FILM MUSIC IN CONCERT

The Pioneering Role of
the Boston Pops Orchestra

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Elements in Music since 1945

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Abstract: The Boston Pops Orchestra was the first orchestra of its kind in the USA: founded in 1885 from the ranks of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, its remit was to offer concerts of light symphonic music. Over the years, and in particular during the fifty-year tenure of its most famous conductor, Arthur Fiedler, the Pops established itself as the premier US orchestra, specialising in bridging the fields of ‘art music’ and ‘popular music’. When the Hollywood composer John Williams was assigned the conductorship of the orchestra in 1980, he energetically advocated for the inclusion of film-music repertoire, changing Fiedler’s approach significantly. This Element offers a historical survey of the pioneering agency that the Boston Pops had under Williams’s tenure in the legitimisation of film music as a viable repertoire for concert programmes. The case study is complemented with more general discussions on the aesthetic of film music in concert.

Keywords: film-music concerts, Boston Pops Orchestra, Conductor John Williams, Cine-concerts, prejudices against film music

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