

Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra
November 23 programme complementary content

Danny Elfman and Tim Burton

Danny Elfman's working relationship with Tim Burton is one of the longest and most successful filmmaker/composer collaborations in the history of film — and one of the most unexpected. Elfman was drawn to the movies his entire life, but only came to music as a young adult and with no formal training. It was at 18, during a year of traveling in West Africa, when Elfman picked up his first musical instrument (violin) and began to toy with the fantasy of a musical direction for his life.

At 19 he teamed up with his brother Richard, who founded the avant-garde musical cabaret troupe 'The Mystic Knights of the Oingo Boingo', and it was there Elfman taught himself to write music by doing transcriptions of early 1930s jazz bands. He also began writing his first compositions. After eight years with the troupe, Elfman started the idiosyncratic rock band known simply as Oingo Boingo. As their writer and singer, he performed and recorded with them for almost two decades.

But there was another side to Danny Elfman — the kid who religiously attended Saturday matinees, watching every type of horror and fantasy movie imaginable. The young Danny had no interest in music — he wanted to be a scientist, or a 'radiation biologist' as he once explained. When he did begin to notice music, it was movie music, and he found a particular delight in the filmmaker/composer relationship of stop-motion animator Ray Harryhausen and Bernard Herrmann. "If I saw the names Harryhausen and Herrmann in the same title sequence," he said, "I already knew the movie was going to be a huge favourite — something really special."

In high school, Elfman began listening to the classical composers who would later become his inspiration. The Russian composers Stravinsky, Prokofiev and Shostakovich particularly got under his skin. He also began to refine his interest in film, rediscovering Bernard Herrmann through the legendary composer's other great collaborator, Alfred Hitchcock. Elfman was absorbing the language of movie music. His first taste in scoring would come from another collaboration with his brother, who directed the cult film *Forbidden Zone* in the late 70s — but he wouldn't truly become a film composer until 1985, when he got a strange call from an extraordinary young animator he had never heard of.

Tim Burton came out of the suburbs of Burbank and the California Institute for the Arts (CalArts), and, like Elfman, he had been mesmerized by Ray Harryhausen's stop-motion fantasies as a child, as well as the vivid black-and-crimson iconographies of horror films. Burton had made an uncomfortable fit for the Walt Disney Company, toiling as a conceptual artist and animator on movies like *The Fox and the Hound*. But his short film *Frankenweenie* grabbed the attention of executives and filmmakers in Hollywood...including Paul Reubens, the performer who created and portrayed Pee-wee Herman. Reubens and Phil Hartman had written a movie for the character called *Pee-Wee's Big Adventure*, and after seeing *Frankenweenie*, Reubens quickly lobbied for Burton to direct it.

Both Burton and Reubens were familiar with Danny Elfman through Oingo Boingo, and *Forbidden Zone*, and when editor Billy Webber tracked a scene from the movie with music from Bernard Herrmann's score to the Harryhausen movie *The 7th Voyage of Sinbad*, Burton loved the effect. When Elfman came in to interview for the job, he happened to mention that very same score as one of his life-long favourites. Burton was sold, and Elfman, after some hesitation, decided to jump into a completely new world, figuring he'd either learn to swim or drown in the attempt. He was certain of one thing: the score would not be a rock score. He would explore an insane mashup of Bernard Herrmann and Nino Rota (who did Federico Fellini's scores) and in

the process created an alternately joyous and manic sound that fit the hyper-enthusiastic Pee-wee character like a glove.

Elfman's score to *Pee-Wee's Big Adventure* was a revelation, and an instantly indelible musical personality had invaded film. And Elfman was also now hooked on a new addiction...film scoring. He immediately began getting offers to score other films, but it was already clear he had a special working relationship with Burton. Their next collaboration was another comedy, but one out of left field — the “ghost exterminator” story *Beetlejuice*, a movie that allowed Burton to express his own personality more than he had on *Pee-Wee's Big Adventure*. Elfman's frantic opening music demonstrated his love for the “danse macabre” — the ability to have a fiendishly good time.

