

London Philharmonic Orchestra



GCSE BrightSparks Resources

BrightSparks is generously funded by the Rothschild Foundation with additional support from the Candide Trust, Dunard Fund, Rivers Foundation, The R K Charitable Trust, Mr & Mrs Philip Kan, Gill and Julian Simmonds

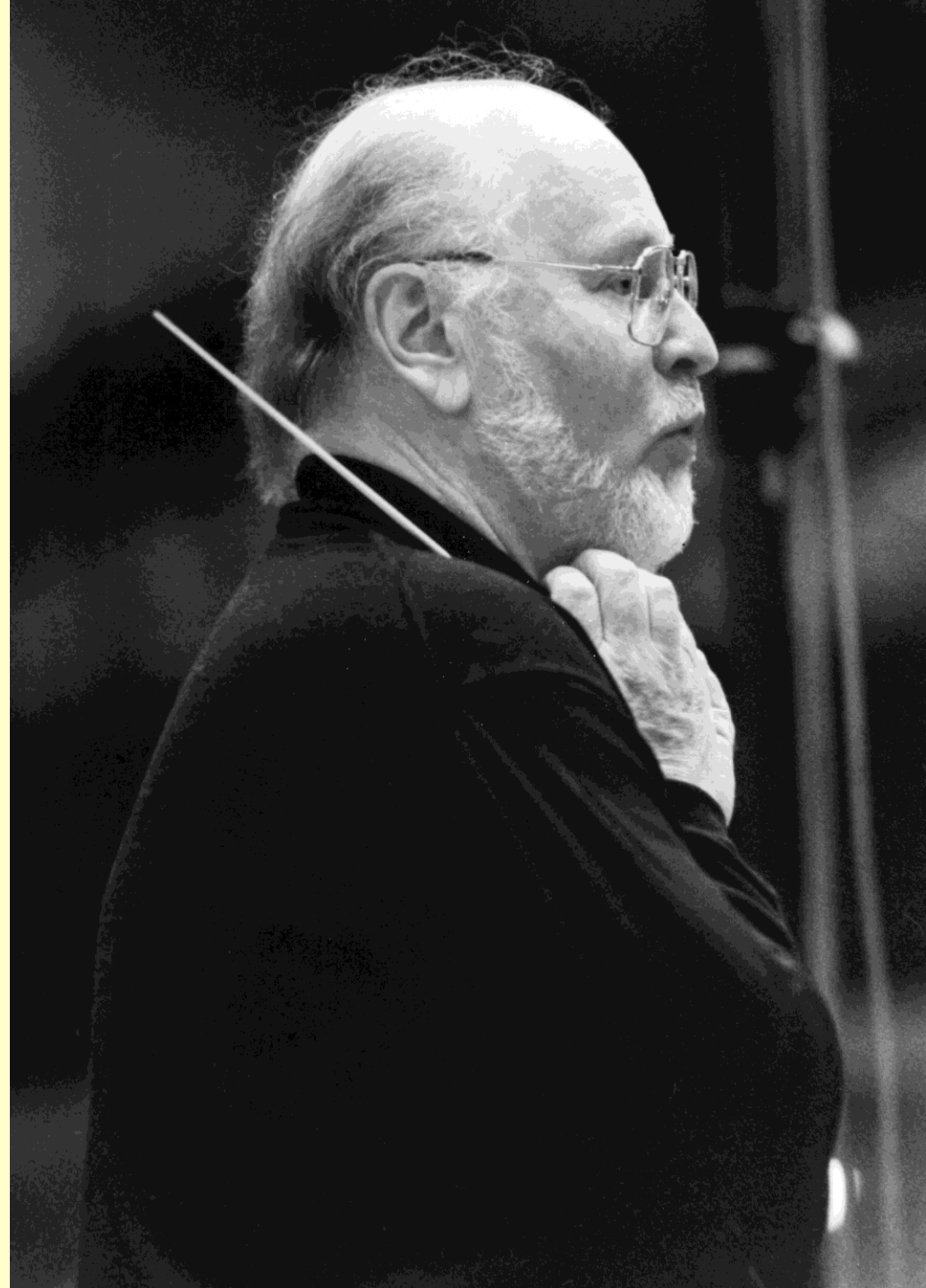
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John Williams

(b. 1932)

Superman March

(1978)

