

# Local Performers Star in Next Lobby Lounge Cabaret

“Two Leading Men, One Night of Broadway” is at 7 p.m. Monday at The Sharon in Spanish Springs.

By TAYLOR STRICKLAND  
Daily Sun Senior Writer

Patrons of The Sharon L. Morse Performing Arts Center have the chance to see not just one, but two leading men grace the Lobby Lounge Stage on Monday.

Russell Stephens and Ryan Loeckel star in “Two Leading Men, One Night of Broadway,” the latest installment of Lobby Lounge Cabaret Series. Featuring a five-piece band and special guests, the cabaret will encompass songs ranging from beloved Broadway musicals like “Les Misérables” to lesser-known shows like “The Secret Garden” and even popular tunes from films like “The Muppet Movie.”

“I added some pieces that I’ve never sung in public before but that I’ve been noodling around for years and really liked for years,” said Loeckel, company manager for Significant Productions, the creative force behind The Sharon and The Studio Theatre Tierra del Sol.

Residents may recognize Loeckel from “A Quiet Christmas,” the annual holiday concert he performs alongside longtime friend and collaborator Angie Rose, as well as “Christmas in July” and “Bach to Broadway.” He also often performs behind the scenes at The Studio, such as during the Black Box theater’s recent production of “Pippin.”

Stephens, another regular performer in The Villages, starred in his own solo cabaret last year called “Never Have I Ever: Songs

from the Bucket List,” where he performed songs from all the roles he hopes to one day play.

Loeckel and Stephens met during production for the “25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee” at The Studio, where Stephens played the role of Mitch Mahoney as well as Dan’s dad and Olive’s dad.

“We met and hit it off and started doing a little bit of singing together,” Loeckel said. “It was, I think, his lobby lounge cabaret that we performed together for the first time. I was a special guest.”

Although Loeckel and Stephens have shared the stage as either guests or part of a greater ensemble, “Two Leading Men, One Night of Broadway” will be the first proper show they do together.

The idea for the show came to Loeckel and Stephens in December. Following the 2024 performance of “A Quiet Christmas,” the cast and their friends all went out to eat. There, Loeckel, Stephens and Sharon music director Gary Powell chatted about doing a show together. It eventually turned into “Two Leading Men, One Night of Broadway.”

Both men chose their own songs and built the show around those selections.

“To start with, there’s not a lot of baritone duets from musical theater,” Stephens said. “A lot of it is like a baritone and soprano or a baritone and tenor.”

Loeckel and Stephens started with “Lily’s Eyes” from “The Secret Garden,” which is one of the few songs they performed together during previous cabarets. From there, Stephens added “The Confrontation” from “Les Misérables” and the cabaret last year called “Never Have I Ever: Songs



Russell Stephens, above, previously seen in “Cabaret” at The Studio Theatre Tierra del Sol and the Lobby Lounge Cabaret show “Never Have I Ever: Songs from the Bucket List,” will perform alongside “A Quiet Christmas” and “Bach to Broadway” star Ryan Loeckel, right, in “Two Leading Men, One Night of Broadway” at 7 p.m. Monday at The Sharon L. Morse Performing Arts Center.

Submitted photos



Changes Everything” from “Aspects of Love,” “Unexpected Song” from “Song and Dance” and “I Don’t Know How to Love Him” from “Jesus Christ Superstar.”

Stephens also chose “The Muppets Movie” song, “Rainbow Connection,” which is a duet between Barbra Streisand and Kermit the Frog.

“I did a Barbra Streisand cabaret in Winter Park a couple years ago, and when I

was doing my deep dive into that I found she had recorded ‘Rainbow Connection’ with Jim Henson as Kermit, and it was never released,” Stephens

said. “I ended up doing it with a friend of mine in Orlando for that cabaret.”

Since Loeckel is more often working behind the curtain rather than on stage, his selection mostly features songs from musicals that he’s always wanted to perform but never go the chance to do, such as William Finn’s “March of the Falsettos.”

“This list was some favorites that have never been done in my career, and this is a great opportunity to do it,” Loeckel said. “I think it’s a perfect venue, and it’ll be an eclectic audience that will appreciate the sort of lesser-known pieces we’re doing in the show.”

In addition to Loeckel and Stephens, the show will feature a live band and two guest singers. The band includes Powell on piano, drummer Chris Conner, bassist Christopher Mewhinney, cellist Jean-Marie Glazer and guitarist Miles Randolph.

Sara DelBeato, a Central Florida veteran actress and singer, and Marcie Samuelson Winter, the music director at Community United Methodist Church and choral director at The Plantation at Leesburg, will join the show as guest performers.

Stephens and Loeckel perform their favorite selections from Broadway leading men at 7 p.m. Monday at The Sharon. Tickets for the show are \$25 and up. To purchase, go to thevillagesentertainment.com or visit the nearest The Villages Box Office location.

Senior writer Taylor Strickland can be reached at 352-753-1119, ext. 5334, or taylor.strickland@thevillagesmedia.com.

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