



# Change of Venue

Composers find an audience beyond the screen.

By Libby Slate – September 25, 2017



## Television music is moving from the studio to the stadium.

Consider this: when the prestigious Krakow Film Music Festival in Poland added a TV gala two years ago, composers of music from HBO's *Game of Thrones*, Netflix's *House of Cards* and History's *Vikings* took the podium to conduct their works.

Last summer, Jeff Beal's "*House of Cards* in Concert" had its world premiere at the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C. Beal led the National Symphony Orchestra in to music adapted to accompany scenes from the political drama, and he has since taken the program to the Netherlands, Denmark and Israel.

And this past spring, the multimedia extravaganza "*Game of Thrones* Live Concert Experience," conducted by series composer Ramin Djawadi, toured 24 cities in the U.S. and Canada.

Beal recalls that in Krakow, "The TV music concert was the highest-selling of the festival. I went out to conduct my *House of Cards* suite in an arena that holds 12,000 — it was thrilling."

He had already been developing that suite when he was asked to create a shorter piece for a 2014 concert at the Television Academy.

His “*House of Cards* in Concert” presents a variety of musical styles culled from the show’s first four seasons, including a movement based on the Russian-themed episode for which Beal had won a 2015 Emmy, a heartbreaking death scene and some of the series’ celebrated snarky dialogue. His wife, singer Joan Sapiro Beal, performs operatic music in the second half.

“I wanted to use film in a non-linear way to create montages that would not spoil the plot but would allow for getting to know the characters,” says Beal, who was Emmy-nominated for the show again this year. To use the clips, “I had to get the cast, writers and directors to sign off on their rights, gratis,” he explains. “I went to Kevin Spacey first. He said, ‘I love the music. I’m happy to.’ It was a cavalcade of generosity.”

In the case of *Game of Thrones*, showrunners David Benioff and D.B. Weiss suggested about three years ago Djawadi — a 2014 Emmy nominee for *GOT* — that he do a live concert. “I said, ‘All right, but I want to do something that’s never been seen before,’” says the composer, who is in competition again this year for his main title theme for HBO’s *Westworld*.

Djawadi got his wish: an almost-two-hour show with multiple stages and sets, huge video screens for clips that streamline six seasons of war and romance, his own band plus a local orchestra and choir, pyrotechnics and other effects. Djawadi conducted, hosted and performed on several instruments. The setup was so vast, “I couldn’t even see the [substitute] conductor when I was playing,” he says.

Both composer-conductors enjoyed the audience reactions. “They clapped, and shouted lines, and booed the villains,” says Djawadi, who would like to do a pre-season-eight version and is also considering a *Westworld* experience.

The concerts don’t resemble the composers’ tightly timed day jobs. Says Beal: “The things I like are what’s not like scoring sessions — the fun of letting the music live and breathe in the moment, while keeping it in sync.”

[Article Link](#)