

Green eggs and band

Break out the forks: Upcoming performance to fuse classical music and Dr. Seuss

By Will Knous
THE BATTALION

Most people remember bedtime stories and reading their favorite books incessantly.

Over the past 100 years, there is a good chance that some of those favorites were from Dr. Seuss — favorites such as "Green Eggs and Ham."

Allison Nelson, a junior international studies and Spanish major can remember those times and Seuss' uncanny series of books.

"We had this big stack of books in our playroom when we were little and we read those books all the time," Nelson said. "Many times, our babysitter would read (a Dr. Seuss) book to us to calm us down."

Nelson said Dr. Seuss' works can be appreciated by younger and older audiences.

"Green Eggs and Ham" is one of those things we thought was fun when we were little, and we read it today and think, "Man that was such a good book. It is literary genius," Nelson said. "How can you resist its rhyme and rhythm — and realistically, who isn't attracted to green eggs? It was cool because it was totally off the wall. It wasn't like most books you forced your parents to read over and over again."

Now, the rhyme and rhythm of an old classic is getting a new facelift from what might seem an unlikely source — The Houston Symphony Orchestra. The classical performance will be hosted by the Cynthia Woods Mitchell Pavilion on Wednesday, April 28.

Guest composer Mark Mandarano said the orchestra undertook this eccentric endeavor because it is interested in reaching out to the less classically pursued family group through its music.

"I am interested in reaching whatever audience I can with orchestral music, so I do concerts with non-traditional music," Mandarano said. "I also do lots of concerts for families with children. Besides, I read 'Green Eggs and Ham' when I was a kid, and since I just had a baby boy seven months ago, I see it in my future."

Because the average Dr. Seuss fan is a small child, and the average classical music devotee is generally somewhat senior, not everyone can readily embrace this unlikely fusion of styles. Mandarano said that even he thought the idea was a little incredulous at first.

"When I first heard about it I was skeptical," Mandarano said. "There is not much to the story besides the rejection of the food over and over, but the composer has done something brilliant — each new time the (character) cajoles him, the music changes styles."

Since the performance is through the Houston Symphony Orchestra, Mandarano said audiences should expect music to be their main guide through the show.

"There is blues, a march, jazzier tunes and some lyrical songs," Mandarano said. "The composer, Robert Kapilow, turned (the book) into a sort of mini-opera, and there is more to it than a musical interpretation of the book — they act out the story. Kapilow had some insight into the structure behind Seuss and he is trying something new. I want to try something new also."

Cynthia Dubois, public relations manager for the Pavillion said this unconventional classic is aiming to reach a familial audience.

"There is more of an emphasis this year on family programming and we are really excited about it. It makes building the audience a lot more interesting and fun to do," Dubois said. "It is a program that we did in downtown at Jones Hall — it is a great fit for the Pavilion. This year is the 100-year Seuss anniversary, and there is a lot of buzz about Dr. Seuss. The Symphony thought it would be a great time to feature the program."

Dubois said she agrees with the conductor's statements about the originality and value of the performance.

"The composer pieced together the music, and it is all abstract and very visual," Dubois said. "The symphony will play the sounds that are written — for example there is a part of the book mentioning a train and (the musicians) will mimic the sound of a train. You hear both music and a little bit of theater. The two soloists sing verbatim and act out the book. It is music and visual and theater all in one."

Aggies such as junior journalism major Mari Saugier, who grew up reading Seuss classics, are intrigued by this performance. Saugier, who is a season ticket holder to the Houston Symphony, said she has plans to attend the performance.

"This performance sounds appealing because it is an interesting mix between past and present — like when you were younger you did not listen to the symphony, and now that you are in college you do not

Musicals

what:

The Houston Symphony Orchestra

where:

The Woodlands Pavillion

how much:

\$20 & \$15 for covered seats, \$10 for uncovered, free (with ticket) on lawn

doors open:

April 28 at 6:30 p.m.

Green Eggs and Ham



By Dr. Seuss



PHOTO COURTESY OF • CYNTHIA DUBOIS

read much Dr. Seuss," Saugier said. "But now we can enjoy those old works in new ways."

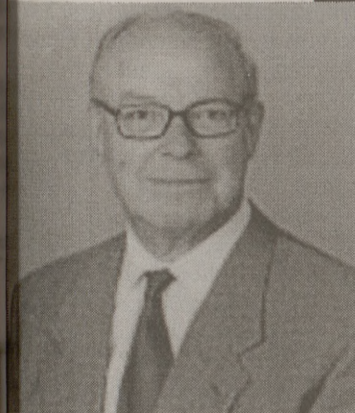
This mixing of old and new is a concoction of form and style, which Mandarano said is the perfect opportunity to disprove most people's assumptions about what they will be getting when they go to the symphony.

"I think (the audience) will be surprised at how much fun it is," Mandarano said. "People imagine something more formal or high culture, and there is certainly that, but there is a certain amount of fun in it — and this is a good intro into more classical music through that fun part of it."

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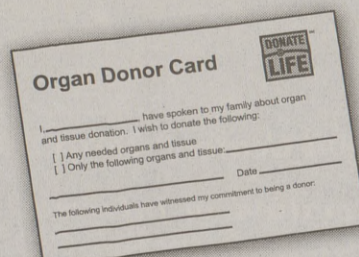
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