

London Philharmonic Orchestra



GCSE BrightSparks Resources

BrightSparks is generously funded by the Rothschild Foundation with additional support from the Candide Trust, Dunard Fund, Rivers Foundation, The R K Charitable Trust, Mr & Mrs Philip Kan, Gill and Julian Simmonds

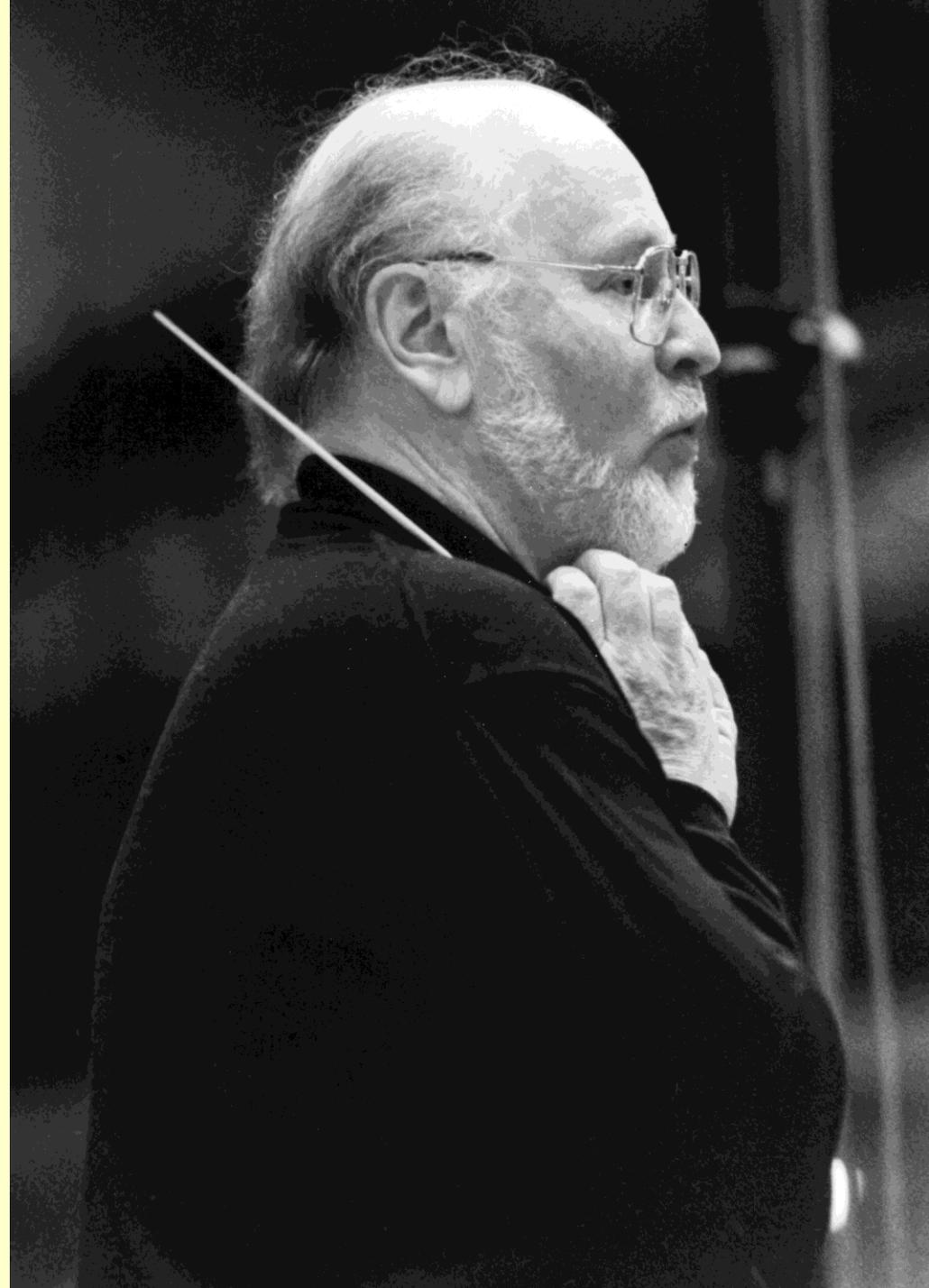
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John Williams

