



STAR WARS: The Empire Strikes Back **in Concert**

Wednesday, June 11, 2025, 7:30 p.m.
17,200th Concert

Thursday, June 12, 2025, 7:30 p.m.
17,201st Concert

Friday, June 13, 2025, 7:30 p.m.
17,202nd Concert

Saturday, June 14, 2025, 7:30 p.m.
17,203rd Concert

Sarah Hicks, Conductor
(New York Philharmonic conducting debut)

Wu Tsai Theater
David Geffen Hall at Lincoln Center
Home of the New York Philharmonic

This program will last approximately two and one-half hours, which includes one intermission.

Programs for Families at the New York Philharmonic are presented by **Daria and Eric Wallach.**



June 11–14, 2025

***STAR WARS: The Empire Strikes Back* in Concert**

Sarah Hicks, Conductor (New York Philharmonic conducting debut)

John WILLIAMS
(b. 1932)

Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Back
(1980)

STAR WARS: THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK

Starring

Mark Hamill
Harrison Ford
Carrie Fisher
Billy Dee Williams
Anthony Daniels

Co-Starring

David Prowse as Darth Vader
Kenny Baker as R2-D2
Peter Mayhew as Chewbacca
Frank Oz as Yoda

Directed by

Irvin Kershner

Produced by

Gary Kurtz

Screenplay by

Leigh Brackett and Lawrence Kasdan

Story by

George Lucas

Executive Producer

George Lucas

Music by

John Williams

 DOLBY



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Notes on the Program

John Williams has been the pre-eminent composer of Hollywood film music for more than five decades. The son of a film studio musician, he grew up studying first piano and then trombone, trumpet, and clarinet. When his family moved to Los Angeles, in 1948, he began working with the jazz pianist and arranger Bobby Van Eps. During the early 1950s, he did a stint in the Air Force (conducting and arranging for bands) and studied piano at The Juilliard School with Rosina Lhévinne for a year. Later that decade, he was a composition pupil of Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco and Arthur Olaf Andersen.

Williams orchestrated numerous feature films in the 1960s and by the 1970s had emerged as an important film-score composer in his own right. Ronald Neame's *The Poseidon Adventure* (1973) marked one of his first incontrovertible successes, but his breakthrough came two years later with the Steven Spielberg blockbuster *Jaws*. Williams became that director's composer of choice, providing music that would mirror, support, and advance the action and emotional states depicted in his films. A selective list of Williams's scores for more than 20 Spielberg films includes many "must-hear" entries, including *Close Encounters of the Third Kind*, *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, *E.T. the Extra-Terrestrial*, *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom*, *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade*, *Jurassic Park*, *Schindler's List*, *Saving Private Ryan*, *Lincoln*, and *The Fabelmans*. The composer concurrently maintained close working relationships with other leading directors, including Alfred Hitchcock (*A Family Plot*), Oliver Stone (*Born on the Fourth of July*, *JFK*, and *Nixon*), and Rob Marshall (*Memoirs of a Geisha*).

Apart from Spielberg, the director-producer with whom Williams is most identified is George Lucas, creator of the *Star Wars* series. It began as a trilogy: *Star Wars*, in 1977 (retitled *Star Wars: A New Hope* upon its re-release four years later); *The Empire Strikes Back*, in 1980; and *Return of the Jedi*, in 1983. That sequence was later expanded by a "prequel trilogy" — *The Phantom Menace*, in 1999; *Attack of the Clones*, in 2002; and *Revenge of the Sith*, in 2005 — and a "sequel trilogy": *The Force Awakens*, in 2015; *The Last Jedi*, in 2017; and *The Rise of Skywalker*, in 2019.

Over the decades Williams often maintained a pace of two films per year, and has now completed more than 100 scores, not counting television movies, shorts, or adaptations. He has been recognized with an impressive succession of honors, among them 54 Oscar nominations and 4 Academy Awards for Best Original Score (for *Jaws*, *Star Wars: A New Hope*, *E.T.*, and *Schindler's List*), plus another for Best Scoring

In Short

Born: February 8, 1932, in Flushing, Queens, New York

Resides: in Los Angeles, California

Work composed: 1980

World premiere: The film *Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Back* was released June 20, 1980.

