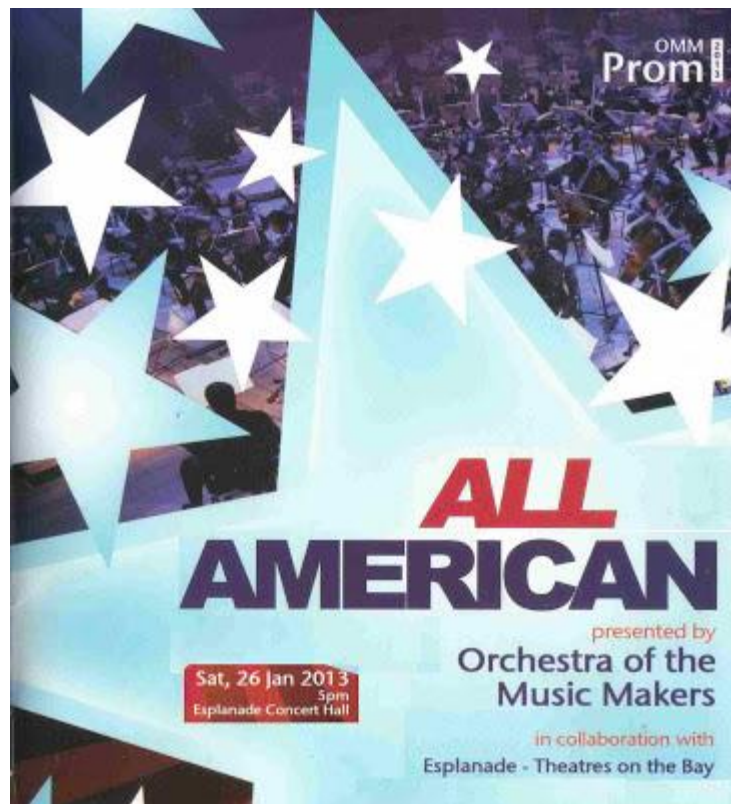


OMM PROM 2013: ALL AMERICAN / Review



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Orchestra of the Music Makers
Esplanade Concert Hall
Saturday (26 January 2013)

This review was published in *The Straits Times* on 28 January 2013 with the title "*Music Makers reach out with pops concert*".

The Orchestra of the Music Makers (OMM) has made its name by performing the larger works of the classical repertoire in subscription concerts. When the young volunteer orchestra chooses to perform shorter pieces and popular classics, it does so in an outreach event called the OMM Prom, its name derived from the BBC Proms. As the Singapore Symphony Orchestra has ceased its Familiar Favourites series, the OMM Prom has become the *de facto* pops concert of the masses.



A very large audience greeted the latest OMM Prom which was an enjoyable salute to American music. The heady spirit of the Boston Pops was immediately relived with the opener, George Gershwin's *Girl Crazy Overture*, with popular melodies like *Embraceable You*, *I Got Rhythm* and *But Not For Me* flowing out with the slickness that these Broadway musicals demand.

Rhapsody in Blue was next, and clarinetist Vincent Goh's slinky opening solo set the tone for a totally commanding performance by young pianist Clarence Lee. Not only does he have the physical heft to project above the orchestra, he also gave the score an improvisatory feel by dictating the pace, slowing at will and then upping the ante when it mattered. The orchestra's razor-sharp reflexes served the music's rhythmic intricacies to a tee, with woodwinds and brass in splendid form.



Conductor Chan Tze Law then touched upon how 20th century American music and popular culture was closely linked, and the next three works were proof of that. Philip Glass's *Heroes Symphony* (inspired by David Bowie) provided seven minutes of repetitive tedium in its fourth movement despite some fine solo trumpet and clarinet

playing. This was offset by film music from John Williams and Alan Menken, *Star Wars* and *Enchanted* respectively, which brought out the loudest applause.



The second concertante work was the slow movement of Samuel Barber's *Violin Concerto*, with Edward Tan the stylish and sensitive soloist. His beautiful tone, rising to impassioned high, provided the evening's most reflective moment. Then it was back to the bluster of brass and percussion in Aaron Copland's *Fanfare for the Common Man*, that familiar standard now subsumed as the final movement of his *Third Symphony*. Busy counterpoint and development on the theme brought the concert to a rousing close.

For its obligatory encore, OMM surprised with that old chestnut, *Old McDonald Had A Farm* in Leroy Anderson's uproarious orchestration, complete with barnyard sound effects from five percussionists. The downside to that programming pique was this: it is now almost impossible to rid that melody from the mind!