MUSIC BY
JOHN WILLIAMS

PRODUCTION BRIEF

"Music by John Williams" from Lucasfilm Ltd, Amblin Documentaries, and Imagine Documentaries is a fascinating and insightful look at the prolific life and career of legendary composer John Williams. From his early days as a jazz pianist to his 54 Oscar® nominations and five wins, the documentary takes an in-depth look at Williams' countless contributions to film, including many iconic franchises, as well as his music for the concert stage and his impact on popular culture.

The film features interviews with artists and filmmakers whose lives have been touched by his timeless music. Directed by award-winning filmmaker and best-selling author Laurent Bouzereau, the documentary is produced by Steven Spielberg, Brian Grazer, Ron Howard, Darryl Frank, Justin Falvey, Sara Bernstein, Justin Wilkes, Meredith Kaulfers, Kathleen Kennedy, Frank Marshall, Laurent Bouzereau, with Markus Keith and Michael Rosenberg serving as executive producers.

ABOUT THE FILM:

Award-winning filmmaker and best-selling author Laurent Bouzereau, whose credits include the HBO documentary "Faye" and the Disney+ documentary "Timeless Heroes: Indiana Jones & Harrison Ford," has always been passionate about film scores. "Growing up in France, I discovered the soundtracks I bought on vinyl, ahead of most American movies that would come out months after the U.S. release," remembers Bouzereau, "And John Williams was the composer I immediately identified with. His scores made me fall in love with music and made me realise – at a very young age – the power that a score had on cinematic storytelling."

Over the years, Bouzereau has amassed many interviews with Williams and developed a substantial level of trust with the artist in the process. What he and the rest of his team found most exciting was that, at 92, Williams has maintained an infectious enthusiasm for all aspects of music.

"Meeting John 30 years ago, in connection with the beginning of my career as a documentary filmmaker, was nothing short of illuminating," says Bouzereau. "Since then, I have wanted to tell his story."

The legendary composer was initially shy about the idea of a feature-length documentary based on his career, but Bouzereau has a long-standing relationship with acclaimed filmmaker Steven Spielberg, who was able to step in and infuse confidence in the project.

“John is incredibly humble and is a very private person,” Bouzereau continues. “But I said to him, ‘Look, the documentary will not be directly about you; it will be about your music. It will be a vital look at a career that has spanned so many decades, and not only be about your creative contributions, but about your orchestral music, the community of musicians, and an artform that that may one day disappear.’”

To tell his story, Bouzereau and his crew followed Williams, who generously opened the doors to his creative process, allowing the director to sit with him at the actual piano where he created the “Jaws” and “Close Encounters of the Third Kind” themes. Bouzereau then wrote a script using interviews and archival material he had amassed over the past 30 years, which included a meticulous selection of cues from the composer’s vast catalogue.

The impressive list of artists and filmmakers interviewed includes Steven Spielberg, Kathleen Kennedy, Frank Marshall, Kate Capshaw, Gustavo Dudamel, J.J. Abrams, Chris Martin, Ron Howard, Chris Columbus, George Lucas, Itzhak Perlman, Lawrence Kasdan, Yo-Yo Ma, Ke Huy Quan, James Mangold, Alan Silvestri, David Newman, Thomas Newman, Seth MacFarlane, Branford Marsalis, and Anne-Sophie Mutter, among others.

Ultimately, it was Williams’ music that guided the director toward a tight, relatable, and inspirational tale. “None of our discussions came out of thin air,” explains Bouzereau. “Everything came through music; it required extreme knowledge on my part and exhaustive preparation and research, which made for great conversations between the two of us.”

The director spent countless hours interviewing Williams at a number of different locations, including Tanglewood, backstage at the Hollywood Bowl, at the John Williams Music Building dedication on the historic Culver City lot, and even driving with him.

Of utmost concern, Bouzereau wanted to ensure the documentary did not come off as a tribute reel to the composer. “We didn’t want to have any of his many collaborators just sitting on camera gushing about John’s work,” he explains.

“John is very dedicated to his art, and that’s the most inspiring thing about him,” Bouzereau continues. “When I was sitting with him at the piano, even when he was speaking in technical terms, he came to life, and he was able to express the power of music. Those moments at the piano were not improvised but are very reflective of the way that he likes to talk about his process of writing music.”

While the director wanted to spend time discussing the composer’s most recognisable compositions, he wanted to be sure he balanced the documentary with his other achievements to provide a full sense of who he is and where he came from. “The biggest challenge was telling

such an epic story, in a concise and relatable way," says Bouzereau, "And to create a film that would appeal to music lovers, but also to young viewers who are just discovering John."