New York Philharmonic premiere and most recent performances: September 26–28, 2017, conducted by David Newman; this marked the World Premiere of the score performed live to the complete film.

Estimated duration: ca. 129 minutes

Star Wars: A Musical Language

John Williams was impressed by George Lucas's script for *Star Wars* (later subtitled *A New Hope*) when he first read it. "I thought the film would give me the opportunity to write an old-fashioned swashbuckling symphonic score," he said, and he convinced Lucas to opt for a completely original soundtrack rather than assemble one from existing classical compositions, as Stanley Kubrick had done with *2001: A Space Odyssey*. Williams explained:

What the technique of using pre-existing classical music doesn't do is to allow for a piece of melodic material to be fully developed and related to a character all the way through a film. ... For formal reasons, I felt that this particular film wanted such thematic unity.

Williams accordingly formulated about a dozen memorable, easily recognizable themes, each associated with a specific character or situation. These ideas could be revisited and worked into the evolving musical texture as the saga unrolled, in the manner of the leitmotifs famously employed as a structural and narrative element in the operas of Richard Wagner — works to which the *Star Wars* movies are frequently compared. Now instantly recognizable themes introduced in *A New Hope* include the sometimes quiet, sometimes heroic "The Force Theme," which underscores the scene in which a contemplative Luke Skywalker gazes out upon the binary sunset, and also accompanies the first appearance of Obi-Wan Kenobi; Princess Leia's romantic, yet regal theme; and the low-pitched "Imperial Motif," which presages the ominous "Imperial March" associated with Darth Vader, introduced in *The Empire Strikes Back*.

Indeed, Williams's score does have a Wagnerian cast, employing a large symphony orchestra with unmistakable grandeur. The goal was not to emphasize the futuristic aspects of the film, which might have invited electronic effects or extended instrumental techniques. Instead, Williams wrote original music that did not disguise its kinship to such earlier symphonic masters as Wagner, Bruckner, Stravinsky, or Korngold. In this sense, it mirrors the stance of the film itself, which is unquestionably set in the land of sci-fi but also draws on more traditional Hollywood genres, from swashbuckling adventure epic to gun-slinging Western.



From top: Luke Skywalker embarking on his journey to become a Jedi in *The Empire Strikes Back*; Princess Leia and Han Solo moving toward romance; Darth Vader inviting Luke to embrace the Dark Side.

Adaptation and Original Song Score (*Fiddler on the Roof*), 4 Golden Globes, 5 Emmys, and 26 Grammys, in addition to induction into the Hollywood Bowl Hall of Fame (in 2000), a Kennedy Center Honor (2004), the National Medal of Arts (2009), and an honorary KBE from Queen Elizabeth II (2022). In 2016 he became the first composer to receive the American Film Institute Life Achievement Award.

When director and writer George Lucas was creating the original *Star Wars* film in 1977, his friend Steven Spielberg recommended that he hire John Williams to compose an original score. The film was an immense success, and Williams's score became an instant classic in its own right; the movie was honored with six Oscars, including for Best Original Score.

When the time came to continue the saga in *The Empire Strikes Back* — now with Lucas as executive producer and Irvin Kershner as director — Williams was again an integral part of the team. The earlier score had included numerous musical themes associated with specific characters, and these were carried over to the new film. But Williams created entirely new themes, too. Some of the most memorable among them are music to accompany the beloved Yoda (a new character), a leitmotif for “Han Solo and the Princess,” additional music for the robotic C-3PO and R2-D2, and Darth Vader's ominous “Imperial March.”

Instrumentation: three flutes (two doubling piccolo, and one doubling piccolo and alto flute), three oboes (one doubling

In the Composer's Words

In an interview, John Williams spoke about recording the music for *Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Back* and how the score connects to what preceded it while moving forward as an original piece:

I wrote and recorded nearly two hours of music for *The Empire Strikes Back*. My intention was to develop new material that would wed with the original and sound like part of an organic whole: something different, something new, but an extension of what existed for the first film. So in the creation of new themes and in the handling of the original material, the task, both in concept and instrumentation, was one of extending something that I had written three years before.



