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CAL PHIL MAKES MUSICAL MAGIC...WITH "MOVIE MAGIC" ON AUGUST 9 AND AUGUST 10

Soloists include piano and violin virtuoso Ayke Agus and Phil Smith, organ conservator at Walt Disney Concert Hall

Calendar summary:

August 9: Movie Magic

Featured soloists: violinist and pianist Ayke Agus and organist Phil Smith
Program includes: excerpts from such Hollywood blockbusters as Ben Hur, American in Paris, Rocky, The Godfather, Babe, Indiana Jones, Schindler's List and 2001: A Space Odyssey
The Arboretum
301 N. Baldwin Ave in Arcadia
Gates open at 5:30 p.m.; concert begins at 7:30 p.m.
626.300.8200 or purchase online, www.calphil.org
Tickets start at \$20

August 10: Movie Magic

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Program includes: excerpts from such Hollywood blockbusters as Ben Hur, American in Paris, Rocky, The Godfather, Babe, Indiana Jones, Schindler's List and 2001: A Space Odyssey
Walt Disney Concert Hall
111 South Grand Avenue in Los Angeles
Concert begins at 2 p.m.
For tickets, call 213.365.3500 or purchase online, www.ticketmaster.com
Tickets start at \$35

SAN MARINO, Calif. According to Dr. Victor Vener, Music Director of the California Philharmonic, it's not as easy to program a concert of movie music as you might at first think.

"Our goal was to find music expansive and memorable enough to stand on its own as a concert piece," says Vener, who will lead Cal Phil in a weekend of music paying tribute to the silver screen, "Movie Magic," on August 9 at the Los Angeles County Arboretum and Botanic Garden at 7:30 p.m. and August 10 at Walt Disney Concert Hall at 2 p.m.

Many soundtracks consist of 3 to 20 second "cues" composed to reflect, move along or heighten the emotional impact of the story, the conductor explains. However, these snippets are difficult to perform in a concert setting. They're simply too short.

Adding to the challenge was Vener's prerequisite that the works be "fun and recognizable."

Vener, however, is confident that the program he ultimately crafted has not only met his own high expectations but those of the thousands of audience members who regularly attend Cal Phil performances. “Our patrons appreciate the way the Maestro combines great music with a great time,” says Grace Thompson, General Manager. “Even the ushers at Disney Hall – who are used to hearing the best of the best – rave about him.”

At “Movie Magic,” Vener will wield the brand of musical magic for which he has become renowned – combining more classical works such as Johann Strauss’ Blue Danube Waltz, used by Stanley Kubrick in 2001 A Space Odyssey, or George Gershwin’s American in Paris with soundtracks from films loved by generations of moviegoers. These include the theme from The Godfather by Nino Rota; Gonna Fly Now from Rocky by Bill Conti; the Parade of Charioteers from Miklos Rozsa’s soundtrack for Ben Hur; and a medley of what Vener calls “Hollywood Blockbusters” by composer James Horner, who won two Academy Awards for Titanic.

Nor will John Williams – with 45 Academy Award nominations to his credit, the composer is the second most nominated artist after Walt Disney – be neglected. Cal Phil will perform the Raiders’ March from Steven Spielberg’s Indiana Jones series and excerpts from Schindler’s List, which won an Oscar for “Best Original Score.” Described by Score Reviews as “one of the most beautiful, and best scores ever written for a motion picture,” Schindler’s List may surprise those who are used to Williams’ usual swashbuckling, bold style of composition.

“Williams is a composer, first and foremost,” Vener says. “His music reflects what has to be conveyed – whether it’s Indiana Jones’ gallantry and sense of adventure or the triumph of hope and bravery against a backdrop even as dark as the Holocaust.”

Cal Phil first violinist Ayke Agus will appear as the featured soloist in Schindler’s List. While Itzhak Perlman performed the solos in the original soundtrack, Vener is confident that Agus will move audiences just as powerfully.

“In Indonesia, where Ayke was born and began her studies, she’s still referred to as ‘the Mozart of Indonesia,’” he says. “She has studied with Ivan Galamian, whose students included international stars like Itzhak Perlman and Pinchas Zukerman, and was one of a handful of violinists selected by Jascha Heifetz to take part in his master class. Of course, Heifetz was so impressed by Ayke that he wound up collaborating with her for the last fifteen years of his life.”

Agus, however, is more than a virtuoso violinist. She is also a renowned concert pianist who has presented recitals and appeared in chamber music festivals worldwide and as a guest artist with such internationally recognized ensembles as the Ysaye String Quartet and Jacques Thibaud String Trio. Hailed by the LA Times as “the sort of apparently easygoing, technically whiz-bang pianist that other pianists talk about with awe,” Agus will perform Richard Addinsell’s Warsaw Concerto with Cal Phil.

