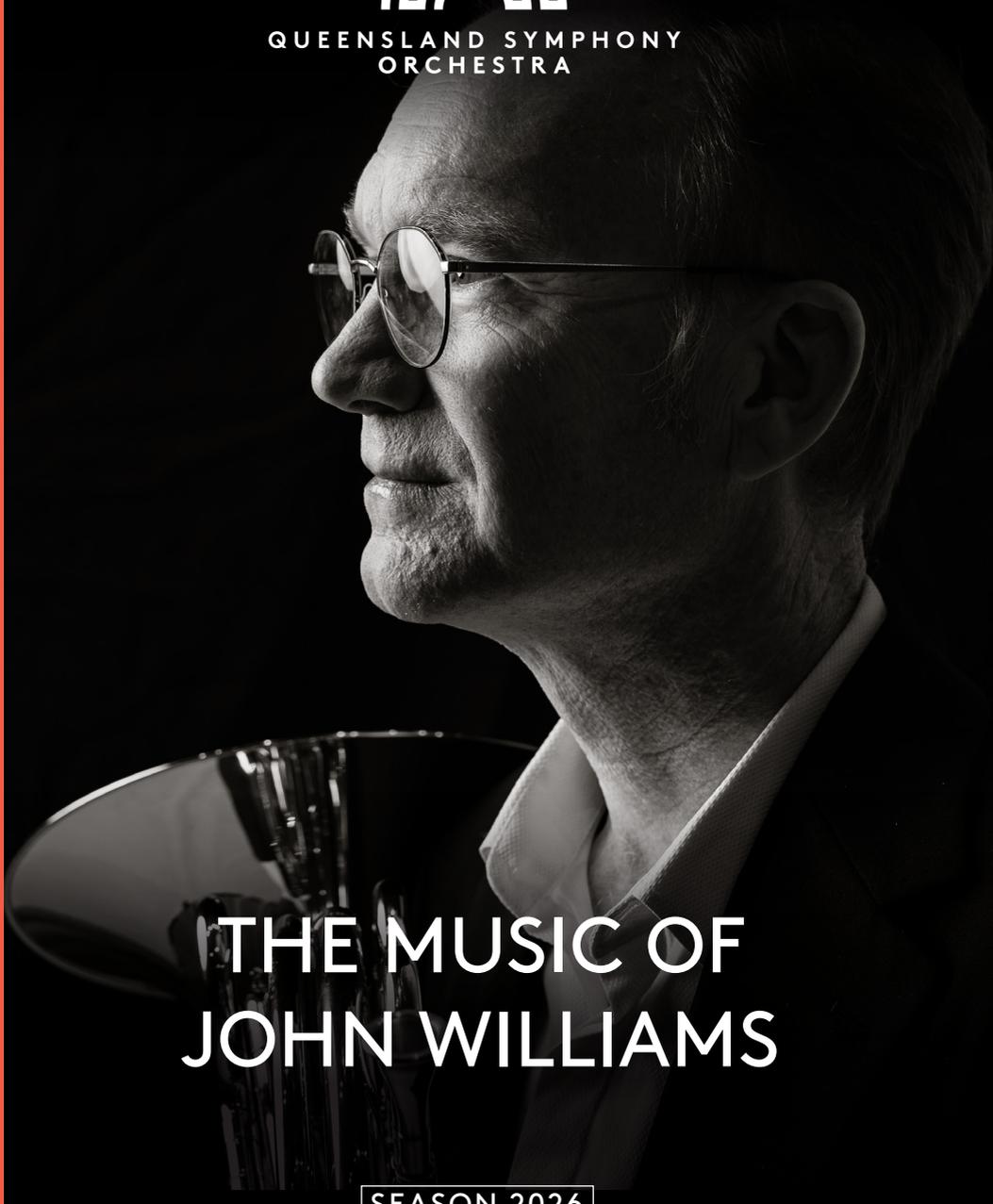


CONCERT SPECIAL



QUEENSLAND SYMPHONY  
ORCHESTRA



# THE MUSIC OF JOHN WILLIAMS

SEASON 2026



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CONCERT SPECIALS

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# WELCOME

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Orchestral movie scores unlock our imaginations, sweep us into the story and connect us with the on-screen heroes and villains. They place these characters and stories permanently in our memories, recalled with just a few notes of a cherished theme. None have mastered this art form (and no-one writes for the horn!) like John Williams.

As a horn player there's nothing more exhilarating (and difficult!) than Williams's music – I love every dot. In fact, my first orchestral experience was hearing the QSO perform the *Star Wars* theme at City Hall in late 1970's – I was hooked from the very first downbeat. Suddenly, that weird bit of tubing I was lugging around made sense – it carried the hero's theme, it heralded the cavalry, it even caused people to swoon!

