

arts & culture

Guest Musicians Impress at VPO Classical Concert

The Villages Philharmonic Orchestra's program offered an evening of Beethoven and Mercadante.

By TAYLOR STRICKLAND
Daily Sun Senior Writer

Prior to the March 18 installment in the Village Philharmonic Orchestra's Classical Concert Series, Maestro Pasquale Valerio said he hoped patrons would fill the theater just as they had for previous performances.

They did just that. The audience came to The Sharon L. Morse Performing Arts Center anticipating the chance to witness the return of acclaimed Antonio Pompa-Baldi as he performed Ludwig van Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 3 in C minor, Op. 37.

The concert was the VPO's first Villages event since its 20th Anniversary Fundraiser Gala last month, which supports the orchestra's ongoing efforts to nourish the hearts, minds and souls of Central Florida's performing arts patrons.

"On Feb. 27, we returned for this magnificent gala event to our original location, Church on the Square, which today is the foyer of The Sharon L. Morse Performing Arts Center," Valerio wrote in his

message to the audience. "The warmth, the joy of participating in this event from all of you and all of us was extraordinary and your support touched the hearts of each of us."

The major piece for the March 18 concert was Beethoven's Symphony No. 6 in F major, Op. 68, which the VPO performed during the second half of the evening. Before the concert, Valerio shared his insights on the piece and later included another version in the playbill commentaries.

"The sixth symphony is one of the most beautiful symphonies that the composer wrote," Valerio said. "It is unlike everything he wrote before or would compose after — in the sixth symphony, we find the only moment in which the composer writes music that is descriptive."

Beethoven's symphony, also known as the Pastoral Symphony, is also unique in that it contains five movements instead of the standard four. It's best recognized from the Disney movie "Fantasia."

Audiences also were treated to The Sharon debut of guest flutists Charina Quintana and Giovanni Mugnuolo and their interpretation of Saverio Mercadante's Concerto in D Major for Flute and Orchestra.

Mercadante's concerto was the first piece of the



Antonio Pompa-Baldi plays the piano with The Villages Philharmonic Orchestra during a concert in 2019 at the Sharon L. Morse Performing Arts Center. He was back March 18 for the VPO's Classical Concert Series.



Pompa-Baldi performed Ludwig van Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 3 in C minor, Op. 37 at the March 18 concert.

night, which Quintana and Mugnuolo played alongside the orchestra.

Both flutists are considered

ambassadors of his music and credentialed professionals within the world of classical music.

Quintana, a designated Yamaha Artist and flute professor at the Conservatorio Superior de Música de Canarias in Las Palmas, Spain, received recognition in 2021 for her interpretation of Mercadante's unpublished music. That same year, Mugnuolo was the artistic director of the Mercadante Fest held in the composer's hometown of Altamura, Italy.

"The flutists were just wonderful," said Bill Penix, a Village of Bridgeport at Mission Hills resident and a member of the Opera Club of The Villages. "And the piece is rarely played in orchestra mode."

Penix was accompanied by his partner and fellow opera club member, Baerbel Engel, of the Village Rio Grande. The pair are at nearly every VPO concert and are often most vocal in their appreciation for the orchestra's performances.

In addition to praising the program selections, Penix

said he's pleased by the large footnotes each piece was given, pointing to it as another example of Valerio's efforts to educate audiences on the salience of the presented pieces.

"We here in The Villages get to be exposed to so many different artists and the nuances of the art," Penix said. "Maestro (Valerio) challenges us with some of his selections ... and there is a very strong emphasis on teaching the audience music."

The VPO's next classical concert, at 7 p.m. April 21 at The Sharon, will feature Beethoven's Violin Concerto in D major, Op. 61 and Johannes Brahms' Symphony No. 3 in F major, Op. 90.

Tickets start at \$35. Find more information at the villagesentertainment.com.

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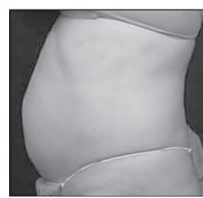
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