

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****The Museum of Modern Art**For Immediate Release  
March 2001**THE MUSEUM OF MODERN ART TO PRESENT  
NINE FILMS SCORED WITH ORIGINAL MUSIC BY  
ERICH WOLFGANG KORNGOLD****MoMA Series, *Pure Korngold*, Presented as  
Part of a Celebration of Korngold's Music*****Pure Korngold*  
April 9-17, 2001  
The Roy and Niuta Titus Theater 1****Concert by Aron Quartet (including String Quartet No. 3 in D Major)  
April 4, 2001  
Weill Recital Hall*****Die tote Stadt (The Dead City)*  
April 15-26, 2001  
New York City Opera****Symposium on Korngold's Music  
April 5, 2001  
The Goethe Institut**

The Museum of Modern Art presents nine films scored by Austrian composer Erich Wolfgang Korngold as part of a celebration of Korngold's music in collaboration with New York City Opera, The Goethe Institut and the Austrian Cultural Institute. Korngold built upon the late-Romantic idiom of Richard Strauss and Gustav Mahler and created sweeping melodies and lavish harmonies that quickly became the model for movie studio swashbucklers and melodramas of the 1930s and 1940s. Korngold inspired his contemporaries and future generations of film composers through the twentieth century, such as John Williams, who reprised his lush symphonic themes for epics such as *Star Wars* (1977) and *E.T. The Extra Terrestrial* (1982).

Korngold's conception of the music he composed for the movies was like '*opera without singing*': from 1935 through 1947 he created original music for 18 feature films including 1935's Errol Flynn vehicle, *Captain Blood*, and 1938's Technicolor *The Adventures of Robin Hood*. Few talents of his generation made a smoother transition from the musical theater to the sound stage. From April 9 through 17, 2001, the Museum will feature nine films with original score by Korngold in the Roy and Niuta Titus Theatre 1; on April 4, the Aron Quartet performs a concert including Korngold's String Quartet No. 3 in D major, Op. 34 (1945) at Weill Recital Hall; between April 15 and 26, the New York City Opera presents his 1920 opera, *Die tote Stadt (The Dead City)*; and on April 5, The Goethe Institut hosts a symposium on Korngold's music.

"The musical performances at New York City Opera and the symposium at The Goethe Institut concurrent with the film series illuminate Korngold's masterful range," remarks Mary Lea Bandy, Chief Curator, Department of Film and Video, who organized the series. "These collaborative programs are an extraordinary opportunity to celebrate the musical treasures created by Korngold."

Born in Brno, Moravia, in 1897, Korngold was raised in Vienna, where his father was the most influential music critic of his time. His teacher was the composer Alexander Zemlinsky. A child prodigy, Korngold wrote ballet music, chamber works, symphonic pieces, and opera scores in his teens. At 23, he composed his most successful opera, *Die tote Stadt* (*The Dead City*, 1920), a richly melodic and highly theatrical three-act tragedy set in eighteenth-century Bruges.

Korngold's admiration for the music of Johann Strauss, Jr., led to his collaboration with producer-director Max Reinhardt on an anthology titled *Waltzes from Vienna*, and in 1934 Reinhardt commissioned Korngold to adapt and conduct Felix Mendelssohn's stage score for the Warner Brothers film of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

Korngold's impact on Hollywood was immediate, and after completing another opera and a score for Oscar Hammerstein for Paramount, he settled at Warner Bros., where he composed 18 original scores from 1935 through 1946. His first assignment was *Captain Blood* (1935), directed by Hungarian émigré Michael Curtiz and intended to make the young Errol Flynn an immediate star. Given three weeks to compose an hour of symphonic music, Korngold borrowed from Franz Liszt to score the duel between Flynn and Basil Rathbone, although most of the film's music was his own. *Captain Blood* proved that the expertise of the studio system could create a hit critically as well as commercially, and the team worked together again in 1938 on *The Adventures of Robin Hood*, a masterpiece of storytelling for children of every age. Witty and engaging, joyous and boisterous, *Robin Hood* enchanted audiences with fine-tuned performances that reunited Flynn with Rathbone and Olivia de Havilland and a Technicolor palette as lush as its opulent, lyrical melodies.

