

Holiday Pops a Tradition Worth Keeping

Written by Zach Carstensen

Tuesday, 21 November 2000 18:00

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On the evening of November 18, anyone who is even remotely festive couldn't help but feel the holiday spirit. The weather was chilly outside, the Festival of Trees holiday parade marched through downtown Davenport, Thanksgiving was less than a week away, and the Quad City Symphony Orchestra (QCSO) was gearing up for the annual Holiday Pops concert at the Mark of the Quad Cities.

Quickly becoming a Quad Cities tradition, the Holiday Pops concert has been evoking the spirit of the holiday season for eight years. Complementing the kick-off of the Festival of Trees, the Quad City Symphony, with the help of choirs, figure skaters, guest conductors, and featured musicians, soothes us into the holiday spirit.

The most recent outing by the pops group was no different. This year, Michael Buttermann was featured as the guest conductor, Guy Few impressed us with his trumpet expertise, and the Sanctuary Choir of the First Presbyterian Church and the Holiday Pops Children's Chorus provided vocal support.

One of the more moving moments occurred early on in the concert with a reverent performance of an Ave Maria. Accompanying the orchestra were skaters from the Figure Skating Club of the Quad Cities.

The QCSO and the Holiday Pops ensemble merged the best of the standard musical fare with some less traditional holiday treats. The audience got to hear some atypical selections by Bach, Poulenc, and Rutter, for example, before the first half of the concert ended with a sing-along of famous carols.

After its brief intermission, the orchestra and the Pops ensemble performed a rousing if not funny performance of Victor Herbert's "March of the Toys." While the orchestra played seriously, the young skaters who performed seemed to defy gravity. Providing levity to the performance was a young skater, maybe four or five, who spent more time sitting on the ice than skating on it. Additionally, in both the first half and the second half, Canadian trumpeter Guy Few performed admirably and with style. Sporting a lime-green suit, Few lulled the audience with the "Trumpeter's Lullaby" and sparkled in "Trumpet in the Night."

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Charles Pittman and Mary Kautz were cute in another number as they staged “Yes, Virginia, There is a Santa Claus.”

Even though there were flaws, the total performance of the Pops ensemble was moving and effective. Michael Buttermann oozed excitement for the music he was conducting, the orchestra played marvelously, and the choirs were angelic. I couldn’t help but hum along to the traditional carols, and during the sing-along, like every other audience member, I was compelled to help sing “Let it Snow,” “The Christmas Song,” and “I’ll Be Home for Christmas.”