

REMEMBRANCES from SCHINDLER'S LIST
By JOHN WILLIAMS
Born February 8, 1932, in New York City

Without question, John Williams is one of the most well-known and successful American composers of film music. Among his many credits are the scores for Jaws, the Star Wars trilogy, Close Encounters, Superman, Indiana Jones, E.T., Born on the Fourth of July, and Far and Away. He has also written several notable works for the concert hall, including concertos for flute, violin, tuba, and trumpet. In addition, from 1980 until 1995, he had been the conductor of the Boston Pops Orchestra, that remarkable institution which has been so successful in bringing the best of classical, semi-classical, and popular music to the world for more than a century.

In 1992, Steven Spielberg asked Williams to compose music for his motion picture Schindler's List, a story about the Holocaust, Hitler's maniacal, systematic slaughter of over six million European Jews before and during World War II. "With dignity and compassion, John Williams has composed original and stunningly classical music for Schindler's List in a collection of haunting themes and orchestral remembrances," noted Spielberg. "The antihuman events beginning with Kristallnacht (1938) to the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau (1944) posed a deliberate challenge to both John and me: how to make the unimaginable factual, and how to create not so much a motion picture but a document of those intolerable times." The film won three Academy Awards: one for Best Motion Picture, one for Best Director, and one for Best Score.

The music which Williams composed for Schindler's List represents a substantial departure from his usual style. Poignant, reflective, and deeply moving, it is strongly influenced by the music of the synagogue and of the Ashkenazim, the Jews of central and Eastern Europe who were the principal victims of the Nazis' brutal extermination program. Throughout the score, the violin has an especially prominent part (In the soundtrack, these solos were played Itzhak Perlman.) "Remembrances" is a brief, hauntingly beautiful excerpt for violin and orchestra from the film score which appears well on its way to becoming an independent concert piece.

-Kenneth C. Viant