The music of *Robin Hood*, which took seven weeks to complete, exemplifies Korngold's working methods. For the composer, a screenplay was an opera libretto: each principal character and his or her passions were defined with musically distinct motifs to be repeated in variations appropriate to the comic or dramatic scenes. Sitting at his piano before a screen, Korngold had the projectionist run the reels of the film as he improvised to create musical personality and mood; subsequently he wrote down his ideas and sketched them in greater detail in collaboration with an orchestrator. The music set the pace, spiced the action, anticipated the romance as it introduced each character, and enhanced the pageantry, turning the motion picture into grand opera, with a nod to the Viennese waltz.

Korngold subsequently scored adventure films set amidst British piracy and Elizabethan court intrigue. For contemporary dramas, he wrote darker music, contrasting the often expressionistic violence of narrative themes with the characters' sorrow, loneliness, and sense of failure and loss in films such as *The Private Lives of Elizabeth and Essex* (1939), *The Sea Wolf* (1941), and *Kings Row* (1942). Korngold died in 1957, thinking that interest in his style of musical scoring had passed, just a score of years before John Williams reprised his style in *Star Wars* and *E.T. The*

*Extra-Terrestrial.*

*Pure Korngold* was organized by Mary Lea Bandy, Chief Curator, Department of Film and Video, and is presented in collaboration with New York City Opera, the Goethe Institut New York and the Austrian Cultural Institute, and with the generous cooperation of Turner Entertainment Company.

**Pure Korngold Screening Schedule:**

**Monday, April 9, 2:30 p.m.; Friday, April 13, 6:30 p.m.**

***Anthony Adverse.*** 1936. USA. Directed by Mervyn LeRoy. Screenplay by Sheridan Gibney. Based on the novel by Hervey Allen. Music by Erich Wolfgang Korngold. With Frederic March, Olivia De Havilland, Donald Woods, Anita Louise, and Edmund Gwenn. This mammoth epic adapted from a bestseller included 78 speaking parts, a twelve-acre set of an African compound built on the back lot, and miniatures reused from *Captain Blood*. Korngold set the pace with the opening half-hour of his score. Print courtesy Turner Entertainment Company. 136 min.

**Monday, April 9, 6:00 p.m.; Thursday, April 12, 2:30 p.m.**

***The Private Lives of Elizabeth and Essex.*** 1939. USA. Directed by Michael Curtiz. Screenplay by Norman Reilly Raine and Aeneas MacKenzie. Based on the play *Elizabeth the Queen* by Maxwell Anderson. Music by Erich Wolfgang Korngold. With Bette Davis, Errol Flynn, Olivia De Havilland, Donald Crisp, and Vincent Price. The role of the powerful monarch Queen Elizabeth I was an ideal vehicle for Davis. Accordingly, Korngold devoted the music to her character, contrasting themes of court formality and intrigue with melodies revealing the essential loneliness of the ruler who loves and trusts men at her peril. Print courtesy Turner Entertainment Company. 106 min.

**Tuesday, April 10, 2:30 p.m.; Thursday, April 12, 6:00 p.m.**

***Kings Row.*** 1942. USA. Directed by Sam Wood. Screenplay by Casey Robinson. Based on the novel by Henry Bellamann. Music by Erich Wolfgang Korngold. With Ann Sheridan, Robert Cummings, Ronald Reagan, Betty Field, and Charles Coburn. Unlike his previous work, Korngold here scores a contemporary narrative set in a pre-World War I small Midwestern town, *Kings Row*, brimming with hypocrisy, and he creates strong melodies and bold harmonies to delineate character and suffering, particularly of the lighthearted Ronnie Reagan. Print courtesy Turner Entertainment Company. 126 min.

