

MYSTERY COMPOSER (MC) CLUE/JANUARY 2024 GROUP

This year's M.C. can be described as a creator of contemporary classical music with a neo-romanticism flavor, inspired by late 19th century orchestral music in the style of Tchaikovsky, Richard Strauss, Antonin Dvorak and Richard Wagner. He is also a conductor, pianist and jazz buff.

M.C.'s recording career goes back to the 50's and encompasses concertos, orchestral and chamber works, gospel music and TV and film scores. He is revered for his classical and standard interpretations, his nods to George Gershwin, the delight he took in working with opera singer Jessie Norman, Chinese-American cellist Yo-Yo Ma, violinists Isaac Stern (for whom he composed the violin cadenzas for the film adaptation of *Fiddler on the Roof*), Itzhak Perlman (who performed the violin solos on *Schindler's List*), Joshua Bell, and Gil Shaham. He was conductor of the celebrated Boston Pops Orchestra from 1980 to 1993. He is now its Laureate Conductor, leading the orchestra on several occasions each year, particularly during their Holiday Pops season and a week of concerts in May.

A profile in the *Los Angeles Times*, published in 2012, gives insight to M.C.'s method of composition. "The quietest room in Hollywood may be the office where (M.C.) composes," the paper observed. "In a bungalow on the Universal Studios lot, ...he works alone at a 90-year-old Steinway grand piano, with fistfuls of pencils and stacks of composition paper nearby, and worn books of poetry by Robert Frost and William Wordsworth piled on the coffee table." Refusing to fall back on synthesizers or computers, M.C. writes his scores the old-fashioned way; he doesn't let machines dictate his search for melody.

He composed music for more than 200 television episodes of series including Wagon Train, Tales of Wells Fargo, Kraft Mystery Theatre, Bob Hope Presents the Chrysler Theatre, Gilligan's Island, Lost in Space, and many more.

M.C. is considered an undisputed master of the film score. Having composed over 100 scores in the past 60 years, M.C. composes themes that are not just an accompaniment to the action — they often *are* the action, preceding the main event and taking the listener into unknown worlds—underwater or deep space—while raising one's hair on the back of one's neck.

In 1972, after being captivated by M.C.'s score to *The Reivers*, a young film director by the name of Stephen Spielberg sought out a lunch with M.C. And, as they say, *the rest is history*.

Who is this year's M.C.?

Rules of M.C. Contest:

- All answers must be emailed; I will not respond to texts or phone calls
- **Middle & High School Students must do their own research**
- **Elementary** students may (and will probably need) parental help/guidance
- All answers must include the following:
 - Name, date of birth, date of death (if applicable) of M.C.
 - What part of the clue did you use to guide your research?
 - Resources used to discover identity of M.C. If Google is used, please include the url(s) of articles in your email to me.
 - Include the name of at least 2 compositions by M.C.

Happy Research!