

THE NEW YORK POPS

SKITCH HENDERSON FOUNDER

Notes on the Program

by Stuart Malina and Michael Feinstein

Friday, October 26, 2007, 8:00PM, Carnegie Hall

That's Entertainment: Hollywood's Golden Era

Tonight's program pays tribute to the golden age of movie music, a period of time when the greatest songwriters were creating blockbuster movie musicals, while simultaneously, some of the world's best composers were writing memorable movie soundtracks. It was the age of Gershwin, Berlin and Arlen, as well as Herrmann, Korngold and Steiner. The movies were America's premiere source of entertainment, and with each opening, new songs and great melodies entered the collective American consciousness.

We begin our program, however, with a different sort of tribute. On September 20, John Griner, chairman of The New York Pops board of directors, lost his struggle with brain cancer. Strangely, John had begun his term the day after Skitch Henderson died in November of 2005. It was John's leadership that helped the orchestra get through this difficult time. He also led the ongoing search for a new music director of The New York Pops, a task which occupied an enormous chunk of his time, even through the final weeks of his terrible illness.

When I first met John, he was waxing poetic about a piece of music he had heard on satellite radio's pops station – a work that he thought would both delight the audience and show off the incredible virtuosity of his much-loved New York Pops. So it is with deep sorrow as well as admiration, gratitude and love that we present Enescu's dazzling Romanian Rhapsody No. 1 in memory of John Griner.

The rest of our first half will be devoted to classic film melodies, starting with Miklós Rózsa's majestic prelude from the epic *Ben-Hur* and Max Steiner's expansive "Tara" theme from *Gone With the Wind*. We end with the music of Erich Wolfgang Korngold, who died fifty years ago this year, and who had two careers, first as a boy prodigy composer in Vienna, and then as one of the best writers of film music. The beautiful and schmaltzy Violin Concerto is composed of themes from four different Korngold movie scores – *Another Dawn* and *Juarez* in the first movement, *Anthony Adverse* in the second, and *The Prince and the Pauper* in the stirring finale.

In the second half of our program, we will be treated to the stylings of one of the great interpreters and performers of American popular song – Michael Feinstein – whose prodigious musical abilities are matched only by his charm and vast knowledge. Who better to take us on a whirlwind journey through the music of the classic Hollywood musical?

Enjoy!

-- Stuart Malina

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Film Music has come to encompass such a vast and wide ranging repertoire that it is a daunting challenge to choose a selection of titles that might convey the essence of sounds inspired by the moving image. Personally, I feel Stuart Malina has picked a perfect cross section of sounds that have played in the background of über-classics like *Gone With the Wind* and *Ben-Hur*. To hear such melodies liberated from their visuals proves the genius of these great composers. They were probably thrilled to hear their work played by great studio orchestras, yet thwarted to have it relegated to underscore. Tonight at Carnegie Hall they shall receive their due.

The second half will celebrate the great songs of Hollywood, and the great Tin Pan Alley writers who came west to write for such budding stars as Fred Astaire, Shirley Temple, Dick Powell and Alice Faye. Many songwriters could never quite get over their good fortune at working in a "dream factory," even when the studio executives were (as three-time Oscar winner Harry Warren put it), "complete morons." However, Harry also said that the first time he heard the lush Warner Bros. studio orchestra play one of his tunes, in such a sweeping and beautiful way, he burst into tears.

A few of tonight's selections were not originally written for Hollywood but have become connected with the movies, so it was felt that they warranted inclusion.

We are lucky that in today's disposable world so many of these works have survived. Much has been lost or forgotten through the decades, but hopefully that which is good will continue to survive. It's a pleasure to be here tonight to recreate the glory days of some of Hollywood's greatest creations.

-- Michael Feinstein