

John Williams and His Music for *E.T.: The Extra-Terrestrial*

John Williams is considered to be one of the greatest film composers of all time and one of the greatest composers of modern times. He has composed music for over one-hundred films, in a career that has spanned over six decades. His music for the film *E.T.: The Extra-Terrestrial* is an incredible union of visual and musical storytelling, and is considered one of Williams' finest scores. This paper provides a brief biography of John Williams, a general background of the film *E.T.*, and analyzes the music that Williams wrote for the movie. This includes an overview of the musical themes and a cue-by-cue analysis that examines the thematic material and how it supports the narrative.

Background on John Williams

John Towner Williams was born on February 8, 1932 in New York. His father, John Francis Williams, was a percussionist who worked in the CBS Radio Orchestra, played drums in the Raymond Scott Quintette, and was also a Hollywood studio musician¹ The younger John Williams played a number of instruments as a child, but finally dedicated himself to the piano and dreamt of becoming a concert pianist. He moved to Los Angeles with his family in 1948. He studied piano with Robert Van Eps, composition and counterpoint with Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco, and studied music at UCLA until he joined the Air Force in 1951.

While he was in the Air Force, Williams conducted and arranged music for the Air Force Band. After getting out of the Air Force in 1955, he studied music at Juilliard in New York. It is not exactly clear if Williams was still pursuing a career as a concert pianist at that point, but his focus at Juilliard was the piano (though he would soon change his goal to composition). His piano teacher at Juilliard was Rosina Lhevinne, and Van Cliburn was one of his classmates. While he was studying at Juilliard, he also played jazz piano in various clubs around New York.²

After Juilliard, John Williams moved to Los Angeles in 1956 and became a pianist in the Columbia Pictures orchestra.³ He played piano for a number of famous film composers, including Alfred Newman, Henry Mancini, Bernard Herrmann, Jerry Goldsmith, and Elmer Bernstein. He played piano in Elmer Bernstein's score for *To Kill a Mockingbird* and Henry Mancini's theme for the TV show, *Peter Gunn*. Williams and Mancini became lifelong friends and Mancini even presented the Oscar for Best Original Score to Williams for his score to *Star Wars*. He did a lot of arranging and orchestration work in Hollywood, but eventually worked his way up to composing for TV and films. His first film score was for the low-budget film, *Daddy-O*, in 1958. His 1969 score for *The Reivers* won the admiration of Steven Spielberg who said that he wanted John Williams to write music for his movies. Spielberg was true to his word and asked John Williams to write the music for *Sugarland Express* in 1974. Since then, Williams has scored all but three of Spielberg's films. These include *The Color Purple*, *Bridge of Spies*, and *Ready Player One*. Quincy Jones was executive producer for *The Color Purple* and wanted to compose the music himself. Thomas Newman composed the music for *Bridge of Spies* because Williams had pacemaker surgery and was unable to score the film. Alan Silvestri composed the music for *Ready Player One* because Spielberg had two films coming out around

¹ Emilio Audissino, "Introduction: John Williams, Composer," in *John Williams: Music for Films, Television and the Concert Stage*, edited by Emilio Audissino, Contemporary Composers, Volume 1 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2018), xiii.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

the same time: *Ready Player One* and *The Post*. Unfortunately, Williams could only do one and he wound up writing the music for *The Post*. The collaboration between Spielberg and Williams continues to this day and is considered the greatest collaboration between a director and a composer in film history. Spielberg and Williams work very well together and have become lifelong friends. They have similar styles of storytelling: both are imaginative, unique, entertaining, and emotionally packed. John Williams' music perfectly blends with Spielberg's visuals in a way that is rarely equaled by other director/composer relationships. Although Williams was very well-known before 1977, he became one of the biggest composers in film music thanks to *Star Wars*. With the success of *Star Wars*, John Williams became the biggest name in film music. He is credited with resurrecting the symphonic tradition of Hollywood's Golden Age, which by the 1960s and early 1970s, was considered a thing of the past. Studios wanted more popular film music, complete with a hit title song to sell records and sheet music. John Williams demonstrated with *Star Wars* that the symphonic tradition (or Hollywood Neoclassicism) was still very popular and effective for films.

In his long and illustrious career, Williams has received numerous awards. Has been nominated for fifty-two Academy Awards and has won five. He won for his arrangement of *Fiddler on the Roof*, and for original music in *Jaws*, *Star Wars*, *E.T.: The Extra-Terrestrial*, and *Schindler's List*. Currently, he is the most-nominated living person and the second-most nominated person in the history of the Oscars.⁴ Williams has also been nominated for six Emmy Awards and has won three, nominated for twenty-five Golden Globe Awards and has won four, nominated for seventy-two Grammy Awards and has won twenty-five.

Throughout his career, John Williams has also written music for the concert hall and for various events. He was commissioned to write themes for the 1984, 1988, 1996, and 2002 Olympic Games. *Liberty Fanfare* was composed for the rededication of the Statue of Liberty in 1986. *Soundings* was commissioned by the Los Angeles Philharmonic for the opening of Walt Disney Concert Hall. With his concert music, he has written concertos for almost every instrument of the orchestra, including the flute (1969), oboe (2011), clarinet (1991), bassoon (1995), horn (2003), trumpet (1996), tuba (1985), violin (1974-76, revised 1998, and a second concerto in 2000), viola (2009), cello (1994), and harp (2009). Other concert works include the Scherzo for Piano and Orchestra (2014) and *Markings* (for violin and orchestra) (2017), Three Pieces for Solo Cello (2001), *Quartet La Jolla* (2011), and *Hollywood's Ghost* (2018).

In addition to his career as a composer, John Williams is a prolific conductor. In 1980, he became the music director and conductor of the Boston Pops Orchestra and he held this position for fourteen seasons. Since then, he has held the titles of "Boston Pops Laureate Conductor," as well as "Artist-in-Residence" at Tanglewood.⁵ Williams frequently guest conducts orchestras, including yearly performances with the Los Angeles Philharmonic at the Hollywood Bowl. In January of 2020, Williams conducted the Vienna Philharmonic for the first time in his career. This concert featured selections from his film scores, as well as the famous violinist, Anne-Sophie Mutter, who played violin solos from *Schindler's List*.

⁴ "John Williams: Biography," JohnWilliams.org, accessed March 4, 2021, <https://johnwilliams.org/reference/biography>.

⁵ Ibid.

Background on *E.T.: The Extra-Terrestrial*

E.T.: The Extra-Terrestrial is one Steven Spielberg's most famous films. It is often considered his most personal film, as many aspects of his childhood are incorporated into the movie. *E.T.* was released in 1982, directed by Spielberg and written by Melissa Mathison (her script was based on an original story by Spielberg). While working on *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, Spielberg felt lonely and wished he had a friend to talk to. He came up with the idea of an imaginary creature, similar to the aliens that appeared at the end of *Close Encounters*, as a kind of imaginary friend. He imagined being a kid again and what it would be like to have this imaginary friend who was also an alien.

Melissa Mathison had written *The Black Stallion*. She was dating Harrison Ford at the time and was visiting him on the set of *Raiders* when Spielberg asked her to write the script for *E.T.* John Williams wrote the music, which was performed by the London Symphony Orchestra. The orchestrations were done by his longtime collaborator, Herbert W. Spencer. The film starred a number of child actors, including Henry Thomas as Elliot, Drew Barrymore as Gertie, and Robert MacNaughton as Michael. Dee Wallace played the children's mother, Mary, and Peter Coyote played the mysterious (and mostly faceless) government agent, Keys.

When the film was complete, Spielberg gave a sneak preview at the Medallion Theater in Dallas, Texas, which he considered to be his "good luck theater,"⁶ having previewed *Jaws* and *Close Encounters* with positive results. Despite the seemingly bad omen of having the film fall out of the cans at the airport, the preview was a big success and received wonderful praise. It soon premiered at the 1982 Cannes Film Festival with even greater success. About fifteen minutes before the end of the movie, the crowd started making noises, clapping and stomping their feet. The producer thought that meant the crowd hated the movie, but soon realized that they loved it.⁷ The film was a huge success at Cannes and received a standing ovation. *E.T.* received a wide release in the US on June 11, 1982 and was enormously successful. It became the biggest blockbuster and highest-grossing film up to that point. On its opening weekend, *E.T.* made \$11.8 million and made even more money in its second, third, and fourth weeks.

The movie was nominated for numerous awards, including nine Academy Awards, of which it won four: Best Sound, Best Visual Effects, Best Sound Effects, and Best Original Score (Williams' fourth academy award). *E.T.* was nominated for five Golden Globes and won two for Best Original Score and Best Motion Picture. It was also nominated for twelve BAFTA Awards and won one for Best Score. In addition to *Jaws* and *Star Wars*, the score for *E.T.* won all four of the major awards: the Academy Award, Golden Globe, BAFTA, and a Grammy. Only six film scores have ever achieved this, and Williams wrote music for three of them – a testament to his compositional abilities.⁸ Altogether, the music for *E.T.* won seven awards and was voted the fourteenth-best American film score of all time by the American Film Institute in 2005.⁹

In March 2002, *E.T.* was re-released with great success, though many people have criticized the alterations that Spielberg made to the film for its re-release. The movie was re-released to celebrate its 20th anniversary, as well as to utilize modern computer graphics to enhance certain aspects of the film. This may have been inspired by George Lucas' re-release of

⁶ Linda Sunshine, ed., *E.T.: The Extra-Terrestrial: From Concept to Classic. The Illustrated Story of the Film and Filmmakers* (New York: Newmarket Press, 2002), 167.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Matt Lawson and Laurence E. MacDonald, *100 Greatest Film Scores* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2018), 92.

⁹ Ibid.

the original *Star Wars* trilogy, which also included updated computer graphics. Alterations to *E.T.* include added scenes (E.T. and Elliot in the bathroom, E.T. in the bathtub, and extra shots in the Halloween scene) and digital enhancements (E.T. running through the forest to escape the government officials, and E.T.'s face and eyes replaced with CGI effects to give him more animated features). Though these edits are mostly subtle, many people consider them to be unnecessary and believe the original film was perfect. The replacement of the government officials' guns with walkie talkies is perhaps the most notorious change to the film. Spielberg said that he did not like the government agents pointing guns at children, especially after having his own children, which is why he changed it in the film. In recent times, however, Spielberg has come to regret the changes he made to *E.T.* and has vowed never to go back and change his movies.

