

MELODY

John Williams writes catchy, memorable melodies, which is one reason why his film scores have been so popular.

The piece starts with a **fanfare** (grand and heroic).

Then the **leitmotif** is played by trumpets and other brass. It uses intervals of **4ths** and **5ths** and lots of **7ths**

Then the B theme is **scalic** and played by **the violins and other strings**

There is a **full descending scale** to end the B theme

Then the **A theme returns** but with small changes.

After the theme, there are not many main melody ideas in the “rebel blockade runner” section—just a short piccolo melody during the “star filled sky” section

The fanfare-like intro uses **rapid repeated notes using tonic (Bb) triplets**—which are used throughout the main theme. It also uses **imitation** (the melody ideas are repeated by different brass instruments). There are **7th intervals** in the fanfare, like in the main theme.

The main theme consists of a **4 bar idea which balances stepwise motion and leaps**.

There are repeated use of **triplets** and **long minims** to create excitement and tension

The B theme is **contrasting** to the A theme—it feels less forceful. It uses **scalic**

patterns, but does contain **some leaps and triplets** to remind us of theme A.

At the end of the B theme there is a **descending Bb minor melodic scale**.

Both themes use an **anacrusis**.

The main A theme can be broken down as follows: Bar 1 contains a **rising perfect 5th** (tonic to dominant) which creates a heroic feel. Bars 2 and 3 are identical, including a **leap of a minor 7th**. Bar 4 uses an **auxiliary note** (not in the main chord) to reach the note C, preparing for the repeat of the 4 bar phrase.

STRUCTURE

The main theme uses an **AABA** structure
After this, the music **follows the action on the screen**.

The full structure of the rebel blockade runner section is: Star filled sky, camera pans down to show planets, spaceship appears, larger spaceship attacks, action continues and switch-

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

This is a piece of music written for the film Star Wars Episode IV: A New Hope in 1977

It uses a main theme (which is a **leitmotif** for Luke Skywalker).

The “Rebel Blockade Runner” section uses music to **support the**



**STAR WARS MAIN TITLE
- JOHN WILLIAMS**

HARMONY

The harmony of the main theme is mostly **diatonic** (uses chords and notes that fit with the key signature)

The melody is accompanied by mostly **major and minor chords**.

There are **not many perfect cadences**, which we normally expect in this kind of music.

After the main theme, the **harmony is complicated** and often feels **dissonant** and **atonal** (not in any key signature)

The harmony in the fanfare and A theme uses **quartal harmony**—chords made up of notes that are 4 steps apart.

In the main theme the chords are **syncopated**. When the A theme repeats, it is slightly changed to create a **descending bassline**.

When the bigger spaceship appears the “Mars” like hammered unison chords are **dissonant** (clashing). This also uses a **tritone** (an augmented 4th.. the devil’s interval!).

The theme does use some chords not in the key of Bb major, such as the Ab major at the end of the first A theme (before the **imperfect cadence**). The B section also uses a Db major, which is not in the key of Bb major.

In the intro and A theme there is an **inverted tonic pedal** played tremolo in the violins.

In the B theme there is a **dominant pedal** played by the brass instruments.

During the “star filled sky” section, the harmonies mix unrelated chords together (like Db major and C major) to create strange, unstable effects.

When we see the two planets, the strings and the brass are playing in two different keys.

RHYTHM, TEMPO and METRE

The **fast tempo** matches the mood and feel of the film—an exciting action movie!

The **4/4 metre, steady tempo** and use of brass give it a “**march**” like feel—which reflects the battles going on in star wars

There is repeated use of **triplets** in the melody lines
After the main theme, the **pulse becomes harder to follow**.

Both themes use an **anacrusis**.

The main theme (A) is accompanied by **syncopated block chords** which create excitement.

When the large spaceship appears, the time signature

changes to 3/4

The **tempo changes** during the “rebel blockade runner” section of the piece to emphasize the action on screen.

The “Mars” like chords when the large spaceship appears are **homorhythmic** (all playing the same rhythm).

TONALITY

The main theme is in **Bb major**.

After the theme finishes, during the rebel blockade runner section **the tonality is less clear**, using more **unstable harmonies**.

From when the spaceships appear, there is lots of use of **dissonance**. The piece is almost **atonal** at times, and as the action switches to inside the craft there is some use of **bitonality**.

As the planets are revealed the piece switches to **C major** (with an added Ab) for a short while.

When the spaceships appear the music is more based around the note C, which is heard as a **bass pedal**.

INSTRUMENTS/SONORITY

Main Title/Rebel Blockade Runner uses a full symphony **orchestra** — **Strings, percussion, woodwind and brass**.

The instruments used are a full string section, plus:
Wind: flute, piccolo, oboe, clarinet, bass clarinet, bassoon

Brass: Horn, trumpet, trombone, tuba

Percussion: Timpani, triangle, tam tam (gong), vibraphone, glockenspiel, cymbals.

Plus a piano, celeste and harp

The orchestra is used in the style of a traditional romantic-era orchestra, with much **doubling of parts** an octave or more apart.

TEXTURE

The piece is mainly made up of **homophonic** textures.
There are only a few solo or lighter textures, it is mostly **very**

The main theme is mostly accompanied by **block chords** or **arpeggios**.

The piece uses pedal textures, such as the **inverted tonic pedal** (repeated Bb note played by the violins) during the introduction and A theme, and the **dominant pedal** (repeated 5th note played by the brass) in the B section.

At the end of the rebel blockade runner, when the action

KEY

3 Grade

5 Grade

8 Grade