

Accordion Pops Orchestra Concert Review

The Accordion Pops Orchestra under the direction of Dan Desiderio presented "A Concert of Hope" Saturday evening, April 21, 2007 in the Perelman Theatre at the Kimmel Center for the Performing Arts in Philadelphia, PA.

This is the third time that APO has performed at the Kimmel Center for this very important fund raiser for the ALS Hope Foundation. Last year the concert raised over \$25,000 for the Hope Foundation and it is expected that this year's concert will do even better.

In addition to the full orchestra performing such great pieces as "Finale to Symphony No. 4, Opus 36 in F minor by P. Tchaikovsky," "Selections from My Fair Lady," "Russian's Sailor Dance," and "Mancini in Concert" to name a few, there were several soloists.

The orchestra accompanied Rodolfo Veneziano noted Tenor Soloist and Elizabeth Patterson Mezzo Soprano who performed both solo and as a duo with the beautiful aria "Parlami d'Amore Mariu". Ms. Patterson also sang "O Mio Babbino Caro" from Puccini's *Gianni Schicchi*. She was accompanied on acoustic accordion by her brother, Justin Patterson and they also did a terrific change of pace with the ever popular song "Crazy" made famous by the late Patsy Cline.

One of the APO members is not only a fine accordionist, but is also a concert flautist. Andrea Maurer thrilled the audience with a magnificent rendition of "Sonata No. 2, 1st Movement" by B. Holcombe ably accompanied by Lotus Cheng who is a concert pianist in her own right.

To begin the second half of the program, Aarthi Manohar, a high school senior and five year piano student of Mr. Desiderio, mesmerized the audience with Rachmaninoff's "Prelude in C-Sharp Minor, Op. 3 No. 2" accompanied by the Accordion Pops Orchestra with a special orchestral transcription by Maestro Desiderio.

Mary Tokarski world renowned concert accordionist, wowed the audience with a flawless rendition of "Dance of the Demon" by E. Holst, arr. D. Desiderio. The audience would not let her leave, and as an encore, and tribute to the late Frank Mucedola, she played his very exciting descriptive piece, composed especially for the accordion, "The Fox and the Hound".

A highlight of the concert featured the Accordion Quintet of Diane Squillace, Sydia Anderson, Al Terzo, Cecilia Hrubovcak and Lenny Feldmann presenting the world premier of "... And Not A Single Regret" by composer Stephen Senderoff. Mr. Senderoff was present to introduce this new work to the audience and tell them a little about how he came to compose it.

Mr. Senderoff is currently exploring the application of computers to new areas of electronic music composition and sound design. He especially loves the way he can blend the tonal colors and ranges of the accordion to create note-accurate adaptations of traditional American fiddle tunes. "...And Not A Single Regret" is an impressionist arrangement of traditional melodies with names such as *Blackbird*, *Farewell to Whiskey*, *Dives and Lazarus*, and *A Firm Foundation* ingeniously entwined into the parts of the four acoustic accordions and acoustic bass accordion.

By the way, as Mr. Senderoff so eloquently expressed it during his opening remarks: "Good evening, my name is Stephen Senderoff and I am living with Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis, also known as Lou Gehrig's disease (ALS). This is the third time I have had the opportunity to speak at this annual event and, in fact, I have been living with ALS since 1998. I consider the gift of time that has been granted to me the most precious gift I have ever received. My memories of this time, every minute, are among my most prized possessions."

After the performance of the piece by the Accordion Quintet, Mr. Senderoff received a five minute standing ovation in appreciation of the beautiful new piece of music he has composed and the deep emotions the music touches in everyone who heard it.

The concert concluded with the orchestra playing "Americana - A Tribute to America and our Armed Forces" - a stirring arrangement by Dan Desiderio that had the entire audience of over 250 attendees on their feet singing *God Bless America*.

by Lenny Feldmann

United States National Accordion News, May 2007 (www.accordionusa.com)

