

THINK FUN

FAMILY CONCERTS CONNECT THE SYMPHONY
WITH SOME EXCELLENT PARTY PEOPLE.

BY EDDIE SILVA



DILIP VISHWANATH

Powell Hall is a very family-friendly place for Family Concerts

“They’re going to be fun!”

Berakiah Boone, St. Louis Symphony Director of Education, emphasizes one word when talking about the upcoming season of Family Concerts at Powell Hall: fun. Fun is the key: the key of F, for Fun. Where fun leads, the music, the educational opportunities, the audience interaction, the pre- and post-concert activities—these all follow and connect to the “fun” theme. Repertoire, for example, is “relevant to 2014,” says Boone. “Kids will hear music in Powell Hall that they are likely to hear in everyday life—in movies, in video games, in commercials.” Expect those “Aha! I’ve heard that before” moments of recognition

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at Family Concerts. Music will be heard that is part of the popular culture. It just happens to be called “classical.”

During the 2014–15 season, the Symphony collaborates with cultural institutions and artists who are experts at combining entertainment and education: the Zoo, the Science Center, and the music ensemble PROJECT Trio. They all think “fun.”

For the opening Family Concert, October 26, the Symphony is especially excited to be partnering with the Saint Louis Zoo, a first-time ever collaboration—at least in the collective memory of the two institutions. John Lithgow’s children’s book, *Never Play Music Right Next to the Zoo*, provides the literary anchor for the program. The Symphony, or “Zoorchestra,” makes the music. The Zoo shares its storytelling expertise in the person of Emily Bowling, a member of the Zoo’s Education staff.

Bowling observes that the Zoorchestra and Zoo are a great fit. “The Zoo’s Education Department is dedicated to nurturing respect for animals and their habitats and to promoting conservation action by providing educational opportunities and experiences. This collaboration offers both opportunities and experiences to children, their parents, students, and teachers, exposing them to the uniqueness of animals around the world through great music.

“Music and animals are universal in their appeal,” says Bowling. “Bringing them together encourages concertgoers to imagine animals in a different way. After this concert, when a child hears *Flight of the Bum-*

blebee, that child may think of the importance of pollinators. Or when children see zebras at the Zoo, they may think of *Hoe Down* or *Carnival of Animals*.”

With all Family Concerts this season, pre- and post-concert activities engage audiences as well. For the Zoo-at-Powell afternoon, “We will have biofacts (wild animal skulls, pelts, feathers, etc.) for people to touch,” says Bowling. “We’ll also have crafts for the children and animal instruments for them to play.”

The Symphony collaborates with the Saint Louis Science Center for its next Family Concert, *The Science of Sound and the Art of Noise*, on January 25. The Science Center “has experts in speaking the language of science to a young audience,” says Boone, “and they know how to make it fun.” As an educator herself, Boone understands that there are many ways of learning. “Some people learn by doing,” she observes, “so there will be hands-on instrument building of non-traditional musical instruments—all with materials everyone has in their homes.” And for those who learn best through visual stimuli, there will be cool things to see, such as a giant Slinky demonstrating a sound wave on Powell Hall’s big screen.

The spirited musical ensemble PROJECT Trio returns to perform with the St. Louis Symphony in *From Bach to Rock to Hip Hop* on February 22. Cellist Eric Stephenson, double bassist Peter Seymour, and flutist Greg Pattillo bring their entertaining and inspiring method of teaching music history. They

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TOM WALSH

PROJECT Trio returns for From Bach to Rock to Hip Hop on February 22.

cross wide barriers of time and bust multiple musical genres in less than an hour. PROJECT Trio has performed with the Symphony before, “so they fit right in when sharing the stage with the orchestra,” says Boone. “We span some 300 years” in this Family Concert, she adds. “We want to drive home that any genre can be a valid form of expression. We want children to understand that it’s OK to be a fan of any kind of music.”

This broad musical exploration leaves room for a fun educational dynamic. “We’ll be connecting musical dots,” Boone explains. “Hip hop is global, and with rock and baroque we hear musical ideas that connect along seemingly diverse genres. We hear sequence and order. We hear how silence is

used to create rhythm. These are basic music concepts that apply—whatever the music is called.”

Forces of Nature, April 19, is about space and about Earth. The space part includes music from *Star Wars*. The Earth part involves the natural forces of our planet. There will be *Star Wars* storm troopers in the foyer, and the storm move-

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ment of Beethoven’s Sixth Symphony on the stage. “We want to help children understand the world we live in and bring that world to life with some really good repertoire and some inspiring images,” says Boone. Music by Grofé depicts a sunrise. Smetana’s music embodies the Vltava River rushing through the composer’s Czech homeland.

Some of the images to be shown will be created by students who participate in the Symphony’s Picture the Music program. During the school year, students, grades K-6, will listen to the storm in Beethoven’s “Pastoral” and make images from what they hear and imagine. A committee selects winners in each grade category, and those will appear on screen at Powell.

But for all the visual elements, the audience interaction, the pre- and post-concert activities, and the collaboration with St. Louis cultural institutions planned for Family Concerts at Powell Hall this season, Boone affirms “It’s the orchestra that makes this unique. Music is common in family entertainment, but nothing of this quality or this scale.”

In addition, some of the music-makers will meet with families before and after the concerts. For the fun of it.

Family Concerts are presented by PNC Arts Alive.

For Family Concert information and tickets visit stlsymphony.org.

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