Elfman and Burton would both have to prove themselves on their next project: *Batman*. Shot well before the current vogue of costumed superheroes, Burton's take on the Caped Crusader created a shadowy world halfway between a film noir and an animated graphic novel. The film required a major symphonic score, which he knew would be an enormous challenge. Elfman's score was a sensation — as quirky and unpredictable as his earlier comic works, yet so muscular and violently stark that it instantly helped define the comic book genre.

Amazingly, Elfman faced doubts again on his fourth collaboration with Burton, *Edward Scissorhands*. With three successes under his belt, Burton could afford to make a film that was truly his, and Edward was nakedly autobiographical, depicting an inarticulate, artistic character adrift in a hostile world that looked suspiciously like the suburbs of Burbank. There were no questions about whether Elfman could score this kind of a movie, because no one knew what kind of a movie *Edward Scissorhands* was. But from the opening celeste notes of Elfman's score, it was clear he had found Edward's soul. *Edward Scissorhands* became a film music genre just as much as Burton's film defined his output as a director — and it is still perhaps Elfman's most imitated and personal work.

Burton and Elfman revisited *Batman* with *Batman Returns*, expanding on the gothic landscape both men had initiated in their first effort, with Elfman providing distinctive approaches to Michelle Pfeiffer's Catwoman and Danny DeVito's Penguin. But for their next project, the two men dug into their past love of stop-motion animation and took advantage of Elfman's skills as a songwriter and performer. *The Nightmare Before Christmas* turned vintage Rankin-Bass holiday specials inside out, exploring a monsters-eye-view of Christmas through the character of Jack Skellington, brought to life with the singing voice of Elfman himself. *The Nightmare Before Christmas* was a vivid, original vision and a cult smash, throwing songs like “This Is Halloween” into the cultural marketplace and again demonstrating Elfman's versatility.

Mars Attacks! bubbled with subversive humour, kicked off by Elfman's Russian-inspired main title march, which grows from an impishly comic rhythm into a full-blown sci-fi anthem complete with theremin.

Elfman and Burton explored more serious genre territory in their next two collaborations. *Sleepy Hollow* was Burton's love poem to the British Hammer horror movies he'd loved as a child, and Elfman responded with a richly atmospheric and gothic score. For *Planet of the Apes*, Elfman stepped into the footsteps of legendary composer Jerry Goldsmith, fashioning his own musical world of simian rule using the massive collection of exotic percussion instruments he'd collected as far back as his teenage trip to Africa.

As he had with *Batman*, Burton followed up *Planet of the Apes* with a more personal project. *Big Fish* mixed Burtonesque fantasy with a more serious personal drama, as a resentful son tries to come to terms with his father's predilection for tall tales — lies, as the son sees them. By the time he scored *Big Fish*, Danny Elfman had been completely accepted in Hollywood — in 1997 he received his first Oscar nominations for both *Good Will Hunting* and *Men in Black*. For his touching Americana score to *Big Fish*, Elfman received his first Oscar nomination earned by one of his collaborations with Tim Burton.

For *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, Elfman again took advantage of his rock and performance background to create the songs performed by the movie's diminutive Oompa-Loompas (all voiced by Elfman) in a pageant of pop rock styles — everything from Beatles-esque to Bollywood, all alongside an evocative orchestral score to characterize the edible environment of Willy Wonka's sweets factory.

Burton and Elfman returned to the gothic stop-motion territory of *The Nightmare Before Christmas* in *Corpse Bride*, with Elfman creating songs whose inspiration ranged from Gilbert and Sullivan to Cab Calloway.

Burton's adaptation of *Alice in Wonderland* became one of the biggest money makers in movie history in 2010, a hugely challenging technical exercise for the director, who shot the majority of the film on green screen sets so most of his cast could be transformed into computer-generated versions of Lewis Carroll's classic characters. Elfman responded to the controlled chaos by writing one of his grandest scores, driven by his stirring 'Alice's Theme'.

