



## ABOUT THE MUSIC

# RACH & the Hollywood Sound

January 20, 21 & 22, 2024

Program notes by Elizabeth Schwartz

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### BERNARD HERRMANN

Suite from *Psycho* for Orchestra



**COMPOSER:** born June 29, 1911, New York City; died December 24, 1975, Los Angeles, CA

**WORK COMPOSED:** January – February 1960

**WORLD PREMIERE:** *Psycho* premiered in New York on June 16, 1960

**INSTRUMENTATION:** string orchestra

**ESTIMATED DURATION:** 8.5 minutes

### ABOUT THE MUSIC

The score for Alfred Hitchcock's most famous film, *Psycho*, needs no introduction. Bernard Herrmann's shrieking upward glissandos perfectly express Janet Leigh's paralyzing fear, so much so that this short fragment of music has taken on a life of its own and become a kind of meme for generic terror.

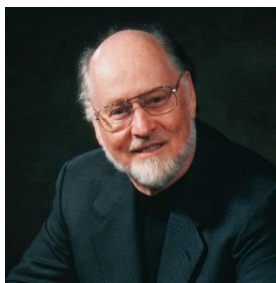
Sometimes creative people need to be rescued from themselves. When Hitchcock completed shooting for *Psycho*, which was made on a shoestring budget in black-and-white for Paramount Pictures, he was so dissatisfied with the result that he didn't think it worthy of release. Herrmann knew better. In his score, Herrmann matched the pared-down look, skewed camera angles, and claustrophobic tension of the film with a score for string orchestra "to complement the black-and-white photography of the film with a black-and-white score."

In another misguided moment, Hitchcock had also instructed Herrmann not to write any music for the shower scene. When the director and composer screened the film with the score for the first time, Hitchcock was duly impressed by Herrmann's music, which added more tension and edge-of-your-seat suspense to an already creepy film. Hitchcock also told Herrmann that, upon reflection, he now regretted not having any music for the shower scene. Herrmann remembered the exchange, telling Hitchcock, "I really do have something composed for it, and now that you've seen it your way, let's try mine." We played my version of the music. He said, 'Of course, that's the one we'll use.' I said, 'But you requested that we not add any music.' 'Improper suggestion, my boy, improper suggestion,' he replied."

Herrmann had won Hitchcock over. *Psycho* opened in theatres in June 1960 and went on to garner four Academy Award nominations, including a Best Director for Hitchcock. In what seems like a monumental and baffling oversight today, Herrmann's score was not nominated.

## JOHN WILLIAMS

### Three Pieces from *Schindler's List*



**COMPOSER:** born February 8, 1932, Flushing, Queens

**WORK COMPOSED:** Summer 1993

**WORLD PREMIERE:** *Schindler's List* premiered on November 30, 1993, in Washington, D.C.

**INSTRUMENTATION:** solo violin, 3 flutes (1 doubling piccolo and alto flute), oboe, English horn, 3 clarinets (1 doubling bass clarinet), 2 bassoons, contrabassoon, 3 horns, 3 trombones, timpani, bass drum, vibraphone, celesta, harp, and strings

**ESTIMATED DURATION:** 15 minutes

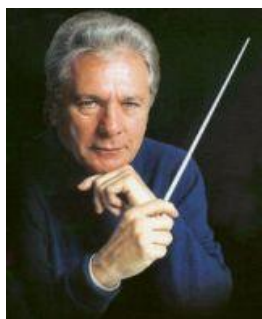
## ABOUT THE MUSIC

John Williams is synonymous with movie music. He became a household name with the Academy Award-winning score he wrote for *Star Wars* in 1977, and has defined the symphonic Hollywood sound ever since. When director Steven Spielberg asked Williams to write the score for his historical film about Oskar Schindler, a German industrialist who saved more than 1200 Jews during the Holocaust, Williams hesitated. In an interview on the *Today* show, Williams recalled, "Spielberg showed me the film ... I couldn't speak to him. I was so devastated. Do you remember, the end of the film was the burial scene in Israel – Schindler – it's hard to speak about. I said to Steven, 'You need a better composer than I am for this film.' He said to me, 'I know. But they're all dead!'"

Williams eventually put his misgivings aside and set to work; the resulting score earned him his fourth Academy Award for Best Original Score in 1993. Williams was also inspired by the musicianship of violinist Itzhak Perlman, who performed the featured violin solos. Three Pieces from *Schindler's List* features three of Williams' solo violin melodies, beginning with the plaintive, sadly gentle "Theme from *Schindler's List*." "Jewish Town (Krakow Ghetto - Winter '41)" continues the melancholy mood of the Theme but spirals into a darker realm as it morphs into a quasi-grotesque dance. "Remembrances," from the film's epilogue, features a simple, haunting theme for solo violin and harp, which Williams uses to create a series of ever-more-lush variations.