**Tuesday, April 10, 6:00 p.m.; Friday, April 13, 2:30 p.m.**

***Deception.*** 1946. USA. Directed by Irving Rapper. Screenplay by John Collier and Joseph Than. Based on the play *Jealousy* by Louis Verneuil. Music by Erich Wolfgang Korngold. With Bette Davis, Paul Henreid, Claude Rains, John Abbott, and Benson Fong. Henreid plays a gifted musician, Rains a composer and conductor with a mean streak, and Davis's character dares to take charge. Korngold creates a concerto to make the Henreid's virtuoso famous; it is heard first in excerpts, then at a rehearsal, and finally in performance. Production notes explain that for the latter scenes, two cellists hid behind Henreid's back, each of whom wound an arm around him to jointly play his cello, and camera angles took care of the

rest. Print courtesy Turner Entertainment Company. 112 min.

**Saturday, April 14, 2:00 p.m.; Thursday, April 19, 6:00 p.m.**

***The Adventures of Robin Hood***. 1938. USA. Directed by Michael Curtiz and William Keighley. Screenplay by Norman Reilly Raine and Seton Miller. Music by Erich Wolfgang Korngold. With Errol Flynn, Olivia De Havilland, Basil Rathbone, Claude Rains, and Alan Hale. This Technicolor fairy tale enabled Korngold to create what is perhaps his greatest score. The composer alternated march tunes and melodies, waltzes, and fanfares, to complement the daring and bravery of the Merry Men. Print courtesy Turner Entertainment Company. 102 min.

**Tuesday, April 17, 6:00 p.m.; Thursday, April 19, 2:30 p.m.**

***Between Two Worlds***. 1944. USA. Directed by Edward L. Blatt. Screenplay by Daniel Fuchs. Based on the play *Outward Bound* by Sutton Vane. Music by Erich Wolfgang Korngold. With John Garfield, Eleanor Parker, Sydney Greenstreet, Faye Emerson, and Paul Henreid. A spiritual drama set in London, with an overreaching Garfield backed up by a fine cast. The film's eerie, mysterious qualities are caught by Korngold's music, which is considered among his best work from the mid-1940s. Print courtesy Turner Entertainment Company. 112 min.

**Saturday, April 14, 5:00 p.m.; Monday, April 16, 2:30 p.m.**

***Captain Blood***. 1935. USA. Directed by Michael Curtiz. Screenplay by Casey Robinson. Based on the novel *Captain Blood: His Odyssey* by Rafael Sabatini. Music by Erich Wolfgang Korngold. With Errol Flynn, Olivia De Havilland, Lionel Atwill, Basil Rathbone, and Henry Stephenson. The first of the Warner Brothers/Curtiz pirate tales made Flynn a star in his role as an Irish physician who puts humanity over politics and pays a price. It also first paired Flynn and De Havilland as the adventurer and his doubting lady, and was Korngold's first original score for the studio. Print courtesy Turner Entertainment Company. 120 min.

**Sunday, April 15, 2:00 p.m.; Monday, April 16, 6:00 p.m.**

***The Sea Hawk***. 1940. USA. Directed by Michael Curtiz. Screenplay by Howard Koch and Seton Miller. Music by Erich Wolfgang Korngold. With Errol Flynn, Brenda Marshall, Claude Rains, Donald Crisp, and Flora Robson. Korngold understood that music can signal movement and create tension and excitement before they are grasped visually. In this fourth collaboration between Curtiz and Flynn, their most episodic swashbuckler, Korngold's score introduces the winds blowing the ships before we see them rising with the waves. When Flynn's men are captured and made galley slaves, it is the music that tells us they are no longer rowing to the beat of the galley master. Restored print courtesy Turner Entertainment Company. 127 min.

**Sunday, April 15, 2:00 p.m.; Monday, April 16, 6:00 p.m.**

***The Sea Wolf***. 1941. USA. Directed by Michael Curtiz. Screenplay by Robert Rossen. Based on the novel by Jack London. Music by Erich Wolfgang Korngold. With Edward G. Robinson, Ida Lupino, John Garfield, Alexander Knox, and Gene Lockhart. A ship sets off on a nightmare voyage, captained by a brutal but learned madman (Robinson) who torments his crew and

passengers. The haunting music for Garfield and Lupino, two lovers on the lam, is played on a harmonica. Print courtesy Turner Entertainment Company. 90 min.

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