

Christmas in July At The Sharon Warms The Heart

The latest musical addition to the Lobby Lounge Cabaret Series brought glad tidings and good cheer.

By TAYLOR STRICKLAND
Daily Sun Senior Writer

It was beginning to look a lot like Christmas at The Sharon L. Morse Performing Arts Center.

Christmas trees, snowflakes, candy canes and colorfully wrapped packages were strewn about the theater lobby during Significant Productions’ inaugural Christmas in July event Thursday. Hosted by former Broadway orchestra-pit keyboard player and conductor Angie Rose and SigPro company manager Ryan Loeckel, the yuletide celebration featured Gary Powell and Sean Pollock on the theater organ and piano, special appearances from local celebrities and everyone’s favorite holiday tunes.

“We’re going to sing a few songs, and hopefully we’ll be having some visitors join us throughout the night,” Rose said.

“Silver Bells” played as ushers dressed as elves escorted patrons to their seats, and Christmas clowns from Clown Alley 179 passed out balloon corsages to those who passed by. Loeckel and Rose started the night with a rendition of “We Need A Little Christmas” followed by an introduction.

Residents may know Loeckel and Rose as the stars of the annual holiday concert “A Quiet Christmas,” in which they sing serene versions of classic seasonal songs. The duo has been performing together for more than three decades, and it all started one winter’s day in Cleveland.

“We met on the playground, in one of those tractor tires,” Rose said. “He says to me at all of about 4 years old, ‘It’s really muggy outside.’”

According to 4-year-old Loeckel, “muggy” meant cold. After that, he and Rose were playground pals. They grew up teasing and chasing each other and, later, performing together.

Loeckel and Rose reminisced about Christmases past, sharing fond memories and commiserating with Northern audience members about the ice and snow.



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EDEN WILKINS
The Villages Charter Elementary School student

Amid songs and sing-alongs, a few special guests did join Loeckel and Rose on stage. The first was Ray Dal Lago, who WVLG listeners may have recognized as Rose’s co-host on The Breakfast Club and his one-man version of “Tuba Christmas.”

Gary Powell made his entrance in a blue hippopotamus costume as Rose sang “I Want a Hippopotamus for Christmas,” followed by production coordinator Madi Carr as “Dominick the Donkey.” Together, the hippo and the donkey danced a segment from “The Nutcracker.” The Grinch and Santa Claus were the last of yuletide guests, each coming out to their respective signature holiday songs.

It was unclear who had more fun during — the audience or the performers.

“I liked the hippopotamus,” 11-year-old Eden Wilkins said. “That was my favorite song last year. I could not stop playing it because it was so funny.”

Eden, a student at The Villages Charter Elementary School, is a violinist. She has shared the stage with Loeckel and has played the violin at events in The Villages, including the American Cancer Society’s Walk For a Cure.

Accompanying Eden were her grandmothers, Debbie Marsich and Carol Marks. The Village of Mallory Square neighbors agreed they liked the singing and scenery.

In addition to the entertainment, Christmas in July also featured a chance drawing. Up for grabs were tickets to “Star Shanties: Songs from a Galaxy Far, Far Away,” “Dubé & Diamond” and “A Quiet Christmas.”



Ryan Loeckel, left, of Wildwood, and Angie Rose, of Oxford, perform Christmas songs at the Lobby Lounge Cabaret Christmas in July event Thursday at The Sharon L. Morse Performing Arts Center.

Sophia Lucente | Daily Sun

Elaine and Greg Gerken were among the drawing winners. The Village of Calumet Grove residents won tickets to “Dubé & Diamond,” a concert starring vocal impressionists Martin Dubé and Steeve Diamond. Neither Elaine nor Greg had heard of the singers before and were excited to try something new.

“I like to go to the lobby things, because I already get to go to some shows,” said Elaine, who is a volunteer usher. “But now I don’t have sign up for this one, so that’s really fun.”

Unlike Elaine, Greg had never been to one of the lobby concerts before, and the Christmas in July event was a surprise. Elaine told him where they were going on the ride to The Sharon. He was delighted.

“The two are very dynamic,” Greg said, referring to Loeckel and Rose. “Their singing was very good.”

Fans of Loeckel and Rose can catch them in “A Quiet Christmas” at 7 p.m. Dec. 19 at New Covenant United Methodist Church. For more, go to aquietchristmas.org.

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