## MAURICE JARRE

### Suite from *Lawrence of Arabia*



**COMPOSER:** born September 13, 1924, Lyon, France; died March 28, 2009, Los Angeles

**WORK COMPOSED:** 1962

**WORLD PREMIERE:** *Lawrence of Arabia* premiered in London on December 10, 1962

**INSTRUMENTATION:** 3 flutes (1 doubling piccolo), 2 oboes (1 doubling English horn), 3 clarinets, E-flat clarinet, 3 bassoons, (1 doubling contrabassoon), 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, 2 tubas, timpani, bass drum, crash cymbals, drum kit, glockenspiel, gong, snare drum, suspended cymbal, tambourine, tam-tam, tenor drum, 2 tom-toms, 4 tuned timbales, triangle, vibraphone, xylophone, piano, synthesizer, 2 harps, and strings

**ESTIMATED DURATION:** 12 minutes

## ABOUT THE MUSIC

When Maurice Jarre was hired to write the score for director David Lean's epic biopic *Lawrence of Arabia*, he was largely unknown as a composer. He was also a third choice, after William Walton and Malcolm Arnold, both prestigious British composers, turned the project down. Jarre had only six weeks to compose more than two hours of music for Lean's sprawling film. The score Jarre produced, for a full symphony orchestra and an impressive battery of percussion instruments, earned him his first Academy Award and marked the beginning of a long and prolific collaboration with Lean.

Lean's film, based on the activities of soldier, archaeologist, and author T. E. Lawrence, focuses on Lawrence's pivotal

role in the Arab revolt against the Ottoman Empire during World War I. Jarre's score evokes the epic sweep of the desert and the daring exploits of Lawrence and his men in key moments of the revolt, including the battle for Aqaba. Jarre's music also portrays the essential differences in culture between British soldiers and Arab tribesmen.

## SERGIE RACHMANINOFF

### Symphony No. 3 in A Minor, Op. 44



**COMPOSER:** born April 1, 1873, Semyonovo, Starorussky District, Russia; died Mar. 28, 1943, Beverly Hills, CA

**WORK COMPOSED:** 1935-6, at Rachmaninoff's Swiss villa, named Senar (Sergei and Natalia Rachmaninoff) on Lake Lucerne. Revised 1938.

**WORLD PREMIERE:** Nov. 6, 1936, by the Philadelphia Orchestra, led by Leopold Stokowski. The revised version premiered in the fall of 1938, again with the Philadelphia Orchestra, this time conducted by Eugene Ormandy

**INSTRUMENTATION:** piccolo, 2 flutes, 2 oboes, English horn, 2 clarinets, bass clarinet, 2 bassoons, contrabassoon, 4 horns, 3 trumpets, 3 trombones, tuba, timpani, celesta, harp, and strings

**ESTIMATED DURATION:** 40 minutes

## ABOUT THE MUSIC

Sergei Rachmaninoff is an underrated symphonist, due to the extraordinary and enduring popularity of his piano concertos and the Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini. Contemporary reviews did not help; Rachmaninoff was skewered by critics for his later music, particularly the Third Symphony because it didn't sound "modern" enough to their ears. Audiences, meanwhile, rejected Rachmaninoff's later works because they yearned for the romantic soundscapes of the Second Piano Concerto and were unwilling to let Rachmaninoff evolve as a composer. Author Madeleine L'Engle once summarized this dilemma in a response from her publishers, who wanted her to duplicate the success of a previous book: "You've done it in pink, dear; now do it in blue."

Rachmaninoff would have understood L'Engle's frustration all too well. As a composer, he had something new to say, but few seemed interested in hearing it. After he fled Russia in 1917, Rachmaninoff essentially sacrificed his identity as both conductor and composer; instead, he supported his family as a virtuoso pianist who maintained a relentless and exhausting schedule of concerts and travel. In 1926, Rachmaninoff began composing again, after a nine-year hiatus. His new music reflected all the turmoil of those years, along with Rachmaninoff's exile from his homeland, and new trends in classical music, particularly the influence of jazz.

Stylistically, the Third Symphony retains some of the lushness of Rachmaninoff's earlier works, blended with a more expansive harmonic palette and infused with a restless tension not found in his earlier music. The Third Symphony also condensed the usual four movements into three; the second movement, however, features two large sections that function almost as separate movements (Adagio followed by Scherzo). Overall, the music is episodic, and Rachmaninoff makes a point of developing rather than merely embellishing his trademark melodies. Towards the end of the final movement, Rachmaninoff quotes the *Dies Irae* (Day of Wrath) from the Requiem Mass. This ancient chant was a recurring theme in Rachmaninoff's music; he first used it in his Symphony No. 1, and in later works such as the Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini, Symphonic Dances, and *Isle of the Dead*.

Reactions to the Third Symphony were mixed. Olin Downes, writing for the *New York Times*, opined, "The outward characteristics of Rachmaninoff's style are evident in the work heard on this occasion ... It cannot be said, however, that in these pages Mr. Rachmaninoff says things which are new, even though his idiom is more his own than ever before, and free of the indebtedness it once had to Tchaikovsky ... There is a tendency to over-elaboration of detail, and to unnecessary extensions, so that the last movement, in particular, appears too long. Would not a pair of shears benefit the proportions of this work?" However, another critic praised the Third as "a most excellent work in musical conception, composition, and orchestration." Rachmaninoff himself was puzzled by the negative reactions. In a 1937 letter to a friend, Rachmaninoff wrote, "It was played wonderfully. Its reception by both the public and critics was sour. One review sticks painfully in my mind: that I didn't have a Third Symphony in me anymore. Personally, I am firmly convinced that this is a good work. But – sometimes composers are mistaken too! Be that as it may, I am holding to my opinion so far."

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Elizabeth Schwartz is a writer and music historian based in the Portland area. She has been a program annotator for more than 20 years, and works with music festivals and ensembles around the country. Schwartz has also contributed to NPR's "Performance Today," (now heard on American Public Media).