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Boston Pops, Bernadette Peters coming to Van Wert on Saturday

They will perform at a 10th anniversary celebration at the Niswonger Performing Arts Center

By James Grant for The News-Sentinel
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The Niswonger Performing Arts Center in Van Wert, Ohio, will celebrate its 10th anniversary in style Saturday with a special gala concert featuring the Boston Pops Esplanade Orchestra along with Broadway legend Bernadette Peters.

The concert, which starts at 8 p.m., will feature the Boston Pops performing songs from George Gershwin's esteemed catalog for the first half of the show, followed by a second act consisting of Bernadette Peters performing songs, accompanied by the Boston Pops Orchestra, written by her favorite composers as well as selections from her Broadway career.

Since opening on March 15, 2007, the Niswonger Performing Arts Center has hosted quite a few well-known musical performers, Broadway touring companies, lectures as well as other community events creating a vibrant arts center



Bernadette Peters will join The Boston Pops Saturday in Van Wert for a special show celebrating the 10th anniversary of the Niswonger Performing Arts Center.

More Information

Anniversary Gala in Van Wert

What: The Gala – Bernadette Peters & the Boston Pops

When: Saturday, April 1, 8 p.m

Where: Niswonger Performing Arts Center, 10700 Ohio 118 S, Van Wert, Ohio

Cost: \$100-\$250

For more information call the Niswonger Box Office at 1-419-238-6722 or purchase tickets online at <http://www.npacww.org/events>

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that has truly benefited residents of northwest Ohio and northeast Indiana.

Keith Lockhart, who has helmed the Boston Pops as conductor since 1995, says that though the concert at the Niswonger Center is part of an eight-city tour, it will be a special concert for the Boston Pops because of the addition of Peters and the Niswonger anniversary.

“The Van Wert program is special because, of course, we’re helping celebrate the 10th anniversary of the Niswonger Center,” Lockhart said in a telephone interview.

“They asked us to be involved in this gala, and they asked us if we could collaborate with a true headliner to add even more pop to the occasion, and they suggested Bernadette. We have a long relationship with Bernadette; we’ve worked with her many times,” Lockhart added.

“She’s an American classic. She’s an amazing performer onstage, just so delightful,” he said.

Lockhart also stressed that the Boston Pops portion of the concert will focus on the music of George Gershwin and presents it in a way that Gershwin himself would have heard it at the time it was composed.

“The tour that this is a part of is an entirely Gershwin tour, and we’re cutting down and excerpting from that tour to present the first half of the concert,” Lockhart said.

“We’ll be playing the overture to the Broadway show ‘Nice Work If You Can Get It,’” he continued.

“And we’ll be playing ‘An American in Paris,’ Gershwin’s great tone poem, and ‘Rhapsody in Blue,’ all of it in the original Paul Whiteman ‘Rhapsody in Blue’ orchestration, kind of a leaner, tighter, jazzier sort of orchestra which would have been very much how Gershwin would have heard it himself in the 1920s.

“And then we’ll take an intermission and come back with Bernadette,” Lockhart added. “And I don’t have her set list in front of me, but if I know her, she’ll be singing a lot of Broadway classics.

“She sings music from the great American songbook, from Broadway, some Stephen Sondheim thrown in, some ‘Send in the Clowns’ probably and a version of ‘Fever’ that is the absolute best one since Peggy Lee.”

Lockhart says that the show in Van Wert as well as the Boston Pops whole eight-city tour really highlights the importance of the music of George Gershwin.

Gershwin’s music lives on because it resonates with audiences, and Lockhart feels that Gershwin’s music is the celebration of genius and is a vital part of the Boston Pops musical identity.

“Gershwin’s repertoire, Gershwin’s output is really central to us at the Pops,” Lockhart said.

“We’re America’s orchestra, and great music written by Americans for orchestra is very central to what we do.”

“The Gershwin program that we’re doing in its entirety is really telling the story of George Gershwin, one of the great American creative geniuses of the 20th century, who managed to write ‘An American in Paris,’ ‘Rhapsody in Blue,’ the ‘Concerto in F,’ the opera ‘Porgy and Bess,’ several hit musicals, won a Pulitzer Prize for a Broadway musical, helped invent the movie musical in Hollywood and did all this in under a 15-year span of time before his death of a brain tumor at the age of 37.”

“It’s really a story of genius, and we’ll tell a little bit of that story even when we recede the stage to Bernadette,” Lockhart added.

Fans of the Boston Pops should also be on the lookout for new recordings that they are working on that should be released by late spring or summer that are a tribute to John Williams and feature some of Williams’ enthralling music from the Star Wars film franchise.

“We are actually recording an album; we’re about halfway through,” Lockhart said of the Boston Pops’ other current project.

“We finish the rest of it the week after we get back from the tour.

“It’s a special birthday tribute to John Williams who is my predecessor here at the Boston Pops,” Lockhart continued.

“It actually features the first orchestral recording of John’s suite from (Star Wars) ‘The Force Awakens.’

“This whole spring season in Boston we're paying tribute to John because of his 85th birthday, which he just passed.”

Lockhart said that he thoroughly enjoys his musical career and feels lucky to be able to do what he loves to do.

The most satisfying part of his career is being able to live the life of a performing artist, and Lockhart feels fortunate that he has been able to do that for more than 20 years as a part of the Boston Pops.

“I think there's nobody luckier than performing artists,” Lockhart said of his career.

“You are one of those few people who has the rare opportunity to do what they would do if they didn't have to work.

“I feel very grateful for that. I've been very, very lucky for a kid from Poughkeepsie, N.Y.”

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