C-3PO, R2-D2, Luke, and Leia in the final scene that sets up action for *Return of the Jedi*

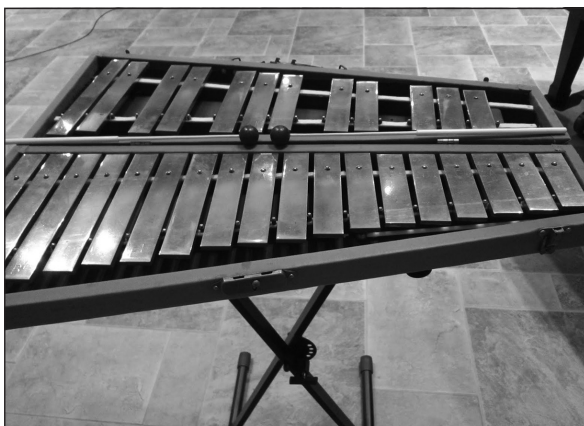
English horn), three clarinets (one doubling bass clarinet, another doubling E-flat clarinet and bass clarinet), three bassoons (one doubling contrabassoon), six horns, three trumpets, four trombones, tuba, timpani, orchestra bells, xylophone, vibraphone, chimes, two snare drums, military drum, field drum, tuned drums, low / deep drum, two bass drums, tam-tam, anvil, triangle, timbales, gong,

cymbals, suspended cymbal, sizzle cymbal, bongos, congas, ratchet, whip, harp, piano (doubling celesta), and strings.

— James M. Keller, *former New York Philharmonic Program Annotator; San Francisco Symphony program annotator; and author of Chamber Music: A Listener's Guide (Oxford University Press)*

Listen for ... Drums and Bells

John Williams deploys an extensive array of percussion instruments in his score for *Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Back*, including a variety of drums, cymbals, bells, a whip, and even an anvil. Snare drums provide the unmistakable militaristic drive of “The Imperial March” and perform a similar function in “The Battle in the Snow.” However, throughout the score Williams also uses absolute contrasts in tone, pairing low drums with triangle, chimes, and the ethereal sound of the celesta (best known from “The Dance of the Sugar Plum Fairy” in Tchaikovsky’s *The Nutcracker*). He particularly calls upon orchestra bells (a set of tuned metal plates arranged as a keyboard and struck with mallets, seen above, also known as the glockenspiel) to provide the ringing, crystalline sound of deep space, and to strike a hopeful note for the Rebel Alliance.



New York Philharmonic Principal Percussion Christopher S. Lamb has noted that an even wider array of percussion — drums, gourds, rattles, and more — makes a large statement in the next installment of the *Star Wars* saga, *Return of the Jedi*, to be performed by the Orchestra live to a complete screening of the film, June 24–27, 2026.

— The Editors

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E-FLAT CLARINET

Benjamin Adler

(Continued)

Instruments made possible, in part, by **The Richard S. and Karen LeFrak Endowment Fund**.

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Barret Ham

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Kurt Masur

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The Artist



Sarah Hicks's versatile and vibrant musicianship has secured her place as an in-demand conductor across an array of genres. She has collaborated with diverse artists,

from classical musicians such as Hilary Hahn and Dmitri Hvorostovsky to popular artists including Jennifer Hudson and The Dirty Projectors; she has toured with Sting as conductor of his Symphoncities Tour. Hicks's passion for cross-genre partnerships led to a 2019 album with rap artist Dessa and the Minnesota Orchestra (with whom she holds the titled position of principal conductor of Live at Orchestra Hall), and is an Emmy winner as both conductor and host for *This Is Minnesota Orchestra*.

A specialist in film music and the film-in-concert genre, her live concert

recordings can be seen on Disney+ and on ABC, and she acts as advisor for and is a frequent collaborator with Disney Concerts across an array of projects. Her first major feature film credit, *Renfield*, was released in 2023, and *The Morricone Duel*, her live album with the Danish National Symphony Orchestra, has garnered more than 200 million views on YouTube.

Hicks's notable conducting collaborators include The Philadelphia Orchestra, Chicago Symphony Orchestra, The Cleveland Orchestra, San Francisco Symphony, Los Angeles Philharmonic, and Boston Pops. International engagements include the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, Czech National Symphony Orchestra, RTÉ Concert Orchestra, St. Petersburg Philharmonic Orchestra, Tokyo Philharmonic, Malaysian Philharmonic Orchestra, and many others.

