

Cleveland Orchestra at the Movies: Final tune builds alongside title character in ‘Indiana Jones’ performance

by Peter Feher: Cleveland Classical

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Blossom Music Center, pictured in this file photo, kicked off its 2024 summer festival on Saturday with a Cleveland Orchestra performance while playing "Indiana Jones and the Raiders of the Lost Ark." The orchestra will perform again Sunday night. Courtesy of Cleveland Orchestra

CUYAHOGA FALLS, Ohio — You’ll definitely want to stick around for the credits at Blossom Music Center this weekend. The Cleveland Orchestra sounds marvelous playing John Williams’ entire score for *Indiana Jones and the Raiders of the Lost Ark*, but the famous title tune — the “Raiders March,” teased in snippets throughout the movie — doesn’t appear in full until the very end.

It’s one of many theatrical moments that land effectively (and differently than you might

remember) in the Orchestra’s presentation of the film live in concert. Only after *Indiana Jones* finishes his first cinematic crusade does the theme for all his subsequent adventures take true, triumphant shape.

Fortunately, the musicians don’t have to wait until the finale to share in the glory. Williams’ compositions are integral to the universe of Steven Spielberg and George Lucas, and for the 1981 *Raiders* (directed by Spielberg, based on a concept by Lucas), the score serves as one of the chief storytellers.

The Orchestra fared nobly in this role on Saturday, the opening night of the 2024 Blossom Music Festival. Seasoned film-in-concert conductor Sarah Hicks leads another performance this evening, June 30 at 7 p.m.

In the same way that the “Raiders March” is built up note by note, the character of *Indiana Jones* is revealed in stages. The movie’s opening set piece in Peru has Harrison Ford playing a charming mix of expert and reckless — traits expounded upon in the

following scenes, which introduce Dr. Jones as an archaeology professor by trade but sometimes a swashbuckler-for-hire.

Williams' score for these first few minutes is a jungle soundscape, with the woodwinds burbling, distant drums rumbling, and the strings doing their best pizzicato impression of tarantulas.

We don't hear the name "Indiana Jones" until half an hour into Raiders (the name was also absent from the film's original title). Marion, portrayed by Karen Allen as a damsel who's determined to find her own way out of distress, greets our hero and then delivers him a punch. The score has already identified her as Jones' romantic interest, assigning her a soaring love theme that starts simply with solo flute.

In fact, Williams' music often tips off the audience to the tone of any given scene before it's even begun. Nothing too terrible can come of the basket chase through the streets of Cairo because the score — in its comic, circus manner — suggests otherwise. Similarly, the music for the sequence in the map room portends a spectacular discovery, the full orchestra crescendoing to a shrieking climax as a shaft of sunlight illuminates the location of the Ark of the Covenant.

Having the score featured so prominently meant that Williams could draw on multiple musical sources. In his signature allusive style, the composer evokes the atmosphere, if not the actual notes, of some of the great classical works of the 19th and 20th centuries, from Igor Stravinsky's *The Rite of Spring* (the opening jungle scene) to Aram Khachaturian's *Gayane* (the basket sequence).

At the same time, there's more than a hint of Old Hollywood and television to Williams' character themes, which could just as easily accompany a cowboy Western as a biblical epic. Spielberg and Lucas were aiming to capture cinematic history with this first movie in the series — how else to make sense of a story that spans five continents and involves a native tribe, a Hebrew relic, an ancient pharaoh, and Nazis?

The Cleveland Orchestra presents one more performance of Indiana Jones and the Raiders of the Lost Ark live in concert at 7 p.m. on Sunday, June 30 at Blossom Music Center, 1145 W. Steels Corners Rd., Cuyahoga Falls. Tickets are \$29 for lawn seats and \$36 to \$121 for pavilion seats and are available at the Blossom Box Office or via clevelandorchestra.com

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