

Boston Concerts Reviews and Pictures

Tuesday, 18 May 2010

Boston Symphony Hall, Boston, MA
 May 11-14, 2010
 The Boston Symphony Orchestra Conducted by JOHN WILLIAMS

'Hooray for Hollywood'

EXTERNAL REVIEWS

- John Williams Brings Magic to Symphony Hall in Celebration of The Boston Pops's 125th Anniversary (Betsysview.com)

VIDEOS

- Hooray for Hollywood concerts introduction
- John Williams introduces Hedwig's Theme and Harry's Wondrous World
- The Imperial March (excerpt)

JWFAN REVIEWS

Concert review by Jason LeBlanc (originally posted on our forum)

I was at Friday's concert.

It was a gorgeous day in Massachusetts on Friday, and my girlfriend and I enjoyed a nice ride into the city around 6:00 to go to the show. We had a reservation at Betty's Wok and Noodle for 6:30, which I had never been to. We decided to check out the street parking on the chance there'd be a spot before paying \$20ish for a garage... and low and behold, we found a street spot RIGHT next to Symphony Hall, also RIGHT across the street from Betty's! That was our first bit of good fortune for the evening... Betty's was excellent, definitely recommended to anyone going to see a show there.

I found an usher to ask if Mr. Williams would be signing after, because I wasn't sure if I should bring my Hook LP in with me or not. He said that Mr Williams wouldn't be signing, but that it was outside when he usually does it, so I left my Hook LP in the car. Our tickets were waiting for us in the Will Call booth (thank you Craigs List!) and an usher showed us to our table inside. Our seats were on the floor, about a dozen tables back from the stage. It was a good view for seeing the musicians up front, but we couldn't see beyond. So we basically watched the string players all night and never saw any brass and hardly any woodwinds. I now realized that the best place to be at Symphony Hall is in the First Balcony, as close to the front as possible.

The show started a few minutes after 8oclock. Williams came out to a quick smattering of applause and launched right into the first piece. The set list of was as follows:

- Sound The Bells!
- March from 1941
- Excerpts from Close Encounters Of The Third Kind
- Hedwig's Theme from Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone
- Harry's Wondrous World from Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone
- Adventures On Earth from E.T. The Extra-TerrestrialINTERMISSION
- Liberty Fanfare
- Love Theme from Superman
- March from Superman
- Love Theme from Cinema Paradiso (Ennio Moricone)
- The Imperial March from The Empire Strikes Back
- Princess Leia's Theme from Star Wars
- Throne Room and Finale from Star WarsMAIN PROGRAM END

- Hymn To New England (Encore 1)
- The Raiders March from Raiders of the Lost Ark (Encore 2)

Here are my recollections of the individual pieces...

Sound The Bells! was very nice, I had never heard it before to my recollection (though I realize now it's on the American Journey CD)

March from 1941 was the same arrangement we've heard a million times, but I had certainly never heard it performed live (I hear it's somewhat rare for Mr Williams to perform it, actually). I would say the performance lacked the "punch" that some recordings I have of it, though I was grateful no cannon sound effects were added

At this point a screen came down and played images from Close Encounters while the orchestra performed the excerpts (which I believe is the same suite that's been recorded several times). The images were not necessarily the same ones tied to the sections of music being played, just a kind of overall summation of the movie (starting with most of Barry's Abduction before segueing to some shots of the UFOs flying around before jumping to the end of the movie). My appreciation for CE3K music has grown considerably of late, and the full finale leading into the beginning of the end credits is one of Mr. Williams' most accomplished works in my opinion. Sadly that part was not performed

At this point Williams spoke, for 1 of only 2 times the whole night. I actually recorded what he said, though I didn't start recording right away, so I missed the first sentence or two. But, what I did get was:

Quote...to celebrate with the orchestra this... 125th anniversary of the Boston Pops. *applause*

Also it's a treat for me to come before a live audience and in front of a great orchestra and play some music from the films - I always say without the distraction of all the dialogue and sound effects that come with it. *audience laughter* And it also is an opportunity at a venue such as this to demonstrate the virtuosity that our orchestras provide and contribute to the movies that we make which without the music and without the orchestras that score them, the movies would be without much life, and we can illustrate this here with our great orchestra here in Boston so well.

Harry Potter... *audience applause* The application of any literary judgment of any standard would have to conclude with J.K. Rowlings' achievement of Harry Potter. The books have been a phenomenal thing in the history of literature. I'm told that the books have been translated into 67 languages - I didn't know there WERE 67 languages... I'm still struggling with the first one. *laughter* And that the books have sold over 400 millions copies around the world. And the six films already have grossed over 5 billion dollars for Warner Brothers films and we have two more to go. Um, it's been said that perhaps Harry Potter is the greatest British cultural export since The Beatles. May be true!

Here are two little pieces from the score of Harry Potter - Hedwig's Theme, which is presented initially on the celeste, which is a little keyboard instrument capable of brilliant magical sounds of great deft, quick passages. And then a theme that I call Harry's Wondrous World, which is a theme associated with Harry and his group of friends. So first Hedwig's Theme, then Harry's Wondrous World

Hedwig's Theme and Harry's Wondrous World both sounded as you'd expect them too. During Hedwig's Theme, cool blue lights were shined around the hall. During Harry's Wondrous World, the screen came down again and showed a montage of scenes from all 6 Harry Potter movies.