The basic plot involves an alien (also known as an Extra-Terrestrial, or "E.T.") who gets stranded on Earth and meets a boy named Elliot. Elliot hides E.T. from the mysterious government agent, Keys, who is searching for the alien. Elliot shares E.T. with his older brother, Michael, and his little sister, Gertie, who also befriend E.T. As Elliot and E.T. become friends, they develop a strong telepathic bond in which they can feel each other's feelings. As E.T. builds a device to call his people, he becomes increasingly sick. The government agents discover that E.T. is hiding in Elliot's house and invade his home. Despite the efforts of government officials and doctors, they are unable to heal E.T., and he dies. Amazingly, he is resurrected through the power of Elliot's love (and the return of the other aliens). Elliot manages to sneak E.T. out the house, and with the help of his brother and friends, return him to the forest, just as the spaceship arrives. After a tearful goodbye, E.T. boards the spaceship and takes off into the sky.

Close Encounters of the Third Kind (1977) and *E.T.* were both made by Spielberg and are similar films in that they both involve humans meeting aliens. While *Close Encounters* deals with aliens meeting humanity on a large scale and takes place in various locations around the world, *E.T.* deals with one boy meeting one alien, and takes place in the suburbs of southern California, primarily inside Elliot's house. *Close Encounters* is a big story with fantastic special effects that explores ideas of communication between cultures, while *E.T.* is a small and intimate film about friendship. Communication is the main theme of *Close Encounters*, while love is the main theme of *E.T.*¹⁰

The Leitmotifs of *E.T.: The Extra-Terrestrial*

"In *E.T.*, music guides our comprehension of the gradual development of the friendship between Elliot and E.T. and makes the increasingly stronger bond vivid."¹¹ There is not a lot of dialog in the film, so the music helps the audience understand characters' internal feelings, the relationship between characters, and the emotional impact of certain scenes. To aid the musical impact of the score, John Williams uses leitmotifs that are associated with particular characters, relationships, or moods. The different themes are diverse in character, yet united by particular musical characteristics. The leap of a perfect 5th is the most unifying element to the thematic material. It occurs in every theme in the score, more noticeably in some, but is always present. Many of the themes involve harmonic shifts by 3rds (mediant relationship) or by 2nds. Many of the themes feature the Lydian mode which contains a raised 4th scale degree. The harmonies

¹⁰ Emilio Audissino, *Film/Music Analysis: A Film Studies Approach*, Palgrave Studies in Audio-Visual Culture, (Charm, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 205-206.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 192.

contain various chord extensions, such as major 7ths and 9ths. The music is also developmental, in that many of the themes are only hinted at in the beginning, then gradually developed over time. For example, the Flying Theme is gradually introduced throughout the film, with a few notes played early on, then a few more the next time it occurs, until you finally get the entire theme played by the full orchestra when the bicycle lifts off and flies past the moon.

E.T.'s Theme

E.T.'s theme is usually played by a solo piccolo, which is an interesting choice that reflects E.T.'s gentle nature. The theme is written in the Lydian mode and the raised 4th scale degree gives the music a mysterious quality.

Musical Example 1, "E.T.'s Theme" from *E.T.: The Extra-Terrestrial*¹²



Aliens' Theme

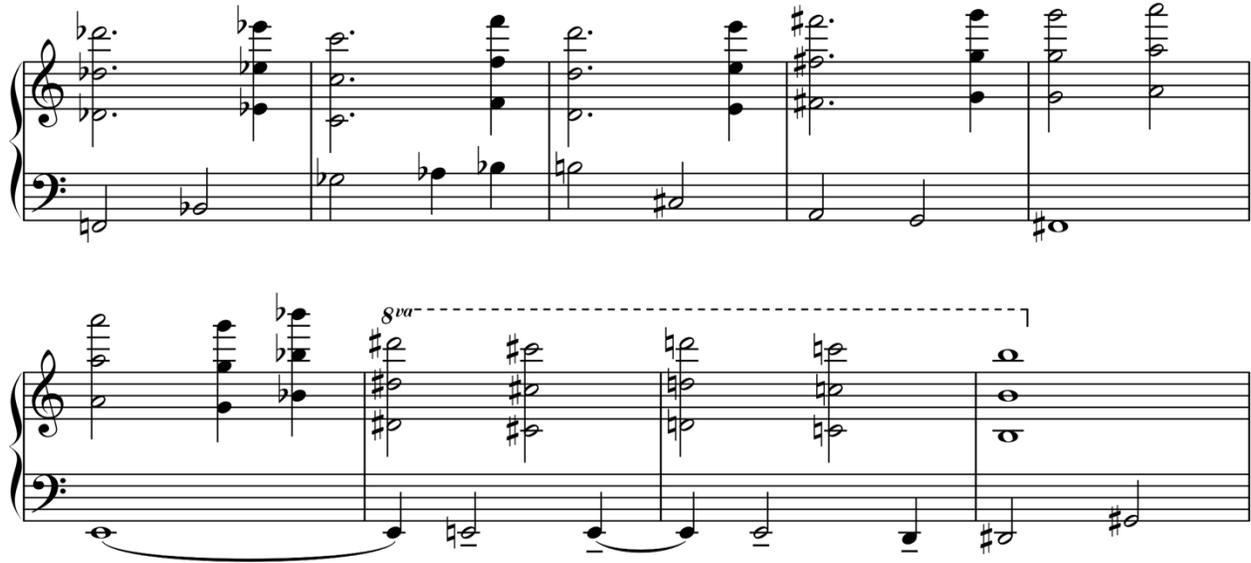
The music for the aliens and their spaceship at the beginning of the movie has a long, wandering melody played in multiple octaves with a gently moving bass line underneath. John Williams creates an otherworldly timbre with the unique combination of strings, winds, horns and organ. Large leaps in the melody and frequent shifts to unrelated harmonies contribute to the alien quality of the music. Also, the theme contains an enharmonic descending perfect 5th (B ♭ down to D# in mm11-12 of the example below).

Musical Example 2, "Aliens' Theme" from *E.T.: The Extra-Terrestrial*¹³



¹² Chloé Huvet, "John Williams and Sound Design: Shaping the Audiovisual World of *E.T.: The Extra-Terrestrial*," in *John Williams: Music for Films, Television and the Concert Stage*, edited by Emilio Audissino, Contemporary Composers, Volume 1 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2018), 298.

¹³ John Williams, *Selections from E.T. (The Extra-Terrestrial)*, arranged for piano by Frank Metis (Melville, NY: Music Corporation of America, 1982), 4-5.



Keys' Theme

For Keys and the government agents, Williams wrote a menacing somewhat reminiscent of the Imperial March from *The Empire Strikes Back*, complete with a mediant relationship in the harmony (G minor to E ♭ minor).

Musical Example 3, “Keys’ Theme” from *E.T.: The Extra-Terrestrial*¹⁴



Bicycle Theme(s)

Since the main characters are children, they ride around on bicycles. John Williams wrote lively music for the Bicycle Theme, which has two parts. Bicycle Theme 1 is more of a rhythmic figure, with energetic and syncopated rhythms in 6/8 time. This figure is used throughout the film, but becomes more prominent in the latter half when the children are being chased by government agents.

Musical Example 4, “Bicycle Theme 1” from *E.T.: The Extra-Terrestrial* (transcribed by ear)



¹⁴ Huvet, “John Williams and Sound Design: Shaping the Audiovisual World of *E.T.: The Extra-Terrestrial*,” 301.

Bicycle Theme 2 is a melodic figure. It is very lyrical, has a rapidly flowing pulse, and a yearning or searching quality, perhaps due to the large leaps in the melody and the raised 4th scale degree.

Musical Example 5, “Bicycle Theme 2” from *E.T.: The Extra-Terrestrial*¹⁵



Atonal Mystery Motif

This short motif is used earlier in the film to highlight feelings of uncertainty and tension. For example, when Elliot first meets E.T., it is unclear what happens during their interaction. It is an atonal melody but is more tense than aggressive.

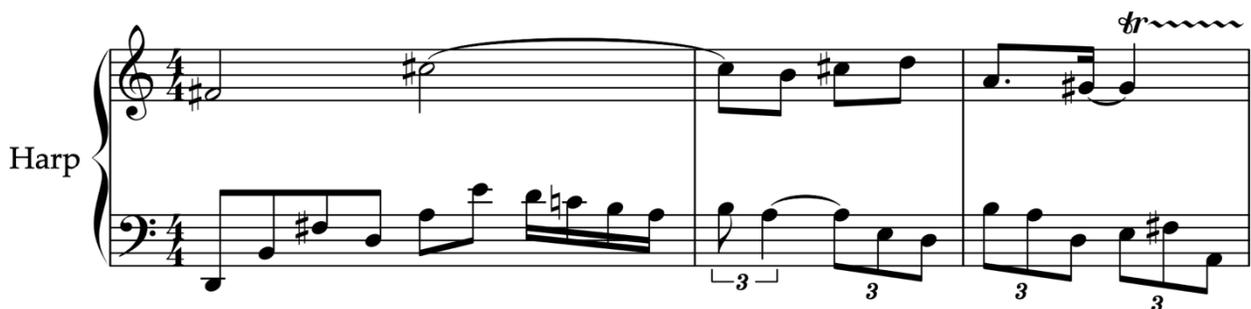
Musical Example 6, “Atonal Mystery Motif” from *E.T.: The Extra-Terrestrial*¹⁶



Friendship Theme

This theme develops out of E.T.’s Theme and represents the friendship between Elliot and E.T. It is frequently played by solo instruments, such as the harp or celesta, to suggest the intimate nature of their relationship.

Musical Example 7 “Friendship Theme” from *E.T.: The Extra-Terrestrial*¹⁷



¹⁵ Williams, *Selections from E.T.*, 18.

¹⁶ Audissino, *Film/Music Analysis*, 212.

¹⁷ Huvet, “John Williams and Sound Design: Shaping the Audiovisual World of *E.T.: The Extra-Terrestrial*,” 296.

The Flying Theme

The Flying Theme is the most famous theme from *E.T.* It is frequently played in film music concerts, and when Williams conducts concerts with his music, it is often played as an encore. The music is divided into two sections. The A section opens with a perfect 5th and ascends higher, followed by a series of descending notes. Each successive statement reaches higher, with ever-widening leaps.

