

Bill Conti, conductor

Oscar and three-time Emmy Award-winner Bill Conti is one of Hollywood's most sought-after composers and conductors for both film and television. His compositions have sold in excess of eight million albums, and he is in great demand as a conductor of symphony orchestras throughout the United States. On November 10, 1989, his rich contributions to the entertainment industry were recognized when a star bearing his name was placed on the Hollywood Walk of Fame. In 1995 the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers (ASCAP) awarded Conti the Golden Soundtrack Award for lifetime achievement in film and television.

For the silver screen, Bill Conti has composed the musical scores for many box office giants including *Broadcast News*, *Baby Boom*, *f/X*, *The Karate Kid*, Goldie Hawn's military romp *Private Benjamin*, and most recently, *Spy Hard*. He won an Oscar for Best Original Score for *The Right Stuff* in 1983 and received two Oscar nominations for Best Original Song -- one for the Sheena Easton hit record "For Your Eyes Only" from the James Bond picture of the same title and one for "Gonna Fly Now," the powerful anthem from the 1976 Academy Award-winning Best Picture *Rocky*.

The soundtrack for the Sylvester Stallone blockbuster *Rocky* also garnered a host of other honors including a Golden Globe nomination, a Billboard Award nomination, an RIAA Certified Platinum Album, a Rock Award nomination, and a Grammy nomination for Best Original Score. "Gonna Fly Now" not only occupied the number one position on the Billboard magazine charts for the week of July 2, 1997, but also received an RIAA Certified Gold Record and two Grammy nominations for Best Instrumental Composition and Performance.

Conti's work for the small screen has been equally as critically acclaimed, receiving a total of ten Emmy nominations throughout his career. He won two Emmy Awards in 1990 for developing the creative concept and composing the score for the running of the New York City Marathon, which was telecast by ABC. Conti conducted the Juilliard Symphony Orchestra during the course of the marathon live from Lincoln Center -- a first in television sports coverage. He won his third Emmy in 1992 for his musical direction during the telecast of the Academy Award Ceremonies, marking the first time an Emmy was awarded for a participant in the Oscar ceremonies.

Conti's relationship with the Academy of Motion Picture Arts & Sciences spans two decades as he has been the musical director for twelve of the internationally-televised annual Academy Award ceremonies, most recently in 1997. For six consecutive years (1990-1995) he was nominated for an Emmy Award for Outstanding Individual Achievement in Music Direction for his work on the Academy Award shows.

Although the public may not be aware of it, Bill Conti has composed some of the most recognizable themes for television broadcasts, including those for the 1984 *Good Morning America*, *Turning Point*,

World News Tonight, Prime Time Live, Nightline, ABC Sports, Inside Edition, and American Gladiators. He has also composed music for numerous television commercials advertising products for Honda, Pizza Hut, Sprite and Coca Cola. "For Your Eyes Only" was featured in a commercial for the financial managers of Merrill Lynch.

During the 1983-84 television season, Bill Conti set an all-time industry record for having composed the themes for five television series playing concurrently in prime time. However, he broke his own record in 1986-87 when that number increased to nine -- *Dynasty, Falcon Crest, Cagney & Lacey, Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous, Ohara, The Colbys, Our World, Business Week, and Mariah.*

In addition to his composing, Conti spends considerable time traveling around the world as a guest conductor for many prestigious orchestras including the Boston Pops, the London Symphony Orchestra, the Cleveland Orchestra at the Blossom Music Festival, the National Symphony at Wolf Trap, the Houston Symphony Orchestra, the Baltimore Symphony, the Florida Pops Orchestra, the Dallas Symphony, the Calgary Philharmonic, the RAI Orchestra of Rome, and the Graunke Orchestra of Munich. He has also been the principal pops conductor for the Nashville Symphony.

Born in Providence, Rhode Island on April 13, 1942, Conti began studying piano at age seven under the tutelage of his father, an accomplished pianist, sculptor and painter. At the age of 15, he organized a band and began to play for high school dances in Miami, Florida. He was a member of his high school band and symphony orchestra and won the "Silver Knight Award" from the Miami Herald for high achievement in the field of music.

Conti received a bassoon scholarship from Louisiana State University where he majored in composition and played jazz piano at many of the local night spots to help defray the costs of his education. While attending LSU, he held a variety of musical posts including first chair bassoon in the school symphony orchestra, the staff arranger for the University's marching band and accompanist for the LSU Ballet Corps. It was in this capacity that he met his wife, Shelby, who was a member of the Ballet Corps and a soloist with the Modern Dance Group.

After Conti received his Bachelor of Music degree from LSU, he auditioned and was accepted at the Juilliard School of Music in New York where he studied with such musical greats as Hugo Weisgall, Vincent Persichetti, Roger Sessions, Luciano Berio, and Jorge Mester. In 1965 Conti won the Marion Feschl Prize for having composed the best song of the year. He received a Bachelor of Music degree from Juilliard, followed by a Master's Degree.