



STU ROSNER

Santa Claus makes a special stop to visit with Keith Lockhart on opening night of the Holiday Pops earlier this month at Symphony Hall.

Holiday Pops a dream come true for Canadian

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The Boston Pops may be affectionately known as “America’s Orchestra” but its musicians have held a warm place in the hearts of Canadian audiences for years as well.

Well, at least this Canadian.

As a child growing up in Sydney, Nova Scotia, I looked forward to watching the annual televised Holiday Pops special on our PBS affiliate, one of the few channels we could get back in the '70s.

I was intrigued, maybe because the orchestra’s seasonal performance was being broadcast all the way from Boston, which seemed a very exotic locale to a girl who had never ventured far from her Cape Breton home.

But, if memory serves me

right, my penchant for the Pops had more to do with the music itself.

The spiffily dressed orchestra, situated against a backdrop of Christmas lights and sparkling decorations, created an amazing mix of sounds to my young ears, from gentle harmonies to thundering beats, all in a festive theme. Though not a band kid (tooting a recorder in music class was my only foray into the musical world), I was mesmerized by this distant symphony.

One of the best parts was singing along as the Pops and a lively backup choir performed my favorite Christmas carols. When jolly ol’ St. Nick arrived for a visit near the end of the show, my holiday spirit skyrocketed into high gear.

Fast forward 35 years or so. As I was recently planning a

combined business-pleasure trip to Boston for mid-December, I wondered if I could realize my childhood dream and see the Holiday Pops in person. Since my oldest daughter would be accompanying me on the junket from our home in New Brunswick, wouldn’t it be amazing if I could introduce her to the spectacle that had captivated me for so many years?

A phone call later and the dream was closer to coming true. We had tickets to a show!

Fast forward again, this time to Dec. 18.

Giddy with anticipation, I headed inside Symphony Hall with my daughter and found our seats at a table on the main floor of the historic building. A glance around the room and to the balconies above left this happy spectator with the sense that most of the 2,300-plus seats

available for the concert had been filled.

Before I could say another excited word to my daughter, the lights went down and the show began.

A lump of pure happiness caught in my throat as the Holiday Pops, joined by the Tanglewood Festival Chorus, opened with a powerful rendition of “Hark! The Herald Angels Sing.” My daughter and I sported ear-to-ear grins as we enjoyed some of our favorite songs of the season, including the “Hallelujah” chorus and “Waltz of the Flowers” from “The Nutcracker.”

Our smiles grew even bigger when the Pops, conducted by a very lively Keith Lockhart, broke into some neat mash-ups of holiday hits that resulted in songs like “Frosty All the Way.” The orchestra’s unique spin on “The Twelve Days of Christmas” was

definitely our favorite— a combination of the original tune and bits of songs such as Queen’s “Bohemian Rhapsody.” Hilarious!

Later, the traditional carol sing-along had our heads swaying and toes tapping. My daughter and I laughed with folks at neighboring tables as we all belted out the lyrics projected on a screen above the stage. An appearance by Santa was icing on my Christmas cake.

About 10 years ago, I had a chance to take in the holiday tree lighting at New York’s Rockefeller Center. No offense to my New York friends, but the Holiday Pops gets my vote for seasonal spirit booster.

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