International Steinway Artist to Perform with NISO

By Amber Vis

Northwest Iowa Symphony Orchestra is pleased to announce that pianist Rich Ridenour will be joining them at the Winter Pops Concert. He will be playing a variety of genres including classical, jazz and rock music.

Rich Ridenour is a native of Grand Rapids, Michigan. He received a bachelor's degree in music from the University of Michigan and a master's degree from the Juilliard School of Music. He is an international Steinway Artist. Ridenour and his wife make their home in Sarasota, Florida, but he travels all over the world to perform.

“This whole concert is centered around Rich Ridenour and the piano,” said Conductor Christopher Stanichar.

The program will include everything from favorite classical piano pieces to popular piano music composed by Elton John and Billy Joel. Classical pieces on the program include Für Elise by Ludwig van Beethoven, Linus and Lucy by Vince Guaraldi, and Maple Leaf Rag by Scott Joplin. There will also be a Brazilian jazz piece. One of the biggest pieces of the night is Rhapsody in Blue by George Gershwin.

During the concert, a celebrity guest conductor will be chosen. Whoever raises the most money will have the privilege of directing the orchestra in the Radetzky March by Johann Strauss.

“This is a very popular piece, especially in Vienna during New Years. Audiences love to clap along,” said Stanichar.

Stanichar will rehearse the piece with the orchestra in advance, but after intermission, the music will be in the hands of the celebrity guest conductor as he conducts the orchestra for the first time.

“There will be something for everyone,” said Stanichar. “It’s really just a lot of fun for a good family night or a good date night.”

The Winter Pops Concert will be held in the B.J. Haan Auditorium at Dordt College in Sioux Center, Iowa at 7:30 p.m. on February 1.
By Shirley Matheis

NISO’s third Celebrity Conductor Fundraiser will be held on February 1, 2014 in connection with the Winter Pops Concert. Prominent individuals have been invited to vie for the honor of conducting an orchestral selection that evening. They are vigorously garnering support from family and friends by soliciting donations for NISO. Each dollar donated will constitute one vote. The winning candidate will demonstrate his skill after the intermission.

John Heller (Orange City) grew up in Dunlap, IA, where his parents operated a service station and convenience store. He attended Iowa State, where he earned an Ag Business degree with an emphasis in finance. He has been a banker for more than 17 years, serving since 2012 as President of Northwestern Bank of Orange City and Sheldon. John has always been an active community volunteer and is currently a member of the Orange City Fire Department. His love for music started as a young boy listening to his parents, who were great vocalists in the church choir. He began playing the trombone in the fifth grade band and played throughout high school, where he was also active in the choir. John still gets the trombone out on occasion to entertain his five-year-old daughter, Allison, and his three-year-old son, Henry. They like to try to “toot” the trombone and may follow in their father’s footsteps. John and his wife, Rhonda, are expecting another potential musician in early February. They look forward to raising their family in Orange City. John would consider it a great honor to be chosen as NISO’s guest conductor on February 1.

Scott Rens (Hull/Sioux Center) was born and raised in Sioux Center. He was exposed to classical music in grade school and fondly remembers trying to “hear” the sunrise in the Grand Canyon Suite and to pick out the animals in Peter and the Wolf. Aaron Copland’s Variations on a Shaker Melody was one of Scott’s favorite high school band performances. Since then, listening to music has been part of his heart and soul. He’s been known to tear up during the Hallelujah Chorus or Pavarotti’s singing of Nessun Dorma. In midlife he discovered smooth jazz, but classical music is his favorite. Dr. Rens practices medicine in Hull and Sioux Center. A husband and father of three, he also enjoys watching hockey, riding motorcycle, and playing with his adopted dogs. One thing he has not yet done, though, is to conduct an orchestra!

After graduating from Dordt College, Ron Rynders (Sioux Center) served Christian schools in various places as both a teacher and an administrator. Returning to Dordt, he served in several capacities in Student Services, where he was affectionately known by the students as “Uncle Ron.” A curious person, Ron has been involved in all sorts of things: beekeeping, maintaining a huge yard and garden, and even reconstructing a windmill in his backyard. Ron and his wife, Karen, love music and have sung in the Sioux County Oratorio Chorus and in church choirs. They attend all the concerts they can find, and Ron hums along with his bees. You can help Ron to round out his musical “career” with a little orchestral experience by electing him as the NISO Celebrity Conductor of 2014!

Peter W. Wagner (Sheldon/Sibley) remembers that his older brother, who shared his bedroom, woke him every morning with recordings ranging from Respighi’s The Pines of Rome to Bach’s Mass in B minor. Peter and his wife, Connie, moved to Northwest Iowa in 1962 to establish The Golden Shopper. Ten years later they founded The NW’West Iowa REVIEW. A nationally recognized speaker, Wagner is an ordained minister and the current president of Circus Fans Association of America. He reports, though, that he can’t read a note of music; he’s that guy in the group who always claps on the offbeat. In order to save NISO from a direct experience worse than death, Peter suggests that you send him all the voting dollars possible with a note indicating that they are voting against him! When not working, Wagner spends his time with his four grandchildren who, unlike him, are very musically talented.

The orchestra performed selections from the program to be performed in the evening, including pieces with the two featured soloists, Shannon Salyards and Russell Sveningsen.

The theme of the evening concert was “Verdi vs. Wagner,” and the children voted for their favorite pieces by their applause. Two NISO board members, John Slegers and Marion Van Soelen, dressed up as Verdi and Wagner and competed for the students’ applause.

“the real winners were the kids, highly engaged with the music and enthusiastically applauding for their favorites,” DeMol said. “It was something to behold—4th to 6th grades raising the roof with applause for Verdi and Wagner.”

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