

## Conductor Richard Kaufman returns to Blossom for two evenings of film music

by Stephanie Manning



To Richard Kaufman, returning to Blossom this weekend to lead The Cleveland Orchestra in music by John Williams “is like winning the concert lottery.” The combination of a world-class orchestra, a beautiful venue, and fantastic music fills the conductor with enthusiasm for the two performances on September 4 and 5 at 7:00 pm.

“There’s something about doing a concert during the summer, especially at a place like Blossom, where everybody is just in a great mood,” Kaufman said during a recent phone interview. The program, “Salute to John Williams,” will feature that composer’s music from beloved films like *Superman*, *Harry Potter*, and *Star Wars*. Tickets are available [online](#) — fireworks will follow both performances.

“You know, the difficult part about putting together a John Williams concert is what *not* to do, because there are so many fantastic choices of music that audiences love,” Kaufman said. “So you put together the program knowing that you can’t play everything.” Nevertheless, he’s confident that there’s something for everyone, from the “Flight to Neverland” from *Hook* to the “Flying Theme” from *E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial*.

Along with big titles like *Indiana Jones* and *Jurassic Park*, the orchestra will also perform music from some of Williams’ lesser-known films. One such selection is “If We Were In Love” from 1982’s *Yes, Giorgio*, which starred Luciano Pavarotti. “It’s music that nobody ever hears, but it’s a magnificent piece,” Kaufman said.

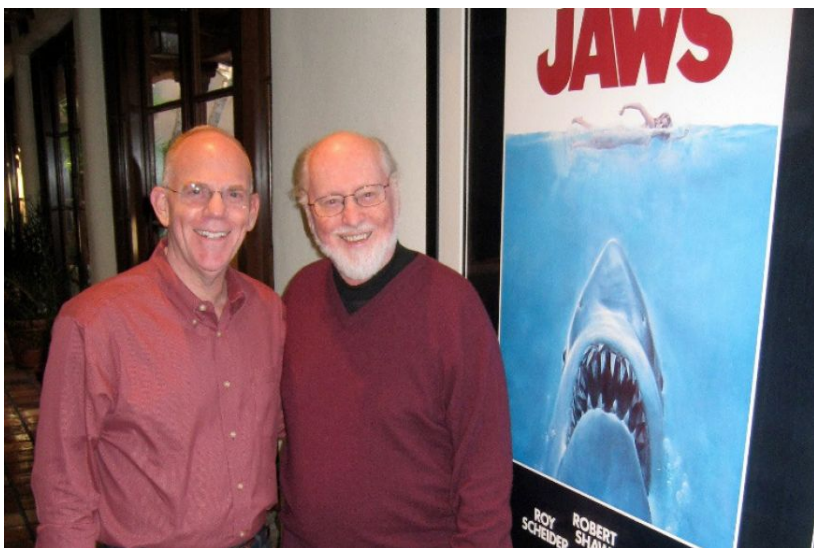
Principal trumpet Michael Sachs will be the featured soloist in the theme from *Born on the Fourth of July*, and associate concertmaster Jung-Min Amy Lee will be in the spotlight during the main theme from *Schindler’s List*. Kaufman also drew special attention to “Scherzo for Motorcycle and Orchestra” from *Indiana Jones and the Last*

*Crusade*. “It’s a chase where Harrison Ford is on a motorcycle, and it’s just incredibly exciting,” he said.

The conductor is particularly looking forward to the “Shark Theme” from *Jaws*, a score which holds a special place in his heart. He started his career as a violinist and played on the soundtracks for six of Williams’ films, “so to be able to play that theme in concert is always very special.”

It was in the recording studio for *Jaws* where Kaufman first met the great composer. “I actually went up to him during the sessions to say how much I enjoyed his music. That was 46 years ago, and we’ve been friends ever since.” The two have conducted concerts together with the Chicago Symphony and at Tanglewood Film Night, and in 2015, Kaufman substituted for Williams at the Boston Pops.

“It’s always an honor to work with John and to have had the opportunity to play his scores,” he said. When asked what he thinks makes the composer’s music so special, Kaufman (*pictured with Williams, below left*) praised Williams’ dramatic sense and the way his music contributes to the films. “Also, I think the themes that he writes are so memorable that they really stay with you.”



Though Kaufman has a classical background, his love for film music started young. His parents frequently took him and his brother to movies and would often buy the soundtracks, which Kaufman would try to play along with on his violin. At that time, film scores saw very few live performances after release, but composers like Williams eventually began to arrange their music for concert performance, giving these scores “a whole new life in the concert hall.”

Williams’ talent for arranging is another reason why his music stands out, Kaufman said. “If you’re a painter, and you have six or seven colors, that kind of limits you. But John uses a palette of sound that has dozens and dozens of colors musically — not only

individual instruments, but combining them into great orchestration. The way he uses all the colors of the orchestra is so incredible.”

Now as a conductor, Kaufman loves the idea of bringing this music to people — “not in the movie theater, but being played by a great symphony orchestra. If you’re somebody who loves music — whatever kind of music — and you have the opportunity to hear The Cleveland Orchestra play it, it’s just an amazing experience.”

The conductor’s last appearance at Blossom was in 2018, and he is “thrilled” to be back. “When you work with an orchestra like Cleveland, it spoils you as a conductor, because they’re just so good. Personally, they’re such a nice group of people, and the staff is just wonderful. So it’s always a complete pleasure to be able to be there.”

Kaufman ended our conversation by saying, “I think today, with everything going on, the concert hall has become an oasis for people to escape some of the difficult realities of the world. What a great way to fill one’s soul with some beauty.”

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