Musical Example 8, “Flying Theme, A section” from *E.T.: The Extra-Terrestrial*¹⁸

The B section of the Flying Theme is more chromatic, with unusual harmonic shifts (usually by 3rds).

Musical Example 9, “Flying Theme, B section” from *E.T.: The Extra-Terrestrial*¹⁹

¹⁸ Williams, *Selections from E.T.*, 6-7.

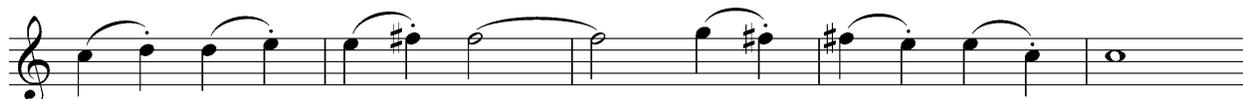
¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 7-8.



Drunken Theme

This theme plays during the scenes in which E.T. and Elliot are drunk. Although the music is different than the other themes, it shares both the Lydian mode and the span of a perfect 5th that are common to so many of the themes in the film (such as E.T.’s Theme and Bicycle Theme 2). It is gentle at first but becomes a lumbering and clumsy melody that humorously captures their growing intoxication.

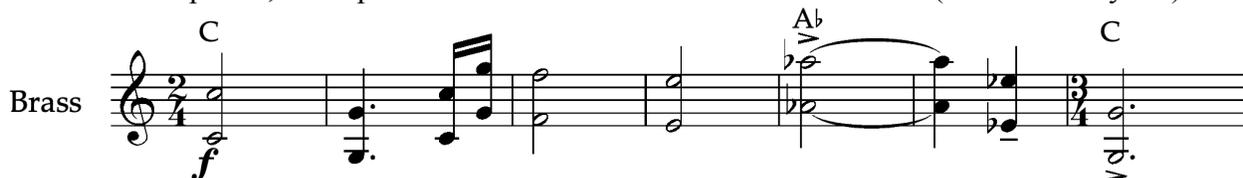
Musical Example 10, “Drunken Theme” from *E.T.: The Extra-Terrestrial* (transcribed by ear)



Escape Fanfare

The Escape Fanfare only appears in the final sequence of the film when the children evade government agents and attempt to return E.T. to his spaceship.

Musical Example 11, “Escape Fanfare” from *E.T.: The Extra-Terrestrial* (transcribed by ear)



The music in the fanfare resembles the third movement of Howard Hanson’s Symphony No. 2, “The Romantic.” Hanson’s music was used as temp music while the film was edited, and its influence can be heard in John Williams’ music. The orchestration and rhythmic gestures in the accompaniment are very similar to what Hanson did in his symphony. Beyond their surface similarities, however, the themes are quite distinct, and the music unfolds differently. This is an instance of John Williams paraphrasing the music of another composer and making it his own, which he has done numerous times in his career. For example, the opening portion of “The Planet Krypton” from *Superman: The Movie*, is a paraphrase of *Also Sprach Zarathustra*, and “Holiday Flight” from *Home Alone* shares similar features with the Russian Character Dance in *The Nutcracker*. Other similarities can be drawn to Elmer Bernstein’s score for *To Kill a Mockingbird*. In a general sense, the music for *E.T.* and *To Kill a Mockingbird* both feature lighter orchestration, with an emphasis on solo instruments (such as flute/piccolo, harp, and piano) and smaller instrumental combinations (such as the piccolo, horns and strings in E.T.’s Theme). Both scores also make extensive use of Lydian mode. The raised 4th scale degree creates

The main titles are written in an unusual purple font and feature some very mysterious sounds. There is no traditional music used during the main titles. Rather, the only sound heard is a mysterious, metallic groaning noise. The pitch (though indefinite in tone) does change slightly, as does the timbre, but are not specific or familiar enough to be easily identified. This unusual sound is created by rubbing a super ball on a tam-tam. This is an extended technique rarely heard, except in 20th Century avant-garde music. Though, Jerry Goldsmith used the same technique for the opening titles of the space crime-drama, *Outland*, in 1981.

The purpose of the music is to create an unsettling atmosphere in which the audience does not know what to expect. The music is “out of this world” and builds anticipation for the alien, or extra-terrestrial, visitors. What are the aliens’ intentions? Are they good or bad? John Williams could have used atonal music filled with massive tone-clusters like he did for the main titles in *Close Encounters*, but he chose a different route for *E.T.* Although the music is strange, and most listeners might even confuse it for sound effects, it works well in setting the tone. The music is strange, but not overpowering. It is not played by a full choir and orchestra like in *Close Encounters*, but by a single percussion instrument. The music for the main titles, therefore, serves 2 purposes: 1) It creates an unearthly musical quality, while 2) It beautifully sets the tone for the film. *E.T.* is, after all, an intimate story. The music is intimate as well, often employing chamber-like orchestration that explores the relationship between a lonely boy and a stranded alien who become friends.

“Far From Home/E.T. Alone” (1:09-7:52)

This fantastic cue and lengthy cue introduces the aliens, E.T., Keys and the government agents. As we are introduced to the characters, Williams introduces their themes and establishes leitmotivic connections that will be used throughout the film. After the credits finish, the camera pans down from a starry sky onto a forest, and a solo piccolo plays E.T.’s theme. Again, Williams uses a solo instrument to suggest the intimate nature of the story. In the second statement of the theme, the orchestration opens up with gently undulating accompaniment that is reminiscent of the opening to Debussy’s *Prelude to the Afternoon of a Faun*. When the camera cuts to a shot of a spaceship, the Aliens’ Theme is introduced. The melody is played in 3 octaves by strings, winds, horns, and organ. It is strange, but beautiful and gentle music, with constantly shifting tonal centers. As the camera slowly moves around the ship, we catch brief glimpses of the aliens. However, they are always shown in silhouette or far away. Although the aliens seem mysterious, they do not seem threatening. They seem curious and particularly interested in plant-life. The camera then follows E.T. as he digs up a small plant and walks through the forest, admiring the tall trees. We even hear E.T. make a pleasurable sound that resembles an “Ooh” (as in, “Ooh, how pretty!”) as he views the city lights below.

Suddenly, several cars burst into the forest and startle E.T., who hides in the bushes. The music becomes more menacing as humans invade the forest. A number of men (government agents) get out of the cars and search around. We never see their faces, though. In fact, we never see the faces of adults (except for Elliot’s mother, who is somewhat childlike herself), until the end of the film. This was an intentional choice by Spielberg to keep the film grounded in the world of children. It is not until the adults invade Elliot’s home, and therefore the world of children, that we finally see Keys’ face and the faces of other adults. In the forest, the men run around, carelessly stomping through puddles, and the camera focuses on one particular man: Keys. Since the grownups are only shown from the waist down, Keys is the only man we can

identify because of the large key ring he wears on his belt (hence his name). When he appears, Keys' Theme is introduced by bassoons and the bass clarinet. When the aliens at the spaceship call E.T., his heart-light is activated and emanates the sound of a perfect 5th. Even as a sound effect, the perfect 5th is an important interval. The men hear the sound, E.T. panics and makes a break for the spaceship. The men follow in hot pursuit and Williams accompanies the scene with some of his finest chase music: racing strings, Keys' Theme on trumpets and horns, and pounding timpani. Unfortunately, the spaceship is forced to take off, leaving E.T. stranded and alone. It is interesting to note that while the aliens are mysterious, they are not dangerous. It is men who are dangerous, and the music reflects this. The music for E.T. and the aliens is strange, but always gentle. The rhythms flows very smoothly and without any rhythmic stress. The music for the men, however, is aggressive. The rhythm is much more jagged and accentuated by heavy blasts from brass and percussion.

As E.T. watches the spaceship rise into the night sky, his theme is played with decreasing orchestration, ending with a solo piccolo. E.T.'s Theme and predicament are emphasized by echoes in the horns and a trill on the triangle. E.T. walks forlornly out of the forest and down towards the city lights below and the cue ends as the government agents investigate the forest. Keys' Theme returns, softly this time, played by the winds and accompanied by tense harmonies in high strings. As the music comes to a gentle, but unsettling close, the camera cuts to a house not far from the hills of the forest. This is Elliot's house, and the following scene introduces him and his family.

“Elliot Explores the Corn Field” (12:26-13:41)

After getting a pizza delivery, Elliot walks back up the driveway to his house and hears a sound in the backyard. He goes to investigate and walks towards a shed. He throws a baseball inside, which is promptly thrown back out. Elliot panics and runs into the house to tell his family. The family comes out to look around, but thinks it was just a coyote. Later that night, Elliot and his dog are awakened by sounds coming from the backyard. The only music in this cue, is the strange sound created by rubbing a super ball on a tam-tam, as heard in the “Main Titles.” The music recalls the mysterious mood created in the opening credits. At that point, the audience was unsure what to expect. They did not know if something bad was going to happen or if the aliens had sinister intentions like the Martians from *War of the Worlds*. After the first scene, however, it seems that the aliens are merely curious about our world and are not here to harm anyone. This is especially noticeable after witnessing E.T. flee in terror from humans. Now, in this scene, even though the music is the same, it has a different effect. E.T.'s intentions are not sinister, but there is a nervousness about Elliot's first encounter with E.T. What will the alien look like and what will happen when he meets Elliot?

Elliot goes into the backyard to investigate and looks around with a flashlight. While looking at a wall in the backyard, he hears more noises. The music stops, leaving only the sounds of strange breathing, footsteps, and the rustling of dry corn stalks. Elliot sees unusual footprints on the ground, leading into a small patch of corn nearby. As he enters the corn, the camera switches to a POV shot from inside the corn. Elliot comes closer and shines his light towards the camera. The camera is showing things from E.T.'s perspective. When Elliot comes close to the camera, he pulls back the corn and sees E.T.'s face for the first time. He is a strange creature who is terrified. He screams and frantically runs away and goes through the gate at the back of the yard. E.T. is not shown running away, though. Everything is implied from sound effects, changes

in camera angles, camera movement, Elliot's reactions, and the sway of corn stalks that E.T. has passed through (this is an effective technique that Spielberg used in a number of his films, including Jurassic Park, to imply the movement of unseen things).

