

Budding artists join renowned tenor for Tulip Festival concert

Casey Adams Daily Herald | May 6, 2015

Thanksgiving Point hosts the annual Tulip Festival through Saturday, but eager spring-ers attending Friday can attend a concert with American Heritage Lyceum Philharmonic featuring "popera" talent Nathan Pacheco at no additional cost. The classical crossover performance showcases a rising genre of popular music fusing Broadway, opera and classical works into a presentation backed by the youth philharmonic ensemble and headlining the Utah-trained operatist tenor.

"We're big fans of what he's doing. It's different than most pop," said the ensemble director, Kayson Brown, of Pacheco's rising acclaim. "It's really got a classical bend to it, and that made him perfect for this concert because we're going to be presenting it with a full symphony."

Admission to the concert is included in ticket prices for the festival and goers will experience more than music in a bending and blending of genres.

Brown said he teaches the masterworks of the orchestral repertory like Sibelius' "Symphony No. 2," but also hopes to inspire students with other forms of music.

"Classical music isn't the only thing you can play on a violin or a trumpet," Brown said, who also conducts the philharmonic.

"Bring Him Home" from the "Les Misérables" production along with a rendition of "I Need Thee Every Hour" will be featured among other arrangements. In one piece arranged by The Piano Guys, the high school-aged musicians take on "Beethoven's Five Secrets," which combines the German composer's music with the rock 'n' roll song "Secrets" by OneRepublic.





Pacheco is featured in eight numbers including a presentation of "Nessun Dorma," an aria that began etching its way into pop culture when Luciano Pavarotti performed it in the 1990s.

"If you don't know opera, you still know 'Nessun Dorma,' because it's this famous big love aria by Puccini," Brown said.

American Heritage School in American Fork maintains five orchestras in its music program with the philharmonic reserved for more advanced students from throughout Utah. Students from more than 75 Utah schools participate in the various orchestras, Brown said, and introduce student artists to professional performance opportunities.

Brown said when all these music genres are combined, it gives audiences and aspiring musicians something that will speak individually to them.

"Not all of them will fall in love with Bach, Beethoven and Brahms. Many of them do. I'd love it if all of them fell in love with the masters of classical music," Brown said of his students. "But if you combine those masters with Broadway music, with inspirational music, with patriotic music -- there's almost no teenager we can't reach."

Pacheco reunites with the youth musical group after performing with them at a charity event held in October. He graduated from Brigham Young University in 2005 in vocal performance and has since toured with international composer Yanni.

After headlining a number of PBS specials, the now Nashville resident has released his second album, "Nathan Pacheco II," which was recorded on Music City Row and in Los Angeles.

"My goal in my performances is always to make the songs accessible to the audience," Pacheco said during a Monday telephone interview from Los Angeles. "Sometimes opera songs are seen as 'out there' and it's hard for people to connect with them, especially if they're in a foreign language."

The pop-opera tenor gives brief introductions to each song he performs so audiences can connect with the story and emotion of each composition.

"I try to incorporate different parts of the strengths of classical, but then also to tone my voice down a bit to sing more pop, every now and then it has the accessibility of pop music as well," he said. "And that's one of the reasons I love this style of music, this classical crossover style and Andrea Bocelli and Josh Groban have done, because I feel like it's more accessible and I feel like (listeners) identify more with it."

The 35-year-old will perform songs from his two albums and others he has not recorded. During the 100-tour date campaign with Yanni, Pacheco was mentored in how to structure a show so it flows well to up the entertainment factor for audiences.

He said there's an enormous appreciation of this style of music when it's done correctly and when it's "brought down to Earth" for the audience member.

Pacheco attended BYU at the same time as Brown, and the two performers even appeared together in a university production of "La Boheme" in 2005.

Much of Brown's vision as an educator centers on "helping students understand that their talent isn't limited to the practice room in high school orchestras. ... All of a sudden when you see what your violin can do for you, that it can put you on stage with Nathan Pacheco in front of 4,000 people or performing with The Piano Guys in front of 15,000 people at a sold-out EnergySolutions Arena concert," it changes how students approach their respective instruments.

"Just come to the Tulip Festival and stay for the concert," Brown said.