AN EVENING OF

Henry Mancini

Program Notes

Enjoy a companion Spotify playlist of this evening's music.

Set 1 Energy, Recognition & Hits

1. Theme from Pink Panther

The Pink Panther, 1963

Created for Blake Edwards' comedy starring Peter Sellers as Inspector Clouseau. The slinky, jazz-inflected melody, originally featuring Plas Johnson on saxophone, became instantly iconic. It has been used across the entire Pink Panther film series and remains one of the most recognizable themes in cinema.

The theme won Mancini three Grammy Awards, including Best Instrumental Composition.

2. It Had Better Be Tonight

Also known as Meglio Stasera · The Pink Panther, 1963

A lively, Italian-flavored number from the original Pink Panther film. It has a playful, romantic energy that contrasts with the more famous instrumental theme. The song has been performed in both English and Italian versions.

Fran Jeffries sings it on screen, with English lyrics by Johnny Mercer and Italian lyrics by Franco Migliacci.

3. Charade

Charade, 1963

Written for the stylish thriller starring Audrey Hepburn and Cary Grant. The melody has a cool, slightly mysterious elegance that fits the film's mix of romance and suspense. It remains one of Mancini's most sophisticated film themes.

Johnny Mercer wrote the lyrics, and the song was nominated for the Academy Award for Best Original Song.

4. Baby Elephant Walk

Hatari!, 1962

"Baby Elephant Walk" is the playful, marching piece that accompanies the baby elephants in Howard Hawks' film about animal trappers in Africa, starring John Wayne. In the scene, Elsa Martinelli leads three of them down to a waterhole to bathe. Mancini said they were "walking eight to the bar," like a boogie-woogie; he set the gait with an electric calliope and gave the jaunty melody to a clarinet. The piece won him a Grammy for Best Instrumental Arrangement, and Lawrence Welk's recording reached No. 48 on the Billboard Hot 100 and No. 10 on the Easy Listening chart.

5. Theme from Hatari!

Hatari!, 1962

"Hatari" is Swahili for "danger!"—the cry the trappers shout in the film. The main theme from Hatari! is more sweeping than "Baby Elephant Walk," and it captures the film's sense of adventure. Hawks hired Mancini after two earlier scoring attempts did not work out, then gave him a box of African instruments from the location shoot—including a thumb piano, shell gourds, and giant pea pods—along with tapes of Masai chants. Mancini used those sounds especially in the animal scenes, and built a main theme whose sparse, slightly melancholy line stands apart from the film's more lighthearted cues.

6. Dear Heart

Dear Heart, 1964

Composed for the romantic comedy starring Glenn Ford and Geraldine Page. The warm, gently swinging melody captures the film's tender tone. It became a popular standard and is a lovely example of Mancini's gift for intimate ballads.

Jay Livingston and Ray Evans wrote the lyrics. The song was nominated for the Academy Award and the Golden Globe, and Andy Williams, Jack Jones, and Mancini himself all had chart versions of it that same season.

7. Days of Wine and Roses

Days of Wine and Roses, 1962

Composed for Blake Edwards' drama about alcoholism, starring Jack Lemmon and Lee Remick. Johnny Mercer's lyrics and Mancini's wistful melody earned the song an Academy Award. It remains one of the most emotionally resonant standards of the 1960s.

Mercer's lyric is just two sentences, one for each verse. The song also won the Grammys for Record of the Year and Song of the Year.

8. Sometimes

Music by Henry Mancini · Lyrics by Felice Mancini

Henry Mancini composed the music, and his daughter Felice Mancini wrote the lyrics. The Carpenters made the song best known when they recorded it on their 1971 album Carpenters, with Karen singing over Richard's piano. It is a short, tender song about thanking the people we love, and it makes a natural moment to talk about the Mancini family.

Felice wrote the lyric as a gift for her parents, and Henry set her words to music.

9. The Sweetheart Tree

The Great Race, 1965

Written for Blake Edwards' epic comedy starring Jack Lemmon, Tony Curtis, and Natalie Wood. Johnny Mercer's lyrics give the gentle waltz a sweet, nostalgic feel. It is a charming, understated gem from a large-scale film score.

Natalie Wood appears to sing it on screen, but the voice is Jackie Ward's. The song was nominated for the Academy Award for Best Original Song.

10. Remington Steele

Remington Steele, NBC, 1982–1987

Henry Mancini wrote both the opening "Remington Steele Theme" and the closing "Laura Holt's Tune" for NBC's romantic detective series. Stephanie Zimbalist played Laura Holt, a private eye who invented a male boss because clients wouldn't hire a woman, and Pierce Brosnan was the charming con man who took on the role. The show made Brosnan a star. In 1986 he was offered James Bond, but NBC held him to his contract, so he didn't play 007 until GoldenEye in 1995.

11. Crazy World

Victor/Victoria, 1982

Composed for Blake Edwards' musical comedy starring Julie Andrews. The song reflects the film's themes of identity, performance, and love. It has a sophisticated, slightly bittersweet quality typical of Mancini's later work with Edwards.