(b. 1932)

***Star Wars Main
Theme***

(1977)

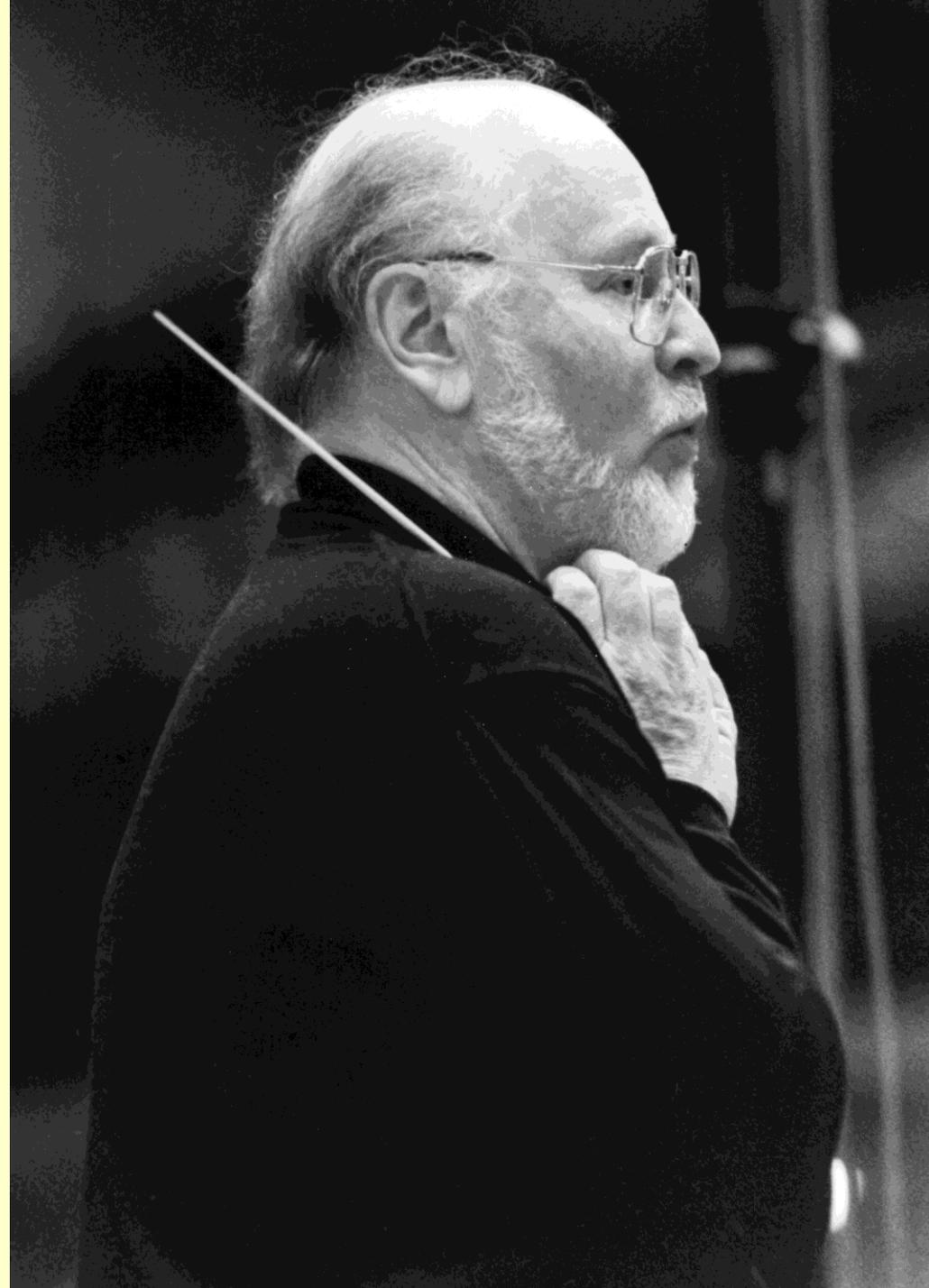


John Williams

(b. 1932)

