

Preview**Cleveland POPS to salute Marvin Hamlisch**

by Mike Telin



If you were asked to name one musical by the late great Marvin Hamlisch, chances are you'd say *A Chorus Line*. "I think the whole idea of *A Chorus Line* is amazing in itself," says Cleveland Pops Conductor Carl Topilow, "and it is the work that distinguished him and made him very special. All you have to hear are the opening rhythms and you know exactly what it is. It's so iconic."

On Friday, February 21st beginning at 8:00 pm in Severance Hall, Topilow

will lead The Cleveland POPS Orchestra in a concert dedicated to Hamlisch's music. "Marvin Hamlisch, A Musical Legacy" features many of the composer's most beloved music from *A Chorus Line*, *Ice Castles* and *The Way We Were*. Topilow will be joined by three stars of musical theatre, Donna McKechnie, Jodi Benson and Doug LaBrecque.

Prior to his 2011 performance with the Cleveland Institute of Music Orchestra (pictured above), we asked Hamlisch why he thought *A Chorus Line* resonates with so many. "I think it's because everybody in the audience sees a part of themselves up on that stage," he replied. "Ostensibly it is about dancers, but it is not just about that. It is about anybody who has ever needed a job. It is about anybody who has tried to follow a dream, and I think that is just about everybody."

Topilow points out that *A Chorus Line* did produce some of Hamlisch's most recognizable melodies, "some of those songs like "At the Ballet," "Nothing," "What I Did for Love," "One" — I mean these are just classic songs. I think just to sit down and write a song is unbelievable, but he wrote so many." Although Topilow confesses that his personal favorite Marvin Hamlisch song is not from *A Chorus Line*. "'Through the Eyes of Love' from *Ice Castles* is my favorite, I think it's a beautiful song."

It was Hamlisch's work on *The Sting* that introduced or re-introduced many to Ragtime music. "I've adapted a couple of his arrangements of Scott Joplin Rags for some solo clarinet like *The Entertainer* and *The Easy Winners*. And our pianist will play *Solace*."

The evening also includes some of Hamlish's lesser-known works. "There are a few that are new to me although I did know about two thirds of them. And the songs I didn't know, it's been fun to learn about them."

Adding extra spice to the evening, the Cleveland POPS Chorus will join in the fun during "Sunshine", "Lollipops and Rainbows", "One Song", "Smile" and "What I Did For Love."

And of course no Marvin Hamlish tribute would be complete without a performance of "The Way We Were."

Published on clevelandclassical.com February 19, 2014