Aside from the ambient tam-tam sounds at the beginning of this scene, there is no other music. The scene does not need any further music, though. The tam-tam sounds set the tone at the beginning of the scene and then the action carries the suspense for the remainder of the scene. It is terrific example of good spotting by Steven Spielberg and John Williams. The music is suspenseful, but not overpowering. After all, this is not a horror movie. Even though E.T. is an alien, he is not a malevolent monster. He turns out to be a gentle and loving creature. At this point in the film, he is just as scared of Elliot as Elliot is of him.

“Bait for E.T.” (14:47-16:25)

At the end of the scene in the corn field, Elliot looks up at the gate that E.T. ran through. As the camera moves closer to Elliot, a slightly dissonant chord is played by the strings. A faint smile emerge on Elliot's face, showing that he is curious about his strange visitor. The camera cuts to the next day and Elliot rides off on his bicycle. In this scene, Elliot searches for E.T. Bicycle Themes 1 and 2 are the primary themes in the music. There is no dialog, so the music communicates Elliot's internal thoughts and emotions. At first, he sets out with eagerness and determination to find E.T and Bicycle Theme 1 provides the rhythmic energy to express this. Bicycle Theme 1 is primarily a syncopated rhythmic figure that features a small melodic component that alternates between rising and falling perfect 5ths. The theme builds, increasing in intensity and orchestration as Elliot rides up into the hills. As Elliot's search continues into the forest, the music switches to the more melodic, Bicycle Theme 2, with a wandering theme full of leaps and frequently shifting harmonies. Its yearning tone not only expresses Elliot's desire to find E.T. but emphasizes his curiosity and wonder while searching for him. When Elliot gets to the forest, he pulls out a bag of Reese's Pieces (which became very popular thanks to this movie) and scatters the candy around as bait for E.T.

While Elliot is searching for E.T. in the forest, he sees Keys from a distance. As soon as he appears, Keys' Theme plays. Elliot hides behind a tree while Keys looks around on the ground. Elliot is uncertain what Keys is doing, but the slightly menacing tone in the music helps the audience understand that Elliot is suspicious of the man, and he rides off on his bicycle in the opposite direction. As Elliot rides away, Bicycle Theme 2 returns. The music ends with a mysterious and slightly dissonant chord as E.T.'s hands are seen drawing back behind a tree.

“Meeting E.T.” (18:51-20:55)

At dinner that night, Elliot tells his family about what he saw, but they don't believe him. When he washes the dishes, he looks out the window and E.T.'s Theme is played by piccolo, accompanied by dizzying harp glissandi and mysterious harmonies in the strings. In the next scene, Elliot finally meets E.T., and John Williams uses soft atonal music to keep the audience uncertain of the outcome. While Elliot sleeps in the backyard waiting for E.T., the Atonal Mystery Motif is played by the harp, accompanied by dissonant harmonies in low strings, which slide eerily up and down. When Elliot wakes up, he sees E.T. standing in front of the shed. The alien is backlit, so his face is hidden in shadow. In the music, the Atonal Mystery Motif is played by the flute and is supported by dissonant brass and high-pitched glissandi in the violins, in an almost aleatoric fashion.

The atonal music continues as E.T. moves towards Elliot. When E.T. gets close, he reaches out with his hand. This is accompanied by muted trumpets and the Atonal Mystery Motif in the flute. E.T. drops something onto Elliot's blanket, which turn out to be the Reese's Pieces left in the forest. The music eases a little, though remains atonal. A single triangle hit accentuates the reveal of the candy on the blanket and the Atonal Mystery Motif plays in the celesta. This change in orchestration is a subtle, but important difference. The celesta's soft qualities shift the music towards a lighter tone, eases the tension of the scene, and aids in the transition to the more tonal music in the next scene.

“E.T.’s New Home” (20:58-22:45)

The music in this cue is broken up into three sections to match the tone and emotions unfolding in the scene. Immediately following the meeting in the backyard, the movie cuts to inside Elliot's house. When it becomes clear that E.T. and Elliot are friendly towards each other, the music changes and becomes warmer and more tonal. Elliot sets Reese's Pieces down on the floor to lure E.T. up the stairs and into his bedroom. As he does this, a trill begins in the strings, while the piccolo plays E.T.'s Theme. The music gradually grows into a Debussy-esque moment, with a gently undulating figure in the French horn. When the two characters reach Elliot's room, the music changes to a slightly comical tone to match E.T. fumbling around Elliot's room. At the doorway, E.T.'s hands snatch up a handful of candy. This is accompanied by short and detached notes in pizzicato strings and celesta. Harp, flute, and string trills are added as E.T.'s feels around the room with his hands. The music drops out as E.T. noisily knocks over a can of pencils and a light, which startles him. Elliot hastily closes his bedroom door and throws a blanket over E.T. This marks the third musical change in the cue. Elliot stands looking at E.T., and the alien's face is finally shown. The music is sparse in texture, but somewhat tense. Isolated statements of ascending perfect 5ths are passed around to various instruments. This sounds like the beginning of E.T.'s Theme, but the theme does not materialize. Instead, John Williams creatively transforms E.T.'s Theme, via the perfect 5th, into an entirely new theme which starts a moment later in the next cue.

“The Beginning of a Friendship” (22:46-25:17)

The music in this cue is divided into 2 sections. The first section features the new Friendship Theme, which plays when Elliot and E.T. finally connect with each other. After being startled, Elliot and E.T. stand staring at each other for a moment, until Elliot rubs his nose. E.T. mimics Elliot's hand movements and a solo harp begins the Friendship Theme. It is a very tender moment between the two characters as they learn to communicate and trust each other. The music beautifully captures the gentleness of the scene in a very simple, yet very effective way. The harp plays by itself during all of their back-and-forth interactions. It is not until E.T. and Elliot start feeling tired that the orchestration changes. In an effective bit of scoring, John Williams evokes the physical sensation of drowsiness with cadential figures in the strings that slide lazily down from one chord to the next.

In the second section of “The Beginning of Friendship,” a camera cut to the forest is accented by muted trombones, which play Keys' Theme. While Keys and the other government agents search the woods for signs of E.T., the music hits a few subtle sync points, such as the cut to the forest, but also the moment when Keys steps into frame, which is accented by a chord and bass drum hit. When Keys looks down at the ground with his flashlight, descending lines work

their way through tremolo strings. Keys kneels down and finds a pile of Reese's Pieces on the ground, and when he picks one up, the Atonal Mystery Motif plays on the piano. The music fades out as a soft crunching sound is heard. Keys is eating Reese's Pieces.

“Toys” (27:25-29:58)

In this scene, Elliot pretends to be sick so he can stay home from school and be with E.T. After his mom and siblings leave the house, Elliot opens his closet and tenderly calls E.T. out into his room. One thing to note, is that the original music John Williams wrote for this scene was replaced with part of the music from the cue, “E.T. is Alive!” The original version is available on the soundtrack, however. The melancholy tone is perfect for Elliot's lament over the death of his friend near the end of the film. During this scene, though, when the characters have their first meaningful interaction, the music is more solemn than sorrowful. When E.T. emerges from the closet, an elegiac introduction emerges from the violins, accompanied by a sustained perfect 5th (D \flat and A \flat) underneath. These sustained pitches provide harmonic support while maintaining a thin and gentle texture that enhances the burgeoning relationship between Elliot and E.T. Elliot talks to E.T., telling him his name, and asking if he talks. This beautiful melody, written in the Lydian mode, is filled with a number of large leaps, including a perfect 5th. These leaps pull the emotions up and down as the characters learn to communicate with each other. It foreshadows the bonds of love and friendship that grow between them during the movie.

Musical Example 14, “Elegiac Introduction to the Friendship Theme” from *E.T.: The Extra-Terrestrial* (transcribed by ear)

The musical score is for strings and consists of two systems. The first system shows a melody in the upper voice of a string section (violin) and a sustained perfect fifth (D-flat and A-flat) in the lower voice (cello/bass). The second system continues the melody and the sustained fifth. The music is in 4/4 time and the Lydian mode.

E.T. is not able to talk yet, so he moves towards a table filled with toys. As he does, a transitional rising figure is played in low strings and the clarinet, followed by the Friendship Theme. In the 1st statement of the theme, the melody is played by celesta, with accompaniment in low strings. Elliot shows his toys to E.T. and the theme is allowed to play in its entirety. The second statement of the theme begins when Elliot shows a fish bowl to E.T. The melody is played by the clarinet, with similar accompaniment in the strings again. The theme concludes with a brief string coda while Elliot shows a toy car to E.T. When E.T. grabs the car and tries to eat it, the music changes again. This light and comedic moment is supported by the first appearance of the Flying Theme, played by the flute, with trills in the strings. John Williams only uses about four measures of the theme, so it is very brief, but he is planting thematic seeds that

will grow as the film progresses. This helps the audience become familiar with the melody, so it is recognizable and satisfying when the theme is played in its entirety by the full orchestra.

“E.T. in the Bathtub” (33:05-33:55)

This scene was cut from the original 1982 release but was added back in for the 20th Anniversary re-release in 2002. It is similar to the “Toys” scene, as it shows Elliot explaining things to E.T. while he plays around with various things in the bathroom, such as perfume, toothpaste, and the bathtub. There is only about fifty seconds of music that plays near the end of this scene. While Elliot talks to his mom on the phone, E.T. falls into the bathtub, which is full of water. E.T.’s Theme is played by the piccolo and accompanied by trills in the strings. When Elliot sees E.T. under the water, he thinks E.T. is drowning and lifts him up. However, E.T. seems to be quite content in the water. He pushes Elliot’s arm away and falls back into the water. The music changes to a lethargic and comedic tone that is similar to the music used in a later cue, “E.T. and Elliot Get Drunk.” The strings slide down just as E.T. dunks himself underwater again. It is unclear whether this music was actually composed and recorded by John Williams before the scene was cut from the 1982 version of the film. However, it sounds as if the music was pieced together from various parts of previously recorded music.