Star Wars Film Concert Series Production Credits

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New York Philharmonic

The New York Philharmonic plays a leading cultural role in New York City, the United States, and the world. Each season the Orchestra connects with millions of music lovers through live concerts in New York and beyond, as well as broadcasts, recordings, and education programs.

Gustavo Dudamel will become the NY Phil's Oscar L. Tang and H.M. Agnes Hsu-Tang Music & Artistic Director Designate in the 2025–26 season, before beginning his tenure as Music & Artistic Director in the autumn of 2026. In the 2024–25 season Dudamel conducts works by composers ranging from Gershwin and Stravinsky to Philip Glass and Varèse, Mahler's Seventh Symphony, and a World Premiere by Kate Soper (one of 13 World, US, and New York Premieres the Philharmonic gives throughout the season). He also leads the New York Philharmonic Concerts in the Parks, Presented by Didi and Oscar Schafer, for the first time.

During the 2024–25 “interregnum” season between Music Directors, the Orchestra collaborates with leading artists in a variety of contexts. In addition to Yuja Wang, who serves as The Mary and James G. Wallach Artist-in-Residence, the NY Phil engages in cultural explorations spearheaded by Artistic Partners. International Contemporary Ensemble (ICE) joins the examination of Afro-modernism through performances of works by African composers and those reflecting the African diaspora, complemented by panels, exhibits, and more; John Adams shares his insights on American Vistas; and Nathalie Stutzmann shares her expertise through Vocal Echoes, featuring music both with and without voice, including on a free concert presented by the Anna-Maria and Stephen Kellen Foundation. The Orchestra also marks milestone anniversaries of Ravel and Boulez, the latter of whom served as the NY Phil's Music Director in the 1970s.

The New York Philharmonic has commissioned and / or premiered works by leading composers since its founding in 1842, from

Dvořák's *New World* Symphony to two Pulitzer Prize winners: John Adams's *On the Transmigration of Souls* and Tania León's *Stride*, commissioned through *Project 19*, which is supporting the creation of works by 19 women composers. The Orchestra has released more than 2,000 recordings since 1917, including the live recording of Julia Wolfe's Grammy-nominated *Fire in my mouth*. In 2023 the NY Phil announced a partnership with Apple Music Classical, the standalone music streaming app designed to deliver classical music lovers the optimal listening experience. The nationally syndicated radio program *The New York Philharmonic This Week* features the Philharmonic's recent performances and commercial recordings complemented by interviews and archival highlights. The Orchestra's extensive history is available free online through the New York Philharmonic Shelby White & Leon Levy Digital Archives.

A resource for its community and the world, the Orchestra complements the annual free Concerts in the Parks across the city and the Phil for All: Ticket Access Program with education projects, including the Young People's Concerts, Very Young People's Concerts, and the New York Philharmonic Very Young Composers Program. The Orchestra has appeared in 436 cities in 63 countries, including Pyongyang, DPRK, in 2008 — the first visit there by an American orchestra — as well as, in 2024, the first visit to mainland China by a US orchestra since the COVID-19 pandemic, a tour that included education activities as part of the tenth anniversary of the NY Phil-Shanghai Orchestra Academy and Partnership.

Founded in 1842 by local musicians, the New York Philharmonic is one of the oldest orchestras in the world. Notable figures who have conducted the Philharmonic include Tchaikovsky, Richard Strauss, Stravinsky, and Copland. Distinguished conductors who have served as Music Director include such luminaries as Bernstein, Toscanini, and Mahler.

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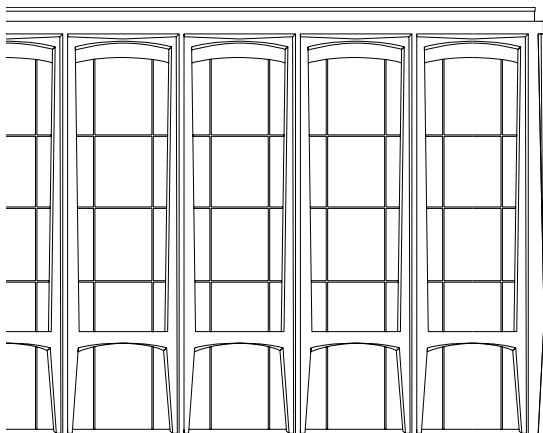
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