

Anniversary concert marks milestone for Pops

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Most students struggle to find that one thing that defines their college career.

For Christopher Lees, a graduate student in the School of Music's Department of Conducting, that passion is the Michigan Pops Orchestra, the University's only student-run and directed orchestra.

"I love Pops without any reservation or hesitation," Lees said. His sheer love for Pops explains why his final performance as the orchestra's conductor at "Best of Pops," on Sunday at 7 p.m. at the Michigan Theater, will be so bittersweet.

But Lees's personal feelings of nostalgia neatly coincide with the concert itself. The show honors the Pops's 10th anniversary, and the concert, which mixes reminiscence of the past with triumphant festivity, guarantees the right tone for Lees's

final performance.

Themes of past, present and future permeate the show. Consider Steve Bizub, the MPO's first conductor, who will fly in from Tokyo to repeat his role conducting Aaron Copland's "Variations on a Shaker Melody," the same piece of music he conducted at Pops's debut concert in 1996. John Zastoupil, conductor for next year, will make his MPO conducting debut, signaling a preview of things to come.

But the show's sentimentalism is nicely balanced by its sense of humor. Costumes, lighting effects and media presentations generally characterize a Pops concert, and the "Best of Pops" will be no exception. Video clips of former conductors wishing Pops a happy birthday will be sporadically interjected throughout the show — a fitting representation of the balance the concert strikes between sentimentality and fun.

And then, of course, there's the main attraction: the music. "Best of Pops" will feature highlights from the concerts of the last decade, including classical pieces as well as more mainstream fare such as the scores from "Harry Potter," "Star Wars" and Broadway favorite "Rent."

But don't let the pop-culture appeal



Courtesy of Michael Chang and Kaiann Fu

The Michigan Pops Orchestra will perform its 10th anniversary concert Sunday.

of the music disguise the mastery required to perform it. Previous concerts indicate that Sunday's musicians will play at a level sure to impress any classical aficionado, and the range of the music assures universal audience enjoyment despite varying degrees of musical appreciation.

Lees, though perhaps biased, more simply states that this is "the best music ever. Period."

Adding to the musical merriment is a 45-person chorus composed of stu-

dents with concentrations in musical theater, opera and choral music, as well as LSA students who dabble in à capella. A chorus has only accompanied Pops twice in the past seven years.

Undeniable talent aside, the notion of University students from all backgrounds coming together to share their mutual passion for music is enough to make even the cynics among us stop and appreciate the dedication involved.

No wonder Lees is such a fan.