



Review:...

Monday

Posted May 29, 2017 at 8:02 AM

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This was music to enjoy collectively, with audience, speakers, family and musicians joining together.

By Keith Powers / Contributing writer

HYANNIS — Nostalgia and music go hand in hand. The centenary of the birth of John F. Kennedy, whose presidency was distinguished by an optimistic advocacy for all of the arts, for great scientific achievements and for social justice, makes a perfect occasion for a musical celebration.

Joined by a number of notable guests Sunday evening at the Barnstable High School Performing Arts Center, the Cape Symphony Orchestra, along with the Chatham Chorale and solo performers, brought back some of the music that formed the soundtrack for the Kennedy mystique.

As part of JFK/100, a presentation of the CSO and the John F. Kennedy Hyannis Museum, this commemorative concert was led by maestro Jung-Ho Pak, and included cellist Amit Peled, baritone David McFerrin, multiple guest speakers, and numerous composed remembrances of JFK.

Much of the music served the themes brought forth by a series of guest speakers from the Kennedy family, and from those who are close to the Kennedys and their Hyannis roots. Interspersed with inspired thoughts from Connecticut state Sen. Ted Kennedy Jr., Congressman Bill Keating, and former U.S. Sen. Paul Kirk, along with with video tributes from JFK's daughter, Caroline, state Rep. Joseph P. Kennedy III and others, were scores from Leonard Bernstein, John Williams, Peter Boyer and others that captured the era.

Just like the heady legacy left by JFK, Americans will not forget that music. A Frederick Loewe song from "Camelot," wittily rendered by McFerrin. James Horner's heroic soundtrack to "Apollo 13," remembering the president's promise to put a man on the moon. Even JFK's own campy

campaign anthem, a reworked version of “High Hopes.”

But there was serious music too. Harking back to Pablo Casals’ famous appearance at the White House in November 1961, cellist Amit Peled took the stage, with the very cello that Casals performed with during most of his lifetime.

Peled has been granted use of the famous instrument by Casals’ widow, Marta Casals Istomin. Peled evoked that November night, which still stands as a symbol of the refined, cultured first family, a vanished era of public sophistication on the part of our leaders.

Peled performed “Song of the Birds” and Popper’s “Hungarian Rhapsody,” two works that showed diverse sides of the great Spanish cellist. “Song of the Birds” is an uplifting folk tune, which Casals turned into a lament for his lost homeland (he was exiled for decades from Franco’s Spain).

“Hungarian Rhapsody” was the kind of muscular, double-stopped adventure that Casals championed repeatedly, establishing his instrument as a true solo force. Racing up and down the fingerboard, putting emotion and intensity before note-perfect practice, Peled successfully recaptured Casals’ sense of musicianship and his desire for communication.

The orchestra, in its supportive role, played with spirit. Principal flute Zachary Sheets’ accents behind McFerrin during Bernstein’s “Simple Song” stood out during a rare moment in the spotlight.

Boyer’s “The Dream Lives On,” a 2010 commission by the Boston Pops celebrating the memory of John, Robert and Ted Kennedy, narrated stoutly here by Ted Kennedy Jr., brought the evening’s celebration to an emotional close.

This was music to enjoy collectively, with audience, speakers, family and musicians joining together in poignant remembrance.

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