

OPINION

Texas Tenors hit right notes in concert with NISO

Over the last decade Connie and I have attended a number of exceptional Northwest Iowa Symphony Orchestra concerts on Dordt University's campus in Sioux Center.

I especially enjoy the often rousing compositions by Ludwig van Beethoven, Peter Tchaikovsky, Camille Saint-Saens, Edvard Grieg, Richard Wagner, Antonin Dvorak and Bedrich Smetana.

My favorite pieces include Saint-Saens' popularly named "Organ Symphony" and Dvorak's "New World Symphony."

Connie, on the other hand loves nothing as much as a light, romantic and lyrical violin solo.

Both of us are usually more than satisfied by the varied selections included in any concert.

That said, you might be surprised that I was not look-



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ing forward to the NISO Texas Tenors Pops Concert last Saturday.

I was excited when the program was first announced, but a recent hourlong Iowa PBS concert, promoting the network's two eastern Iowa performances, presented the trio as flat, focused mostly on singing popular music.

But that might have been a good thing. Attending an event with low expectations, and being pleased, is certainly better than going with great expectations and being disappointed.

The Texas Tenors from the moment they took the stage in B.J. Haan Auditorium were warm, personable, entertaining and truly a musical delight.

They opened the concert with "Coming to America" and "Amazing Grace" and moved on to include the patriotic "God Bless the USA," opera favorite "O Sole Mio" and Broadway hit "Bring Him Home" from "Les Misérables."

For popular music fans they performed the 1950s "Unchained Melody," the country hit "Galveston" and Frank Sinatra's later life theme song "My Way."

The Texas Tenors have performed under that name since they discovered each other in Houston where each had moved.

They created the trio to appear on "America's Got Talent." But while they call them-

selves Texas Tenors two of the three originally came from Iowa.

Opera-trained John Hagen, the organizer of the group, was born in Waverly and blond-haired, Broadway vocalist Marcus Collins was born in Washington, IA.

The third, country music singer JC Fisher, who told us he was the romantic one, is married and the father of three and was born in Missouri.

Collins shared during the concert that he had just lost his job when Hagen suggested they band together to take a shot at television's "America's Got Talent" competition in 2009. They won round after round to finish the season in fourth place, and that as, Paul Harvey was known to say is "the rest of the story."

The tenors, who bring their own musicians playing

drums, piano, electric guitar and bass, complemented the Northwest Iowa Symphony Orchestra for their musical ability and preparedness. The tenors had only arrived that afternoon, they said, and the orchestra was ready to go, totally prepared and committed.

This announcement may be a regular part of their program since they often perform with a local symphony. But I doubt the tenors often are accompanied by an orchestra made up of every age from grade-school students to individuals well into retirement. As I understand it, NISO is as much a training organization as it is a performing orchestra.

And speaking of the orchestra, they did more than just accompany the vocalists. Early in the evening the musicians set the western mood with a superb rendition of the

main theme from the movie "The Magnificent Seven." Later, in the second half of the concert the orchestra scored again with a worthy rendition of Aaron Copland's "Hoe-Down from the Rodeo."

If you missed the evening you really did miss a wonderful opportunity. It was only possible because of specials grants from the Sioux Center Recreational & Arts Council, the Iowa Arts Council and major gifts from a number of community-minded sponsors.

I can only hope they find the opportunity to bring other such talent to N'West Iowa in the future.

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