

arts & culture



Submitted photo  
Vocal impressionists Martin Dubé and Steeve Diamond perform as “Dubé & Diamond” at 7 p.m. Sept. 20 at The Sharon L. Morse Performing Arts Center.

Impressionists Set to Make Debut In The Villages

Catch “Dubé & Diamond” at 7 p.m. Sept. 20 at The Sharon L. Morse Performing Arts Center.

By TAYLOR STRICKLAND  
Daily Sun Senior Writer

The vocal likes of Andrea Bocelli, Liza Minnelli, Steven Tyler or Ozzy Osbourne are so distinctive, they may never be heard again, but these musical mimics get pretty close.

“Dubé & Diamond” stars dueling pianists Martin Dubé and Steeve Diamond, two singing impressionists with a five-octave range and clashing styles. Accompanied by guitarist Réjean “Rej.E” LaChance, the intergenerational duo imitates the greatest hits from more than 60 renowned artists, such as Adele, Tom Jones, Axl Rose, Tina Turner, Bon Jovi, Stevie Wonder, Melissa Etheridge, Elton John, Luciano Pavarotti, Rod Stewart, Frank Sinatra and more.

“We perform the biggest, most successful songs on the planet,” Dubé said.

From the Dolby Theater in Los Angeles to Caesar’s Palace in Las Vegas, La Scala in Milan to the Moulin Rouge in Paris, Dubé and Diamond have performed on some of the world’s most prestigious stages separately and as a duo. Dubé is renowned for his impressions of pop and disco artists, while Diamond is better known for covering rock ‘n’ roll and opera. Together, they battle it out on stage.

Hailing from Quebec, Canada, Dubé and Diamond had similar starts. Both realized they could do vocal impressions from a young age.

“I would do vocal impressions of teachers,” Diamond said. “My parents let me take vocal lessons to sound like singers, then I did opera lessons, which is why I can do Andrea Bocelli.”

The singers’ paths first crossed at the Just for Laughs

Comedy Festival in Montreal more than 20 years ago. Dubé went through the first week and Diamond made it to the second. Following those performances, their respective careers took off.

Dubé found his niche in the United States, where he caught the attention of Saturday Night Live writer Joe Bodolai. Highlights of his career include performing at Larry King’s Cardiac Foundation Gala, where King referred him as “a must-see,” and co-hosting the 75th Academy Awards pre-show alongside Kate Hudson.

Diamond found popularity in Quebec and abroad, earning nominations for Quebec’s 1999 ADISQ Gala — comparable to the U.S. Grammy Awards — and creating the popular “The 3 Tenors of Humor” and “4 Without Voices” shows.

Dubé and Diamond have known each other for two decades, but the “Dubé & Diamond” show has only been touring for two years.

“Ever since since Danny Gans passed away, there are not too many vocal impressionists touring anymore,” Dubé said. “It’s a good time for it.”

The show utilizes both Dubé’s and Diamond’s strengths. Dubé has the wider range of the two, and can even do feminine vocal impressions. He typically sings the part of the woman when he and Diamond duet.

Diamond, with his lower register, can’t get high enough to impersonate women. He said his upper limits are Andrea Bocelli or Steven Tyler, and his lower limit is David Draiman, lead singer of metal band Disturbed.

“Martin is doing things I can’t do and I’m doing things he can’t do,” Diamond said. “I think that’s why we make such a good team.”

“Dubé & Diamond” makes its Villages debut at 7 p.m. Sept. 20 at The Sharon L. Morse Performing Arts Center. Tickets are \$32 and up. Visit thevillagesentertainment.com.

VPO Puts On Patriotic Program at Labor Day Concert

Area residents celebrated the recent holiday early at the “Labor Day Celebration Pops” concert on Sept. 1.

By TAYLOR STRICKLAND  
Daily Sun Senior Writer

The Villages Philharmonic Orchestra started off the season with a salute to the nation.

A packed house welcomed the VPO back to The Sharon L. Morse Performing Arts Center for the first show of its 21st season, the annual “Labor Day Celebration Pops” concert. The event marked the end of the orchestra’s summer hiatus and featured a patriotic program spanning multiple genres. Playing alongside the VPO was a quartet of beloved Villages performers, including vocalists Marcella Richardson, Stephen Mumbert, Norman Lee Schaffer and Clark Barrios.

