Sonic 30th Anniversary Symphony

Due to Covid precautions I chose the virtual concert option for my first concert review. One such virtual concert that I was already quite interested in was the Sonic 30th anniversary Symphony, where the video game company, SEGA, in celebration of the 30th anniversary of the game franchise *Sonic the Hedgehog* put together an orchestra to play the most iconic music from the series. It was a virtual only concert, meaning it did not have a live audience at the performance.

The set went in a chronological order of released games, starting with a medley of the music from the first game. They continued to play a medley of each game released through to the latest. The entire concert finished with some songs by the band *Crush Forty*, who produced much of the music for later games. Performing the songs in chronological order strongly invoked nostalgia, as it starts by taking the listener to songs from thirty years ago, and slowly walks them through the years to more recent pieces. The concert itself changed throughout, much as the music from the series itself has. It started with happy orchestral music, and slowly added more electronic music, drums, and electric guitars to the orchestra to culminate in a very high energy climax.

There is also much to say about the form of the concert as well as that of each of the separate ‘medley’ pieces that made up the whole of the concert. They almost all started with the main theme of the corresponding game, moved on to slower, more emotional pieces, then slowly built to a grand climax, often repeating a modified version of the main theme, to finish. This pattern could be seen in the smaller pieces as well as in the arrangement of the entire concert. It was very exciting being able to recognize these forms somewhat after learning about it in class, as the general form of the concert seemed to have an “A B A’“ kind of form that used repetition and contrast to really keep the audience captivated for nearly two hours of music.

The reason I was initially interested in this concert is that from a young age I have always enjoyed these video games, not in small part due to the soundtrack of each one. While I can always appreciate some great music, this one had a lot of that nostalgia associated with it that most concerts I could view just would not. Listening to these beautiful arrangements of music I associate with pleasant childhood memories was truly a wonderful experience. It brought up memories that I had completely forgotten about. It was also a pleasant surprise to hear a lot of the more recent music in much of its original format, but with the addition of the orchestra to bring new depths to the pieces. Overall, the concert was a very exciting and nostalgic experience for me.

In many ways this was not what one would typically think of when they hear the word “concert.” However, it was very special in many aspects, as it effectively took the listener along the history of the subject, including all the emotional ups and downs involved. It did not have a live audience and was from the start created as a virtual experience. This allowed them to incorporate many different styles of music without the interruption that one would normally experience as they switch between artists and styles of music, making many of the transitions quite seamless. It initially started with strictly orchestral music and added from there. By the end it had many songs that were more in the rock genre, but they never stopped incorporating the orchestra throughout. This unique blend of styles and genres created an experience much unlike any other that I have had.