

## REVIEW

# Schulman and Pops take wild ride down Broadway

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### SOUTH BEND

Noisy babies, an empty water glass, a malfunctioning microphone and a massive roster of Broadway numbers no man in his right mind ever would attempt to sing in one night: These were the challenges facing tenor Craig Schulman, star of the South Bend Symphony Pops! concert Saturday.

Like the lunatic souls he brought to life on the Morris Performing Arts Center stage -- Don Quixote, the Phantom, the Beast, Dr. Jekyll -- Schulman set for himself a course of diabolical difficulty. And, like the courageous characters he also assumed -- Quixote, the Cowardly Lion, Jean Valjean and more -- Schulman emerged victorious.

*Heroes, Monsters & Madmen* was as much a display of sheer will as of vocal talent, although, as he demonstrated from the first number (from *Quixote*) onward, this tenor has talent in abundance. Schulman's clarion, opera-quality tone made his Lancelot ("C'est Moi" from *Camelot*) delightfully insufferable, his Sky Masterson ("Luck Be A Lady" from *Guys and Dolls*) magnetic, his Coalhouse Walker ("Make Them Hear You" from *Ragtime*) noble.

... His is a meatier talent, showcased stirringly in a number from *The Scarlet Pimpernel* and more humorously in "If I Were King of the Forest" from *The Wizard of Oz*.

And when this remarkable hit parade had passed by, Schulman still had the energy -- and the chops -- for one of the most punishing show soliloquies ever, "The Confrontation" from *Jekyll & Hyde*.

Local audiences recently saw another gifted performer in this dual role, on this same stage, when the Broadway Theatre League played host to the popular show earlier this month, but he had the benefit of lighting and cosmetic effects. If anything, Schulman, using only his imposing figure and mercurial voice to convey the doctor's split personality, was more convincing.

The Pops! orchestra, conducted by Tsung Yeh, might not have displayed any of Schulman's madness -- although the maestro did reveal a playful streak from the podium -- but they did mirror some of his courage. Whether underscoring the soloist or performing on their own, the musicians gave this music a more full and spirited hearing than show audiences are likely to get in this era of attenuated pit orchestras and recorded sound.

For lovers of Broadway, both today and yesterday, this was an unforgettable evening. Good thing Schulman was crazy enough to try it.