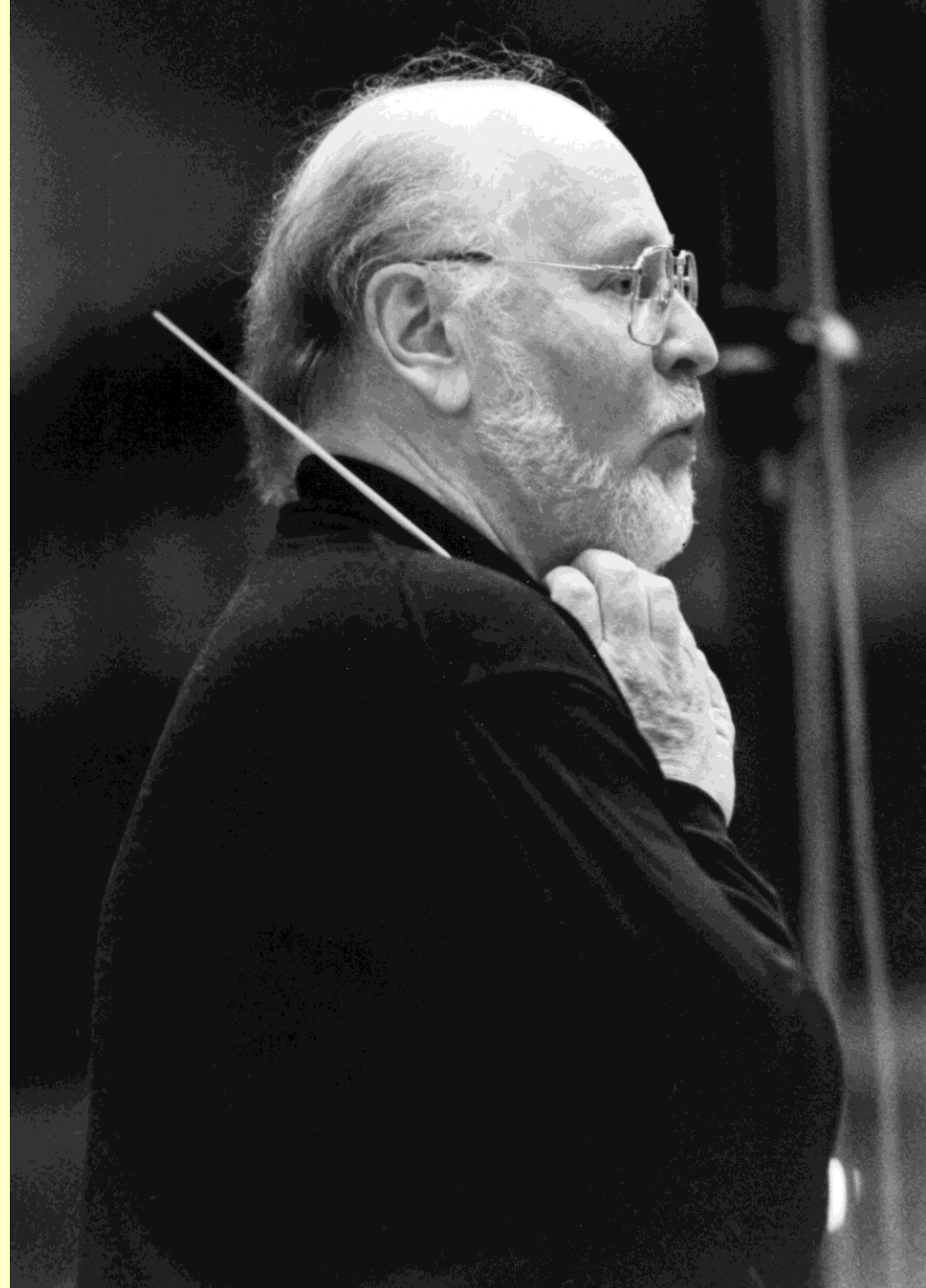


John Williams

(b. 1932)

- ♠ American film composer
- ♠ Famous for symphonic scores with **leitmotifs**

Leitmotif = small music idea that represents a place, character, emotion, theme etc within the film's story