- ✓ American film composer
- ✓ Famous for symphonic scores with **leitmotifs**

Leitmotif = small music idea that represents a place, character, emotion, theme etc within the film's story



Williams – Star Wars Main Theme – 1977

Analysis



Williams – Star Wars Main Theme – 1977

Introduction and Fanfare (bars 1-4)

- ✍ Main theme begins with a 'burst' of fanfare from the brass section – features classic fanfare figures: arpeggios, repeated staccato notes, triplets, sextuplets
- ✍ Fast tempo
- ✍ Bb major
- ✍ Time signature is 4/4
- ✍ **Quartal harmony** = chords based on 4ths

Williams – Star Wars Main Theme – 1977

Luke's Theme (A) (bars 4-11)

- ✍ March-like – associated with heroism, adventure
- ✍ Brass accompanied by syncopated chords from lower strings and inverted tonic pedal from violins
- ✍ Homophonic

Williams – Star Wars Main Theme – 1977

Luke's Theme (A) (bars 4-11)

- ✓ Melody features a distinctive leap of a 5th from tonic to dominant
- ✓ Later that interval is inverted to become a falling 4th, still tonic to dominant

The image shows a musical staff in 4/4 time, key of B-flat major. The melody starts with a half note G2 (tonic), followed by a half note D3 (dominant), which is a 5th interval up. This is annotated with "5th up from tonic to dominant". The melody then continues with a triplet of E3, F3, G3, followed by a half note D3. An arrow points from the text "4th down from dominant to tonic" to the interval between the first D3 and the first E3 of the triplet. The melody then continues with a triplet of E3, F3, G3, followed by a half note D3, and then a triplet of E3, F3, G3, followed by a half note D3. The piece ends with a quarter rest.

- ✓ Theme made up of two balanced 4-bar phrases

Williams – Star Wars Main Theme – 1977

Theme B (bars 11-21)

- ✓ Played by strings, doubled so stretched across 3 octaves
- ✓ Accents from glockenspiel
- ✓ Begins with anacrusis
- ✓ Mostly conjunct but features a leap of a 6th
- ✓ Made up of two balanced, 4-bar phrases

Williams – Star Wars Main Theme – 1977

Theme B (bars 11-21)

- Second phrase ends with Bb minor scale to the dominant
- Contrary motion – downwards and upwards at the same time

The image shows a musical score for the 2nd phrase of the Star Wars Main Theme, bars 11-21. The notation is in treble clef with a key signature of two flats (Bb minor). The phrase begins with an anacrusis (before the bar). The melody is mostly stepwise, with a 6th leap. A triplet of eighth notes is marked with a '3'. The phrase concludes with a contrary motion scale, where the upper voice moves upwards and the lower voice moves downwards simultaneously.

2nd phrase

6th leap

mostly stepwise 3

anacrusis (before the bar)

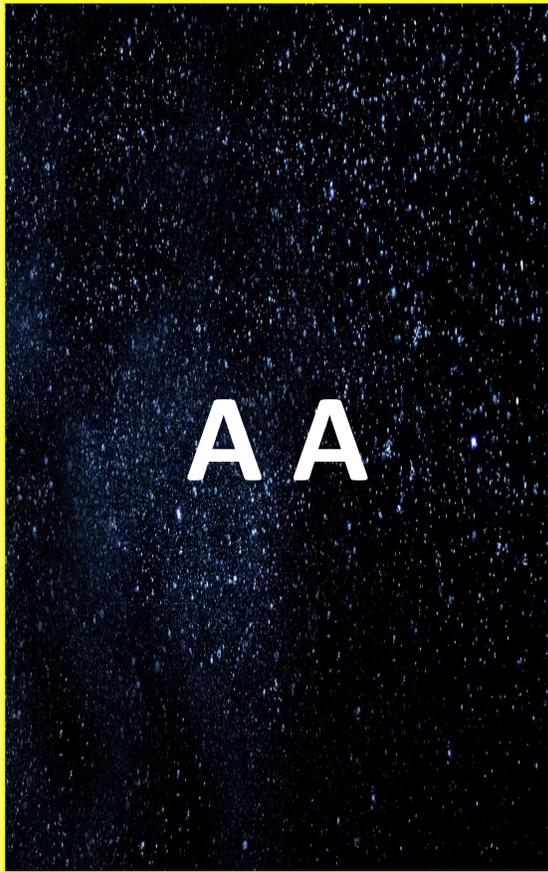
contrary motion scale (up and down at same time)

