

## **W.Va. Symphony Orchestra has fun with the music of Queen**

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*by David Williams*

CHARLESTON, W.Va. -- Michael Shotton and the Jeans 'n Classics Band's concert of the music of Queen with the West Virginia Symphony made an amiable evening Friday night at the Clay Center.

The orchestra's forays into rock music have sometime yielded very opaque sounds, with the electric guitars and amplified drums of the band burying the orchestra's contributions.

That was not the case with this concert, where even the busiest music had the orchestra in apt balance with the band.

Shotton opened with Roger Taylor's "One Vision" and a rollicking "Kind of Magic," which featured some nice flourishes from the trumpets and horns.

"Show Must Go On" had tight playing from the band, the orchestra's strings and trumpet.

Shotton kept drawing the audience in. On "Radio Ga Ga" he had it clap two times on every fourth beat to add to the backbeat. On John Deacon's "Another One Bites the Dust" the audience sang the chorus.

Freddie Mercury's "Love of My Life" had Shotton in his high range, where he was mostly comfortable, with the orchestra's woodwinds and strings in finely detailed support.

His bluesy singing on Deacon's "I Want to Break Free" was aided by principal trumpeter David Porter's solo.

"Under Pressure," with its iconic bass line, ended the first half.

The second half opened with Brian May's "We Will Rock You," with the audience doing the expected heavy lifting on the chorus and stomping accompaniment. It sounded like a sound problem cut off the beginning of Adam Martin's otherwise fiery guitar solo.

Shotton waxed lyrical in Mercury's "We Are the Champions," caressing the lyrics and finding a gentler side of triumph.

May's "Flash," from the campy "Flash Gordon" film, featured the West Virginia State University Chorus, Dirk Johnson, conductor, and Shotton singing from a balcony above the stage.

That segued to "You Take My Breath Away" with the WVSU singers and pianist Duncan Grant supporting Shotton's soaring vocal.

A fine arrangement of May's "Who Wants to Live Forever," from "Highlander," showed the orchestra in fine form.

Conductor Grant Cooper demonstrated a single pitch of vocal prowess at the start of "Somebody to Love" before the chorus took over and Shotton joined in.

The concert closed with a great arrangement of "Bohemian Rhapsody," which the orchestra, chorus and band played zestfully. The audience sang the first verse solidly.

Shotton was launching into "Fat-Bottomed Girls" as an encore as I was leaving to make deadline.

The concert repeats tonight at the Clay Center at 8 p.m. Brush up on your lyrics if you plan to attend.