For their most recent collaborations, Burton and Elfman once again turned to their genre pasts. Burton cast Johnny Depp, the star of numerous Burton films, as Barnabas Collins in his tongue-in-cheek remake of the *Dark Shadows* television series, which showed the director still has chops for the offbeat comedy he demonstrated in *Pee-Wee's Big Adventure* and *Beetlejuice*. Elfman created a lush score dominated by the iconic, sensuous flutes inspired by the eerie vibe from the 70s television series.

Burton mounted an animated version of his own *Frankenweenie* in 2012 (which ironically, was his first live-action film). Filmed in black-and-white, *Frankenweenie* sprang directly from Burton's illustrations, and Elfman returned to his gothic, yet emotionally charged style to accompany the story of a young boy who brings his pet dog back to life.

Elfman and Burton continue their movie music relationship with Burton's *Big Eyes*, marking their 16th collaboration over 25 prolific years.

Danny Elfman

For over 30 years, four-time Oscar nominee Danny Elfman has established himself as one of the most versatile and accomplished film composers in the industry. He has collaborated with directors such as Tim Burton, Gus Van Sant, Sam Raimi, Peter Jackson, Ang Lee, Rob Minkoff, Guillermo del Toro, Brian De Palma, James Ponsoldt and David O' Russell. Beginning with his first score on Tim Burton's *Pee-Wee's Big Adventure*, Elfman has scored over 100 films, including: *Milk* (Oscar nominated), *Good Will Hunting* (Oscar nominated), *Big Fish* (Oscar nominated), *Men in Black* (Oscar nominated), *Edward Scissorhands*, *Batman*, *To Die For*, *The Nightmare Before Christmas*, *Alice in Wonderland*, *The Grinch*, *Silver Linings Playbook*, *American Hustle*, *Avengers: Age of Ultron*, *Spiderman*, *A Simple Plan*, *Midnight Run*, *Sommersby*, *Dolores Claiborne*, and the Errol Morris documentaries *The Unknown Known*, and *Standard Operating Procedure*. In addition to his film work, Elfman wrote the iconic theme music for the television series *The Simpsons* and *Desperate Housewives*. Elfman recently scored the Marvel feature *Dr. Strange in the Multiverse of Madness*.

A native of Los Angeles, Elfman grew up loving film music. He travelled the world as a young man, absorbing its musical diversity. He helped found the band Oingo Boingo, and came to the attention of a young Tim Burton, who asked him to write the score for *Pee-Wee's Big Adventure*. 37 years later, the two have forged one of the most fruitful composer-director collaborations in film history. Since 1985, composer Danny Elfman has set the tone for over 100 films with his instantly recognizable scores, garnered four Academy® Award nominations, collected two Emmy® Awards and one Grammy® Award, generated hundreds of millions of streams, and earned platinum and gold certifications.

Elfman has expanded his writing to composing orchestral concert works which include: *Serenada Schizophrana*, a symphony commissioned by the American Composer's Orchestra, which premiered at Carnegie Hall in 2005, *Rabbit and Rogue* for the American Ballet Theater choreographed by Twyla Tharp, performed at The Metropolitan Opera house in 2008, and *Iris* for Cirque du Soleil directed by French choreographer Philippe Decouflé. In 2013, *Danny Elfman's Music from the Films of Tim Burton* live orchestral concert, premiered at the Royal Albert Hall, and has since toured around the world and won two Emmys.

In 2017 Elfman premiered his first violin concerto *Eleven Eleven* which was co-commissioned by Stanford Live and performed at Bing Concert Hall in March 2018. *Eleven* was recorded by the Royal Scottish National Orchestra and released on Sony Classical records which also contains his first Piano Quartet commissioned by the Berlin Philharmonic. In March 2022, two of Elfman's compositions had European world premieres: *Percussion Concerto #1*, performed by Colin Currie with the London Philharmonic Orchestra, and *Cello Concerto #1*, performed by Gautier Capuçon with the Vienna Symphony.

