

Review of the November 23, 2013 Concert with Artist Jelani Eddington

by Ronald Stonehouse

On this evening, DTOS proudly presented Mr. Jelani Eddington for the sixth time. He is well known for his very orchestral registrations and playing abilities. We enjoyed him here in March of 2011 with the late Chris Gorsuch. Several of us enjoyed them again at the 2011 and 2012 ATOS conventions and Jelani again at the 2013 convention alas alone. Several of this evening's pieces were in remembrance of Chris. With the magnitude of voices on our Kimball and the expertise of the master at the console, I knew we were in for another great adventure. We were not disappointed.

Jelani begins the performance with **Some People** from the 1959 Broadway production of "Gypsy", referred to by several critics as "one of the best of musicals", music by Jule Styne and lyrics by Stephen Sondheim.

The next tune was **Take Five**, a jazz piece by Paul Desmond, introduced by the Dave Brubeck Quartet in 1959 and has become the best-selling jazz single of all time. It was written and played in the unusual 5/4 time. The arrangement was by Chris Gorsuch and performed in tribute to him. It was a great tribute to say the least.

From the 1937 musical "Babes in Arms" by Richard Rodgers and Lorenz Hart came a popular jazz standard, **My Funny Valentine**, featuring the Cor Anglais (English Horn) which is not normally on a theatre organ, per Walt Strony, and Jelani gives it a lush and lovely arrangement and not a bit funny. That tune appears on over 1300 albums performed by over 600 artists.

Orb and Sceptre March written by Sir William Walton for orchestra and the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II on June 2, 1953 was a great demonstration of the orchestral sounds of our organ and nobody does that better than Mr. Eddington. Sir Walton also wrote **Crown Imperial** in 1936 for the coronation of Elizabeth II's father, King George VI.

A **Symphonic Overview from West Side Story** the 1957 Broadway musical with music by Leonard Bernstein and lyrics by Stephen Sondheim was Jelani's next spectacular arrangement. The highlights in the medley were: **Prologue, Something's Coming, Maria, America, Tonight, I Feel Pretty**, and the very beautiful **Somewhere**. A thunderous applause following this set was proof of our approval.

The following tune was performed as a commemorate of John F. Kennedy, our 35th president, who died 50 years ago on Nov.23,1963. Jelani selected a traditional Irish folk tune published in an 1855 book, "The Ancient Music of Ireland" and listed as an anonymous air. The title of the air came from the name of County Londonderry in Northern Ireland. It was a very somber and fitting arrangement of **Londonderry Air** featuring some of the lovely strings on our Kimball.

To wrap up the first half of the program, we were treated with what the American Film Institute in 2005 called "the greatest American film score of all time", the **Symphonic Suite of Star Wars**, the 1977 movie "Star Wars" the first of a trilogy. The music is by an American composer, conductor, and pianist, a legend in his own time, with a career spanning six decades, Mr. John Towner Williams, Jr. He is considered to be one of the greatest film composers of all time, with 48 Academy Award nominations is the second most nominated person after Walt

Disney. With all this greatness behind him, how could Jelani go wrong? He of course magnificently rose to the occasion!

After the intermission, Jelani opened with something "big", as the title is generally known with "big" at its end and that would be **This Could Be the Start of Something**. It was written by Steve Allen, published in 1956, and later became his personal theme song. A nice rousing rendition was enjoyed by all.

Get Happy, by Harold Arlen, was first performed by Ruth Etting in the 1930 "The Nine-Fifteen Revue" but is most associated with Judy Garland in her last MGM film in 1950, "Summer Stock". In this sultry arrangement by Chris Gorsuch, Jelani invited Donnie Rankin, on drums, to join him. For those of us that were here at Donnie's concert in January 2013, we were aware of his abilities on the drums and apparently many were by the big round of applause welcoming his return. They performed well together and who knows in what direction this might take. Maybe a new partner for Jelani?

Jelani entitled the next medley **An Orchestral Overview of the opera Carmen**. The opera "Carmen" was first performed in 1875 and the French composer was Georges Bizet. The Toreador Song from Act 2 is among the best known of all operatic arias. Although I am not a real fan of opera, I found myself enjoying this arrangement by Jelani and have listened to it over four times now. I find it simply amazing that one guy on one instrument can make that much gorgeous music. Pardon me while I go listen one more time!

Over the Rainbow and often referred to as **Somewhere Over the Rainbow** is from the 1939 movie "The Wizard Of Oz". The music was Harold Arlen's, the lyrics are E.Y. Harburg's, and the singer of course was Judy Garland. That song later became her signature song, is now called "the greatest song of the century", and is another of Jelani's best arrangements.

For a very lively conclusion to this concert and a complete change of style, from the 1974 album "Streetlife Serenade" comes **Rootbeer Rag** penned and played by Billy Joel.

After a well deserved standing ovation, Donnie returned for the encore with Jelani and a great finish with **Tico-Tico No Fuba** (meaning, sparrow in the cornmeal) by Zequinha de Abreu in 1917 and concluding that with a piece of **Gonna Build a Mountain** from "Stop the World I Want to Get Off" by Anthony Newley and Leslie Bricusse in the 1961 London's West End production.

As one looks back at what we enjoyed this evening, you will see an underlying theme of "best" and "greatest" running throughout. I can add nothing more to that, except, many thanks and BRAVO!