

arts & culture



Michael Fortuna | Daily Sun

Nancy Simmons, of the Village Santo Domingo, conducts Bach with a Beat during rehearsal. The chorus presents its spring concert on Friday at Hope Lutheran Church.

Bach With A Beat Lives Up to Name In Upcoming Concert

The resident chorus will present “Rhythm of Life” at 6 p.m. Friday at Hope Lutheran Church.

By MICHAEL FORTUNA
Daily Sun Staff Writer

Bach with a Beat keeps the rhythms going throughout the year thanks to a multitude of melodies.

The 40-member chorus, under the direction of Nancy Simmons, will celebrate the “Rhythm of Life” during its spring concert at 6 p.m. Friday at Hope Lutheran Church. Tickets are \$20 and are available online at bachwithabeat.com or at the door.

The first song of the concert is “Rhythm of Life” from the musical “Sweet Charity,” which will lead into a variety of musical styles, including jazz, pop, classical, folk, Broadway and rock ‘n’ roll. Piano, bass and drums will accompany the chorus.

In the Bach department, a flutist and soprano will duel in a piece Simmons is keeping secret as a surprise.

“I hope they enjoy themselves,” said Simmons, of the Village Santo Domingo.

Simmons and Melanie Bales co-direct the group, with Bales handling the Christmas concert and Simmons taking on spring.

“It’s a really great group of people,” Simmons said. “They work hard. I enjoy getting to know them.”

Simmons was in a community choir called Vocal Fusion for about six or seven years while living in Colorado, then led the group for another six.

Singing has always been a part of Simmons’ life. She started conducting some 20 years ago.

“Both have unique gifts,” she said. “I don’t mind doing either.”

Tim McCusker, who sings in the tenor range, joined Bach with a Beat six years ago.

One of his favorite songs

from the concert is “Crazy Little Thing Called Love.”

“I keep singing it,” said McCusker, of the Village of Briar Meadow. “I can’t get it out of my head. The audience will get a kick out of it.”

Since joining the group, McCusker has enjoyed meeting the other singers.

“There’s a lot of talent,” McCusker said. “Everybody enjoys it. I’m actually growing as a singer. I have to pay attention and sing the right notes at the right time.”

Throughout his life, McCusker sang in local choruses, church choirs and folk groups.

“I like to sing all of it,” he said. “The great thing is the music is varied.”

Kathy Scott, who sings in the soprano section, has been with the group for about 10 years. She sings with her husband, Jack Strite, in several groups in the area.

“We’re always going and singing someplace,” said Scott, of the Village of Bonnybrook. “It’s nice to find groups that sing different kinds of music.”

Scott would be hard pressed to pick a favorite song in this concert.

“They’re like your children. You can’t choose,” she said.

Wherever she’s lived, from Connecticut to Pennsylvania, Scott has made it a point to join a chorus. She met Strite in college singing in a group.

“It’s been a part of our lives,” Scott said.

Photographer Will Present Longevity Project at Sharon

National Geographic photographer David McLain presents “The Search for Longevity” on April 19.

By TAYLOR STRICKLAND
Daily Sun Senior Writer

Globetrotter. Blue Zones documentarion. Brand wizard.

For more than a decade, National Geographic photographer David McLain has traveled the world alongside author Dan Buettner to document five places in the world where people live the longest and remain the healthiest. Now, the man known as the eye behind the Blue zones project shares the secrets of longevity across the country.

“We started by identifying the regions of the world that have been verified to have the healthiest and longest living people in the world,” McLain said. “Then, reverse engineering what people are doing in the longest-lived regions in the world.”

The longest-lived regions in the world are known as Blue zones, which originally encompassed the Okinawa Prefecture in Japan; the Nuoro Province in Sardinia, Italy; the Nicoya Peninsula in Costa Rica; and Icaria, Greece. Each zone shares common practices, geographic advantages and cultural values that researchers have identified as contributing to a higher incidence of centenarians.

“I felt really fortunate that I got to spend time with the Michael Jordans of aging,” McLain said. “The lessons we learned are directly applicable to our own lives.”

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DAVID MCLAIN
National Geographic

McLain first became involved in the Blue Zones project when he shot a National Geographic cover about the secrets of longevity. However, the project began before that, when demographer Michel Poulain and his team set out to verify the AKEA study, which focused on the extreme longevity of people on the island of Sardinia, west of the Italian peninsula.

The project attracted the attention of National Geographic Fellow and New York Times best-selling author Dan Buettner, who founded



Submitted photo

National Geographic photographer, filmmaker and best-selling author David McLain is set to give a presentation on the secrets to longevity at 7 p.m. April 19 at The Sharon L. Morse Performing Arts Center.

the marketing company, Blue Zones LLC, and later identified Loma Linda, California, as another blue zone due to the unusual longevity of the Seventh-day Adventist community living there. In 2020, Blue Zones LLC was purchased by AdventHealth.

While demographers did the initial research for the project, Buettner and McLain are credited for bringing the blue zones’ cultures and their peoples to life. Together, they did the bulwark of the original National Geographic articles, created a cookbook and a Netflix docuseries called “Live to 100: Secrets of the Blue Zones.”

McLain said that when he approached the project, his ultimate goal was clear: to make older people look heroic and aspirational.

“I always thought older people were interesting and had a lot to offer in wisdom and experiences,” McLain said. “It was important to me to flip the script on what was possible.”

Preoccupied with his career and the subjects he documented, McLain thought

little about how the aging process applied to himself while shooting the blue zones project. Now in his 50s, however, he makes a concentrated effort to adopt the many lessons he learned from the people who age the best.

“For instance, if I’m in an airport and there’s an elevator and a stairwell, I go straight for the stairs,” McLain said. “I move more naturally, I garden, I try to eat healthier, I prioritize my loved ones more.”

McLain talks all about these lessons and more in “The Search for Longevity,” which he emphasizes is not a lecture about how to live. Instead, the presentation is more like a travel log that follows a handful of characters, shares their stories and documents their accomplishments. It includes, in McLain’s own words, “some incredible photography” and scientific findings that everyone can use to improve their quality of life.

“It’s going to be a ton of fun,” McLain said.

Join McLain in the “Search for Longevity” at 7 p.m. April 19 at The Sharon. Tickets are \$25 and up. Go to thevillagesentertainment.com.

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