In 2021, Elfman performed a concert of *Nightmare Before Christmas* featuring Billie Eilish. He recently released the double "Chamber Punk" album *BIG MESS* along with 7 singles and videos from the album culminating in his critically acclaimed career spanning 2022 Coachella concert!

"I need to push myself into new territory with fresh challenges as much as I can and whenever I can. I am told I have a recognizable style, but my greatest pleasure is when I can surprise the audience with my music." – Elfman

Tim Burton

Tim Burton, widely regarded as one of cinema's most imaginative filmmakers, has enjoyed great success in both the live-action and animation arenas. Most recently Burton directed *Big Eyes* and the critically acclaimed *Frankenweenie* which was a 2012 Academy® Award nominee for Best Animated Picture.

Earlier in 2012 Burton directed Johnny Depp, Michelle Pfeiffer, Helena Bonham Carter and Eva Green in the gothic thriller *Dark Shadows*, based on the cult favourite television show. He also produced the fantasy horror *Abraham Lincoln: Vampire Hunter* which was directed by Timur Behmambetov.

In 2010, Burton directed *Alice in Wonderland*, an epic fantasy based on the classic story by Lewis Carroll, and starring Johnny Depp, Helena Bonham Carter, Anne Hathaway, and Mia Wasikowska in the title role. The film earned more than a billion dollars at the worldwide box office, making it the second highest-grossing release of 2010. *Alice in Wonderland* also received a Golden Globe nomination for Best Picture – Musical or Comedy, and won two Academy® Awards for Best Art Direction and Best Costume Design.

Burton was previously honoured with an Academy Award® nomination for Best Animated Feature for the 2005 stop-motion film *Corpse Bride*, which he directed and produced. He earlier received BAFTA Award and Critics' Choice Award nominations for Best Director for the acclaimed fantasy drama *Big Fish*. More recently, Burton won a National Board of Review Award and garnered Golden Globe and Critics' Choice Award nominations for his directing work on *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street*, which also won the Golden Globe for Best Film Musical or Comedy. Depp earned an Oscar® nomination for his performance in the title role of Burton's 2007 film adaptation of the Stephen Sondheim musical thriller, also starring Bonham Carter and Alan Rickman.

Burton began his film career in animation, and, in 1982, directed the stop-motion animated short *Vincent*, narrated by Vincent Price, which was an award winner on the film festival circuit. He made his feature film directorial debut in 1985 with the hit comedy *Pee-Wee's Big Adventure*.

In 1988, Burton helmed the inventive comedy hit *Beetlejuice*, starring Michael Keaton as the title character. He then reteamed with Keaton on the action blockbusters *Batman*, which became the top-grossing film of 1989 and also starred Jack Nicholson as the Joker, and *Batman Returns*, also starring Michelle Pfeiffer and Danny DeVito.

In 1990, Burton directed, co-wrote and produced the romantic fantasy *Edward Scissorhands*, which was acclaimed by both critics and audiences. The film also marked the start of his successful cinematic partnership with Johnny Depp, who delivered a poignant performance in the title role. Their subsequent collaborations include the Burton-directed films *Ed Wood*, also starring Martin Landau in an Oscar®-winning portrayal of Bela Lugosi; *Sleepy Hollow*, adapted from the classic tale by Washington Irving; and the 2005 worldwide smash *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, which was based on Roald Dahl's beloved book and grossed more than \$470 million worldwide.

Burton's additional directing credits include the all-star sci-fi comedy *Mars Attacks!*, which he also produced, and the 2001 remake of *Planet of the Apes*, which marked his first collaboration with producer Richard Zanuck.

