

SPECTACULAR MUSICAL SEASON AHEAD

THE VILLAGES PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA BRINGS VARIETY TO ITS SERIES AT THE SHARON

BY KATHRYN DEEN

Diversify your musical tastes. Let your soul be touched by beautiful sounds. Delight in the bold, rich and inarguably passionate professional repertoire of The Villages Philharmonic Orchestra.

Sept. 5 starts the 60-person orchestra's sensational 2016-17 season of music with a pops concert at the Sharon L. Morse Performing Arts Center. Its musicians might want to unpack their bags, because they'll be moving in for awhile. All eight concerts in the orchestra's series will come to life at The Sharon.

"You have no idea how excited the musicians are to be there," said the orchestra's founder and conductor, Pasquale Valerio. "It's a beautiful theater."

The Sharon, a state-of-the-art theater of 32,000 square feet and 1,000 seats, opened a little more than a year ago in Spanish Springs Town Square. Renovations to the former Church on the Square vastly expanded the facility to accommodate larger-scale productions from around the world.

Valerio said performing there is a musical group's dream for its fine acoustics, spacious stage and all-around gorgeous facilities.

The feeling is mutual. The Sharon couldn't be more thrilled to host the orchestra.

"It's a wonderful opportunity for us to host an established philharmonic that happens to be rooted right in the backyard of The Villages," said Elizabeth Constant, The Sharon's booking coordinator.

"We will still continue to host international orchestras annually to cater to all classical tastes for music lovers,



Pasquale Valerio

and are very excited to expand our orchestral offerings with The Villages Philharmonic's season of 13 performances."

The orchestra's lineup includes classical, opera and special American musical selections.

"We have a little bit of everything," Valerio said. "We try to reach not only classical, but inspire your pops, so if the audience are not classical lovers, they can grow with the orchestra."

Valerio co-founded the group at Church on the Square with Oscar Feliu, a popular Villages musical icon who passed away last year.

"The project started in a very humble way and continues to serve the community," Valerio said.

Feliu convinced Valerio and his family to move to Florida from Naples, Italy, to enrich the community's musical offerings. Together, Feliu and Valerio organized the Philharmonic and held its first show in 2004.

Soon after, they added the Philharmonic Chorale — comprised of about 50 Villages residents — to expand the orchestra's capabilities and "to complete our repertoire," Valerio said.

Valerio deeply misses Feliu, but he feels Feliu's breath on his shoulder constantly encouraging him, he said. Valerio will dedicate the upcoming season's first show to Feliu, playing many of his favorite songs, including "Delilah," "Cabaret" and "You Raise Me Up."

"The first concert of the season will be extra special," Valerio said. "He loved pops music. Without Oscar Feliu, there would be no Villages Philharmonic."

The orcl Member member, vi "I see th the beautif Musiciar

and are very excited to expand our orchestral around the offerings with The Villages Philharmonic's Costa Rica, season of 13 performances."

The orchestra's lineup includes pops, for me," Val classical, opera and special Italian and Not ever: American musical selections.

"We have a little bit of everything," Valerio said. "We try to reach not only classical, but inspire your pops, so if the audience are not classical lovers, their career.

He's pro the Square with Oscar Feliu, a popular Villages musical Orchestra ar Lindemann

"The project started in a very humble way and For Valer continues to serve the community," Valerio said. to the comm

Feliu convinced Valerio and his family to move to Valerio's Florida from Naples, Italy, to enrich the community's "When I musical offerings. Together, Feliu and Valerio organized making mu He said h

Soon after, they added the Philharmonic Chorale — hearts. "We have comprised of about 50 Villages residents — to expand the orchestra's capabilities and "to complete our repertoire," family atmo: Valerio al

Valerio deeply misses Feliu, but he feels Feliu's breath Orchestra a on his shoulder constantly encouraging him, he said. Florida Lake: Valerio will dedicate the upcoming season's first show He has re to Feliu, playing many of his favorite songs, including conductor at "Delilah," "Cabaret" and "You Raise Me Up." Teatro Regic

"The first concert of the season will be extra special," Music Festiva Valerio said. "He loved pops music. Without Oscar Feliu, there would be no Villages Philharmonic."



