

REVIEW

PB Pops season comes to a swinging conclusion

Guests, varied orchestra configurations add diversity to concert.

By **DAVID A. FRYE**

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From the first downbeat of the evening, there was little doubt that this was going to be a great night of music with the Palm Beach Pops, which, on Tuesday, opened its final Kravis concert series of the season celebrating the "king of swing," Benny Goodman.

Maestro Bob Lappin was clearly in his element on Tuesday night. He was having a ball running the Pops through their paces in several different configurations beyond the usual full orchestra, including a small ensemble, a quintet, and a larger, big band lineup that featured the brass and reeds. This varied approach, combined with two exceptional guest artists, the veteran rhythm section of drummer Frank Derrick and bassist Phil Flanigan, along with several outstanding choices on solos, provided a diverse musical setting that made for a very interesting evening.

Lappin and company did their homework for this program: Many of the selections were performed using the actual Goodman-endorsed arrangements, created by some of the best arrangers in modern music. Some of these charts were effectively fleshed out to expand the big band combination to a more lush, Nelson Riddle sound.

Guest clarinetist Ken Peplowski worked with Goodman, as well as artists ranging from Mel Tormé to Madonna, and his technical ability — imagine if Eddie Van Halen had taken up the lico-rice stick instead of guitar — is equaled only by his exuberance as an entertainer. This nimble-fingered veteran proved that if you are comfortable enough with your

abilities, you can afford to have a little fun — and steal the show — along the way. But make no mistake, at solo time he was all business, consistently delivering an A game on familiar tunes such as *Don't Be That Way*, *Let's Dance* and the sentimental chestnut, *Memories of You*, served up as a simple duet with Lappin on piano.

Vocalist Lynn Roberts has toured the world, performing with Goodman, the Dorsey Brothers and Harry James, among others, and she appeared to be very much at home with the Pops. Her instrument was more than strong enough to hold its own with the orchestra, at the same time carrying every nuance of the softer numbers, most notably, the lovely *And The Angels Sing*. This beautiful arrangement, by Tommy Newsome of the old Tonight Show, brought back fond memories of a time when Johnny Carson would sit back and let the rest of America enjoy the NBC Orchestra in a spotlight number that was actually part of the show, instead of just coming in and out of the commercials.

Roberts also coaxed Lappin into a duet of *I've Got A Crush On You*, with Peplowski joining in on clarinet. The mutual respect between the three allowed for a great creative dynamic — with equal parts melody, memories and cheap schtick — that was definitely contagious.

In addition, several Pops members got a chance to really show their stuff, including Gary Mayo-ne on vibes, harpist Kay Kemper, Dolph Castellano on piano and trumpeter John Amaroso. By the time Derrick kicked off the classic *Sing, Sing, Sing*, the lid on the Kravis was clearly ready to blow — to the crowd's delight.

Simply put, Lappin and The Palm Beach Pops struck the right combination of great music, gifted performers and a few laughs, to make for a truly swinging affair to close out the season.



Peplowski

Clarinetist offered his A game on familiar tunes.



Flanigan

Bassist helped provide a diverse musical setting.



Roberts

Vocalist strong enough to hold her own with orchestra.