

Pianist Mac Frampton Ignites Audience Enthusiasm

By Barbara W. Wilkinson

The audience at Northland Pines High School was instantly enthralled with the musical electricity of pianist Mac Frampton on January 20, 2010. Sponsored by the Headwaters Council for the Performing Arts and backed by his band of percussion, guitars, keyboards and singers, Frampton belted out a powerful message that beautifully communicated the romantic recordings of the 1970's. In his presentation, Frampton demonstrated his ability to play to a wide audience with the profound understanding that "music speaks more deeply than words." Since early childhood, the gifted artist has wanted to share his talents, and through his adaptations of popular tunes from the "70's, he easily rekindled our pasts.

With the voices of Jennifer Ferren and Vinnie Talarico, which aptly epitomized the musical styles of the era, Frampton and his talented orchestra brought the audience to life, opening with a tribute to Richard and Karen Carpenter. In this segment, Ferren began with the all-time favorite "Yesterday Once More." Throughout it, she skillfully projected Karen's pure clear voice while Frampton demonstrated his amazing ability to recreate Richard's meticulously clean arrangements, including "We've Only Just Begun" and "Close to You." Frampton's busy fingers played as fast and as deftly as Richard's did thirty years ago. Through this melding of voice and piano, Ferren and Frampton brought back fine memories of yesteryear through a nostalgic medley of Carpenter hits.

After an accomplished section of television theme songs that featured impromptu drum solos, the ensemble gave a resounding tribute to Billy Joel. Beginning this section with "Root Beer Rag" and "Piano Man," it was complete with riveting trills that delighted the audience into keeping time with the music. Talarico, clad in black leather for the occasion, skillfully belted out "Just the Way You Are," "You May be Right" and "She's Always a Woman to Me" with Joel's inflections and feeling. Through these selections, he was able not only to emulate both the private, poignant world of the soul but also the social / political world that Joel wanted to capture in his music.

Frampton executed a frenetic section of James Bond theme songs, including "Goldfinger" and "The Spy Who Loved Me," impelling the audience to feel like it was actually watching the movies. This transitioned into a dynamic homage to Neil Diamond whose songs convey a deep sense of isolation yet a desire for connection, a yearning for home yet a need for greater freedom. Talarico beautifully conveyed that private conflict with compassion by singing "Play Me" and "I am I Said." Additionally, the ensemble performed an infectious "Sweet Caroline" as the audience swung its collective arms, and ended with the perfect touch—"Coming to America."

This led into a smashing Ferren--Talarico duet of Bob Seger's "We've Got Tonight, Who Needs Tomorrow," and Frampton's heartfelt rendition of Vangelis' "Chariots of Fire." "Chariots" was mesmerizing with its crescendos and decrescendos, and the perfect transition to a rousing tribute to Barry Manilow. Again Talarico took center stage with a medley of the artist's favorite hits, including "Weekend in New England" and "Mandy." Like Manilow, Talarico performed as a "melody" man, bringing compassion to his music, as though he were in a dream world. After a rousing medley of Manilow songs ending with "I Write the Songs," the ensemble was awarded a standing ovation. The audience was delighted with encores of James Taylor's poignant "You've

Got a Friend” and Simon and Garfunkle’s heartrending “Bridge Over Troubled Waters.”

Frampton is a gifted performer whose style, performance and charisma captivated his audience. This concert was more than a performance—it was a happening. He and his band and singers brought energy and exuberance, filling the auditorium with excitement, passion and spirit. Congratulations to the Headwaters Council for the Performing Arts for a fine presentation on a cold winter evening!

Headwaters Council for the Performing Arts
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