SUPPORT The Friends of each month at residents who philharmonic ir rea. Plus, save n Feb. 26 at Sa



AUGUST 2016

The orchestra offers an impressive array of talent. Members' ages range from teens to 80s. The youngest member, violinist David Brill, 18, joins them on college breaks. "I see these children grow up with us," Valerio said. "That is the beautiful part."

Musicians gravitate to the orchestra from The Villages and around the world. Valerio rattled off Venezuela, Argentina, Costa Rica, Romania, Italy and France, to name a few.

"Visitors come to enjoy the lifestyle in The Villages and play for me," Valerio said.

Not everyone speaks the same language, but it's no problem.

"The beauty of the music is ... we speak music," Valerio said.

Valerio continues to recruit international talent and hopes to inspire younger generations to engage in professional music for their careers.

He's proud to see players like Giuseppe Mentuccia blossom. Mentuccia started with Valerio in The Villages Philharmonic Orchestra and now is a CV Starr Doctoral Fellow at Juilliard and a Lindemann Young Artist at the Metropolitan Opera of New York.

For Valerio, it's all about coaching musicians and giving back to the community.

Valerio's passion for conducting the orchestra is obvious.

"When I conduct, it's not just a gig," Valerio said. "It's making music."

He said he feels his baton connect with his students' hearts.

"We have a great community, a very warm and family atmosphere," Valerio said.

Valerio also founded the Lake Sumter Chamber Orchestra and co-founded and conducted the Florida Lakes Symphony from 2005 to 2006.

He has regularly been invited as a guest conductor at the Orchestra Filarmonica '900, Teatro Regio and the Viotti International Music Festival. ■



THE VILLAGES PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA: 2016-17 SEASON

The orchestra has a spectacular lineup for its upcoming season at the Sharon L. Morse Performing Arts Center, 1051 Main St., in Spanish Springs.

7 P.M. SEPT. 5 — POPS CONCERT

Dedicated to and featuring favorite songs of The Villages' late musical sensation and the orchestra's co-founder, Oscar Feliu.

7 P.M. OCT. 10 — ITALIAN-AMERICAN CELEBRATION:

A mix of opera and Italian music featuring the Philharmonic's American soprano Janette Zilioli and Metropolitan Opera extraordinaire Gino Quilico.

7 P.M. NOV. 22 — MESSIAH:

Sing along with the chorale to open the holiday season.

2 & 7 P.M. DEC. 19 — CHRISTMAS CONCERT

Similar to concerts past, this one will feature the chorale with holiday music from around the world, but a new selection of songs.

7 P.M. JAN. 10-11 — CLASSICAL CONCERT

A celebration of Beethoven's music, including Beethoven's Symphony No. 7; plus, a violin concerto with Italian native and concert master Fabrizio Falasca.

2 & 7 P.M. FEB. 14 — AMERICAN MUSIC

Popular American composers, including catchy Broadway selections.

7 P.M. MARCH 14 & 15 — CLASSICAL CONCERT:

A variety of classical selections with guest artists from German classical record label Deutsche Grammophon, including Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 3 with the Philharmonic's Francesca Leonardi on piano.

7 P.M. APRIL 4 & 5 — OPERA CELEBRATION

Luciano Pavarotti-style opera selections will make for a delightful musical evening.

TICKETS: Buy tickets for the full eight-concert series (\$120-256), the five-concert winter series (December through April, \$85-175) or individual concerts (\$21-39). Visit The Villages Box Office or call 750-5411. Series tickets only can be bought over the phone or at The Villages Box Office. Individual tickets also can be purchased online.

SUPPORT THE PHILHARMONIC

The Friends of the Philharmonic meets at 6 p.m. the third Tuesday of each month at Odell Recreation Center. The group is open to all Villages residents who are dedicated to promoting and supporting The Villages Philharmonic in its mission of bringing classical, symphonic music to the area. Plus, save the date for the fundraising gala "An Affair to Remember" on Feb. 26 at Savannah Center. Call Maggie Dick at 215-233-3316.