The director chose to forego narration, as he believes the enthusiasm from Williams himself, as well as his closest collaborators, is the best proof.

The ultimate test was showing the film to Spielberg, Williams' brother in art, who loved the film. "Indeed, the film was made with love not only by myself and my husband/producing partner Markus Keith, but by a team of extraordinary producers at Amblin, Imagine, and Lucasfilm," Bouzereau continues. "It was made with love by incredible and visionary editors, directors of photography, sound mixers, music editors, archival producers, and participants who each brought deep knowledge, passion, and respect to 'Music by John Williams.' It was an important story to tell, not only because it is about one of the greatest composers of all time, John Williams, but because of the message it carries about the survival of orchestral music and musicians."

About the Artist:

In a career spanning more than six decades, John Williams has become one of America's most accomplished and successful composers for film and for the concert stage. He has served as music director and laureate conductor of one of the country's treasured musical institutions, the Boston Pops Orchestra, and he maintains thriving artistic relationships with many of the world's great orchestras, including the Boston Symphony Orchestra, the New York Philharmonic, the Chicago Symphony, and the Los Angeles Philharmonic. Williams has received a variety of prestigious awards, including the National Medal of Arts, the Kennedy Centre Honors, an honorary KBE from Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, the Olympic Order, and numerous Academy Awards®, GRAMMY Awards®, Emmy Awards® and Golden Globe Awards®. He remains one of our nation's most distinguished and contributive musical voices.

Williams has composed the music and served as music director for more than one hundred films. His 50-year artistic partnership with director Steven Spielberg has resulted in many of Hollywood's most acclaimed and successful films, including "Schindler's List," "E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial," "Jaws," "Jurassic Park," "Close Encounters of the Third Kind," the "Indiana Jones" films, "Saving Private Ryan," "Amistad," "Munich," "Hook," "Catch Me If You Can," "Minority Report," "A.I. Artificial Intelligence," "Empire of the Sun," "The Adventures of TinTin," "War Horse," "The BFG" and "Lincoln." Their latest collaboration, "The Fabelmans," was scored in early 2022. Williams composed the scores for all nine "Star Wars" films, the first three "Harry Potter" films, "Superman," "JFK," "Born on the Fourth of July," "Memoirs of a Geisha," "Far and Away," "The Accidental Tourist," "Home Alone," "Nixon," "The Patriot," "Angela's Ashes," "Seven Years in Tibet," "The Witches of Eastwick," "Rosewood," "Sleepers," "Sabrina," "Presumed Innocent," "The Cowboys," "The Reivers" and "Goodbye, Mr. Chips," among many others.

His most recent film project is "Indiana Jones and the Dial of Destiny," directed by James Mangold and the fifth instalment of the iconic franchise. He has worked with many legendary directors, including Alfred Hitchcock, William Wyler, and Robert Altman. In 1971, he adapted the score for

the film version of “Fiddler on the Roof,” for which he composed original violin cadenzas for renowned virtuoso Isaac Stern. He has appeared on recordings as a pianist and conductor with Itzhak Perlman, Joshua Bell, Jessye Norman, and others. Williams has received five Academy Awards® and fifty-four Oscar® nominations, making him the Academy’s most-nominated living person and the second-most nominated person in the history of the Oscars. His most recent nomination was for “Indiana Jones and the Dial of Destiny.” He also has received seven British Academy Awards (BAFTA), twenty-six GRAMMYs®, four Golden Globes®, five Emmys®, and numerous gold and platinum records.

Born and raised in New York, Williams moved to Los Angeles with his family in 1948, where he studied composition with Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco. After service in the Air Force, he returned to New York to attend the Juilliard School, where he studied piano with Madame Rosina Lhevinne. While in New York, he also worked as a jazz pianist in nightclubs. He returned to Los Angeles and began his career in the film industry, working with a number of accomplished composers, including Bernard Herrmann, Alfred Newman, and Franz Waxman. He went on to write music for more than 200 television films for the groundbreaking, early anthology series “Alcoa Theatre,” “Kraft Television Theatre,” “Chrysler Theatre,” and “Playhouse 90.” His more recent contributions to television music include the well-known theme for “NBC Nightly News (The Mission),” the theme for what has become network television’s longest-running series, NBC’s “Meet the Press,” and a new theme for the prestigious PBS arts showcase “Great Performances.”