Thank you for joining us today – I hope you enjoy the beautiful themes as much as we enjoy bringing them to life for you.

## Ian O'Brien

Principal French Horn



# THE MUSIC OF JOHN WILLIAMS

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Concert Hall, QPAC  
Friday 27 February 2026 7.30pm  
Saturday 28 February 2026 7.30pm

## IN THIS CONCERT

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**Nicholas Buc** Conductor  
**Glenn Christensen** Violin  
**Queensland Symphony Orchestra**

## PROGRAM

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### All by John Williams:

Main Title from *Star Wars*  
*Out to Sea* and *The Shark Cage Fugue* from *Jaws*  
Excerpts from *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*  
Theme from *Angela's Ashes*  
Theme from *Raiders of the Lost Ark*  
Theme from *E.T. The Extra-Terrestrial*

### INTERVAL

*Olympic Fanfare and Theme*  
Theme from *Jurassic Park*  
Theme from *Schindler's List*  
Theme from *Superman*  
*Hedwig's Flight* and *Harry's Wondrous World* from  
*Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone*  
Excerpts from *Star Wars*

20'

## IMPORTANT INFORMATION

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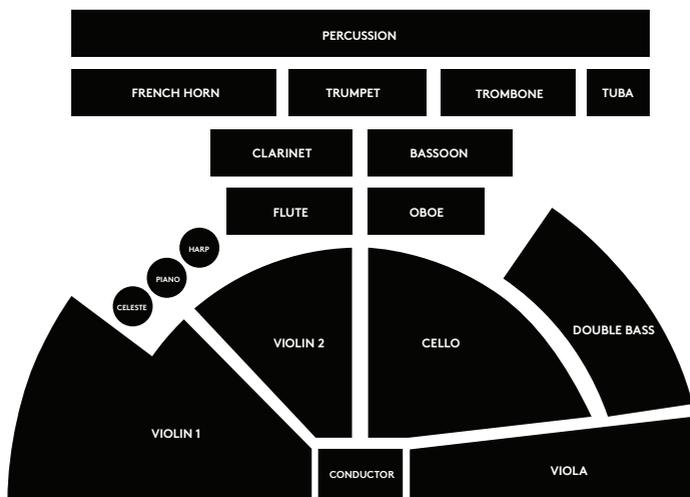
Doors open at 7pm  
This concert will end at approx. 9.40pm



This concert will be recorded by ABC Classic for broadcast at 12pm on 21 March 2026.

# TODAY'S ORCHESTRA LAYOUT

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## WHO'S ON STAGE

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Scan the QR code for the list of musicians playing in tonight's concert.



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Queensland Symphony Orchestra provides a spoken Acknowledgement of Country at the beginning of each concert to encourage awareness and to demonstrate our respect for First Nations cultures and traditions, as well as signalling our commitment to a more inclusive and equitable society. We acknowledge the traditional owners and custodians of Meanjin where we work, rehearse and perform: the Turrbal and

Yuggera peoples, whose deep connection to this land reminds us to always protect and care for it.

Queensland Symphony Orchestra acknowledges the traditional custodians of Australia. We acknowledge the cultural diversity of Elders, both past and present, and the significant contributions that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples make to Queensland and Australia.



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# LISTENING GUIDE

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John Williams: arguably the most iconic composer of the film world. It's difficult to imagine the looming menace of a shark, the glow of a lightsaber, or the snaking journey of the Hogwarts Express without one of his melodies immediately springing to mind.

It's not just the film world that Williams (born 1932) presides over, although he is the most Academy Award-nominated living person today. He's soundtracked real-life as much as the silver screen, from the Los Angeles Olympics in 1984, to the centennial celebrations of the Statue of Liberty in 1986, and President Barack Obama's inauguration in 2009. He's enjoyed a prolific career as a conductor too, most notably as Conductor Laureate of the Boston Pops Orchestra.

But it's true that cinema is where Williams makes magic. In a career spanning seven decades, Williams has scored over a hundred films – how did he become the beating heart of the film composition world?

Williams' career began in the US Air Force, where he arranged music and conducted military bands. His film composition career began somewhat humbly: during his service, he wrote his first score for *You Are Welcome*, a promotional film created for the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador Tourist Information Office. After retiring from service, he began his studies as a pianist at the Juilliard School, but quickly gravitated away from the demands of a career as a concert pianist. After relocating to Los Angeles, Williams began working as an orchestrator in Hollywood, under some of the then-giants of the industry, including Bernard Hermann and Alfred Newman.

