



Michael Giacchino takes ‘Star Trek’ scores live

Alex Biese, @ABieseAPP 12:07 a.m. EDT July 27, 2014



(Photo: Deborah Coleman/Pixar)

Michael Giacchino is taking his acclaimed film music from the scoring stage to the concert stage.

A Burlington County native, Giacchino has won an Academy Award, a Golden Globe and two Grammy Awards thanks to his work on the 2009 Pixar film “Up,” in addition to the Emmy he won for his score for the 2004 pilot episode of “Lost.”

On Thursday, July 31, Giacchino and the Philadelphia Orchestra will present a live performance of his score for the 2013 sci-fi adventure hit “Star Trek Into Darkness,” while J.J. Abrams’ film plays out on the big screen at the Mann Center for the Performing Arts in Philadelphia.

“I’ve always felt that those of us who get to go and record these types of scores, this film music ... it’s such a unique and weird experience to be in a recording studio with the orchestra sitting there, and there’s this giant screen behind them, and you’re able to watch the movie with the orchestra playing live to the picture as you’re recording,” said Giacchino, 46, who was born in Riverside Township and grew up in Edgewater Park.

“Of course, we do stop and start, and all of the cues are broken up (when recording), so it’s slightly different in that sense,” Giacchino said.

“But, the idea of being able to sit in front of an orchestra as they’re playing to the picture is such a strange and unique thing. And, to do an entire movie that way and to be able to bring it to fans, people who actually enjoy these films, is a huge treat.”

And, he added, the “Star Trek: Live in Concert” series of events around the world, with tickets at the Mann starting at under \$15, have the potential to introduce symphonic music to a whole new group of fans.

“I see all these symphonies, and I notice a lot of them are in trouble,” Giacchino said. “And it’s very hard to keep a symphony afloat these days. I’m hoping these concerts can help bring in some people to the audience, into the concert halls, and maybe even make new fans of just the orchestra in general, not just the movies, so that they’ll come back and see other things. That’s the hope, ultimately.”

A natural evolution

Using film scores to introduce concert audiences to symphonic music makes a lot of sense. After all, Giacchino argued, movie music marks a “perfectly natural evolution” in the history of the art form.

“I’ve always thought that classical music itself is not all that different from film music. It was created out of a need for something.

“The church would say: ‘We’re going to have a Mass, and we need something written for this. Hire that guy to do it.’ And that’s how all that music, most if it, was written.

“It was work for hire. These composers worked for the church, and they created all of this music.

“So, what’s different is the church has been replaced by the studio, and the studio is hiring the composer now to write for their event that they need some music for, be it be a movie or whatever, a TV show. So, it’s basically not that different, and it’s nice to kind of start to see that filter into the concert hall as well.”

‘Darkness’ rising

Giacchino, who said he grew up watching reruns of the original “Star Trek” series on local South Jersey television, discussed the process of scoring frequent collaborator J.J. Abrams’ two recent “Trek” films, “Star Trek” and its sequel.

While the first film, which introduced viewers to Chris Pine’s James Kirk and Zachary Quinto’s Spock, was flush with Space Age-style optimism and the joy of discovery, the follow-up takes a harsher and more aggressive look at troubling topical issues.

“The first one is more of a personal journey story, and (‘Into Darkness’) feels like more of a commentary on our sociopolitical status in the world today,” Giacchino said. “It feels like it’s really talking about drone strikes and whether it may be right to go to war. Is it wrong? Is it moral? Is it immoral? All of these things are all over the news today.

“And so, this one was more of an exploration of those sorts of themes, whereas the first one was really about the emptiness of this one character and what he has to do in order to find himself and understand who he is and become a better person — and along the way, make some of the best friends he’ll ever have.

“But, both films have a very different backbone them. So, musically, the second one felt darker. It felt more operatic, it felt — not without emotion, mind you — like it was something that was always clouded in — I don’t want to say darkness, because it’s in the title, and that would sound cheesy — but it is a movie that is marred in emotional confusion as to what’s the right thing to do.”

Over the course of nearly 20 years as a film composer, Giacchino has forged long-running relationships with some of the biggest directors in the industry. For example, along with “Lost” and the “Star Trek” films, he’s worked with Abrams on “Mission: Impossible III” (2006) and “Super 8” (2011).

Likewise, he scored the just-released “Dawn of the Planet of the Apes,” and he’s previously worked with that film’s director, Matt Reeves, on “Cloverfield” (2008) and “Let Me In” (2010). And, after collaborating with director Brad Bird on “The Incredibles” (2004), “Ratatouille” (2007) and “Mission: Impossible — Ghost Protocol” (2011), Giacchino is set to score the director’s highly anticipated upcoming picture, “Tomorrowland.”

Jersey memories

These long-term creative relationships, Giacchino said, harken back to his earliest days of film enthusiasm.

“When I grew up, I was making movies in my backyard in South Jersey. I had a group of friends, that for years, we made movies together,” he said. “And, that was some of the happiest times of my life. I feel like this is sort of just an extension of that. I’ve found this new group of friends that I can run out into the backyard and make things with.

“And, we’re still there, like when J.J. and I are working together, we’ll look around, either on set or on the scoring stage, and inevitably, we will say, ‘Can you believe they’re letting us do this? Can you believe they’re actually letting us play like this?’

“Because, for us, it really is about that passion. That sort of childhood ambition of just coming up with an idea and making it really hasn’t left for me.”

STAR TREK INTO DARKNESS

WITH: Michael Giacchino’s score performed live by the Philadelphia Orchestra

WHEN: Doors 6 p.m., showtime 8 p.m.

Thursday, July 31

WHERE: The Mann Center for the Performing Arts, 5201 Parkside Ave.,

Philadelphia

TICKETS: \$14.50 to \$75

ON THE WEB: www.manncenter.org

<http://www.app.com/story/entertainment/arts/2014/07/27/michael-giacchino-takes-star-trek-scores-live/13165639/>