“The Warsaw Concerto was composed for the 1941 film, Dangerous Moonlight,” says Agus. “You might recognize its later name – Suicide Squadron. The British filmmakers first approached the great Russian composer, Sergei Rachmaninoff. They hoped to use his Piano Concerto No. 2, but when that didn’t work out, they commissioned Addinsell. The Warsaw Concerto is a beautiful, passionate work. I love how you hear hints not only of Rachmaninoff but the Norwegian composer and pianist Edvard Grieg in it.”

Joining Agus as soloist at “Movie Magic” is organist Phil Smith, who will perform the second movement from Camille Saint-Saens’ Symphony No. 3, popularly known as the Organ Symphony.

“If you saw the movie Babe, you’ll recognize the Organ Symphony,” says Vener, who founded Cal Phil 12 years ago specifically to introduce those who might be wary of ‘classical music’ to great music of every era and genre, from Bach to Bono. “Composer Nigel Westlake took the theme from the symphony’s second movement and turned it into a Grammy Award winning song, ‘If I Had Words.’”

Smith, who is organ conservator at Walt Disney Concert Hall, has already earned bravos from Cal Phil audiences this season. In mid July, he appeared as the ‘Phantom of the Opera’ – clad appropriately in a sweeping, long cape – for a performance of Bach’s Toccata and Fugue in D minor during “Andrew Lloyd Webber Meets Puccini.” Smith also performs regularly with the Los Angeles Philharmonic and LA Master Chorale.

“Babe was the pig who wanted to be a sheep dog,” muses Vener. “But, when you hear Phil play that majestic, magical organ at Walt Disney Concert Hall, you won’t want to trade places with anyone.”

Even Hollywood itself will receive tribute in “Movie Magic.” The program will open – appropriately enough – with walk of stars, composed in 2004 by Cal Phil composer-in-residence Roger Allen Ward.

“At the time, I was living just off Hollywood Boulevard, midway between Highland and Cahuenga,” recalls Ward. “The piece is an aural picture of the whole neighborhood—with the famous sidewalk being the main focus. I’m walking my dog through crowds of tourists and surroundings ranging from cheap curio shops to grand historic movie palaces. You can hear cars go by, and you can hear the loneliness of Hollywood Boulevard late at night or early in the morning. What I hope you hear most of all are the dreams we each bring to our idea of Hollywood.”

“All we’re missing at ‘Movie Magic’ is the popcorn,” adds Grace Thompson. “And you never know...We just may find a way to supply that, too!”

The gates will open at The Arboretum on August 9 at 5:30 p.m. for dining and live jazz from the redwhite+bluezz Jazz Stage, with the performance beginning at 7:30 p.m. Tickets start at just \$20 and can be purchased by calling the Cal Phil box office at 1120 Huntington Drive in San Marino at 626.300.8200 from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday through Friday or by visiting the website, www.calphil.org. The Arboretum is located at 301 No. Baldwin Avenue in Arcadia. Gates open at 5:30 p.m. for picnicking.

Tickets for the performance at 2 p.m. on August 10 are available by calling TicketMaster at 213.363.3500, Tuesday through Friday, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. or online at www.ticketmaster.com. Prices range from \$35 to \$95/person. Walt Disney Concert Hall is located at 111 South Grand Avenue in Los Angeles.

Those wishing to help ensure that Cal Phil continues to present such performances can participate in the Barnes and Noble Book Fair from 9 a.m. to 11 p.m. on July 26 and July 27. All patrons have to do is present a special coupon at Barnes and Noble stores in West Covina, Glendora, Pasadena, The Grove at Farmer’s Market or the Glendale Americana and a percentage of the net sale will then be donated to Cal Phil. For more information or to request a coupon, call 626.300.8200.

In 1995, Music Director and Conductor Victor Vener and a small group of enthusiastic, dedicated music lovers based in Pasadena, California founded The CalPhil Foundation. The Foundation, a nonprofit community benefit organization, supports the California Philharmonic in its quest to expand awareness of classical music, thus increasing the interest and support for great timeless music with wide audience appeal, from the classical and operatic repertoire to diverse genres of jazz, pops, Hollywood and Broadway. Also, with a strong commitment to new music and to expanding the symphonic repertoire, the California Philharmonic has presented numerous world premieres of both orchestral and chamber works.

The California Philharmonic began in 1997 with a five-concert inaugural summer season of Cal Phil Festival on the Green on the grounds of the Los Angeles County Arboretum & Botanic Garden in Arcadia. Now, Cal Phil presents twenty-four concerts per year in five different, but equally impressive, venues throughout Los Angeles County. These series include Cal Phil at Walt Disney Concert Hall (downtown Los Angeles), Cal Phil at the Ambassador (Pasadena), Cal Phil Music, Martinis and the Maestro (Castle Green Hotel in Pasadena), Cal Phil Festival on the Green, and Cal Phil at The Mill (The Old Mill in San Marino). For more information, visit www.calphil.org or call 626.300.8200.