“It is my honor to be with you here again this evening,” said Mumbert, who served as the night’s host. “I closed out last season with the final concert; I’m here for the first one and could not feel more special to be here with you all.”

Every year, Florida’s Friendliest Hometown’s resident orchestra takes a brief break during the summer. Its members fly all over the world to share their musical talents before coming back to roost at The Sharon. The Labor Day pops concert, which is the VPO’s only true pop music performance of the year, is always the inaugural concert.

It was hard to determine who was more excited by the VPO’s return — the orchestra members, the singers or the audience. Applause rang out as maestro Pasquale Valerio took his place at the head of the orchestra, and patrons surged to their feet to sing the national anthem and cheer the guest performers.

Unlike most VPO concerts, patrons were encouraged to make as much noise as they wanted.

“We want you to sing along, we want you to clap, we want you to cheer,” Mumbert said. “Don’t just sit there — this is audience participation night.”

Delighted, the audience did exactly that. They clapped and sang along to the variety of Broadway, country and popular American songs that made up the night’s program, starting with Mumbert’s rendition of “Love Me Tender.” Praised as a “scene stealer”



Photos by Joseph Cooke | Daily Sun  
Clark Barrios sings during The Villages Philharmonic Orchestra’s “Labor Day Celebration Pops” concert Sept. 1 at The Sharon L. Morse Performing Arts Center.

“It is my honor to be with you here again this evening. I closed out last season with the final concert; I’m here for the first one and could not feel more special to be here with you all.”

STEPHEN MUMBERT  
performer, host of “Labor Day Celebration Pops” concert

with “an assured and stylish technique,” Mumbert’s bass-baritone is a favorite among patrons and critics alike. When not making guest appearances with the VPO, he is performing in operas around Central Florida. He is currently performing the lead roles in two new opera projects, Guildenstern in Herschel Garfein’s “Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead” and Hopkins in Robert Aldridge’s “Sister Carrie.”

Mumbert was followed by Richardson, president of the VPO’s board and one of The Sharon’s legacy acts. Richardson has been involved with the orchestra since its inception, performing mainly at the Labor Day and Christmas concerts. During the first half of the show, she sang Vanessa Williams’ “Save the Best For Last” and Charlie Chaplin’s “Smile.”

“I want to send this to my father-in-law,” Richardson said of the song. “He’s 97 years old.”

Up next was Barrios, who is part of several groups throughout The Villages, including the Clark Barrios Band. He sang “Georgia on My Mind” before passing the mic to Schaffer, who sang “The Dance.”



Marcella Richardson performs during the “Labor Day Celebration Pops” concert.

As a performer in The Villages, Schaffer can rival Richardson’s tenure. Like Richardson, he performed at The Sharon back when it was Church on the Square. Now, he is a regular guest vocalist. He also was a favorite of the night, with many people praising his easygoing demeanor and Vegas-style showmanship.

The soloists sang 18 songs, with the latter half of the show dedicated to classic American anthems such as “God Bless the U.S.A.,” “America the Beautiful,” “American Medley” and “The Stars and Stripes Forever.”

By far the most sentimental song of the night was “Armed Forces Salute.”

“I know we have some veterans in this room,” Mumbert said. “If you would let us honor you tonight — when you hear the song from your branch of service played during the armed services salute, please stand up and allow us to thank you for your service.”

Patrons looked around the theater as one by one veterans stood as they heard the familiar strains of their branches’ respective marching songs — “Semper Paratus,” “Semper Supra,” “The U.S. Air Force,” “Anchors Aweigh,”

“Marines’ Hymn” and “The Army Goes Rolling Along.”

Among them was former U.S. Air Force veteran Greg Larson, who was attending the event with his wife, Bonnie, and his mother, Marilyn Monroe.

Bonnie is Richardson’s sister, so she always makes sure to attend the “Labor Day Celebration Pops” concert. The two performed together at The Sharon many years ago, and the mix of patriotism and memories made the concert very emotional for Bonnie, nearly bringing her to tears several times.

“It brings us hope,” Bonnie said.

Monroe, who lives with the couple in their Village of Del Mar home, was moved by the concert as well.

“It was wonderful,” she said. “I just cried through most of it.”

For those who enjoy the VPO’s traditional concerts, the orchestra’s “American Italian Celebration” is at 7 p.m. Oct. 15 at The Sharon. Tickets are \$40 and up.

For more information, go to thevillagesentertainment.com.

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