

Review of the ISO with Marvin Hamlisch

by Rita Kohn, *Nuvo*, Indy's Alternative Voice
January 16, 2008

Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra: An Evening with Marvin Hamlisch

5 stars

Northwest Airlines Pops Series; Hilbert Circle Theatre; Jan. 11-13

On a scale of one to five, conductor-composer-arranger-pianist Marvin Hamlisch, together with vocalist Mark McVey and the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra players, earn 10.

Hamlisch, who broke Broadway musical theater ground with "Chorus Line" and went on to win every major music award possible, is one of the wittiest, down-to-earth, delightful individuals on any side of the stage. He arrives with his arrangements, each of which cuts to the emotional core of a composition, and showcases sections and individual players in every piece from "the happy-go-lucky" music of Irving Berlin to the heart-touching encore "Over the Rainbow," which symbolizes his belief that "music can make a difference ... [and] has the potential to bring people together."

He brought the audience into the music with renditions of "Happy Birthday" as the "greats" might have played it, an instant song on the Colts/San Diego game and patter inspired by the moment. His announcement of sponsors demonstrated that ticket sales cover only one-third of the keyboard; without sponsors we in the seats wouldn't hear the remaining two-thirds of the notes — a paltry possibility indeed.

Special bravos for McVey's renditions of "My Son Bill" from "Carousel" and "Music of the Night" from "Phantom of the Opera."

Michael Runyan charmed with his harmonica virtuosity and Steve Hannah was awesome as the drummer swinging with the symphony.