

program notes

BY DR. RICHARD E. RODDA

The Bible and ancient history have provided the sources for screen epics ever since *The Life of Christ* was presented (in twenty minutes) by two French directors in 1906. The following year, Sidney Olcott made a one-reel condensation of Lew Wallace's 1880 novel *BEN HUR* and MGM produced from the same book a silent spectacular in 1926. Director William Wyler's remake of *Ben Hur* in 1959, with music by Budapest-born MIKLÓS RÓZSA (1907-1995), became one of the screen's greatest successes, winning an unprecedented eleven Academy Awards, a record unmatched until *Titanic* equaled it in 1997. Rózsa's Oscar-winning score was integral to telling the tale of the Jewish prince Judah Ben Hur, who survives unjustified slavery in a Roman galley and returns to wreak vengeance upon his enemy and witness the crucifixion of Christ.

Though it became the most famous film score of BERNARD HERRMANN (1911-1975), and one of Alfred Hitchcock's greatest commercial successes, *PSYCHO* (1960) almost never reached the movie screen. Hitchcock made the film, based on a grisly novel by Robert Bloch, as an experiment in what he wryly termed "black comedy" on a tight budget and in stark black-and-white. Paramount Studios and Hitchcock both disliked the first cut of the film and thought that it should be edited to one hour and "got rid of" as a television show. When Hitchcock screened that initial version for Herrmann in December 1959, however, the composer had an idea, and he told the director to "go away

for your Christmas holidays, and when you come back we'll record the score and see what you think." Herrmann's idea was to match the tense, shocking images and the monochrome look of the film with music for strings alone, "to complement the black-and-white photography of the film with a black-and-white score" (and to fit Hitchcock's tight budget restrictions). With Herrmann's score heightening the movie's drama and providing it with continuity, *Psycho* not only created a sensation, but quickly became an icon of Hollywood film-making.

Tokyo-born RYUICHI SAKAMOTO (b. 1952) has led a remarkable career as composer, singer, songwriter, producer, actor and political activist. He first composed for the screen with the 1983 *Merry Christmas, Mr. Lawrence* and has since contributed music to more than eighty films, for which he has received an Oscar, a BAFTA, a Grammy and two Golden Globes. *THE LAST EMPEROR* (1987), the first Western feature authorized to film in Beijing's Forbidden City, is Bernardo Bertolucci's sweeping epic about Pu Yi, whose life is depicted from his ascent of the throne as a child through the Communist Party's takeover of China. *The Last Emperor* won nine Oscars, including Best Picture, Best Director and Best Original Score.

English director David Lean created some of the screen's greatest epics in *LAWRENCE OF ARABIA* (1962), *Doctor Zhivago* (1965), *Ryan's Daughter* (1970) and *A Passage to India* (1984), and he found the perfect composer to match their scale and spectacle in MAURICE

JARRE (1924-2009). *Lawrence*, which brought Jarre an Oscar, is based on the exploits of the British author, archaeologist, diplomat and military officer Thomas Edward Lawrence (1888-1935), who helped lead the Arab Revolt against the Ottoman Empire during the First World War. Jarre's score evokes the film's sweeping panoramas and action sequences, as well as its cultural settings.

CARLOS GARDEL (1890-1935) helped bring the Argentine tango to the world. The title of his *Por una Cabeza* (1935), with lyrics by Alfredo Le Pera about a compulsive gambler comparing his addiction to the race-track and his irresistible attraction to woman, refers to winning a race "by a head." *Por una Cabeza* is not only a standard in the international dance repertory but has also been heard in tango scenes in such Hollywood features as *Schindler's List*, *True Lies*, *Titanic*, *Frida*, *All the King's Men*, and *SCENT OF A WOMAN* (1992), which won Al Pacino an Academy Award for his portrayal of a cantankerous blind veteran adjusting again to civilian life. Celebrated film composer John Williams made a concert arrangement of *Por una Cabeza* for *Cinema Serenade*, the 1997 CD he made with violinist Itzhak Perlman.

Director Steven Spielberg's *E.T. (THE EXTRA-TERRESTRIAL)* (1982) is the enchanting story of ten-year-old Elliot (played by Henry Thomas), who befriends a gentle, lovable alien stranded on earth when his space ship hurriedly leaves without him. These two unlikely friends learn to communicate intimately, and they form a close and very special relationship, which ends poignantly when E.T.'s ship returns to take him home. *E.T. (The Extra-Terrestrial)* was nominated for nine Academy Awards, including Best Picture, and the memora-

ble score by JOHN WILLIAMS (b. 1932) won both an Oscar and a Golden Globe Award. Of the sequence titled *Adventure on Earth* that he extracted from his score for concert performance, Williams wrote, "The music was designed to accompany the bicycle chase near the end of the film."

