

"A Night with the Pops"

August, 30, 2008

Program Notes

Written by Dr. Richard McGee, Music Director

James Bond Theme

The James Bond theme was chosen as the opener of this program for two reasons. First, it represents the classic Hollywood action hero and second, every time one hears this theme it suggests to the audience that they are in for an exciting, entertaining program. Further, most of the James Bond scores are eclectic collaborations; often, great film composers such as John Barry will team up with popular composers like Paul McCartney. It's this kind of blending of talents and genres that I hope will become a hallmark of Nevada Pops.

Beetlejuice

In the 1980s former Oingo Boingo musician Danny Elfman burst on to the film scene with his own unique, angular style of writing. Movies such as "Batman," "Beetlejuice," "Dick Tracy" and, later, "Spiderman" showed that Elfman could maintain his quirky style and still compose memorable scores. Elfman's pieces are fun, and, unlike some movie scores, his themes stand on their own quite nicely as concert pieces.

The Incredibles

"The Incredibles" represents a comedic blending of James Bond, "Mission Impossible" and "Peter Gunn." It's an ingenious, sparkling spoof on every super hero and secret agent theme. If you haven't seen this movie, take the time to watch it and listen to the music—it's extraordinary. Some of Hollywood's best talent is involved in this film, and the orchestrations by Gordon Goodwin are as jazzy and snappy as anyone could want. If you like the sound of this music, try listening to Gordon Goodwin's Big Phat Band. His first album, "Swingin' For the Fences," is a classic of modern big band music, and in many ways captures the spirit of "The Incredibles."

Hoe Down

The power of television advertising is evident here, because for many this piece simply shouts, "BEEF, it's what's for dinner!" However, this classic work by Aaron Copland is actually a segment from his 1939 ballet "Rodeo," which is a landmark work both for American music and modern dance. Take the time to listen to Copland's orchestral suite, "Four Dance Episodes from Rodeo." It's charming, unique and distinctly American.

Fanfare for the Common Man

In 1943, the horrors of World War II were becoming clear to the world's population. Until then no one really knew of the millions who had perished at the hands of Germany's fascist regime. Copland composed "Fanfare for the Common Man" to reaffirm the dignity and special importance of every single human being. If you love this piece as I do, you might consider also listening to his "Third Symphony," which incorporates many of the same melodic ideas.

Highlights from The Music Man

Meredith Willson's vibrant musical celebrates America and yes, salesmanship. The score is remarkable—virtually every melody became a hit song on its own. We are

delighted to have the Desert Chorale joining us for this medley arranged for band by Brian McGee.

When the Saints Go Marchin' In

New Orleans is on its way back after the ordeal of Hurricane Katrina, but songs like this are proof that it takes more than a natural disaster to destroy the spirit of this great city. The Desert Chorale is joined by a Dixieland band comprised of Nevada Pops musicians performing this song the way it should be—in the original Dixieland format. If the spirit moves you, feel free to clap along!

West Side Story Medley

In 1957, Leonard Bernstein scored a triumph with his groundbreaking musical “West Side Story.” The music is neither jazz nor Latin, yet both idioms are blended skillfully into music that magically captures the energy of New York City at night. The musical, based on the story of Shakespeare’s “Romeo and Juliet,” describes passionate love amid immigrant struggles and gang wars. Bernstein’s ingenious sense of melody and his use of rhythm propel the story forward. If you like what you hear, you will also enjoy Bernstein’s clever suite “Three Dance Episodes” from “On the Town.”

Thunder and Blazes

There is nothing like a circus march to lift your spirits and move your soul. Julius Fucik’s classic march sometimes known as “Entry of the Gladiators,” has been an audience favorite for almost a century. If you like this march, try listening to “Barnum and Bailey’s Favorite” by Karl King or any march by John Philip Sousa.

American Patrol

The Glenn Miller Orchestra was certainly one of the most popular bands of the swing era. “American Patrol” quickly became a standard, particularly in light of its reference to the military around wartime. Although there were many march arrangements of this tune, it’s the swing versions that most people want to hear. If this tune makes you tap your toes, try listening to other Glenn Miller favorites “String of Pearls” or “In the Mood.”

Sing, Sing, Sing

The Benny Goodman Orchestra had the distinction of being the first jazz band to play a full concert in Carnegie Hall. This momentous event in 1938 went a long way toward the establishment of jazz music as a serious art form. The band that performed that concert was a Who’s Who of jazz virtuosos of that time. Drummer Gene Krupa played what is believed to be the first extended drum solo ever on this piece. Over the years “Sing, Sing, Sing” has maintained its incredible popularity and enjoying a resurgence during the swing band era of the 1990s. This is the original, but there have been many spin-offs, and if you enjoy this music take the time to listen to other Benny Goodman music or more recent offerings by swing bands like the Brian Setzer Orchestra.

Las Vegas Rhapsody

In 2005 I was asked to compose a work for orchestra, celebrating the 100th anniversary of Las Vegas. The result was *Las Vegas Rhapsody*, which is essentially a musical journey through several periods in Las Vegas’ development. With the help of narration by Mayor Oscar Goodman, the music begins with the pre-settlement time where the Las Vegas valley was simply an oasis for Native American tribes and the occasional explorer. Later, when the Union Pacific railroad came, white settlers

followed. The music takes on a western personality with sounds of the locomotive and some Hispanic influences. Eventually the town was established, but life in the young community was not easy. Several events helped to ensure Las Vegas' survival including the construction of Hoover Dam and the establishment of the airfield that became Nellis Air Force Base. However, as we all know, it was the legalization of gaming that changed everything. As the music seems suspended for a moment, the jazz band takes over representing the influx of gamblers, show business personalities, tourists and every sort of investor. The music builds in intensity, and the audience can hear slot machines and roulette wheels as the party continues to build. Las Vegas Rhapsody is designed to reflect the personality of our city through a combination of classical and jazz references. In the end, everyone wins, as the Nevada Pops and the Walt Boenig Big Band unite to create something completely unique—just like this great city.