Burton also conceived and produced the stop-motion animated feature *The Nightmare Before Christmas*, which remains an enduring holiday favourite. In addition, he has produced such films as *Cabin Boy*, *Batman Forever*, and the animated features *James and the Giant Peach* and *9*.

In 2010, the filmmaker released *The Art of Tim Burton*, a 430-page book comprising more than 40 years of his personal and project artwork. In November of that year, the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) opened an extensive exhibit of his work, which went on to tour in Melbourne, Toronto, Los Angeles, Paris, Seoul, Prague, Tokyo, and Osaka.

Anthony Gabriele *conductor*

Throughout his extraordinary career, Anthony Gabriele has proven himself limitless in terms of genre, travelling the world to perform in over 20 countries, with over 45 orchestras.

Recent performances with multi-platinum singer-songwriter Anastacia, and repeat engagements with Irish singer-songwriter Ronan Keating have established Anthony as the "cross-over" conductor of choice and broadcast his international reputation for conducting with tremendous passion, born of a profound knowledge and understanding of the repertoire.

Anthony's unrivalled expertise as a conductor of Film with Orchestra now includes over 30 titles, including the world premiere performances of: John Williams' score for *Superman*, and his Oscar winning adaptation of Jerry Bock's score for *Fiddler on the Roof*; Thomas Newman's score for *James Bond Spectre*; Caroline Shaw, Andrew Yee and Asma Maroof's composition for the silent film *Moby Dick*; Bruno Coulais' heartrending music for *Les Choristes*; and Lorne Balfe's imaginative score for *Life on Our Planet*.

As a Musical Director on London's West End, and internationally, his credits include *The Lion King*, *CATS*, *The Phantom of the Opera*, *Grease*, *The Wizard of Oz*, *Funny Girl*, *Jesus Christ Superstar*, *The Sound of Music* and *Evita*. As a past prize winner in the international opera conducting competition Blue Danube Musik Impresario (Vienna), Anthony's opera credits include *Don Carlo*, *La traviata*, *La bohème*, *Don Giovanni* and *Madama Butterfly*.

During Anthony's exciting 2024/2025 season he will return again to London's Royal Albert Hall, Amsterdam's Het Concertgebouw and the KKL in Lucerne, and enjoy repeat engagements with the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra, Philharmonia (London), and the Orchestre Philharmonique du Luxembourg. Anthony will also make his debut with the London Symphony Orchestra, Royal Scottish National Orchestra, City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, NDR Radiophilharmonie (Hannover), European Philharmonia (Belgium), Orchestra Sinfonica di Milano and the Academy of St Martin in the Fields.

Kantos Chamber Choir

Kantos is a trailblazing vocal ensemble, performing at the cutting edge of the creative scene, producing vocal performances shaped by the music and stories they believe in.

Performing everywhere from factory spaces to spiritual places, concert halls to nightclubs, they deliver raw, stunning performances as the most ground-breaking, dynamic and creative vocal artists in the North.

Taking on music by everyone from 11th Century visionary saints to genre-bending, experimental rock stars, Kantos prides itself on championing contemporary and well-known choral music. Commissioning and premiering new music is integral to Kantos; recent UK and international artist collaborations include Shruthi Rajasekar, Sadie Harrison, Rebecca Dale, Jack Sheen, Tim Benjamin, Chris Hutchings, Eleanor Cully Boehringer, Rory Wainwright-Johnston, Camden Reeves and Anna Disley-Simpson.

Alongside self-promoted performances and tours across the UK, recent highlights include touring with Gary Numan and Skaparis Orchestra in the Royal Albert Hall, Bridgewater Hall and O2 Shepherd's Bush Empire; recording for *BBC Radio 4's Sunday Worship* alongside Manchester-based poet Rachel Mann; recording with the BBC Philharmonic Orchestra for a *Radio 3* drama production of Anthony Burgess' *Oedipus*; recording with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra; premiering Rebecca Dale's *Mater Requiem*; and an album release of contemporary Christmas carols.