

The People's Critic*David Dow Bentley III***Spectacular “Star Spangled Salute” at Pavilion**Posted on [July 9, 2012](#)

PHOTO: Courtesy of Cynthia Woods Mitchell Pavilion



Uncle Sam towers above the crowd.

PHOTO: Courtesy of
[ThePeoplesCritic.com](#)

It was no surprise that the Houston Symphony’s annual Fourth of July Eve concert at the Cynthia Woods Mitchell Pavilion was everything residents of The Woodlands area have come to expect, and more. What may have been a surprise was the earlier afternoon thunderstorms that cooled summer temperatures delightfully in advance of maestro Michael Krajewski lifting his baton that evening. Even before the concert began there was patriotic fun out on the pavilion plaza where youngsters could capture free American flags and little red, white and blue pinwheels, while meeting a very tall Uncle Sam and the very puffy Woodlands mascot, Puffy Pine Cone™.

Better still were the sweet sounds of The Woodlands Show Chorus, a talented group of women who sing beautifully and make up the local chapter of Sweet Adelines International, a worldwide organization of women singers committed to advancing the musical art form of barbershop harmony

through education and performance. (For more details on the group visit the website: <http://thewoodlandsshowchorus.org/>.)

With the Houston Symphony just recently returned from performing at Carnegie Hall in May and touring Russia in June, now it was on to the symphony’s always delightful celebration of America’s Independence Day. Opening with a rousing “Fanfare and Star-Spangled Banner,” I have never before heard heard a full-house audience join so enthusiastically in singing the national anthem. Next came the beautiful “American Salute,” by Gould, with its lovely variations on the theme of “When Johnny Comes Marching Home.” John Williams’ thrilling “Olympic Fanfare and Theme,” followed. Then Krajewski joked about

Puffy Pine Cone™
greet pavilion
visitors.PHOTO: Courtesy of
[ThePeoplesCritic.com](#)



The Woodlands Show Chorus
PHOTO: Courtesy of ThePeoplesCritic.com

there being no Revolutionary War hard feelings with our now good friends in Great Britain. In recognition of that reconciliation the symphony performed Elgar's, "Pomp and Circumstance March," which no doubt had many in the audience reflecting on graduation days gone by. There was a merry and playful Wendel arrangement of "The Original Ragtime Band," and then a prize-winning Jersey Village High School quartet of young woodwinds players stepped forward having won the right to perform with the symphony for Gershwin's "Strike Up the Band." A smooth and elegant "America the Beautiful," then closed the first part of the program leaving me with the hope that our nation can always be worthy of the best of our patriotic music.

Following the intermission there was a rich medley of music from the show, "Jersey Boys," with a Vanacore arrangement that featured such hit tunes as, "Can't Take My Eyes Off Of You," and "I Love You Baby." Then the orchestra offered the Prechel arrangement of "Sounds of Simon and Garfunkel," with its warm reflection of songs like, "Bridge Over Troubled Waters," "Sounds of Silence," and "Mrs. Robinson." But that was just an appetizer for the vocal talents of guest performers, A.J. Swearingen and Jonathan Beedle. That duo would then come on stage and cast a hypnotic spell over the audience with their gently elegant harmonies for such S&G melodies as "Homeward Bound," "Feelin' Groovy," and their performance of "America" that began sweetly with the symphony playing Aaron Copland's "Simple Gifts."

All of that would have been enough entertainment, but still to come was the annual honoring of service veterans in the audience as the orchestra played Hayman's "Service Medley" while inviting members and veterans of each armed forces branch to stand with their families for recognition. Lastly, in final tribute to American independence, the orchestra performed Tchaikovsky's thrilling "1812 Overture." As the sixteen cannons on the hilltop boomed, one could not avoid feeling that the sounds of American freedom were once more echoing across the land.

*The columns of **David Dow Bentley III** have appeared on Broadway websites, in newspapers from the East Coast to the Gulf Coast, and may be viewed online at the website: www.ThePeoplesCritic.com*

E-mail may be directed to ThePeoplesCritic@earthlink.net

Posted in [Concert Reviews](#), [BroadwayStars.com](#), [ThePeoplesCritic.com](#) | Tagged [Reviews](#), [concerts](#), [music](#), [classical](#), [Houston](#), [Houston Symphony](#), [Cynthia Woods Mitchell Pavilion](#) | [Leave a comment](#)

BEEHIVE Abuzz With Talent

Posted on [July 6, 2012](#)