Williams – Superman March – 1978

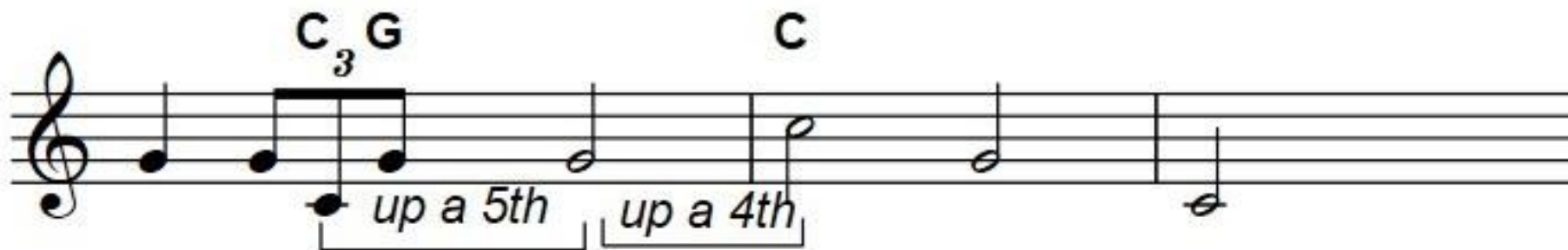
Analysis



Williams – Superman March – 1978

Theme A: includes Superman motif

- ♠ Long, low **pedal note/drone**
- ♠ Fanfare figure (brass) with 3 notes – C, G, C



Pedal = long, often low pitch that underpins the harmony

Drone = one long note, continuously sounded

Williams – Superman March – 1978

Theme A: Includes Superman motif

- ♠ Rhythmic **ostinato** from lower strings, lower woodwind, bass trombone and tuba...



...acting as a **pedal**

Ostinato = repeating pattern

Williams – Superman March – 1978

Theme A: Includes Superman motif



- 💎 Pedal shifts from C to F to G
- 💎 Briefly homorhythmic – everyone plays the same rhythm at the same time

Williams – Superman March – 1978

Theme B



- ♠ Main marching theme
 - ♠ Uses the tonic, the fourth below and the fifth above
 - ♠ Spiky fanfare rhythm
 - ♠ Each phrase begins with an **anacrusis**
- Anacrusis = phrase starts on the upbeat**

Williams – Superman March – 1978

Theme C: associated with love and Lois Lane

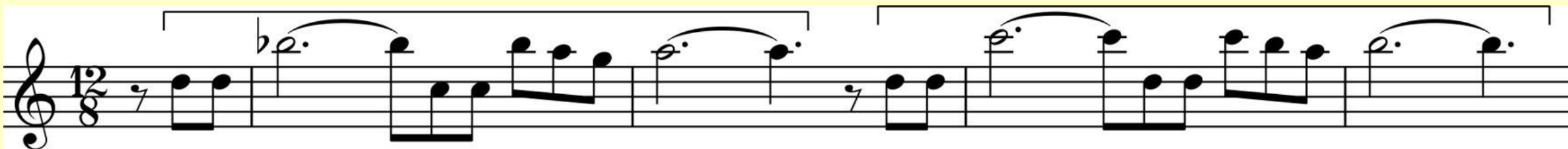


- ❖ In F (we've modulated to the subdominant)
- ❖ Legato (smooth)
- ❖ Accompanied by the **ostinato** in the strings
- ❖ Scales decorate (woodwind, piano, harp)

Williams – Superman March – 1978




Theme C: associated with love and Lois Lane

 Sequence on woodwind






Sequence = musical material repeated at a higher or lower pitch

Williams – Superman March – 1978

-  Key shifts to Bb
-  Repeat of marching **Theme B**
-  Return to **Theme A** in two different keys

Williams – Superman March – 1978

Coda (ending)

-  Chromatic movement from the brass
-  **Ostinato** acting as a tonic **pedal** (on G)
-  Progressive tonality – ends in G (different key from the beginning)

Williams – Superman March – 1978

Quiz Questions

1. Which instruments start playing at bar 5?
2. What is the term for a repeating pattern?
3. At bar 16 everyone has the same rhythm. What is the term for this?
4. What four percussion instruments can you hear from bars 27 to 33?
5. What's the technical term for beginning on the upbeat?
6. Which brass instruments play the transitional melody at bar 43?
7. Who plays the repeating pattern at bar 67?
8. At bar 77 the woodwind repeat the material on a higher starting pitch.
What's the term for this?
9. What's happening in the brass at bar 87?
10. What theme is played at bar 97?

Williams – Superman March – 1978

Answers

1. Lower brass
2. Ostinato
3. Homorhythmic
4. Cymbal crashes, triangle rolls, glockenspiel on the tune, timpani underpins the harmony
5. Anacrusis
6. Horns
7. Strings
8. Sequence
9. Falling 4-note ostinato
10. A (fanfare)

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