Director Michael Curtiz's sumptuous 1938 production of *THE ADVENTURES OF ROBIN HOOD*, Warner Bros.'s first full Technicolor feature, with a score by ERICH WOLFGANG KORNGOLD (1897-1957), stands as the classic Hollywood telling of the legend about the nobleman who turns virtuous outlaw to rob from the rich, give to the poor, and defend England from internal usurpers and external enemies. *The Adventures of Robin Hood* was nominated for four Academy Awards, including Best Picture, and won for Korngold's score.

J.R.R. Tolkien's *THE LORD OF THE RINGS* is regarded by many as the finest of all modern literary fantasies, and the series of three films based on it that Peter Jackson brought to the screen — *The Fellowship of the Ring* (2001), *The Two Towers* (2002) and *The Return of the King* (2003) — as cinematic masterpieces; the trilogy won a total of seventeen Oscars, including one for Best Picture and three for composer HOWARD SHORE (b. 1946).

The Crouching Tiger Concerto is based on the Oscar-winning score of TAN DUN (b. 1957) for the 2000 Best Picture *CROUCHING TIGER, HIDDEN DRAGON*, Taiwanese director Ang Lee's magnificent evocation of a timeless and breathtakingly beautiful feudal China in which warriors have almost mystical powers and love helps to guide a quest

ENNIO MORRICONE (b. 1928) provided the scores for Italian director-screenwriter Sergio Leone's pioneering

“Spaghetti Westerns” *A Fistful of Dollars* (1964) and *For a Few Dollars More* (1965), and they collaborated again for *THE GOOD, THE BAD, AND THE UGLY* (1966). The hit series made a star of Clint Eastwood and established Leone internationally as a director known for his juxtaposition of long and close-up shots, and his use of stylized violence. They were joined on screen in *The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly* by Eli Wallach and Lee Van Cleef in a story about a trio of bounty hunters searching for buried Confederate gold during the Civil War.

In *AVATAR* (2009), with music by JAMES HORNER (1953-2015), director, producer and screenwriter James Cameron created a lush, science-fiction moon called Pandora in the Alpha Centuri star system inhabited by the indigenous Na’vi, humanoids whose existence is threatened by mining for a precious mineral in their homeland. Cameron began developing the idea in 1994, but delayed production for several years for the digital technology to develop sufficiently to realize his vision, and *Avatar* was a box-office phenomenon, earning nine Academy Award nominations (including Best Film, Best Director and Best Music) and winning for Cinematography, Visual Effects and Art Direction.

CARMINA BURANA (1936, “*Songs of Beuren*”) by CARL ORFF (1895-1982) is based on lusty Medieval poems that attack the defects of the Church, satirize contemporary manners and morals, criticize the omnipotence of money, and praise the sensual joys of food, drink and physical love. The work is framed by the cautionary chorus *Fortuna Imperatrix Mundi* (“*Fortune, Empress of the World*”) — “The wheel of fortune turns; dishonored I fall from grace and another is raised on high.”

ALLENTOWN SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

FEBRUARY 8-9, 2020
8:00 P.M., SYMPHONY HALL

P R O G R A M

DIANE M. WITTRY MUSIC DIRECTOR/CONDUCTOR

Allentown Symphony Chorus — ♪♪♪ WHERE DOES THIS GO???

/ _____, Director

“Parade of the Charioteers” from *Ben-Hur*

MIKLÓS RÓZSA

Theme from *Psycho*

BERNARD HERRMANN

The Last Emperor

RYUICHI SAKAMOTO

Erhu Soloist: Cathy Yang

Overture from *Lawrence of Arabia*

MAURICE JARRE

“Por una Cabeza” from *Scent of a Woman*

CARLOS GARDEL

arr. John Williams

Violin Soloist: Eliezer Gutman

“Adventures on Earth” from *E.T. (The Extra-Terrestrial)* JOHN WILLIAMS

I N T E R M I S S I O N

Overture from *The Adventures of Robin Hood*

ERICH WOLFGANG

KORNGOLD

Symphonic Suite from *The Lord of the Rings*

HOWARD SHORE

Crouching Tiger Concerto

TAN DUN

Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon

Through the Bamboo Forest

Silk Road: Encounters

Eternal Vow

To the South

Farewell

Erhu Soloist: Cathy Yang

The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly

ENNIO MORRICONE

Suite from *Avatar*

JAMES HORNER

“O, Fortuna” from *Carmina Burana*

CARL ORFF