“I’m Keeping Him” (37:08-39:23)

When Elliot’s brother and sister (Michael and Gertie) return from school, Elliot introduces them to E.T. At first, the children are frightened of him, especially Gertie, who lets out a wild scream. After calming down, the children are in the closet looking at E.T. (the closet has become the alien’s make-shift home). As Michael says Elliot’s name, the music enters very softly with strings, trills and fragments of the Friendship Theme in the harp. The theme begins in full when Gertie asks Elliot, “What is it?” The harp still has the theme and is accompanied by string pedals and rising figures on low strings and celesta. As Michael and Elliot torment Gertie in order to keep her from telling anyone about E.T., the Friendship Theme moves to the clarino register of the clarinet. While the harp version of the Friendship Theme is tender, the timbre of the clarinet in its high register, makes it sound melancholy. After Gertie says she will not tell anyone, the kids turn their attention back to E.T., and the melody moves back to the harp. The children and E.T. look at each other in wonder, and when E.T. raises his head by elongating his neck, the music rises and swells with it.

The scene cuts to the hills above the suburbs, with the camera looking down at the homes below. This scene is made very unsettling through the use of the “Vertigo Effect,” a dizzying camera effect in which the camera tracks forward while zooming backwards, or vice versa. This particular shot has been used in numerous films since its creation for the film, *Vertigo*, to convey that something is wrong or that something bad will happen. At the start of this scene, Keys’ Theme is played by the horns and echoed by the clarinets, with dissonant and fragmentary notes in the celesta. Dissonant strings enter in the second statement of the theme, and as a man with a camera lurches into the left side of the frame, the music changes key. Numerous men appear and walk back and forth, carrying various electronic equipment. Meanwhile, as Keys stands looking down at the houses, his theme grows in orchestration and tension, before settling back down and ending with a solo note in the horn. The music and visuals imply that Keys believes E.T. is no longer in the forest but may be hiding in the community below. The children’s gentle world will soon be invaded by the menace of men. It is only a matter of time.

“E.T.’s Powers” (41:04-43:49)

Later that night, the children are in Elliot’s room with E.T., who is eating dinner. Elliot tries various ways to find out where E.T. comes from. He shows E.T. a map of the U.S., then a globe. When Elliot asks, “Where are you from?” E.T. points out the window. When Elliot shows E.T. a map of the solar system, E.T.’s Theme is heard. The melody is played by the strings and echoed in the horns and accompanied by harp glissandi. E.T. lays several balls of Playdough on the table while the horn and piccolo alternate fragments of the theme. The music grows in intensity, foreshadowing something is about to happen. Suddenly, the table shakes and E.T. uses his powers to levitate the Playdough balls into the air. The balls look like planets swirling around a star, indicating that E.T. is from a distant planet. While the balls swirl in the air above the children, the Flying Theme returns. It is a mysterious, somewhat ominous version of the theme played by the strings, accompanied by rapid arpeggios in the celesta, tremolo strings, and low brass. It is only 4 measures of theme, but it is elongated for this scene and features thicker orchestration than its previous use in the film.

Suddenly Elliot yells and the balls fall to the floor. Keys’ Theme plays in the trombones, accompanied by a steady pulse in the timpani and dissonant notes in the celesta. Elliot is not sure why he is upset but thinks that something scary is going to happen. Beeping sounds are heard in the backyard and Elliot goes to investigate. A crescendo and a timpani roll accentuate the cut to the backyard. When Elliot arrives, a swing on the playset is moving, indicating that someone was just there. He goes to the back gate and hears men’s voices and a faint jingle of keys nearby. Throughout this scene, Keys’ Theme modulates frequently and is played with varying and thickening orchestration. Later, E.T. is in the closet learning to read the alphabet from a children’s coloring book. A pot of flowers given to him by Gertie sit nearby, but they are wilting. E.T. looks intently at the flowers and uses his powers to make them come back to life. In a stunning, in-camera visual effects shot, the flowers revert from lifeless, dull-colored things, to lush and vibrant flora. As this happens, the Flying Theme is heard, first in the flute and then in the strings, accompanied by harp glissandi, and a triangle trill. Again, Williams only uses the first four measures of the theme, but with more lush orchestration and a beautiful crescendo as the flowers return to life. The cue decrescendos and ends with a brief statement of E.T.’s Theme. The flowers will become a visual representation of E.T.’s health in the movie, giving clues to his declining health and eventual resurrection.

“The Closet” (45:00-45:44)

This short cue contains very little music but is very effective. In this scene, Mary almost discovers E.T. in the closet and the music highlights the tension. There is not a melody in this cue, only pedal tones, fragmentary pitches, and slightly dissonant harmonies. It is a subtle cue that supports the dramatic impact of the scene without overpowering the visuals. In the beginning of the scene, Elliot and Michael have left for school, while Mary, their mom, is about to drive Gertie to school. Just before she walks out the front door, she hears something upstairs and goes to look around. The music enters very softly with ominous pedal tones in high strings and scattered notes in low winds. A brief ascending figure plays on the piano as Mary gets to Elliot’s room. When she opens the closet doors, there are a few more isolated notes in low instruments. As the camera pans from Mary and slowly moves through Elliot’s closet, the other instruments drop out, leaving only the high pedal tones in the strings, occasionally punctuated by

soft, single notes in the piano. E.T.'s face is visible, but he is hiding among the stuffed animals, so Mary does not see him. When the camera cuts back to Mary, the high strings drop out and a gentle, but slightly unstable chord is played in the brass. Finally, Mary closes the closet door and leaves the house. With the tension of the scene resolved, the music comes to a restful conclusion on a CM9 chord in the strings.

“E.T. and Elliot Get Drunk” (45:59-48:47)

This is one of the funniest scenes in the movie. As the name of the cue implies, E.T. and Elliot get drunk. Elliot is at school and E.T. is home alone. The movie cuts back and forth between E.T. and Elliot and their deepening emotional connection is revealed in a terrific display of slapstick comedy. When E.T. drinks alcohol from the refrigerator, it affects him as well as Elliot, and they both become drunk.

The scene starts with a darker, more mysterious tone. The camera begins with a shot of Elliot's door and E.T.'s hands are visible through the slats. In the music, the ambient tam-tam sound from the opening credits is joined by dissonant low brass and the Atonal Mystery Motif in the piano. E.T. slowly opens the door and his hand wraps around the edge. As the door opens, the texture in the music expands with tense high strings and horns. The family dog, Harvey, appears and growls at E.T. The music is quite tense, and it seems like the dog may attack E.T. After all, Harvey did bark at E.T. the first time he saw him, but the dog has not seen E.T. since then. Harvey suddenly moves towards E.T. and the music crescendos. All is well, however: Harvey licks E.T. out of affection and the music settles down.

The scene cuts to Elliot sitting in class while the strings and winds play the Drunken Theme. Back in the kitchen, E.T. waddles towards the fridge and the music imitates his steps with a clever bit of Mickey Mousing. Muted brass and bassoons plod along in time with E.T.'s steps while the winds play the “Drunken Melody.” E.T. opens the fridge and tastes a potato salad. He does not care for it, however, utters, “Yuck!” and promptly throws the potato salad on the floor. E.T. searches for something else to eat in the fridge and spots a can of beer. E.T. expresses his delight at the shiny can and utters an “Ooh!” The “Drunken Theme” returns in the clarinet as E.T. downs the drink. The camera cuts to Elliot who burps. The bond between Elliot and E.T. has grown and they are starting to feel each other's feelings, as well as physical sensations. When Elliot burps, the “Drunken Theme” is passed to the strings, who slide lethargically between the notes.

E.T. walks away from the fridge (which is mimicked again in the music) and accidentally runs into the kitchen counter. This is accompanied by the “Drunken Theme” in flutes and oboes. When E.T. falls back on his rear, the music punctuates his fall with a bass drum hit and an accented note in the brass. The scene cuts back to Elliot who squints his eyes in pain and has trouble keeping his eyes open. As Elliot becomes more and more drunk, the strings slide farther and farther down in a drowsy sequence of chromatically descending chords. This alternation between E.T.'s actions and Elliot's progressing drunkenness happens two more times until E.T. falls face-first on the floor and Elliot falls out of his chair. E.T. opens another can of beer and the music becomes even livelier. In his drunken stupor, Elliot smiles hazily at a cute girl sitting next to him and the strings descend one more time. The music comes to a close while E.T. is typing letters on a Speak and Spell toy and watching TV. For all of the alternation and Mickey Mousing in this cue, John Williams still manages to create music that not only enhances the comedic slant of the scene, but also stands alone as an effective and humorous piece of music.

“Frogs” (49:35-51:42)

This is the second cue for the scene in which Elliot and E.T. are drunk. A lethargic clarinet plays while Elliot looks at a frog he is supposed to dissect. John Williams gives the Flying Theme a groggy treatment, playing it in violin harmonics. A cut back to E.T. shows him in the kitchen, leaning against the table, rubbing his head, and moaning from a hangover. The Drunken Theme plays again. E.T. looks at the comic strips in a newspaper and sees one with Buck Rogers. In the comic, Rogers’ ship has crash landed, and left him stranded on a distant planet. He builds a device, however, and sends a signal for help. Immediately after that, a commercial about long-distance phone calls plays on the TV. These give E.T. the idea to build his own communicator and call for help. While the idea is forming, the music increases with violin trills, harp glissandi and a slower version of the Drunken Theme in the horns. The Drunken Theme becomes less hazy and more focused as E.T.’s realization comes to him. When the idea finally crystallizes, E.T.’s Theme plays in the flutes, supported by brass chords. The camera cuts back to Elliot in the classroom again and E.T.’s Theme continues as Elliot decides to save all the frogs from dissection. The Drunken Theme plays while Elliot releases the frogs. He turns over their glass jars, setting them free and turning the classroom into chaos. The music almost sounds like hopping frogs at this point, especially the accompaniment. Bouncy staccato notes in muted trumpets and bassoons vividly evoke jumping amphibians.

“The Kiss” (52:30-53:00)

This brief, but charming cue has multiple functions that bridge the gap between source music and score. It begins as source music for the movie that E.T. is watching on television (*The Quiet Man*, directed by John Ford and starring John Wayne and Maureen O’Hara) and transforms into score when Elliot kisses a girl at school. While E.T. watches the movie on TV, it causes Elliot to re-enact it at school. He grabs the pretty blonde girl as she runs out of the room. He pulls her back in and kisses her. John Williams uses the melody from the Irish song, “Isle of Innisfree” for the main theme in this cue, which was also the main theme in *The Quiet Man*.²² This musical choice works very well as it allows Williams to make the music sound like it is coming from the TV. In fact, the audio for the music has been filtered to make it sound like old movie music playing softly through a television. Then, when Elliot kisses the girl, the music suddenly becomes source music. The level and sound quality jumps, transforming the music into a lush and romantic statement of “Isle of Innisfree.” When Elliot is being led off to the principal’s office, the pretty girl turns her foot inwards in a romantic gesture as the music concludes with a romantic statement of the Flying Theme.

