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HUFFPOST ARTS & CULTURE

Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey* Wows in Concert

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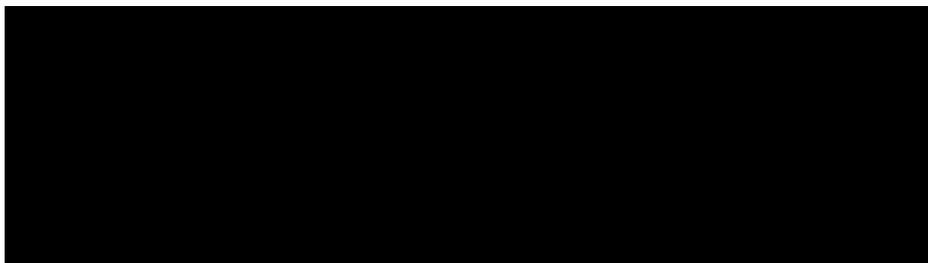
**THE ART OF THE SCORE -- *2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY*
WITH THE NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC, ALAN GILBERT CONDUCTING
AVERY FISHER HALL**

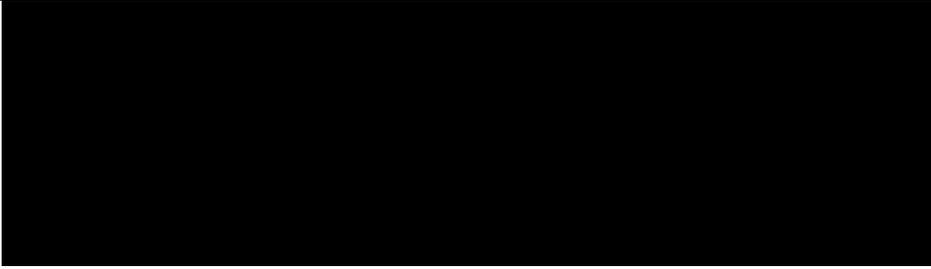
I imagine it's been a long time since the New York Philharmonic played with so much chatter going on in the audience. But the screening of *2001: A Space Odyssey* was more like a pops concert than their usual fare. And when the closing credits of a movie are rolling, people tend to murmur, even if conductor Alan Gilbert is leading his musicians through a lovely rendition of "On The Beautiful Blue Danube." It was all in the spirit of the evening, which began with thunderous roars of pleasure after "Also sprach Zarathustra" near the beginning and concluded with applause for various names in the credits like Douglas Trumbull and Arthur C. Clarke.

During an all too brief week devoted to the art of the film score, Lincoln Center also featured an evening of selections of music from Hitchcock films (I'd kill to see *Vertigo* performed live in full) and a panel discussion led by artistic adviser Alec Baldwin on movie music.

But for me the highlight was the opportunity to see a flawless screening of Stanley Kubrick's landmark work of imagination with the New York Philharmonic and a chorus delivering classical selections from Ligeti, the Strauss's Richard and Johann II, among others in what is surely one of the most brilliant marriages between existing music and movie images in history.

Every viewing brings fresh insights, from the usual (the hand-made special effects are still brilliant and convincing; surely we've taken a disastrous turn for the worse with digital effects?) to the less typical (hey, Kubrick even imagined personal screens on airplanes embedded in the seat in front of you!). The sheer boldness of the story takes your breath away. Who else could devote so much screen time to showing that monumental moment when our distant ancestors first used tools? Who else would find the absolute perfect music for such a thunderous, epoch-shaking moment? And who else would then flash forward with one of the most brilliant and evocative cuts ever imagined? And then to hint at our NEXT stage of evolution and somehow make us feel we truly are witnessing such a miraculous thing? It's set in 2001, but Kubrick will always be pointing the way to the future.





You can enjoy this experience anytime you see the film (ideally in a theater with immersive sound) so I should focus on this particular experience of seeing it with a world class orchestra. It wasn't just enjoyable as any great film would be under such circumstances. It was, in its way, a unique and revealing experience.

First, the mere presence of the orchestra throughout the screening humanized the film in a very real and useful manner. If there is any difficulty in tackling this movie for newcomers, it's a certain chilliness they imagine present in *2001*. That's ameliorated greatly by the living, breathing mass of people on stage who are performing some of the most indelible music ever heard. And that pairing of classical pieces with the movie isn't just handy -- it's also a constant quiet reminder of humanity and the great artistic flowering that humankind has produced, the enduring beauty that is our legacy. You can't think of just empty space and wayward computers when people who have devoted their lives to mastering this music are sitting right in front of you playing Khachaturian's Adagio from *Gayane*.

I didn't even notice the chorus at first. They were seated on both sides of the first balcony. When voices were called for, they arose silently in the dark and the tiny flashlights hovering over their scores looked like alien creatures in the dark, adding even more to the already spooky effect of the Kyrie from Ligeti's *Requiem*. Again, with the voices on both sides of the stage often battling back and forth for supremacy, it added a dynamic, emotional element to a movie often wrongly seen as merely an intellectual head trip. Best of all, I appreciated anew the use of silence in the film; nothing emphasized that more than the presence of a full orchestra on stage waiting for its next cue. And it was a subtle goosing of the excitement to see them settling into position, knowing you were about to hear more music.

I look forward to another edition of *The Art Of The Score* next year, including more selections of great music composed for the movies as well as great movies like *2001* that pulled from the classical repertoire. (Terence Malick, anyone, perhaps with a Bugs Bunny short to kick things off? Heck, they could do an entire evening devoted to classic music in cartoons. If Baldwin isn't available, call me.) I could have done without the unnecessary intermission that merely lengthened the night. But overall it was an excellent evening. Nothing captured the spirit more than the orchestra members onstage during the many lengthy passages without music. There they were, their instruments at rest, quietly leaning back in the dark and craning their necks to see every moment they could of the movie until it was time to go back to work.

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Note: *Michael Giltz was provided free seats with the understanding that he will be reviewing the performance.*

