

Film scores star at the Pops

By David Hendricks

Updated 9:33 pm, Saturday, February 2, 2013

If a point is made by the ever-popular Pops concerts presenting movie music, it's that some of the most innovative music composed in the past decades has been for film, not the concert hall.

In fact, the music is often the best reason to go to the movie theater. Yet the concert hall may be the best place to hear the music, as it was Friday night when the San Antonio Pops orchestra performed favorites for more than 2,000 people at the Majestic Theatre.

Some of the compositional breakthroughs that have occurred in film music could be heard, from the monolithic dark shadings in the "007" themes to the complex chords in James Horner's "Titanic" melodies.

But forget all that. The larger point of Friday's concert was the fun and entertaining way that guest conductor Carl Topilow, the Cleveland Pops Orchestra founder, unfolded his program, with style, humor and lavish moments.

A woman's scream started the medley of themes from Hitchcock's "Psycho." Topilow switched into a muscled costume for the "Superman" arrangement. It was a hoot to see Topilow, also a clarinetist, play his red clarinet in the swing-music, bar-scene theme from "Star Wars," still wearing his Superman costume.

Topilow injected some clever lines between selections. "I've had the greatest time in your city," he quipped. "I've been to the River Walk, the Alamo, the Tower. I can't wait to get back to Cleveland."

San Antonio 12-year-old Matthew John Whyte sang gloriously for the orchestra's rendition of themes from "Lord of the Rings."

Other highlights ranged from the heart-melting, captivating arrangements of "The Wizard of Oz" themes, the stirring John Williams music for "E.T.," the audience whistle-along and clap-along for "The Bridge on the River Kwai" to the lush "My Heart Will Go On" orchestral arrangement from "Titanic."

Video clips from the films were sometimes shown on a screen above the stage with the music. Sometimes only photos or movie posters were screened. Sometimes, nothing was displayed. It didn't matter. The music was the movie star Friday night.

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