“At Home” (57:22-1:02:55)

This cue flows through several scene changes with different emotional contexts, but John Williams seamlessly threads the music through it all. There are strong contrasts of tension and gentleness in the film and the music enhances all of these moments without overpowering them. The musical texture in this cue remains light, featuring solo instruments and chamber-like orchestration, even when the music is foreboding. Many composers might be inclined to

²² “What’s New in the ‘E.T.’ 35th Anniversary Soundtrack Reissue,” YourClassical.org, accessed April 25, 2021, <https://www.yourclassical.org/story/2017/10/12/et-soundtrack-reissue>.

over-emphasize the emotions or the alternation between menace and compassion, but John Williams maintains the intimate nature of the film by keeping the music small.

In the first part of the scene, the kids come home from school and discover that E.T. can talk. He expresses that he wants to call his people for help. This is underscored by E.T.'s Theme in the music, followed by the Aliens' Theme, and concluding with a final statement of E.T.'s Theme. The alternation of these themes hints at the reunion of E.T. with the other aliens. Later that night, a mysterious black van drives around Elliot's street. Inside the van, Keys uses spy equipment to listen to people inside their homes. Keys' Theme alternates gently between the horns and the harp. The theme goes through various modulations and changes in orchestration that enhance the tension of the hunt for E.T. Keys listens to Elliot and Michael while they talk in their garage. The children are looking for equipment that E.T. can use to build his communicator. Michael hints at E.T.'s failing health. This upsets Elliot and he denies it. The kids also find their dad's shirt and reminisce about when they used to do things together as a family, like go to the movies (their dad left before the start of the film and is absent the entire movie). The camera moves closer to Keys' face. Only part of his face is visible, though. His hands press against his headphones and cover everything except his eyes. The music is very subtle yet communicates a sense that things are about to go wrong. Not only is Keys close to discovering E.T., but the aliens' health seems to be declining. While the bond between Elliot and E.T. is growing strong, Michael thinks that it might be unhealthy. On top of this, the separation of their parents is another point of sadness for the children. The harp concludes this section with another statement of Keys' Theme.

The scene moves upstairs to Gertie's bedroom where Mary is reading her a bedtime story: *Peter Pan*. E.T. is hiding in the closet and opens the blinds so he can watch them and listen to the story. The harp transitions from Keys' Theme to the Friendship Theme so smoothly that the change is almost imperceptible. The harp continues to carry most of the musical weight, with a few touches from the celesta. Both instruments emphasize the gentle atmosphere of the children's world. Their continuous use in this cue not only provides continuity to the various musical themes, but when Key's Theme is played by the harp and celesta, it hints at the invasion of men into the children's world.

Elliot enters the closet with a box of supplies for E.T. He sets it down and closes the blinds to Gertie's room, afraid that E.T. will be seen. While digging through the box, Elliot accidentally cuts his finger on a saw. E.T. reaches out with his own finger, which glows brightly. He touches the cut on Elliot's hand and uses his powers to heal him. As he does this, the music gently swells in the strings. Trills in the violins and triangle punctuate the moment when their fingers touch. After Elliot is healed, the musical texture settles back down to harp and celesta again. E.T. opens the blinds once more to watch Mary and Gertie. Elliot wraps a scarf around E.T.'s neck and sits quietly with him as they listen to Mary read the story. Strings enter and add a tender touch to the music, then gently subsides as Elliot puts his arm on E.T.'s shoulder. The harp plays a solo statement of the Friendship Theme. It is a very touching moment that reveals the closeness of E.T. and Elliot's relationship. They have a strong connection and can just sit quietly and enjoy being together. As the camera cuts to the van parked outside Elliot's house, Keys' Theme plays in the flute. Back inside the house, Elliot and Michael watch E.T. build the communicator. The Flying Theme is heard in the winds, but with ominous harmony to reflect Michael's concerns. He is worried that E.T. will blow up the house and that the alien is getting sick (his breathing sounds labored and wheezy). The harmony moves lower in the strings and

becomes more tense as the camera pans past the various parts of E.T.'s machine and stops on the flowers. They are beginning to wilt again, indicating E.T.'s failing health. The cue ends with a slightly tense version of E.T.'s Theme as he levitates various parts of the machine in front of him.

“The Magic of Halloween” (1:05:22-1:08:12)

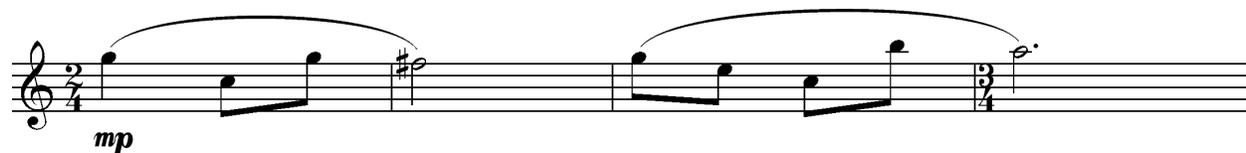
After E.T. completes the machine, Elliot plans to take him to the forest so they can use the machine to call for E.T.'s spaceship. It is Halloween, so the kids dress up and E.T. pretends to be Gertie in a ghost costume. This lets the kids safely walk E.T. past their mother and go outside. Elliot, Michael and E.T. leave the house and walk through the neighborhood while other children are out trick-or-treating. The camera shows several shots from E.T.'s point of view. He looks through eyeholes in the sheet and sees children dressed up in an assortment of strange costumes. These POV shots and the quirky music reflect E.T.'s confused and amused experience with this unusual holiday. This quirky music begins with two staccato oboes in counterpoint.

Musical Example 15, “The Magic of Halloween” from *E.T.: The Extra-Terrestrial*²³



This material is sequenced with varying orchestration until a familiar character from a galaxy far, far away appears. A child in a Yoda costume walks past the children. E.T. stops, runs towards Yoda and cries, “Home! Home! Home!” Yoda’s character first appeared in *The Empire Strikes Back* two years before *E.T.* was released and was an extremely popular character. In addition, the creators of these two films, George Lucas and Steven Spielberg, were close friends. Spielberg paid a nice tribute to his friend by including Yoda *E.T.* Lucas would later return the favor by including E.T.’s species as members of the Galactic Senate in the Star Wars prequels. Yoda’s Theme fits very well with the music in *E.T.*, mainly because he appears in the film, but also for a musical reason: Yoda’s Theme is in the Lydian mode. It has a raised 4th scale degree which is so prominently featured in much of the music in *E.T.* Therefore, it feels like a natural addition that seamlessly flows into the score.

Musical Example 16, “Yoda’s Theme” from *E.T.: The Extra-Terrestrial*²⁴



²³ Williams, *Selections from E.T.*, 22.

²⁴ Williams, *Selections from E.T.*, 24.

E.T., Elliot and Michael meet up with Gertie, who has Elliot's bicycle, and the music modulates using motivic sequences based on Yoda's Theme. Night falls, and Elliot rides into the woods with E.T. and the machine sitting in the front basket of the bicycle. Instead of the Bicycle Theme, however, Williams builds a long modulatory sequence based off of the last few measures of the B section of the Flying Theme (in particular, the alternating 2nds). This music is new. It has not been played before and is an interesting way of preparing the Flying Theme. In the full version of the theme, this passage helps return the music to the primary melody in the A section. By playing this unstable part of the theme first, it builds anticipation for the arrival of the full-length orchestral version of the main Flying Theme. The music grows in intensity, with a rapidly flowing piano part that wanders through various keys. Finally, when E.T. takes control of the bicycle and makes it fly into the air, the Flying Theme is played by the entire orchestra. It is a grand and wonderful statement of the theme and is played in its entirety. Williams has masterfully prepared the audience for this moment through the gradual unfolding of the theme throughout the film. By this point, the melody is familiar and its full declaration by the orchestra in an ABA form is extremely satisfying. The silhouette shot of the bicycle flying in front the moon has become iconic and is even used as the logo for Steven Spielberg's production company, Amblin. The music comes to an end as the bicycle crashes down, sending Elliot and E.T. tumbling onto the ground. A well-timed and amusing hit by the orchestra accentuates the crash.

“Sending the Signal” (1:09:56-1:14:44)

The alternation between the government agents and the children becomes very prominent in this scene. John Williams does an excellent job heightening the tension of the encroaching government agents as well as E.T.'s of contacting his people. In this scene, the children have not returned from trick-or-treating, so Mary drives off to look for them. When she pulls out of the driveway, men get out of a parked car and walk towards the empty house. The music starts ominously with Keys' Theme played by a solo horn, accompanied by low strings. With each repetition of the theme, more instruments are added to the texture, increasing the intensity of the invasion of the house. A cut to a flaming pumpkin introduces an extra sequence that was added to the 2002 re-release. Mary drives through the neighborhood looking for the children. Halloween has turned into a wild frenzy, though, as older kids have taken over the streets, and set fire to pumpkins and trash cans. Smoke fills the air and houses are TP'd by out-of-control teenagers. Mary finds Michael and Gertie, but not Elliot. This scene interrupts the original music in “Sending the Signal.” To fill the added space, music from “E.T. and Elliot Get Drunk” is re-used to provide a humorous tone.

The scene cuts back to the forest. E.T. has set up the machine and waits with Elliot for it to start working and sending the signal. A gentle variation of the Flying Theme is heard in the harp and celesta while they wait. The wind picks up, moving tree branches and pulling ropes that activate the machine. Small bits of E.T.'s Theme are played, and when Elliot says, “E.T., it's working!” the horns play a light version of the Flying Theme. The movie cuts to the house. The men are searching the house and their flashlights cast strange shadows on the walls. Atonal music is played by low winds and high strings. Electronic beeping sounds come from Elliot's room and men's shadows pass over the slats in the door. A cabling powering one of their machines is pulled farther and farther into Elliot's room. The music crescendos as the wire pulls taut and slams a chair into the wall.

