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 April 4 2016 02:34 PM

# Multiple meowing cats (http://lansingcitypulse.com/art 234-1-Arts-and-Culture.html)

Lansing Symphony joins multimedia Disney extravaganza to kick off film festival

BY LAWRENCE COSENTINO ([HTTP://LANSINGCITYPULSE.COM/BV-AUTHOR-88-1.HTML](http://LANSINGCITYPULSE.COM/BV-AUTHOR-88-1.HTML))

MONDAY, April 4 – Reeceerrr, glurrp, meow, gling! Timothy Muffitt, Lansing Symphony Orchestra's conductor and music director, will wrangle some wild hardware at Wednesday night's cartoon kickoff of the Capital City Film Festival.

"There will be actual water involved here, a hose splashing into a tub," he said. "The owl hoot turned into a fire engine is pretty good. There's cracking fire, multiple meowing cats, a chorus of bullfrogs."

He paused to ponder for a few seconds.

"It will be interesting to see how we solve that problem," he added.

The brilliant music of Carl Stalling and other unsung cartoon composers of the 1930s and '40s, played live along with the cartoons, is sucking Muffitt into a strange and wonderful world. The second annual collaboration between the symphony and the Capital City Film Festival will be ratcheted up a few notches this year. Muffitt wasn't involved in last year's mashup of classical warhorses and silent film clips, which came off as hit and miss but still a great fun.

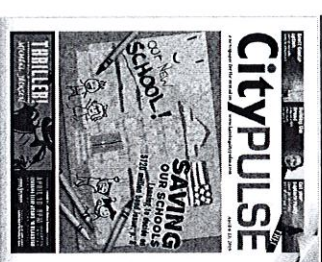
This year, Muffitt will direct a theater-size, saxophone-heavy orchestra of about 40 players, fusing sound and image the way Disney intended.

"We have a huge bag of toys," Muffitt said. "We have an extraordinary lineup of percussionists and they're coming at it with everything they've got."

The program features several complete Walt Disney "Silly Symphonies" shorts, with introductions by Disney himself. On top of the dings, bumps, gurgles and whoops (Muffitt called it "almost like Foley work"), the music itself is flyspeck dense and challenging to play.

"There were no holds barred with these composers," Muffitt said. "They threw in whatever they wanted. Studio musicians in Hollywood, in that period, could do anything you put in front of them, on sight."

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Stalling, who later became famous as the twisted Tchaikovsky who wrote the music for dozens of Bugs Bunny/Warner Brothers shorts, first honed his craft with Disney. "Skeleton Dance" is an early showcase for Stalling's intricate madness, along with the work of several other composers from a golden era.

"They're masters of everything," Muffitt said. "It goes from Debussy to Fats Waller on a dime. There's Rossini, Wagner – any music that has color and character and drama, but with sudden gearshifts into something completely different."

When the idea was first pitched to him, Muffitt thought it would be a "nice community collaboration," not realizing the mad vortex that awaited him. Disney cartoons like "The Three Little Pigs" and "Flowers and Trees," about five to nine minutes long, were more than entertaining shorts. They were small experiments that led to ground-breaking animated features like "Snow White" and "Fantasia."

"They were an exercise, what we call an etude in the music world," Muffitt said. "How can we sync motion, sound and music into something really great? The relationship between the music and the action on screen is fascinating. As I get into the thick of it, I'm realizing the depth of genius that went into this."

#### A Silly Symphony Celebration

(Part of the Capital City Film Festival)

Lansing Symphony Orchestra with Timothy Muffitt, conductor  
7 p.m. Wednesday, April 6

Lansing Center

333 E Michigan Ave., Lansing

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