Mancini and lyricist Leslie Bricusse won the Academy Award for the film's original song score.

12. Moment to Moment

Moment to Moment, 1966

Written for the romantic thriller starring Jean Seberg and Honor Blackman. The melody is elegant and slightly melancholic. It is a beautiful example of Mancini's skill with intimate, character-driven themes.

13. It's Easy to Say

10, 1979

Written for Blake Edwards' comedy starring Dudley Moore and Bo Derek. The gentle, reflective ballad fits the film's themes of midlife and longing. It is one of Mancini's later, more understated film songs.

Robert Wells wrote the lyrics, and the song was nominated for the Academy Award for Best Original Song.

Break "The Theme Scene"

Mancini Instrumental — "The Theme Scene"

> Hitchcock rejected Mancini's score for Frenzy (1972), and Ron Goodwin's score replaced it.

Set 2 Depth, Atmosphere & Build

1. Peter Gunn Theme

Peter Gunn, 1958–1961

The driving jazz theme for the popular television detective series. It helped define the sound of late-1950s crime shows and became a major hit. The piece remains one of the most influential television themes ever written.

The soundtrack album, The Music from Peter Gunn, won the first Grammy Award ever given for Album of the Year.

2. Dreamsville

From the Peter Gunn recordings

A moody, nocturnal ballad associated with the Peter Gunn albums. It showcases Mancini's talent for atmospheric, late-night jazz writing. The piece has a smoky, intimate character that works especially well on solo piano.

Jay Livingston and Ray Evans later added lyrics, and Sarah Vaughan recorded it on her 1965 album Sarah Vaughan Sings the Mancini Songbook.

3. How Soon

"How Soon" was Mancini's theme for NBC's The Richard Boone Show (1963–1964), with lyrics by Al Stillman, who also wrote "Chances Are." His 1964 recording reached the UK Top 10 in the middle of the Beatles era.

4. Newhart

5. Lujon

Also known as Slow Hot Wind

An atmospheric instrumental originally from Mancini's Mr. Lucky period and later popularized under both titles. The piece has a languid, exotic, late-night mood. It is frequently praised as one of his most beautiful pure instrumentals and works especially well on solo piano.

Mancini named it for the lujon, an unusual percussion instrument heard on the original recording. The piece later turned up in The Big Lebowski.

6. Darling Lili Medley

Darling Lili, 1970 · Smile Away Each Rainy Day → I'll Give You Three Guesses → Whistling Away the Dark

All three songs were written for Blake Edwards' World War I musical starring Julie Andrews and Rock Hudson. They range from light and charming to more romantic and wistful. "Whistling Away the Dark" is often considered the standout of the score.

"Whistling Away the Dark" was nominated for the Academy Award and won the Golden Globe for Best Original Song.

7. The Molly Maguires Theme

The Molly Maguires, 1970

Composed for the historical drama starring Sean Connery about Irish coal miners in Pennsylvania. The theme has a somber, folk-tinged quality that matches the film's serious tone. It is one of Mancini's more dramatic and less widely known scores.

Mancini's score replaced an earlier one by Charles Strouse, and he wrote it for Irish harp, tin whistle, and squeezebox. The film's opening runs nearly fifteen minutes before anyone speaks, so the music has to carry the sequence.

8. In the Arms of Love

What Did You Do in the War, Daddy?, 1966

A gentle ballad written for Blake Edwards' World War II comedy. The song has a tender, nostalgic quality. It is a lesser-known but charming entry in Mancini's catalog of film ballads.

Andy Williams recorded it in 1966 and took it to No. 1 on Billboard's Easy Listening chart.

9. Two for the Road

Two for the Road, 1967

Written for Stanley Donen's film about a marriage, starring Audrey Hepburn and Albert Finney. Leslie Bricusse's lyrics give the beautiful melody a mature, reflective quality about love and time. Many singers consider it one of Mancini's finest pure songs.

Audrey Hepburn cabled Mancini herself to ask him to write the score—the only time, he later said, that an actor rather than a director had asked him. After Stanley Donen rejected his first theme, he wrote another, which he came to regard as his favorite of all the songs he had written.

10. Love Theme from Romeo and Juliet

1968

Mancini's lush arrangement of Nino Rota's theme from Franco Zeffirelli's film became a massive hit, reaching No. 1 on the charts. The recording captured the tragic romance in a way that resonated far beyond the movie. It is one of the most successful instrumental film themes of its era.

In June 1969 his recording, with Mancini at the piano, reached No. 1 on the Billboard Hot 100 and replaced the Beatles' "Get Back." It was the only top-ten Hot 100 single of his career.

Encore

1. Moon River

Breakfast at Tiffany's, 1961

Mancini wrote the melody in about half an hour for Audrey Hepburn's character in Blake Edwards' film. Johnny Mercer's lyrics turned it into one of the most beloved songs of the 20th century. It won the Academy Award for Best Original Song and multiple Grammys, and became Mancini's signature.

After a lukewarm preview, a Paramount executive wanted the song cut from the film; Audrey Hepburn refused to let it go.