

Thoughts on *Star Wars* as TCO closes its Blossom season

by Jarrett Hoffman



Before the action figures, t-shirts, and lunch boxes — before even a single sequel was on anyone’s mind — 20th Century Fox’s 1977 *Star Wars* was a movie that came in over budget, with low expectations. The studio moved up the release date so it wouldn’t have to compete with that summer’s *Smokey and the Bandit*. In terms of merchandise, toy company Kenner Products was caught so

flat-footed by the success of *Star Wars* that Christmas shoppers had to settle for a box with a voucher: mail it in to get your toys next year, kids.

Those essentially empty boxes now go for \$13K on [eBay](#). A more wallet-friendly option for your *Star Wars* fix: \$26 tickets to see the original film at Blossom this weekend, with John Williams’ score played live by The Cleveland Orchestra under the direction of assistant conductor Vinay Parameswaran. Screenings of the film, now known as *Star Wars: Episode IV – A New Hope*, will take place from Friday through Sunday, August 31 to September 2, the festival’s closing night, all at 8:30 pm. After the red and green blaster rays, stay for more fireworks, weather permitting.

Actors like Mark Hamill (Luke Skywalker — unfortunately dubbed Luke Starkiller in early drafts of the script), Carrie Fisher (Princess Leia), and Harrison Ford (Han Solo) were fresh names back in 1977. One who wasn’t: John Williams. *Star Wars* would reel in the composer’s third Academy Award, following *Jaws* and his adapted score to *Fiddler On the Roof*. His accolades since then go on and on: two more Oscars for *E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial* and *Schindler’s List*, fifty-one total nominations making him second only to Walt Disney.

But perhaps no music — let alone film score — is as broadly popular as that of *Star Wars*, thanks both to Williams' brilliant writing and the film's many, many sequels: the series spans 31 years and counting. If you draw an infinitely big Venn diagram of all kinds of people and the music they like, *Star Wars* might be right there at the center of it all, connecting scholars who catalog motivic material with those who have better things to do. (Actually, this [list](#) from Tufts University's Frank Lehman is pretty impressive.)

Some might wish the Blossom season had ended with this past weekend's *Carmina Burana*, 50 years to the date when it was performed during the Festival's inaugural year. But *Star Wars* is the perfect choice to bring people together — talking, peeking at, or wondering about one another — thanks to this place, this time of year, and this particular brand of glorious, made-up battles in outer space.

Published on ClevelandClassical.com August 27, 2018.

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