Williams – Star Wars Main Theme – 1977

Structure (bars 1-30)



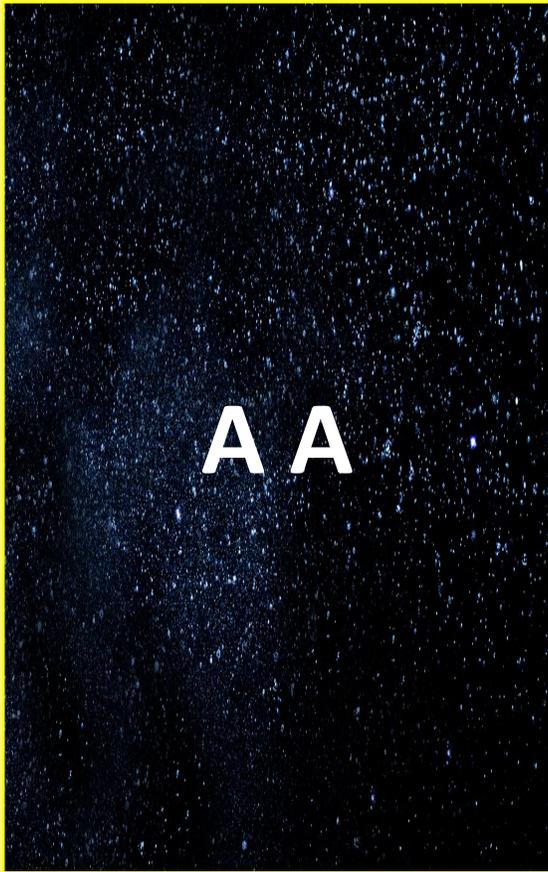
Intro



A A



B B



A A

Williams – Star Wars Main Theme – 1977

Structure (bars 30-end)

Short transition section

- ★ **Fanfare figures**
- ★ **Sequences for violins**
- ★ **Unstable harmony**

Then...

Images on screen dictate musical material

Williams – Star Wars Main Theme – 1977

Stars and Sky Theme (bars 33-39)

- ✍ Lighter texture at bar 33
- ✍ Lonely piccolo solo
- ✍ High strings, celeste, vibraphone and harp reflect the sky, stars and planets on the screen

The image shows a musical score for a piccolo solo. The staff is in treble clef with a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The score begins with a rest in the first bar, followed by a quarter rest in the second bar. In the third bar, a note is marked *8va* (octave above). The melody continues with quarter notes and eighth notes, ending with a quarter note in the final bar. A thick black bar is drawn under the notes in the fourth and fifth bars, with an arrow pointing to it from the word "bitonal" below. A "6" is written below the staff in the fifth bar, indicating a sixteenth-note rhythm. A fermata is placed over the final note of the piece.

Williams – Star Wars Main Theme – 1977

Death Star Motif (bars 39-44)

- ✓ Scurrying strings and block chords from the trombones take us to the next section
- ✓ Ominous, pounding tonic pedal (C)
- ✓ Short, menacing brass fanfare with dissonant chords
- ✓ Death star on screen

Williams – Star Wars Main Theme – 1977

Suspense (bars 44-51)

- ✍ Time signature changes to 3/4 at bar 44
- ✍ Tonic pedal
- ✍ Atonal cluster chords
- ✍ **Homorhythmic** = all players play the same rhythm at the same time

Williams – Star Wars Main Theme – 1977

Battle (bars 51-end)

- ✍ C pedal continues
- ✍ Brass triads (similar to bar 42)

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