

PROGRAM NOTES
Disney in Concert: Around the World
Quincy Symphony Orchestra
September 29, 2019 Quincy, IL
Notes by Dr. Paul Borg

We begin our season with a generous offering of music from the films of the Walt Disney Company [Walt Disney Productions until 1986]. When Walt Disney died in 1966, the corporation continued his inspired and successful animated-film output. Although not all of nearly 200 animations, live-action films, television series, documentaries, or videos are equally memorable, everyone today has heard many of the songs associated with the films, whether from viewing the films, listening to recordings, or in live concerts such as this one.

In the late 1920s and 30s films had newly been furnished with recorded sound, giving motion pictures real-time spoken dialogue among the characters as well as music that could entertain with songs embedded in the storyline. Music could also be employed to enhance or evoke a particular emotion--think the spooky two-note shark approach in *Jaws* or the "screeching" of the knife in the shower scene of *Psycho*. Walt Disney and his brother Roy extended these sound element to animated cartoons, short at first (*Steamboat Willie*) and eventually feature length (*Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*).

Disney's intent to continue a series of fairy tale animations was interrupted by the Second World War, during which he and his collaborators produced a series of training and propaganda films, even using Donald Duck in some comical short sketches. After the war, Disney turned his vision to television and then his entertainment parks, starting with Disneyland in 1955. By the time of his death, he had assembled a dedicated crew of animators, directors, producers, voice-actors/singers, and was using talented composers/song-writers for his successful film career.

One of the films that was released just before he died, *Mary Poppins*, was produced in his creative adaptation of live action combined with animation.

A so-called "Disney Renaissance" began in 1989 with the success of *The Little Mermaid*, which returned the corporation's focus to animated feature films based on stories, fairy tales, and legends. It is mostly from this continuing series of hits that we select our "Around the World" music for this afternoon's program. You might note that the intent here is not to perform an entire film score; rather, the musical titles indicate a selection mostly of songs. An "Overture" begins a musical concert or opera. A "Suite" consists of a series of contrasting musical numbers arranged to offer variety and ultimately a satisfying ending. A "Medley" tends to be less formally organized than a suite—simply a collection of musical sections. A "Symphonic fantasy" is just that--a free-flowing series of musical units for orchestra, strung together by the composer/arranger's imagination. It is noteworthy that one early Disney success *Fantasia* (1940) does just that sort of arrangement: a series of animated stories based on classical music conducted by Leopold Stokowski. The music ranges from Bach's *Toccatina and Fugue in D Minor*, through Beethoven's *Pastoral Symphony*, to Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring*, and of course, Dukas' *Sorcerer's Apprentice*.

Our wandering of the world begins in the ocean: *The Little Mermaid*, a Hans Christian Anderson fairy tale set in and next to the sea. The impossible attraction between two different types of living beings is a favorite theme for many fairy tales. *Pocahontas* is set in colonial Jamestown Virginia at the beginning of the 17th century. In this case the differing types are native Americans and English settlers. *Mary Poppins* is a story from Victorian England. It depicts a social contrast between a servant and a well-to-do family whom she helps. A French

fairy tale *La Belle et le Bête* (Beauty and the Beast) forms the basis for another tortured story involving love as a condition for change.

The Arctic seems to be the locus for another Hans Christian Anderson's tales, *The Snow Queen*. *Frozen* takes place in an "icy place." The heroine pursues a difficult journey to save her sister. Arabia of exotic fantasy is the place for *Aladdin*, taken from *One Thousand and One Nights*, the series of folk tales collected between the 9th to the 12 centuries in the Middle East. Deception is what Aladdin uses in his pursuit of the Sultan's daughter. Chinese legends offer the story of *Mulan* who lived during the Han Dynasty (200 BC-200 AD). She also takes on an impersonation to help fight against a Hun invasion of her Chinese homeland. The title of *Pirates of the Caribbean: The Curse of the Black Pearl* gives its geographical location. It is one of a series of five "swashbuckler" films based on a Disney theme-park ride. Finally, *The Lion King* takes us to Africa with the tale of an interpretation of human family power and conflict cast by lions.

Finally, we end with what has been claimed the most-performed and translated piece of music on earth! When Walt Disney created *Fantasyland* for the New York World's Fair in 1964, he wanted music to accompany the ride through the site. Disney asked his staff songwriters, the Sherman brothers, to walk through his scale model and said, "I need one song that can be easily translated into languages and be played as a round." What they produced is still being heard around the world at Disney parks.

The Disney Company inherited the talented Sherman brothers when it took over the production of the film output begun by Walt Disney. Throughout the years film music has most often been a collaborative process involving many types of input--lyrics, mood music, dances,

and other set pieces. Also, the opening and closing credits allow an overture and postlude

framework. The composers for the films presented today include:

Sherman Brothers =

Robert B. Sherman & Richard M. Sherman
(1925-2012) (born 1928)

Menken & Ashman =

Alan Menken & Howard Ashman
(born 1949) (1950-1991)

Robert Lopez & Kristen Anderson-Lopez

(born 1975) (born 1972)

Goldsmith, Wilder & Zippel =

Jerry Goldsmith, Matthew Wilder & David Zippel
(1929-2004) (born 1953) (born 1954)

Zimmer & Badelt =

Hans Zimmer & Klaus Badelt
(born 1957) (born 1967)

Zimmer & John =

Hans Zimmer & Elton John
(born 1957) (born 1947)

The films listed in chronological order are:

Mary Poppins 1964

Little Mermaid 1989

Beauty and the Beast 1991

Aladdin 1992

Lion King 1994

Pocahontas 1995

Mulan 1998

Pirates of the Caribbean 2003

Frozen 2013

And the music from the theme park ride:

It's a Small World 1962-3 (NY World's Fair 1966)

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