

Frankenstein' film with Springfield Symphony Orchestra accompaniment set for Saturday



By [Clifton Noble Jr. | Special to The Republican](#)

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Boris Karloff as the monster in the 1931 horror classic "Frankenstein", *Universal*

[Springfield Symphony Orchestra](#) patrons will have a chance to try out their Halloween costumes a few days early at the first SSO Pops event of the 70th Anniversary Season, "Frankenstein."

Saturday night's concert features the screening of the 1931 Boris Karloff film with a new musical score composed by Michael Shapiro and played live by members of the SSO with Shapiro conducting.

Shapiro, conductor of the Chappaqua (NY) Orchestra, traced the genesis of his "Frankenstein" score in a recent interview.

"When the Film Society of Lincoln Center opened an adjunct theater in Westchester," Shapiro recalled, "I spoke to executive director Steve Apkon about doing a joint project during their opening season with my orchestra and the theater. During our discussion I

offered to write a film score for 'Frankenstein' which would be played simultaneously with the 1931 film by live musicians," he said.

The original picture has spoken dialog, qualifying it as a "talkie," but no musical score, Shapiro explained. The technology did not exist in 1931 to have a separate music track on the film, he said, adding that the first through-composed film score was (Max Steiner's) "King Kong" in 1933.

"Although it is a 'talkie,' Frankenstein has no music except for scenes that were filmed with live musicians," Shapiro said.

"Writing for a 'talkie' with a simultaneous live score is in many ways a new art form," he continued, "so it's tremendously adaptable and exciting to do." He also noted that live orchestral performance with film attracts a new audience to the symphony to experience this hybrid medium.

"I love writing music that has a dramatic impulse," Shapiro said. "I thought of this Frankenstein score as almost a one-act opera...but instead of writing music to move singers across a stage, I thought of moving actors through their dramatic action, commenting on what is being portrayed emotionally by (director) James Whale in his masterpiece."

"I try to write music in every form that gets under the listener's skin," Shapiro said.

Asked whose film-scoring work he admires, Shapiro named Max Steiner ("Gone With the Wind"), Wolfgang Korngold ("The Adventures of Robin Hood"), Alfred Newman and his sons, one of whom, Michael, conducted the Boston Symphony in a live-music screening of Bernstein/Robbins' "West Side Story" at Tanglewood this summer, John Williams ("Star Wars"), and Elliot Goldenthal ("Interview with a Vampire").

Trained in conducting by Carl Bamberger at the Mannes School and Harold Farberman at Bard College, Shapiro also studied solfege and score reading at the Juilliard School with Renee Longy. He studied composition with Elie Siegmeister, Vincent Persichetti, and Sir Malcolm Arnold, and continues to employ his piano skills, honed as a solo artist and opera coach, as a vocal accompanist and chamber musician.

“Frankenstein” will enjoy several performances this season including a Halloween Eve concert in Michigan with SSO Maestro Kevin Rhodes’ “other orchestra,” the Traverse Symphony.

Another Shapiro composition, the “Archangel” Concerto for Piano and Orchestra will also be presented by Rhodes in Michigan next year, after its New York premiere with pianist Jose Ramos Santana at the keyboard.

Despite all these forthcoming collaborations, Shapiro has yet to encounter Rhodes in person.

“I look forward to meeting Kevin ‘live,’” he said. “We actually met through Facebook!”

Free popcorn will be available at the concert, and patrons are invited to dress up in their Halloween finery. There will be a costume contest, and four finalists will be selected before the concert. Their photos will be posted to the SSO Facebook page so people may vote for a grand prize winner. There is no intermission for this performance.

Springfield Symphony Orchestra invites patrons 'Home for the Follidays'

IF YOU GO

Event: Springfield Symphony Pops presents “Frankenstein”

When: Saturday, 7:30 p.m.

Where: Symphony Hall, Springfield

Cost: \$22 to \$65

For more info: Call (413) 733-2291 or online at www.springfieldsymphony.org