Review of the June 9, 2012 Concert with Artist Nathan Avakian

by Ronald Stonehouse

This evening's performance was introduced as "Outside the Box", coincidently also the title of his CD. I've enjoyed organist performing with silent movies, with other artists, accompanying themselves on the piano or organ, playing their own compositions, and of course playing the organ in a professional manner. Nathan, who by the way was the 2009 overall winner of the ATOS young theatre organist competition, was able to do it all in one outstanding concert!

As the console rises, the auditorium is filled with a rousing **King of New York** from a new Broadway show "Newsies". This was the first of several arrangements Nathan performed this evening using his iPhone and midi sequences that he composed and played all of it himself on an electric piano then edited it together on a computer. By the applause, I'd say it went over very well.

Showing off the subtle sounds of our organ, Nathan went to a sentimental ballad by Randy Newman from "Toy Story 2", his favorite from the movie, **When She Loved Me.**

Next is the lilting **Waltz in Swing Time** by Jerome Kern from the movie "Swing Time" and directly into **Bumble Boogie**, by Jack Fina using the incorporated tracts from his iPhone and again well received.

Joined next by the Longwood Dance Theatre we are treated to some fancy jazz work **Blue Rondo a la Turk** by Dave Brubeck and choreography by Angela Boyd. Organs and ballet go fine together also!

In a classical style, the next piece was by Richard Purvis and called **Capriccio On the Notes of the Cuckoo.**

Taking a break from the organ, Nathan played in a rapid fire presentation on the piano, the Billie Joel tune **Root Beer Rag.**

Presented next the beautiful classic voices on our organ as Nathan played a Louis Vierne composition **Carillon**. This is from **24 Pieces in Free Style.**

Nathan next accompanied himself in an organ and piano duet of **Theme from Somewhere in Time** by John Barry. Very lovely, indeed it was.

Taking us into intermission was a medley from "Jersey Boys". This is a Broadway play featuring songs of Frankie Valli and the Four Seasons. Nathan turned on his iPhone again and we were transported back in time for **December,1963 Oh, What a Night , Can't Take My Eyes Off You,** and **Who Loves You?**

A wake up call follows the intermission as Nathan turns on the rhythm section again and perhaps a little too loud for me with **Rondo In G.**

His own composition, **Untitled Piano Composition #1,** was then beautifully played on the piano. Folks liked it and I thought it might work well as a movie theme.

The next part of the program was of the Youth Silent Film Festival. This amazed me the most in the show. First Nathan had to compose 5 different theme types for non-existent silent movies. Then a silent film producer would then create a movie to fit the score. How a 13 year old Slapstick, a 16 year old Romance, and a 18 year old Sci Fi producer actually did this is far beyond my imagination.

Grace Kelly by Mika brought us back to reality as the rhythm is put in to play.

Sleeping Beauty Waltz by Tchaikovski brings the seniors of the Longwood Dance Theatre back to the stage for another lovely performance. I must add that Nathan really had the orchestral part down pat.

The closing medley was a **Mancini Collection.** Among others were, **Days of Wine and Roses, Baby Elephant Walk, Love Story Theme, Dear Hearts, Charade, Pink Panther,** and **Moon River.** This was some of the prettiest music of the night. I expected no less when he introduced this as one of his all time favorite composers.

Nathan received a well deserved standing ovation.

His encore was **Fantasmic** which is from the musical fireworks and water show at both Disneyland and Walt Disney World.

There are several definitions for "outside the box". The one I liked the most was remarkable, or exceptional, or extraordinary. That pretty much sums up Nathan Avakian, and looking forward to whatever he comes up with next. Thanks Nathan for a show well done!