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## Enjoyable 'Transylvanian Halloween' at Powell Symphony Hall

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"Howl at Powell," the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra's legendary Halloween concerts, died in 2001. But at Friday night's "Classical Detours," "Transylvanian Halloween," the tradition walked again -- with the addition of free beer. (What could be more appropriate on All Hallows' Eve than spirits?)

The audience was divided between those in costume, those in civvies, and those of whom one could not be quite sure.

But most of the orchestra dressed for the occasion. These creatures of the night – or, at least, of the early evening – came as sultry vampires and fairies, presidential candidates, doctors, salt and pepper shakers, nerds, what appeared to be a freelance Muppet and a chef.

There was even an entire zombie section (the violas, of course), with special choreography during Mussorgsky's "A Night on Bald Mountain."

Best was violinist Rebecca Boyer Hall's version of music director David Robertson, complete with twins. Most remarkable was concertmaster David Halen, playing the entire concert – including his solo in Saint-Saens' "Danse macabre" – in a devil mask that completely covered his head.

Conductor Nicholas McGegan came in vampire drag: standard white tie with makeup and a cape. His sanguine podium humor had some bite to it, adding to the evening's enjoyment.

In musical terms, most of the selections – from standards like Grieg's "In the Hall of the Mountain King" to less common fare like Bartok's "Dances of Transylvania" – were well played, particularly given the encumbrances of

costuming. There did seem to be a few musical poltergeists on the loose, and sporadic unearthly sounds emanated from the brass.

But the orchestra played the hell out of "Dream of the Witches' Sabbath" from Berlioz's "Symphonie fantastique," making the encore, "The Monster Mash" seem fun but anticlimactic.

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