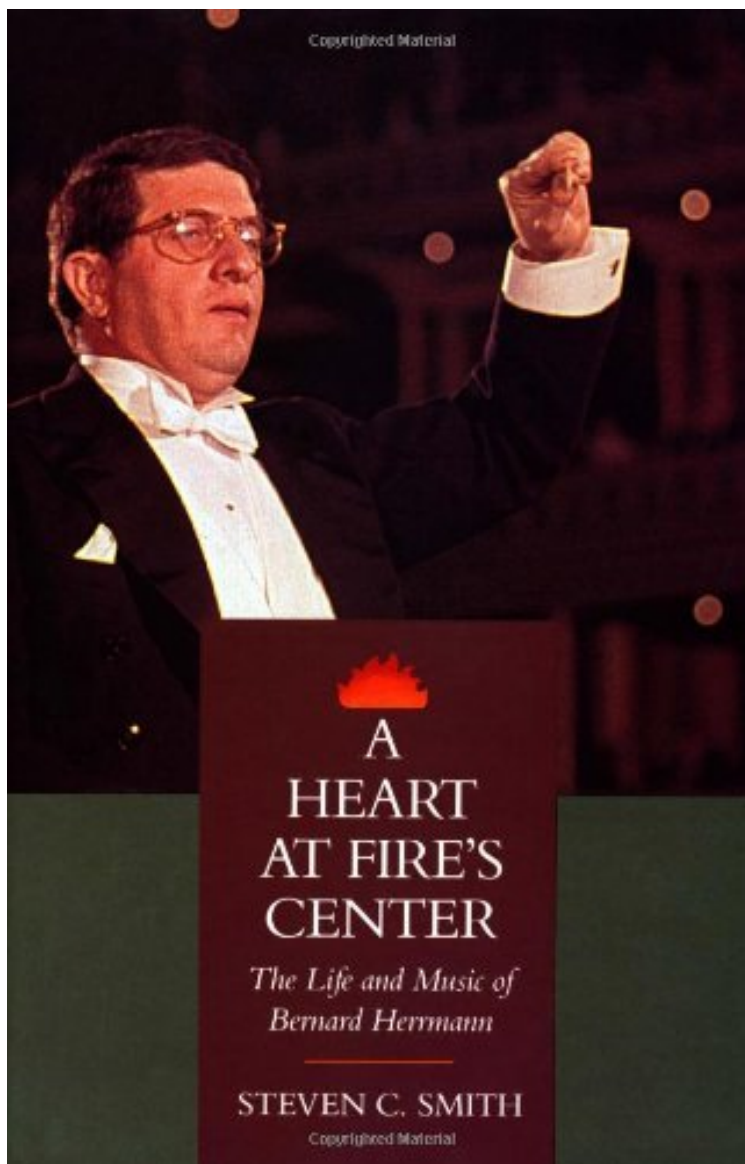


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A Heart at Fire's Center: The Life and Music of Bernard Herrmann

Steven C. Smith

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Steven C. Smith : A Heart at Fire's Center: The Life and Music of Bernard Herrmann before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised A Heart at Fire's Center: The Life and Music of Bernard Herrmann:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Greatest film composer ever. Period. By Robert Hayes For a long time I've had the pleasure of enjoying many of the films which Bernard Herrmann elevated with his signature musical style. The complete story of his life was no less interesting. He shared many characteristics of artists who I feel a similar affinity with, like Scriabin and Hitchcock, while remaining a unique personality. This biography, the only one

I'm familiar with was well-written and thorough, allowing a multifaceted perspective on his life and work. It also provided some insights which I'm keen to use for my Music History paper this semester. For one, I feel like he best summed up music's role in sound film, as one aspect of a collaborative art. After the main body of the book, there is a complete transcript of remarks on film music that he made at a university film class. One is also provided with a complete filmography and recording discography for further watching and listening. If you in any way enjoy movies and/or music, this book is for you. Highly recommended. 5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. *Vieil Homme Terrible* By ilprofessore Bernard "Benny" Hermann--one of, if not *the* greatest composer ever to write music for films--was an enfant terrible. He lived on long enough to become un vieil homme, as well. This revealing book celebrates the genius of the man as a musician and collaborator, but pulls no punches when it comes to depicting his many misadventures and mishaps as a man. Hermann burned almost every bridge he crossed, offended the very people who might have helped him, and so insulted his orchestra players that whenever he made a conducting mistake, as he often did, they followed him to ultimate disaster, causing Benny to lose the many symphony engagements he so coveted. Tail between his legs, he went to London to live and work. The next generation of filmmakers rediscovered him, and, in old age, he ended working for "the kids," as he labeled them. Even then he could not restrain his serpent tongue. When Spielberg heard he had returned to Hollywood, the then young director came to his scoring stage, and literally knelt before him--there were no chairs--to pay him homage. Benny said, "If you think I'm so great how come you keep using Johnny Williams?" An impossible man, but also a very great musician whose scores are now almost all available to us on CDs, proving once again and for all that a very infantile man can also be a supremely mature artist. 3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. *Bernard Herrmann: The Biography* By John Dziadecki An insightful look into the life of a legend of the silver screen. Bernard Herrmann was a genius who is primarily remembered for his outstanding film scores for Orson Welles' "Citizen Kane", Robert Wise's "The Day the Earth Stood Still", several Alfred Hitchcock classics including his haunting "Vertigo", a handful of Harryhausen films including the fanciful "7th Voyage of Sinbad", Francois Truffaut's poetic "Fahrenheit 451" and "Brian de Palma's mysterious "Obsession". Smith does an outstanding job of presenting Herrmann's life and times and music. Herrmann's acerbic, oft-times mercuric temperament would suffer no fools. His gift for remarkable orchestration, as one reviewer put it, would make reading a phone book sound great. Herrmann's as composer and conductor spanned radio presentations, concert halls, opera, classical music and the cinema. Quite simply, Smith's biography of Herrmann a must-read for anyone interested in film scores, behind-the-scenes film-making, brilliant music and the genius that was Bernard Herrmann. A keeper.

No composer contributed more to film than Bernard Herrmann, who in over 40 scores enriched the work of such directors as Orson Welles, Alfred Hitchcock, Francois Truffaut, and Martin Scorsese. In this first major biography of the composer, Steven C. Smith explores the interrelationships between Herrmann's music and his turbulent personal life, using much previously unpublished information to illustrate Herrmann's often outrageous behavior, his working methods, and why his music has had such lasting impact. From his first film (Citizen Kane) to his last (Taxi Driver), Herrmann was a master of evoking psychological nuance and dramatic tension through music, often using unheard-of instrumental combinations to suit the dramatic needs of a film. His scores are among the most distinguished ever written, ranging from the fantastic (Fahrenheit 451, The Day the Earth Stood Still) to the romantic (Obsession, The Ghost and Mrs. Muir) to the terrifying (Psycho). Film was not the only medium in which Herrmann made a powerful mark. His radio broadcasts included Orson Welles's Mercury Theatre of the Air and The War of the Worlds. His concert music was commissioned and performed by the New York Philharmonic, and he was chief conductor of the CBS Symphony. Almost as celebrated as these achievements are the enduring legends of Herrmann's combativeness and volatility. Smith separates myth from fact and draws upon heretofore unpublished material to illuminate Herrmann's life and influence. Herrmann remains as complex as any character in the films he scored--a creative genius, an indefatigable musicologist, an explosive bully, a generous and compassionate man who desperately sought friendship and love.