Meanwhile, back in the forest, a touching moment happens between Elliot and E.T. It's late and Elliot starts to cough. E.T. and Elliot are both sad and this is reflected in the music. The clarinet plays an unfamiliar and melancholy tune. E.T. is sad that the aliens did not respond right away. He taps his chest and says, "Ouch." Elliot is sad that his friend might leave. He does not want E.T. to go and pleads with him to stay while a tender version of the Flying Theme plays in the flute and then clarinet. While E.T. looks up into the sky, his theme plays in the piccolo with harp glissandi and tense strings. Elliot sits down and cries. E.T. looks down at him, wipes a tear from his face, and caresses his hair. This loving moment is accompanied by the cellos, who play an aching version of the Flying Theme. Another interesting feature of the score in *E.T.* is that after the flying sequence, the Friendship Theme is essentially replaced with the Flying Theme (though the Friendship Theme does re-appear two more times near the end of the film). When E.T. looks back up at the sky, a hopeful and vibrant version of E.T.'s Theme plays, enhanced by violin trills. The music decrescendos and comes to a close as E.T. longingly calls out, "Home...?"

"Searching for E.T." (1:16:45-1:20:57)

Elliot does not come home that night and his mom thinks he is missing. He finally comes home the next day, but E.T. is nowhere to be found. Elliot pleads with Michael to find E.T., and Michael races off on a bicycle to find him. As Michael hurries off, the music takes off in a rushed version of Bicycle Theme 2 to highlight the sense of urgency. A car with government agents follows Michael, and the rhythmic figure from Bicycle Theme 1 adds to the energy of the chase. Michael tries to evade them by going through a backyard, an alleyway, and finally manages to lose the car by riding up a hill above the road. When he escapes, a trumpet plays a victorious version of Bicycle Theme 2.

Michael arrives at the forest and finds the machine, but not E.T. Fearful and sad music plays in the strings, with dark brass accompaniment highlighting Michael's concern. When Michael finds E.T.'s ghost costume lying on a fence, a sad version of the Flying Theme is heard in the piccolo. Michael continues to search for E.T. on his bicycle, which is accompanied by a solemn version of Bicycle Theme 2. When Michael finds E.T. lying in the water by a drainage ditch, a tense version of the Flying Theme plays in the strings. Michael covers E.T. with the white sheet as a helicopter is heard flying overhead. The scene cuts back to the front of the house as evening sets. A tall shadow walks towards the driveway, the sound of keys jingling with each step. Keys' Theme plays in low winds, while tolling bells and pulsing timpani foreshadow the impending invasion. Trumpets take over the theme and the music crescendos with timpani and cymbal rolls as the camera pans up to the house. The ominous music tells the audience that the house is no longer safe.

Inside the house, Michael finds his mom and takes her to Elliot and E.T., who are both sick. The music is tense, but soft. Strings play a twisted version of the ending of the Flying Theme's B section. The alternating notes which were previously beautiful have become haunting and dangerous, implying the uncertainty of what is to come. When mom sees E.T., she thinks it is a trick at first but is terrified when E.T. reaches towards her with his hands and utters, "mom." John Williams brings back the Aliens' Theme for this moment, which is extremely fitting. The music that portrayed the mystery of the aliens has not been used since the beginning of the movie. The audience has come to know E.T. and realized that the aliens are friendly. Mary, however, does not know this. This is her first time seeing an extra-terrestrial and it scares her. She panics, orders Michael to take Gertie downstairs while she grabs Elliot. When Mary picks up

the sick child, the strings play the beautiful, yet aching melody that was heard in the beginning of the film when E.T. was in the forest, looking down at the city lights. At that moment, the music was beautiful and tender. Now, as E.T. lays dying and is separated from his friend, the music is sorrowful and tragic. It is the same music, but in a different context it has a completely different tone.

Michael opens the front door to leave, but immediately backs up, a look of fear and disbelief on his face. E.T.'s Theme plays in flutes and muted trumpets, the accompaniment pulsing with ever-growing intensity. Mary rushes down the stairs, and as she is about to run through the door, the music comes to a sudden stop when a man in a space suit walks through the door. The mysterious sound of the rubber ball on a tam-tam is the only sound. This ambiguous sound originally conveyed the unknown intentions of the aliens, but its meaning has shifted. Now it conveys the unknown and threatening actions of men. The remainder of the scene plays out in a terrifying tone similar to the abduction scene in *Close Encounters*, complete with avant-garde music. As more men enter the house, the music intensifies the fear through tone clusters in the strings, and dissonant and accelerating chords in the piano. Keys' Theme blares in the trumpets and winds and a toy train starts running and whistling amidst the chaos. The music crescendos and comes to a blaring conclusion as another man forces his way through a window.

“Invading Elliot’s House” (1:21:01-1:23:40)

As the sun sets, men in hazmat suits walk down the street towards Elliot's house. Fortissimo hits in the timpani provide a shocking pulse for the march to the house and are accompanied by low sustained notes in the bass. Trombones play the beginning of Keys' Theme. The strings take over and crescendo to the end of the phrase. Back inside the house, E.T. lies on the bathroom floor, looking deathly pale. When a man in a space suit finds him, the music becomes atonal again. Strings slide eerily up and come to rest on a dissonant cluster played with wide and intense vibrato. The scene cuts back to the men outside who are now rolling a large plastic tube towards the house, accompanied by various government vehicles and police cars. The fortissimo timpani hits return and accent the ominous arrival of the agents. On a final timpani blast, the scene cuts to the exterior of the house at night. The street has been taken over by government agents, many of them wearing hazmat suits, their faces covered by masks. The house has been transformed into a makeshift government facility. The safe haven for E.T. and the children has become a terrifying place.

The house is covered with plastic tarps and the only way in or out is through a long plastic tube that leads to the front door. The Aliens' Theme plays over this exterior night scene. The mysterious music now applies to the government agents, whose intentions are unknown and appear menacing. Inside a van, a man puts on a hazmat suit. His massive key ring is visible just before he pulls up his suit. It is Keys and he is about to make his big entrance. His theme plays in the horns and the music builds as Keys walks through the tube towards the house. Dissonant clusters and tense racing fragments rush through the strings. Timpani hits increase the intensity of the music, which climaxes as Keys steps through the door and shows his face for the first time. Immediately following Keys' arrival, the camera cuts to doctors questioning Mary and Michael about E.T. A soft, dissonant cluster in the strings underscores their interrogation. The cluster is sustained and persists until the end of the cue.

“Stay With Me” (1:27:16-1:29:32)

Elliot and E.T. and both sick and close to death. Their bond ties the health of one with the other. Elliot calls out to E.T., who speaks back to him, surprising the doctors. Elliot begs E.T. to stay alive and attempts to comfort him by saying, "I'll be right here." The original music for this scene was replaced by different music in the film, though the original version is available on the soundtrack. The new music works better, though, as it enhances the emotions in the scene more effectively. A solo clarinet in its higher range intones a melancholy version of the Flying Theme and is accompanied by the harp. The bond between the two characters breaks, and Elliot comes back to life as E.T.'s health takes a turn for the worse. The strings take over the music with a mournful variation of the theme before moving on to a heart-wrenching version of the Flying Theme. Michael goes upstairs to the closet and falls asleep in E.T.'s bed. When he wakes up the next morning, the celesta plays a gentle version of E.T.'s Theme. Michael opens his eyes and sees the flowers. They die and sag before his very eyes and he screams as he realizes E.T. is dead. The music descends quickly through winds and strings, building to a climax that is cut off by the sound a medical alarm.

"Losing E.T." (1:30:07-1:32:05)

When E.T.'s heart stops beating, the doctors desperately try to save him. For this scene, John Williams composed a mournful elegy, reminiscent of Samuel Barber's *Adagio for Strings*. When the doctors shock E.T. in an attempt to restart his heart, the low end of the music drops out, leaving only the high strings. When E.T. is shocked, his body jolts, and our own hearts seem to skip a beat at the sight. It is a very dramatic moment, and this musical gesture captures the heartache so perfectly. E.T. and Gertie have been watching the entire thing. Mary reaches out to Elliot, who leaps into her arms. As mother and son embrace, the full string section returns to the texture. Outside the house, Michael's friends and a crowd of people stand looking at the house. They do not know what is going on but think that something terrible has happened. A solo trumpet takes over the melody, accompanied by very low and very high strings. The mournful music diminuendos and comes to a close as the doctors give up and declare E.T. dead.

"E.T. Is Alive!" (1:34:54-1:38:55)

E.T. is dead. Keys, who turns out to be a compassionate person, gives Elliot a moment alone with E.T. before his body is taken away. Keys opens the freezer containing E.T., and the music begins with the elegiac introduction to the Friendship Theme (the first half of this cue was re-used earlier in the film, in the "Toys" scene. Elliot talks to E.T., laments over his death, and expresses his love for his friend. The music transitions to the Friendship Theme, the first statement played by the celesta with string accompaniment, and the second statement by the clarinet with string accompaniment. E.T.'s heart-light starts to glow just as Elliot closes the lid over him. Elliot does not notice and walks away. When he walks past the flowers, however, he sees them coming back to life. An expectant version of the Flying Theme plays in the winds, accompanied by string trills, pizzicato bass, and harp glissandi. Increasing rhythm and a crescendo build excitement as Elliot opens the freezer and unzips E.T.'s body bag. When E.T. cries, "E.T. phone home!" the horns play a magnificent version of the Flying Theme with string accompaniment and a triangle trill. E.T. says that the aliens are coming for him, but in his excitement, won't stop talking. When the doctors come back into the room, Elliot closes the freezer and cries loudly to cover up the sound of E.T.'s voice. The strings provide a rhythmic

accompaniment that creates anticipation of how Elliot will rescue E.T. Another joyful statement of the Flying Theme closes the scene while Elliot tells Michael that E.T. is alive.

