

## Review

### Horowitz, Liberace and Victor Borge...POP and ROCK?

By Sandy Copperman, Entertainment Writer

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He has been described as a combination of Vladimir, in his three decades as pianist. Mac Frampton is a unique musical stylist, who utilized five other excellent classically trained musicians in his "Three Penny Symphony" to transform classical works of Debussy, Bach and others, into jazz, pop and rock interpretations that were fresh and entertaining, at his Pop Goes the Classics concert on February 21, at Burnt Store Presbyterian Church in Punta Gorda.

With charm and self-deprecating humor, Frampton said that Serge Rachmaninoff would turn over in his grave if he heard his well-known "Prelude in C-sharp minor" as rearranged into "Prelude in Rock" by Frampton. However, this piece as well as most of the others in the concert program were wild, different and entertaining, a fusion of contrasting musical disciplines.

Frampton's music ensemble consisted of himself as pianist, Cecil Welch (former first trumpeter for Henry Mancini) on trumpet and flugelhorn, Todd Woodson on drums, Rod Henley on the keyboard, Alex Albanese on bass fiddle, and Chuck Riehle as percussionist. This last included a collection of sounds from chimes, bells, castanets, tambourine, xylophone, bongo and kettledrums, and more to give the classical music a "pop" appeal.

For example, the concert opened with a jived up "William Tell Overture" by Rossini, that was spiked with brassy sound effects and a horse's whinny on the trumpet that evoked memories of the Lone Ranger's horse, *Silver*.

The concert took place on a night of a nearly full moon, and Frampton and the Three Penny Symphony took that occasion to perform Debussy's "Claire de Lune," in an Impressionist interpretation done with classical understanding of the work, and with much feeling for the music. The next selection was J.S.Bach's and Mason Williams' "Jesu Joy/Classical Gas," performed in triple-fast time with a joyful lack of inhibitions, including chimes and maracas.

The two next trumpet solos by Cecil Welch were highlights of the evening. The first was written by Raphael Mendez whose title sounded like "Jota," played in a smooth elegant Spanish style with faultless virtuosity, plus "Ole's" shouted from the audience. The second, called "The Spanish Trumpet" was written especially for Welch by Henry Mancini. It was a delightful Mancini-style piece, with lightning fingerings and tonguings up and down the chromatic scale, amazingly performed by Welch.

Next, in Ravel's Bolero, the audience became transfixed by the hypnotic rhythm of the drums and piano, and then was overwhelmed by the sheer power of the music. Frampton's powerful performance was backed by his tall impressive physical figure and his dynamic energy.

The first set ended with a medley of classical hits from the nineteen forties, incorporated into Hollywood films, that ended with an inspiring "Full Moon and Empty Arms" from Tchaikovsky.

The second set was more in the manner of humorous entertainment. Three members of the audience were taught how to play a freaky looking instrument called a *hose-a-phone*, by Welch. Then, each of the musicians took the opportunity to show their impressive musical prowess at improvisations. This was followed by Tchaikovsky's "Nutcracker Suite" performed in a maniacal frenzy. The finale was John Philip Sousa's "Stars and Stripes Forever" played straightforwardly, as the audience rose from their seats and clapped in time to the march music.