Adventures On Earth from E.T. came next, and it was the usual shortened 9 minute concert arrangement, not the full 15 minute piece. I have grown to dislike this arrangement the more I get into the full version, but hearing all the great themes performed live is really quite a treat regardless.

During intermission we were finally able to track down a waitress and order a bottle of Pinot Grigio that was quite delicious! John Williams came back out to a quick round of applause again and immediately launched into the next piece.

The Liberty Fanfare I really enjoyed, and to my knowledge I had never heard it before. He then took the microphone for

the second time. I recorded that one in its entirety so can transcribe for you now:

QuoteThank you very much! Here would have the Love Theme and March from Superman. And um, for me Superman was always something about nostalgic experience in my memory. We'll show you a film set to the march, the second piece that we play with some really great shots of Christopher Reeve, and the recent Superman and Batman, and some crazy pictures of Jack Nicholson.

But what I remember is the summer we spent in London when we were making the first Superman film. And Christopher Reeves was a casting director's dream because he actually seemed to break the whole thing off in his funny red suit. And he was a very young man, in his early twenties, and was brilliant, and wonderfully handsome, and charming, and filled with great promise. And we used to tease him - Not tease HIM but talk amongst ourselves - that someday Christopher would not be an actor, he would be a senator, or a president of a university, or president of the country, whatever. Enormously promising wonderful man. And um, so I think of him always in connection to Superman. Here then are Love Theme, and March, from Superman.

The Love Theme from Superman sounded great. Truly one of his most wonderful themes (though I always felt the concert arrangement went on for a little too long - I prefer to just listen to the Flying Sequence track)

March from Superman was also great, and Emily perked up a bit at some point since she recognized it more than a lot of the other pieces that weren't Harry Potter related

Next he performed the Love Theme from Ennio Moricone's Cinema Paradiso, which I was completely unfamiliar with and cannot recollect anything about now.

He ended the main set with 3 pieces in a row from the original Star Wars trilogy - The Imperial March, Princess Leia's Theme, and The Throne Room and Finale. The Throne Room was the lengthy concert arrangement version, as heard on the Sony "Star Wars Trilogy" CD, or the Revenge Of The Sith original soundtrack. All 3 sounded spectacular. After a standing ovation, a member of the orchestra (Bob Ross) came out and talked about how John had been with the Pops for 30 years, and then asked for his permission to talk to the audience, which was cute. He then sent a lot of praise Williams' way, how he was one of the greatest composers of all time, etc. And how despite all his talent, he is still kind and generous. Then how he knew Mr Williams would be embarrassed about all the adulation and attention, but that they had to him a present in the form of a film, that is set to Hymm To New England... and that he would have to work for his present - he'd have to conduct, as he's the only one with a baton on stage. hehe

Hymm To New England was nice, though I was honestly paying more attention to the video wall. It was a very nice montage of John conducting and the bops playing, magazine articles, other pictures, other footage, etc. Some of the footage was just soooo 80s

He then left but came almost right back in, and for an encore played The Raiders March. I was hoping for the revised ending written for Kingdom of the Crystal Skull, but it was the same old arrangement as always. I wonder if the orchestra members even needed their sheet music for this. This was followed by a very lengthy round of applause. Williams eventually did his now traditional "sleepy" motion (both hands to the side of his head) and exited. What a fabulous concert!

Our next task was to spot him outside and hopefully get his signature! We found the exit door near our car which turned out to be a blessing - it was now POURING RAIN outside! I got COMPLETELY SOAKED in a 10 second run to the car to get an umbrella and my Hook LP. Back inside, an usher told us where to go. We eventually found the little door on the opposite side of the building where he would be exiting from. There were already several people waiting and a security guard. We joined the crowd and waited under the umbrella. Luckily it stopped raining after a little bit. At some point the guard let us know that Williams WOULD be signing!! After maybe 15-20 minutes of waiting, Mr. Williams came outside! He started on the left side, which is where we were standing. He signed my Hook LP! I was so speechless I wasn't able to stammer anything out other than a "thank you so much" when he was done. Sadly, due to the rain, the signature got smudged, but what can you do? The only thing I had for him to use was a gold paint pen that Emily had at her house because I had forgotten to go buy a silver sharpie like I had wanted to before the concert. And the worst part was, she found one in her house the next morning! Haha.

Anyway, that evening I had given Emily my Hook OST CD as a gift - she had been bugging me for a few weeks to burn her a copy of it - she originally told me because she loves the movie so much and had started to really notice the music when we watched it together a few months ago - but now I know it was because she wanted to listen to it while painting me a painting. I thought it would be a good gift because it was a special CD to me, being one of the first OSTs I ever bought and my favorite film score of all time. Anyway long story short - we brought it too in hopes that she would be able to get him to sign it for her, but she ended up preferring to just take camera duty, which ended up being great

because she got a great shot of him signing it!

After the left side he spent a while on the right side. A few fans spoke to him for a bit of length, and some seemed to hand him things (not sure what they were, looked like something hand written? Maybe a letter or a web address for original work? I dunno). The most touching moment of the night, though, was when a fan shook his hand and thanked him deeply for his music, and how his music had inspired him so much and helped him figure out his life path, etc - Mr Williams looked so honestly touched, he was speechless for a second and then gave the fan a very honest hug. It was great and very touching. After signing things for another 5 minutes or so he got into the BSO car and drove off. What a night!