In addition to his activity in film and television, Williams has composed numerous works for the concert stage, among them two symphonies and concertos for flute, violin, clarinet, viola, oboe, and tuba. His cello concerto was commissioned by the Boston Symphony Orchestra and premiered by Yo-Yo Ma at Tanglewood in 1994. Williams also has filled commissions by several of the world’s leading orchestras, including a bassoon concerto for the New York Philharmonic entitled “The Five Sacred Trees,” a trumpet concerto for the Cleveland Orchestra, and a horn concerto for the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. “Seven for Luck,” a seven-piece song cycle for soprano and orchestra based on the texts of former U.S. Poet Laureate Rita Dove, was premiered by the Boston Symphony at Tanglewood in 1998. At the opening concert of their 2009/2010 season, James Levine led the Boston Symphony in the premiere of Williams’ “On Willows and Birches,” a new concerto for harp and orchestra. In 2021, Williams premiered his second violin concerto with the Boston Symphony Orchestra at Tanglewood, along with soloist Anne-Sophie Mutter, for whom he composed the work.

In January 1980, Williams was named nineteenth music director of the Boston Pops Orchestra, succeeding the legendary Arthur Fiedler. He currently holds the title of Boston Pops Laureate Conductor, which he assumed following his retirement in December 1993 after fourteen highly successful seasons. He also holds the title of Artist-in-Residence at Tanglewood.

One of America’s best-known and most distinctive artistic voices, Williams has composed music for many important cultural and commemorative events. “Liberty Fanfare” was composed for the rededication of the Statue of Liberty in 1986. “American Journey,” written to celebrate the

new millennium and to accompany the retrospective film "The Unfinished Journey" by director Steven Spielberg, was premiered at the "America's Millennium" concert in Washington, D.C., on New Year's Eve, 1999. His orchestral work, "Soundings," was performed at the celebratory opening of Walt Disney Concert Hall in Los Angeles. In the world of sports, he has contributed musical themes for the 1984, 1988, and 1996 Summer Olympic Games, the 2002 Winter Olympic Games, and the 1987 International Summer Games of the Special Olympics. In 2006, Williams composed the theme for NBC's presentation of "Sunday Night Football."

Williams holds honorary degrees from twenty-two American universities, including Harvard University, The Juilliard School, Boston College, Northeastern University, Tufts University, Boston University, the New England Conservatory of Music, the University of Massachusetts at Boston, The Eastman School of Music, the Oberlin Conservatory of Music, and the University of Southern California. He is a recipient of the 2009 National Medal of Arts, the highest award given to artists by the United States Government. In 2020, Williams received Spain's prestigious Princess of Asturias Award for the Arts as well as the Gold Medal from the Royal Philharmonic Society in the UK. In 2016, he received the 44th Life Achievement Award from the American Film Institute – the first composer in history to receive this honour. In 2003, he received the Olympic Order, the IOC's highest honour, for his contributions to the Olympic movement. He served as the Grand Marshal of the 2004 Rose Parade in Pasadena and was a recipient of the Kennedy Centre Honors in December of that year. In 2018, he received the Trustees Award from the National Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences. Williams was inducted into the American Academy of Arts & Sciences in 2009, and in January of that same year he composed and arranged "Air and Simple Gifts" especially for the first inaugural ceremony of President Barack Obama. He was awarded an honorary knighthood of the British Empire as one of the final awards approved by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.

About The Filmmaker:

Laurent Bouzereau is an award-winning filmmaker and best-selling author. His film "Faye," a feature documentary on legendary actor Faye Dunaway for HBO/Amblin premiered at the 2024 Cannes Film Festival. He is currently in production on "Jaws @ 50," a feature documentary for NatGeo/Amblin.

His credits include the Lucasfilm/Disney+ documentary "Timeless Heroes: Indiana Jones & Harrison Ford"; the HBO/Amblin/Playtone documentary "Mama's Boy," based on the best-selling memoir by Dustin Lance Black; "Natalie Wood: What Remains Behind" (Sundance 2020, HBO/Amblin); and the Netflix/Amblin acclaimed series "Five Came Back" (with Emmy Award®-winning narration by Meryl Streep), executive produced by Steven Spielberg.

He is the author of several books on cinema, including *Steven Spielberg: The First Ten Years (2023)*, the upcoming *De Palma Decade (2024)*, *Hitchcock: Piece by Piece, The Art of Bond*, and others.

Laurent Bouzereau and his producing partner/husband, Markus Keith, run Nedland Media, a production company based in Los Angeles. In addition to the above-mentioned slate of documentaries that Nedland produced, they are developing scripted as well as non-scripted projects. Nedland is also a leader in film and brand marketing, working on campaigns for all the major studios.

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