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Spider Saloff to Perform with NISO

By Natalie Dailey

“The Memory of All That: Gershwin Tribute,” this season’s Winter Pops Concert, will be a return to the popular classics. This January, NISO will perform music by 20th century composer George Gershwin with special guest artist Spider Saloff.



Spider Saloff

Ms. Saloff is an internationally known jazz singer, songwriter, playwright, and actress based in Chicago. She first began singing in a school variety show at age 14, where she surprised her family with her musical talent. She later became involved in acting, primarily in musicals due to her singing abilities, and gained experience in concerts and jazz clubs. It was during college, at the beginning of her acting career, when Saloff obtained the nickname “Spider.” “It wasn’t a name I chose,” Saloff said. “It chose me.” Saloff eventually gave in and printed the name in a program, and she has been using it ever since. “It’s an odd name, but people don’t forget it,” she said.

Saloff has loved jazz music ever since she saw jazz vocalist Ella Fitzgerald on television as a child. While other children were listening to pop music, “I really would rather listen to my dad’s Benny Goodman records,” Saloff said. Saloff has worked with many other artists such as Les Paul, Harry Allen, and Dick Hyman.

For Saloff, the best part about jazz music is the element of surprise that stems from the improvisation that makes jazz unique. Live performance “is never exactly the same, nor is the audience. The performers and the audience are creating a new experience together,” Saloff explained.

NISO audience members will certainly create a new experience of well-known music. “Gershwin...is the best of them all,” said Principal Conductor Christopher Stanichar. Gershwin’s music continues to be popular today and is continually being re-recorded by other musicians such as Tony Bennett and even Lady Gaga. Stanichar called Gershwin’s music “fun,” “light,” and “soulful,” and said that NISO is “very blessed and happy” to be joined by Saloff for this concert.

“The Memory of All That: Gershwin Tribute” will take place at the BJ Haan Auditorium on the campus of Dordt College on January 31st at 7:30 P.M. More information on Spider Saloff can be found at <http://spidersaloff.com> and on George Gershwin at <http://gershwin.com>.

Concert for Children Important Part of Every NISO Season

By Natalie Dailey

Every year, NISO performs a Children’s Concert for fourth- through sixth-graders of area schools. This season’s Children’s Concert took place on November 18 and was considered by all to be a great success. Karen De Mol, NISO’s General Manager, claimed, “I think that attendance this year hit a new high; the place was packed!” There was indeed a record-breaking number of children at this season’s concert: more than 1,000!

The centerpiece of the concert was Prokofiev’s *Peter and the Wolf*, a musical story beloved by children of all ages. The story, which can be clearly understood by the music and narration, further came to life through the enactment by the Eulenspiegel Puppet Theatre. After the concert, the puppeteers were in the lobby to allow children to see the puppets up close and to explain how they worked.

There were several markers of the success of the event. “The orchestra performed very well, the students were engaged in the concert, and the quality of the Eulenspiegel Puppet Theatre’s contribution to *Peter and the Wolf* was outstanding,” said NISO Music Director Bradley Miedema.

In testament to the children’s engagement in this musical story, De Mol said that when the children were allowed to meet the puppeteers and touch the puppets, none of the children wanted to touch the wolf!

The Children’s Concert is an important part of every NISO season. Part of NISO’s mission is education for children who are beginning to develop an interest and skill in orchestral music. Miedema explained that NISO is “striving to establish a rich experience for its school-aged members while providing an outlet for community and professional musicians to perform masterworks from the orchestral repertoire at a high level of excellence.” Through these yearly Children’s Concerts, NISO hopes to inspire young musicians and encourage them to continue their participation in music for years to come.

NISO's Celebrity Conductor Fundraiser

By Shirley Matheis

NISO's fourth Celebrity Conductor Fundraiser will be held on January 31, 2015 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.

