

Notes on the Program

There Will Be Blood

Jonny Greenwood

There is no doubting the significance of music in *There Will Be Blood*. The film's first 15 minutes unfold without dialogue, with only occasional sounds of industry (pick axe, dynamite, the grinding of metal machinery). And music. It is left to Jonny Greenwood's score to set the mood for this tale of unbridled ambition in the oil fields of early 20th-century California. A thrum of low strings accompanies the establishing shot of a desolate Western landscape; striving, strident glissandos follow the struggles of a lone man mining for silver; discordant string clusters build tension as the focus shifts to the risks of oil prospecting.

With this sweeping opening sequence, writer and director Paul Thomas Anderson demonstrated an unusual level of trust in what was his first collaboration with Greenwood — and only the second film the com-

poser had scored. (The first had been the 2003 documentary *Body Song*.)

Not that Greenwood was an unknown quantity prior to the 2007 release of *There Will Be Blood*. He had built a worldwide following as the lead guitarist of Radiohead, the rock band he formed with his older brother Colin, along with Thom Yorke, Ed O'Brien, and Philip Selway. Born Jonathan Richard Guy Greenwood, in Oxford, England, he studied viola early on and performed with local youth orchestras. His introduction to the soundscapes of 20th-century classical music, which has colored his mature work, included his discovery of Messiaen, Ligeti, Dutilleux, and Penderecki. Greenwood recalled:

I first heard Messiaen when I was 15 or 16 — the *Turangalila-symphonie* — and just found it magical I didn't know it was

IN SHORT

Born: November 5, 1971, in Oxford, England

Resides: in Oxford

Work composed: 2005 / 2007

World premiere: film premiered September 27, 2007, at the Fantastic Fest film festival in Austin, Texas; first live performance of the score to a complete screening of film, August 6, 2014, by the London Contemporary Orchestra, Hugh Brunt, conductor

New York Philharmonic premiere: these performances

Estimated duration: ca. 158 minutes

H.W. (Dillon Freasier) and Daniel Plainview (Daniel Day-Lewis)



allowed to write music like that. Also, it was the fact that he was still alive, still writing Because of this, I came to think of Messiaen and my favorite bands — like The Pixies, New Order, The Fall — as all being in the same category somehow.

At the same time, Greenwood began picking up other instruments — guitar, keyboards, drums — and learning computer programs that led to experimentation with electronic instrumentation. He entered Oxford Brookes University, intending to pursue classical music and composition studies, but

after only three weeks Radiohead was signed by EMI Records. Greenwood left university and the group began forging a path as one of the most influential bands at the turn of the millennium, particularly following the 1997 release of its third album, *OK Computer*.

An experimental, questing nature and the embrace of influences from jazz to electronics to classical to hip-hop set Radiohead apart from its contemporaries. It also propelled Greenwood into solo classical forays. He was named composer-in-residence with the BBC Concert Orchestra in 2004, resulting in the World Premiere of *Popcorn Superhet*

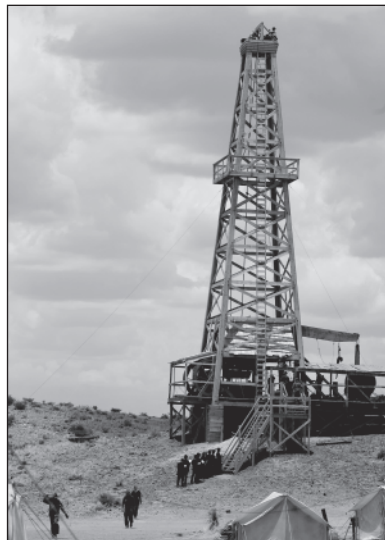
Sources and Inspirations

There Will Be Blood was inspired by Upton Sinclair's 1927 novel *Oil!* Sinclair had gained fame with *The Jungle*, the 1906 book exposing deplorable labor and sanitary conditions in the meatpacking industry that prompted federal regulations. *Oil!* continued Sinclair's emphasis on social, economic, and labor issues. Its patriarchal character, the self-made oilman James Arnold Ross, was reportedly based on Edward L. Doheny, a real-life oil baron who made his fortune in Southern California strikes at the turn of the 20th century. In the 1920s, Doheny figured in the Teapot Dome Scandal that racked the administration of President Warren G. Harding; he was accused of bribing Secretary of the Interior Albert B. Fall for drilling leases in Wyoming's Teapot Dome region. As expected in any good drama, Fall served prison time (some believe he was the source of the term "fall guy") while Doheny was acquitted.

While filmmaker Paul Thomas Anderson deviates from the novel's story line, *There Will Be Blood* includes a galvanic scene of an oil gusher that echoes this passage by Sinclair:

There was a tower of flame, and — the most amazing spectacle — the burning oil would hit the ground, and bounce up, and explode, and leap again, and fall again, and great red masses of flame would unfold, and burst, and yield black masses of smoke, and these in turn red. Mountains of smoke rose to the sky, and mountains of flame came seething down to the earth; every jet that struck the ground turned into a volcano, and rose again, higher than before; the whole mass, boiling and bursting became a river of fire, a lava flood that went streaming down the valley, turning everything it touched into flame, then swallowing it up and hiding the flames in a cloud of smoke.

The oil derrick at Little Boston in There Will Be Blood



Receiver, for string orchestra. He became a self-taught expert on the ondes martenot, the rare 1920s electronic instrument that figures prominently in *There Will Be Blood*. Greenwood's classical compositions include *smear* (2004) for two ondes martenot and chamber ensemble; *Doghouse* for string trio and orchestra; and *48 Responses to Polymorpha*, which calls for that number of solo string players and reacts to the Penderecki work referred to in the title.