In the 60s, Williams began to transition away from orchestration towards predominantly composing original scores. He was nominated for his first Academy Award for *Valley of the Dolls* (1967), and soon caught the attention of up-and-coming director, Steven Spielberg. Like many film composers, Williams is part of a renowned composer-director pairing – where there is Spielberg, there is almost inevitably Williams. The duo's first collaboration, *The Sugarland Express* (1974), would be the first of 29 films together, across five decades.

The pair's success relies on their faith in each other's artistry. When Williams shared his concept for *Jaws* (1975) Spielberg was initially taken aback. He was struck by how basic Williams' proposal was: two notes, played back and forth with increasing intensity. Little did he know it would become the best-known film theme of all time. As Spielberg would come to acknowledge, simplicity, after all, is sometimes best.

Simplicity takes many forms – few would argue that Williams' score for *Star Wars* (1977) fits the bill, with its big, brass-laden sounds, shimmering strings, and agile woodwind. However, it was a notable change from other big sci-fi scores of the time: Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968) had opted for a score compiled from orchestral classics, such as Strauss and Tchaikovsky. Other films, such as *Planet of the Apes* (1968), scored by Jerry Goldsmith, often gravitated towards 'futuristic' sounds – atonality, unusual percussion, brass instruments used without mouthpieces and clarinets played with the tap of fingernails. Sci-fi was not a particularly lucrative genre when George Lucas was busy pitching it to studios, but after reading the script, Williams jumped at the opportunity to

score it: "I thought the film would give me the opportunity to write an old-fashioned swashbuckling symphonic score, so that's what I did." – the rest is history. Williams would end up having something of a knack for space-themed evocations, although pleasing directors wasn't always easy – Williams wrote over 300 versions of the main motif of *Close Encounters of the Third Kind* (1977) before Spielberg was content with the five-note pattern that forms the signature theme. The roles were reversed for *E.T. The Extra-Terrestrial* (1982), when Spielberg was so enamoured with Williams' music for the 'final chase' that he constructed the film's sequence to fit.

While Williams is renowned for his blockbuster grandeur, his scores have their intimate and emotional moments too. These include depictions of woeful Irish poverty in *Angela's Ashes* (1999) and the harrowing *Schindler's List* (1993). Despite

a history of collaborations with Spielberg, Williams did not take his appointment to *Schindler's List* lightly, and told the director: "Steven, for this film, you need a better composer than I am." Spielberg's reply? "You're right, John. But they're all dead."

In 2022, Williams announced his retirement from film composing – works for the concert hall have always been his preference, and he was now into his 90s. After completing the score for *Indiana Jones and the Dial of Destiny* (2023), Williams reversed his decision, declaring he had "10 more years to go. I'll stick around for a while!" In 2026, this iconic composer has his 94th birthday, and proposes at least one more score: for Spielberg, naturally. Behind Williams is a legacy that is ingrained not just in the realm of cinema, but pop culture eternal.

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# ARTIST BIOGRAPHIES

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## Nicolas Buc Conductor

Nicholas Buc is an award-winning composer, conductor and arranger with over 20 years experience in the music industry. He has composed music for film, television and the concert hall, with some of his work being screened at festivals and theatres around Australia, Asia and the US. As the recipient of the prestigious Brian May Scholarship, he completed a Master's degree in Scoring for Film and Multimedia at New York University, receiving the Elmer Bernstein Award for Film Scoring.

He recently completed work on the new Australian feature film *Slant*, starring Sigrid Thornton and Pia Miranda, which won Best Australian Feature at Monster Fest 2022. He also scored the Ukrainian documentary *Slava*, which won Best Short Film at Byron All Shorts Flickerfest 2023.

He has worked with Wynton Marsalis and the Jazz at Lincoln Center Orchestra, Nick Cave and Warren Ellis, Chris Botti, Amanda Palmer, Ben Folds and Australian pop sensation Tina Arena. He has written arrangements for Birds of Tokyo, Missy Higgins and Vera Blue as well as working on Junior MasterChef, The Voice Australia and the 2021 AFL Grand Final.

Nicholas is highly sought after as a conductor for live film concerts, having conducted the world premieres of *Star Wars: The Last Jedi*, *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, *The Lion King* (2019), *Beauty and the Beast* (2017), *Shrek 2* and *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows Part 2*.

He is also the only person in the world to have conducted all three original *Star Wars* films in concert... in one day!

# QUEENSLAND SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

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We play a vital role in Queensland's cultural community: educating; mentoring aspiring performers; touring regional centres; broadcasting; and performing with state, national, and international ballet and opera companies.

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QPAC rests on the lands of the Yuggera and Turrbal peoples. We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of this country and recognise their rich cultural heritage and enduring connection to the land, waters and skies. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are this country's original storytellers, and it is our privilege to continue to share stories and be a place of gathering on this land that has been a meeting place for millennia.

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