“Escape/Chase/Saying Goodbye” (1:38:57-1:53:45)

For the final sequence of the film, Williams composed around fifteen minutes of continuous music with numerous sync points. Onscreen images are imitated with musical gestures, such as descending scalar passages for bicycles going down hills, low brass notes and tam-tam for police cars bursting into frame, and the Flying Theme for when E.T. lifts the bicycles into the air. Williams worked out the calculations to hit all these points within the music, but when it came time to record, he was unable to catch them all and get a satisfactory musical performance. After numerous takes, he turned to Spielberg and said, “ ‘I don’t think I can get this right. Maybe I need to do something else.’ And he [Spielberg] said, ‘Why don’t you take the movie off. Don’t look at it. Forget the movie and conduct the orchestra the way you would want to conduct it in a concert so that the performance is just completely uninhibited by any considerations of mathematics and measurement.’ ”²⁵ After doing that, Williams got a terrific performance from the orchestra and Spielberg re-edited the end of the film slightly to match the music. This is an incredibly rare moment in filmmaking. Usually, the music strictly adheres to the timing of the film. But in this case, the process is reversed, and the film follows the timing of the music. Indeed, the music is truly remarkable and is one the great unions between film and music in cinematic history.

In the final sequence, the children try to escape with E.T. and return him to his spaceship. Gertie gives Mary a note from the boys that presumably outlines their plan. In the music, Williams creates what might be termed, “sneaking around” music. It features low, pulsing, and fragmentary notes with a mid-range pedal tone. It is more rhythmic and textural than thematic. It provides movement and creates anticipation for what is to come. After this, Elliot jogs out of the house and down the plastic tube towards the van carrying E.T.’s body. To accompany this, Williams provides some “walking music.” It contains pulsing staccato chords in the strings, with short melodic passages in the winds. When Elliot gets to the van, Keys’ Theme plays in the winds and a muted trumpet, and the music crescendos as Elliot pulls open the curtain to the front of the van. Michael is sitting in the driver’s seat, struggling to put on a blue hazmat suit. A man walks by, sees Michael in the van, and asks who is. He tries to open the door and gestures towards other agents to help him. As they rush towards the van, the music crescendos again and Michael, who is still a teenager and just learning to drive yells, “I’ve never driven forward before!”

Michael steps on the gas pedal and the van races off. The strings take off with it, playing Bicycle Theme 2 and supported by brass accompaniment. Although Michael and Elliot are driving in the van, the Bicycle Theme is maintained as their travel music. The rhythmic Bicycle Theme 1 plays briefly when Michael stops the van to tell his friends to get their bikes and meet them at the park. When the van first took off, part of the plastic tube was still attached with two men inside it. As Michael drives around, the tube drags behind it and the men attempt to make their way up to the van. An action-packed version of Bicycle Theme 1 provides most of the material for this scene. The music becomes more intense as Elliot attempts to disconnect the tube

²⁵ Sunshine, *E.T. The Extra-Terrestrial: From Concept to Classic*, 144.

from the van before the men can crawl inside. As Elliot pulls out the last connector, the tube slides away from the van and the music rejoices with a victorious statement of Bicycle Theme 2.

At the park, Michael drives through the playground, struggling to control the van. He finally comes to a stop near Michael's friends and the music settles down. A mysterious version of E.T.'s Theme plays while the alien stands at the back of the van with his heart-light glowing and enveloped in a cloud of steam. When the haze clears, the other kids see E.T. for the first time and the strings play up a stirring statement of the Flying Theme. The camera cuts to a shot of government agents and Mary running towards the van. The strings start softly and build to a tense climax as it seems the children might be captured. But when the men get to the van, it is empty. The children and E.T. are gone. The music rises even further and when the camera cuts to the kids racing off on their bicycles, the orchestra bursts into a rousing statement of the Escape Fanfare.

Perhaps the most exhilarating part of the movie and the score, the bike chase is a high-energy escape sequence, with dramatic music and a paraphrase of Hanson's second symphony. Winds, violins and glockenspiel play fast and repetitive gestures that create a shimmering accompaniment. Trumpets and trombones play the stirring fanfare and cadencing with massive chords from the rest of the orchestra. The Escape Fanfare plays several times until the kids ride into the empty plots and terraced hills of an unfinished housing community. Downward-racing figures in the winds and strings accent each time the bikes ride down a hill. Government agents in a car chase the kids while Keys' Theme plays, adding tension to the chase. The agents cut the kids off at the bottom of the hill. However, the kids ride right over the parked car with their bikes, almost hit an agent standing nearby, and escape once again. The Escape Fanfare returns, alternating with the Flying Theme as the children continue to give the agents the slip. When it seems like the kids have finally lost their pursuers, the winds play a more relaxed version of the Flying Theme. Suddenly, dozens of agents rush into the frame, frantically running after the kids and E.T. Bicycle Theme 1 blares when the agents suddenly appear and sequences higher and higher. Government vehicles stop in the middle of the street, blocking the kids' path. The music becomes more and more intense, building to a climax as the children approach the blockade. E.T. uses his powers at the last moment to lift all of the bicycles into the air and escape. The Flying Theme plays as they fly through the sky, soaring over the neighborhood and towards the forest. The entire orchestra plays a full version of the theme, in a satisfying ABA structure. At the end of their flight, the children land safely in the forest (unlike the first flying sequence in which Elliot and E.T. crash landed).

The final scene is very moving and greatly enhanced by the power of the music, which features the new Farewell Theme. The spaceship arrives moments after E.T. and the children land in the forest. While they look up in amazement at the spaceship, E.T.'s Theme plays briefly in the oboe, followed by a lush variation of the Farewell Theme in the strings. Fragments of the theme are sequenced and inverted, with large leaps that tug on the emotions. The melody leaps up, then falls back down. It rises even higher, then falls down again. These dramatic leaps do not sound expressionistic or pointillistic, (even though many of the leaps are quite large), but more like a 19th Century opera melody that surges with emotions. When the ship lands, E.T.'s Theme plays once again.

Keys' Theme is heard briefly as Mary, Gertie and Keys arrive in the forest. Gertie runs up to E.T. to say goodbye, and he replies, "Be good," which were the first words Gertie taught him to speak. Michael is next to say goodbye. As he gently caresses E.T.'s head, a calm but

melancholy variation of the Farewell Theme plays in the horns, accompanied by light arpeggios in the winds. Finally, Elliot and E.T. say goodbye and it is a very tearful scene. When Elliot approaches E.T., the strings open up in an incredibly beautiful treatment of the Farewell Theme, with the A and B sections in counterpoint. The faster-moving B section plays higher in the violins while the slower-moving A section plays lower in the violas and cellos. The music sequences higher and higher, moving dramatically through the tessitura and powerfully reflecting the scene's wide range of emotions. There is excitement for E.T. to go home, sadness at his departure, but also gratefulness for the time spent with this wonderful alien. There are very few words in this scene. "Come," "Stay," and "Ouch," are all that Elliot and E.T. say to each other. All of the emotional power comes from the combination of the visuals and the music. It is pure cinematic storytelling, and Spielberg and Williams are masters of the craft. Elliot and E.T. embrace one last time while the Friendship Theme plays in the horns.

Finally, the two let go and look at each other. E.T.'s mouth opens, then closes. He wants to say something but cannot find the words. He holds up his glowing finger, points to Elliot's head, and says, "I'll be right here." These are the same words Elliot spoke to him earlier as they lay dying. They are also a sign of their friendship. A sign that they are always there for each other. It is what all people want from a friend or loved one. Lastly, the words express that although Elliot and E.T. may never see each other again, they will always be in each other's thoughts. The Escape Fanfare plays in the brass when E.T. speaks the line and Elliot is so overcome with emotion, that all he can utter is a faint, "Bye."

E.T. walks up the gangway to the spaceship, accompanied by the B section of the Flying Theme. A glorious statement of the main section of the Flying Theme follows and the theme comes to a dramatic close with accented hits from brass and percussion as the ship's ramp closes. E.T.'s Theme plays gently in the piccolo as the circular door of the spaceship slowly closes around his heart-light. When the spaceship rises into the air, the A section of the Flying Theme plays in stretto, with overlapping entrances played by different sections of the orchestra, and accompanied by a contrapuntal variation underneath. As the spaceship streaks across the sky, leaving a rainbow in its wake, a final fanfare based on a perfect 5th plays in the trumpets.

Musical Example 17, "Final Fanfare" from *E.T.: The Extra-Terrestrial* (transcribed by ear)



E.T.'s Theme is heard one last time in a grand statement by the horns, accompanied by full orchestra. A massive C major chord plays in the orchestra, which crescendos and ends dramatically as the picture cuts to black.

"End Credits" (1:53:47-1:59:24)

The end credits begin with a solo piano playing Bicycle Theme 2. In the theme's second statement, the piano is joined by horns, glockenspiel and strings. The music crescendos and leads into the Escape Fanfare, with the rousing, Hanson-esque winds and rhythms accompaniment. After this, the Flying Theme plays, but in a slightly different order. The B section appears first, transitioning from the Escape Fanfare to the A section of the Flying Theme. The theme continues

with another statement of both the B section and the A section. For the 20th Anniversary edition of the movie, extra credits and music were added to the end credit sequence. The majestic version of the Escape Fanfare is heard (as it was played in the final scene when E.T. boards the spaceship), followed by another statement of the Flying Theme, in reverse order again (B section then A section). The B section works so well as transitional and modulatory material, that this re-ordering of the theme feels very natural and beautifully transitions from other themes to the Flying Theme. E.T.'s Theme plays in the piccolo, followed by a final statement of the Flying Theme. This is the version used in the closing shots of the film, as the spaceship takes off and streaks across the sky. E.T.'s Theme is heard one final time, in a big, grand and brassy statement, complete with timpani repeatedly pounding out V-I. There is a big crescendo and the music closes with a tutti hit from the orchestra.

Conclusion

E.T.: The Extra-Terrestrial was enormously successful when it was released and remains popular to this day. Currently, it is ranked as the twenty-fourth greatest film of all time by the American Film Institute. The story is engaging and full of wonderful characters and situations. Aliens have long held an attraction for movie-goers and there have been countless films about them over the years, though none of them are quite like *E.T.* It is an intimate story about a boy and an alien who develop a loving friendship. In addition, John Williams wrote one of his finest scores for *E.T.* The music abounds with memorable themes and textures that beautifully capture the tone of the film. The melodies are diverse in character, yet unified and organically develop throughout the film. *E.T.* has endured for almost forty years and the music plays an important role in its success. Spielberg himself has said on numerous occasions that Williams' music becomes a character in his films. And while E.T.'s powers may have lifted the bicycle into the sky, the magic of John Williams' music made it soar.

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