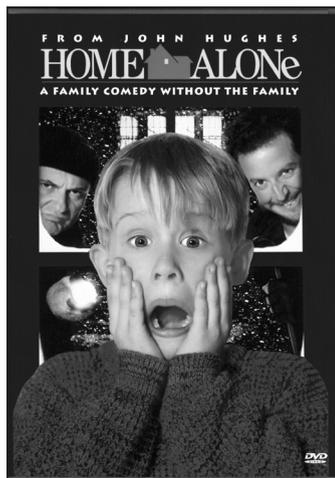
Resides: in Los Angeles, California

Work composed: 1990

World premiere: The film *Home Alone* was released on November 10, 1990, in Chicago, Illinois.

New York Philharmonic premiere: these performances, which mark the New York Premiere of the complete live-to-film presentation

Estimated duration: ca. 109 minutes



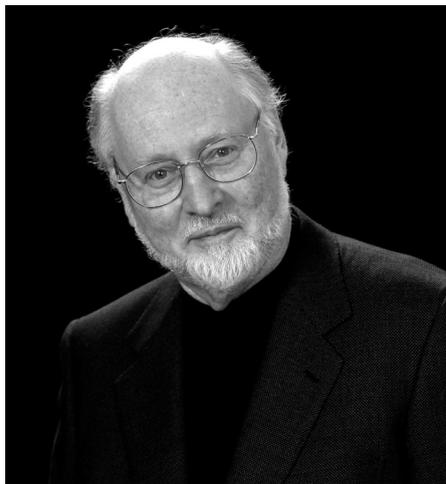
its re-release four years later); *The Empire Strikes Back*, in 1980; and *Return of the Jedi*, in 1983. That sequence was later expanded by a “prequel trilogy” — *The Phantom Menace*, in 1999; *Attack of the Clones*, in 2002; and *Revenge of the Sith*, in 2005 — and is now working through a “sequel trilogy,” consisting of *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* (2015), *Star Wars: The Last Jedi* (2017), and a ninth *Star Wars* film scheduled for release in December 2019.

Home Alone was directed by Chris Columbus (born September 10, 1958, in Spangler, Pennsylvania). After graduating from New York University’s film school, he became a protégé of Spielberg, for whom he wrote several scripts before achieving success in his own right as director of what now number 18 films, including *Home Alone 2: Lost in New*

York (1992), *Mrs. Doubtfire* (1993), *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone* (2001), *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* (2002), and, most recently, *Pixels* (2015). Williams has written music for four Columbus films: *Home Alone*, *Home Alone 2: Lost in New York*, *Stepmom* (1998), and *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone*.

Often working at a pace of about two films per year, Williams has now completed more than 100 scores, not counting television movies, shorts, or adaptations. He has been recognized with an impressive succession of honors, among them 51 Oscar nominations and five Academy Awards, four Golden Globes, three Emmys, and 23 Grammys, in addition to induction into the Hollywood Bowl Hall of Fame (in 2000), a Kennedy Center Honor (in 2004), and the National Medal

In the Composer’s Words



Ever since *Home Alone* appeared, it has held a unique place in the affections of a very broad public. Director Chris Columbus brought a uniquely fresh and innocent approach to this delightful story, and the film has deservedly become a perennial at holiday time.

I took great pleasure in composing the score for the film, and I am especially delighted that the magnificent New York Philharmonic has agreed to perform the music in a live presentation of the movie.

I know I speak for everyone connected with the making of the film in saying that we are greatly honored by this event ... and I hope that tonight’s audience will experience the renewal of joy that the film brings with it, each and every year.

— John Williams

From the Creators

In 2015 *Chicago* magazine marked the 25th anniversary of *Home Alone* by compiling an oral history from interviews with the film's creators. Director Chris Columbus revealed that he never expected John Williams would agree to score the film, and that teaser posters included the name of another composer he had worked with, Bruce Broughton. "Someone at my agency got a finished print to John Williams. He looked at the film and fell in love with it." Columbus was shooting another film in Chicago when he received a cassette tape from Williams. He recalled:

I remember breaking for lunch and sitting with the crew and playing the *Home Alone* score for the first time on a boom box. It was one of the great moments of my life. I thought, This score is going to be in our film? It was fantastic. It elevated everything.

Film editor Raja Gosnell agreed:

The movie went from an 8 to a 28 when John Williams got involved. We had a little movie starring kids that worked. When John Williams got involved, it became a classic.

Supervising sound editor Michael Wilhoit remembered:

Oftentimes, composers would play over action. John Williams and I decided he would lead the music up to the critical moment of the sound and then the sound effect would be the payoff. If the music had run all the way through, it would have been more cartoonish.

Wilhoit elaborated on some of the sound effects:

All the pratfalls were unique. We took a frozen roast beef and hit it against the ground to get the sound of a body hitting the ground. We'd put a soldering iron onto chicken skin to make the flesh bubble and sizzle. Everything was handmade. We wanted the sound to be realistic but also have some humor in it. We played the sound effects big and bold, as if they were part of the score.



From top: Kevin escapes; Marv breaks in; reunion with Mom

— The Editors

of Arts (2009). In 2016 he became the first composer to receive the American Film Institute Life Achievement Award.

Instrumentation: three flutes (all doubling piccolo), three oboes (one doubling English horn), three clarinets (one doubling E-flat clarinet and two doubling bass clarinet), three bassoons (one doubling contrabassoon), four horns, three trumpets, three

trombones, tuba, timpani, ratchet, saw, suspended cymbals, saw, orchestra bells, field drum, marimba, trap set, tambourine, triangles, xylophone, chimes, sizzle cymbal, snare drum, deep drum, sleigh bells, mark tree, bass drum, tam-tam, cymbals, crotales, metal plate, Christmas bells, silver bells, Napoleon field drum, vibraphone, bell tree, harp, piano (doubling celeste), synthesizer, and organ.

Listen for . . . Seasonal Sounds

In his score for *Home Alone*, John Williams utilizes numerous percussion instruments for sounds of mayhem (drums, saw, ratchet, metal plate, and tam-tam, or gong). In a more delicate mode, he also employs a variety of chimes and bells to evoke the crystalline sounds of winter and holiday activities. Here the percussionists deploy sleigh bells, Christmas bells (for more of a “jingle bell” tone), silver bells (how Christmas-y is that?), a mark tree (consisting of small hanging chimes of varying lengths that are played by brushing across them for a shimmering effect), and bell tree (a vertically mounted set of inverted metal bowls of decreasing size that are brushed with a mallet to create a bright glissando). Also in the mix: sounds of the celeste, best known from another holiday classic, *Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy* from Tchaikovsky’s *The Nutcracker*.



— The Editors
Kevin reveling in the Christmas spirit, unaware of what's about to unfold