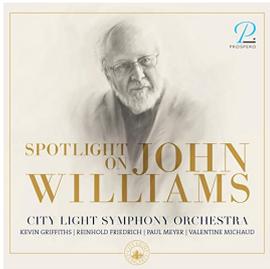


## Spotlight on John Williams \*\*\*\*



JOHN WILLIAMS

Prospero

Disc One: 10 tracks - 66:12

Disc Two: 6 tracks - 35:04

John Williams' music has long been a source of inspiration for conductors and record labels who produce re-recordings. Charles Gerhardt was one of the first practitioners of this back in the 1970s, and Williams himself admired these albums very much, stating in 1980: "In recent years, Gerhardt has done more than anyone else toward advancing the course of film music."

The Prospero label, conductor Kevin Griffiths and Switzerland's City Light Symphony Orchestra offer the latest John Williams highlights album, *Spotlight on John Williams*, featuring an array of greats that cover a wide range of the composer's repertoire. Thankfully, this orchestra is well versed with playing this material, due in no small part to Film Concerts Live having a special arrangement whereby their latest live-to-picture package is premiered and performed by the orchestra in their home of the KKL Concert Hall in Lucerne (an example of which takes place this coming June with *Superman in Concert*).

The *Spotlight* playlist opens with material from Mark Rydell's 1972 film *The Cowboys*. Williams originally constructed this 10-minute overture for his debut Boston Pops performance in 1980, where it shined due to its suitably fanfaric structure with appropriate sprinklings of Americana. The orchestra nails the performance here, making for a fantastic opener. We then shift to a trilogy of Spielberg classics: First up is the underperformed *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom* "End Credits" (paging Laurent Bouzereau; this is how your Concord album should have finished!). *Jurassic Park's* suite of its two main themes packs a punch, especially during the last few bars, which showcase the double basses, contra bassoon and timpani particularly well, thanks to the resounding acoustics of the KKL concert hall. The delightful orchestral colors from *Hook's* "Flight to Neverland" complete this mini-Spielberg showcase.

*Harry Potter* takes center stage next, and the decisions *not* to include "Harry's Wondrous World" and "Hedwig's Theme" are very welcome. Instead we have "The Chamber of Secrets," "Fawkes the Phoenix" (my personal favorite from JW's *Potter* trilogy, as the unashamed, whimsical nature of the theme perfectly captures the essence of the films) and *The Prisoner of Azkaban's* thrilling "Witches, Wands and Wizards." The virtuoso flute solo by Christian Madlener is outstanding.

After some *Tintin* and *Superman*, the first disc finishes with a rousing reading of *Star Wars: Episode VII - The Force Awakens*. It's a weighty 20-minute suite, but remains compelling throughout.

Disc two cleverly spotlights Williams' more soloistic works, beginning with one of the best examples: *JFK*. Trumpet soloist Reinhold Friedrich (hand-picked by

Claudio Abbado for his Lucerne Festival Orchestra) certainly doesn't hold back, and uses just enough vibrato. Oliver Stone is represented again later with a fine rendition of *Born on the Fourth of July*; it's refreshing for a new recording to feature these seminal works.

*Catch Me If You Can*, one of Spielberg's best films, acted as a vehicle for Williams' inherent jazz sensibilities, on full display here with "Escapades for Alto Saxophone and Orchestra." Soloists Valentine Michaud (alto sax), Fabian Ziegler (vibraphone) and Diego Caruso (double bass) don't put a foot (or finger, I should say!) wrong, and the infectious "Joyride" finale is all but impossible not to smile at.

Clarinetist Paul Meyer takes center stage playing "Viktor's Tale" from *The Terminal*, where the almost-duet like interpolation with Laurent Derache on accordion is charming. Closing the album is a lovely reading of "Nimbus 2000," which puts a nice button on things.

In summation, the enthusiasm and love for this music is on full display here, which is particularly great in that this is Prospero's first venture into film music. One can only hope that the label will do more albums of this quality. The orchestra and Royal Academy trained-conductor Griffiths are a winning team, spot on with tempos and energy levels throughout. The cover art is also endearing, as there's an air of Obi-Wan Kenobi in the drawing of Williams. —**Tim Burden**

**\*FSMO subscriber bonus!** *We have two copies of Spotlight on John Williams to give away to two lucky readers. Please email [tburden@filmscoremonthly.com](mailto:tburden@filmscoremonthly.com) to be entered into a random drawing for a chance at being selected.*