Jason Alons (Orange City) is a native-born Iowan who moved back to Northwest Iowa this summer. He is the principal and 7th grade Bible teacher at Orange City Christian School. He and his wife, Michelle, have three young daughters. Music runs deep in his family, with talented relatives including a grandfather who was an accomplished yodeler, a father who sang in several music groups, and a sister who sings in the Houston Grand Opera. Jason's greatest contribution to music is in creating parodies of songs. He is notorious for making up songs while playing games or in the classroom to help students through daily tasks. One of his favorites--one sure to get a groan from the students--is "the hand it up song" when asking for assignments to be passed forward. In high school Jason played the baritone and the tuba. He suffered through one season as the marching band drum major. When remembering his tenure as marching band leader, he recalls, "At least I could keep the beat." He hopes that experience will give him the skills he needs to be a top notch celebrity conductor.



King Hickman (Sheldon) grew up in Sheldon, Iowa, attended Northwestern College, and is a graduate of Iowa State University's College of Veterinary Medicine. He is a founding partner of GPS Dairy Consulting, LLC, and has been working in the dairy industry since 1989. He often serves as a guest lecturer for Iowa State University and the University of Minnesota Veterinary Production Medicine Programs. King participated in band and choir throughout high school and college, and has had a lifelong love of the theatre. For twenty years, he has served as president of the board of directors of Off, Off Broadway, Inc., where he has directed, acted, and sung in too many plays and musicals to count. He is also active in the Sheldon Community Theatre organization and sings with the Circuit Riders, a gospel quartet that performs frequently throughout the region. King passed his love of music to his four children, three of whom are studying music composition, music performance, and music education in college, while the fourth is a middle school honor band and choir member. The whole family, including his wife, Kecia, sometimes make up the entire praise team at their church, playing guitar, bass guitar, drums, piano, and saxophone. Although he conducted an inept boys band as Professor Harold Hill in *The Music Man*, King has never had the opportunity of conducting a real orchestra. He pleads for your vote so he can add that role to his resume.

Matt Nice (Sioux Center) grew up on a farm in Allen, Nebraska, until the age of 10. Shortly thereafter, living in South Sioux City, he discovered golf, which he played while attending Briar Cliff College. He was fortunate to have an awesome PGA Professional as a mentor. Matt's hobby turned into a passion and then a career, which began in Sioux City, and then took him and his wife to Davenport, Iowa, for seven years. Matt's determination never to return to Northwest Iowa changed when he heard about The Ridge in Sioux Center, with the exciting possibility of being their resident golf pro and living closer to family. Since 2008, he and his family have greatly appreciated Sioux Center and the quality of life it offers. Into high school, Matt played saxophone and greatly appreciates the art of music and those with the talents to perform. Matt is pleased to be helping to raise funds for NISO and contributing to a fun and exciting evening. He'd love to demonstrate his own talent for conducting!



Greg Westra (Rock Valley) was born and raised in Rock Valley, went to college all the way over in Orange City, and graduated from NWC in 1989 with an Economics degree. In 1997, Greg co-founded Premier Bank in Rock Valley and Doon and currently serves as Executive VP. A long history of church and civic organizations have been a staple in Greg's diet of clean Northwest Iowa living, along with his wife, Beth, whom he met at the age of 14 at the Sioux County Youth Fair. He has three children - a married daughter and two sons currently attending college. At an early age, Greg began buying and selling antiques as a hobby. This past summer, he opened the Rock Valley Museum in the historic Pember Drug building on Rock Valley's main street. It showcases many items that he has accumulated over the years which have historical importance to Rock Valley. Greg's love for music and theatre began as a contract actor at Lake Okoboji, acting in children's plays during the summers of his high school and college years. He gives high accolades to his two high school band

instructors, Charles Dibley and Kenneth Sabers, who were able to instill such high standards at such an impressionable age. Greg brings some conducting experience into this NISO event as he was the drum major for the RVHS marching band his senior year and brought his troupe of marching Rockets through the Tulip Festival in 1985. So, - Bring it!

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