There Will Be Blood was released to critical acclaim, with much attention paid to the score. In naming it the film of the decade, Peter Travers of *Rolling Stone* wrote that Greenwood had provided “a sonic explosion

that reinvented what film music could be.” In *The New Yorker*, Alex Ross cited Greenwood’s “unearthly beautiful score” as a revelatory example of personal musical language, contrasting it with the clichéd devices of most films:

If the smeared string glissandos on the sound track suggest liquid welling up from the underground, the accompanying dissonances communicate a kind of interior, inanimate pain.

The film garnered numerous awards, including the Best Actor Oscar for Daniel Day-Lewis’s portrayal of Daniel Plainview.

Listen for ... the Ondes Martenot

It’s no coincidence that Jonny Greenwood chose to feature the ondes martenot so prominently in his score for *There Will Be Blood*. He had been fascinated by the unusual electronic instrument after hearing it in works by Messiaen and experimented with it in his work with Radiohead, as well as in his compositions for classical ensembles.

The ondes martenot [Martenot waves] is named after cellist Maurice Martenot, who invented the instrument in the 1920s. It produces sound by changing the frequencies of vacuum tubes. The player, seated at a keyboard, uses a sliding metal ring worn on the right hand to move horizontally along the front of the keyboard, which varies the pitch of the keys being depressed. A panel at the left side of the keyboard holds a control and switches that are used to change the dynamic level and timbre. And while it has often been compared to, or confused with, the theremin, Greenwood thinks of it as an instrument invented from the purest motives — to use electricity the way a saxophone uses air. He said:

It makes the theremin look like a toy. ... The ondes martenot is all about control; there’s no guessing, or random gestures. It’s a true musical instrument, and people who play it well can make it sing. It’s like [the] inventor approached it with the idea, “How can we play music with electricity?”



He added that ondistes, as the instrument’s players are known, are often left only with the simple instruction to improvise, “but it can also create earthly sounds to rival any orchestra instrument.”

Jonny Greenwood at the ondes martenot in rehearsal for live to film performances of There Will Be Blood with the London Contemporary Orchestra, 2014

However, Greenwood's score was deemed ineligible for the Academy Award for Best Original Score because it incorporates music from other sources. *Popcorn Superhet Receiver* is used in the opening sequence, and, in a more propulsive mode, as land is surveyed for a pipeline. *Smear* is heard as Plainview learns of an accident at the oil well, and in a sequence at the beach. The score also includes excerpts from Arvo Pärt's *Fratres*, as Eli Sunday confronts Plainview about a promised payment, while the third movement (*Allegro giocoso*) of Brahms's Violin Concerto marks the triumphant start of drilling, and also plays out over the end credits.

Greenwood and Anderson have gone on to partner on a string of films that beckon comparisons to the great musical collaborations of Bernard Herrmann and Alfred Hitchcock. They have worked together on *We Need to Talk about Kevin* (2011), *The Master* (2012), *Inherent Vice* (2014), *Junan* (2015), and *Phantom Thread* (2018, which finally earned Greenwood an Oscar nomination).

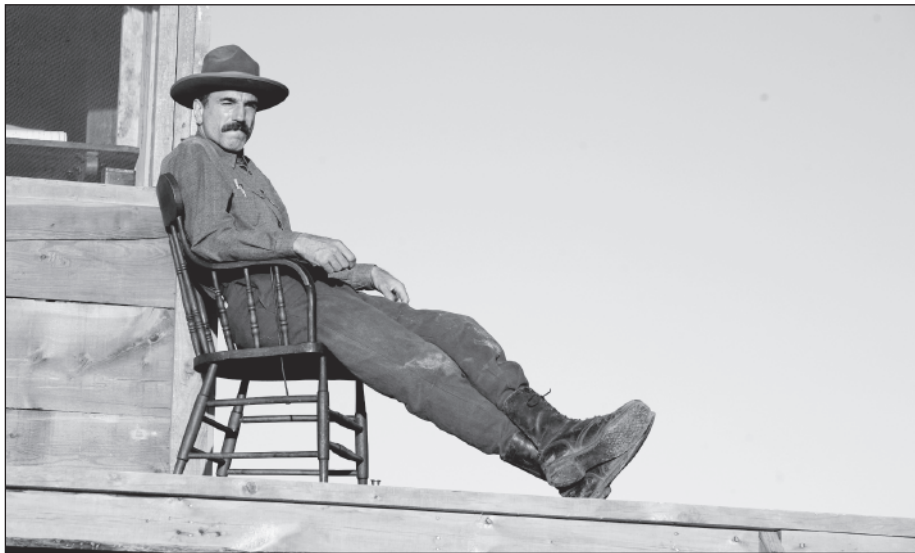
Music from *There Will Be Blood* has taken

on a life of its own as a five-movement suite for string orchestra and ondes martenot (or oboe), which has received several performances. Part of the score's enduring appeal may be Greenwood's creative approach:

I tried to write to the scenery, and the story rather than specific "themes" for characters. It's not really the kind of narrative that would suit that. It was all about the underlying menace in the film.

Instrumentation: two flutes, two oboes, two clarinets, two bassoons, four horns, two trumpets, timpani, tam-tam, tom-toms, wood blocks, bongo, maracas, tambourine, two snare drums, claves, bass drum, suspended cymbal, vibraphone, harp, piano, ondes martenot, and strings, plus solo violin for the third movement from Brahms's Violin Concerto.

— Rebecca Winzenried,
New York Philharmonic Program
and Publications Editor



Plainview keeping constant watch on drilling operations