

NBSO performing the soundtrack of our entertainment lives

Thursday

Posted at 2:01 AM

By Keith Powers, Contributing Writer

The music of John Williams attracts some pretty high-visibility friends. Not just imaginary ones, like Harry Potter, Darth Vader or Indiana Jones. But real-life ones, like Steven Spielberg, George Lucas — and Ken-David Masur.

A fast-rising conductor with a famous last name, Masur comes to New Bedford on April 29 to conduct the New Bedford Symphony Orchestra in a special, season-ending program featuring the music of the movie industry's greatest composer.

It's been a heady year for the NBSO. Not only has the orchestra successfully completed its music director search — culminating with the announcement that Yaniv Dinur will take over in that role — it brings one of the conducting world's brightest stars to the stage to complete the season.

Masur, finishing his third year as the Boston Symphony Orchestra's associate conductor, has just recently renewed his contact with the BSO to continue on as its assistant conductor. It's a fruitful relationship, with much work behind the scenes at Tanglewood and in Symphony Hall, including high-profile subscription performances.

Just last year, Masur filled in for an indisposed Christoph von Dohnányi, conducting Renée Fleming in a bracing account of Strauss's "Four Last Songs."

Masur was first trained, as you might guess, by his father, the late Kurt Masur, whose impact on the music world from Europe to America and beyond was prodigious. But this is no "famous last name gets you work" situation. Ken-David Masur has become an esteemed presence in the music world, as the principal guest at the Munich Symphony, a regular guest at Russia's National Philharmonic, and with high-profile appearances in Chicago, Japan, Paris and elsewhere.

With his wife, pianist Melinda Lee Masur, he leads the Chelsea Music Festival in New York, a summertime series that mixes music and other media, and this year explores Beethoven and his relationship with the metronome.

He is also close to John Williams, who has his own long history with Boston, including more than a decade as conductor of the Boston Pops.



“I met John when I was at the Boston University Tanglewood Institute composer program,” Masur says. “We all had to sing in the choir there, and so I was able to perform under him when I was a teenager.

“And now I see him in Boston of course, but he also surprised me at the Hollywood Bowl just recently,” Masur says. “I was making a debut there, with Gil Shaham, and he came backstage to greet me.

“I’m a big admirer of his, and I’m always looking forward to performing his music.”

There’s a lot of it to choose from. Not only has Williams composed the score for almost every film you could possibly imagine over the past two generations, he has also written an astonishing amount of concert music — concertos for harp, clarinet, cello, bassoon, trumpet and horn, just to name some.



The NBSO performance will concentrate on the film music.

“The concert music takes special care, and you want to make sure you get it right,” Masur says. “We’ll do the film music, including some that you might not have heard before.”

There’s a lot you have heard. “Star Wars,” the Indiana Jones movies, the Harry Potter epics, the Superman films; and earlier scores like “Towering Inferno,” “Jaws” and “The Poseidon Adventure” — Williams has created the soundtrack for decades of film memories. It’s a body of work that has garnered Williams 50 Academy Award nominations — more than any living person.

“He deserves it all,” Masur says. “Not just the awards he gets for his scores — he’s a phenomenal conductor as well. The connections I’ve made with him over the years — at Tanglewood, his appearances with the BSO and the Pops — make this a special occasion.”

The NBSO, with guest conductor Ken-David Masur, conducts the film scores of John Williams on Saturday, April 29 at 7:30 p.m. at the Zeiterion Performing Arts Center. For tickets and information visit www.nbsymphony.org or call the Zeiterion box office at 508-979-2900.



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