



Sweet Sounds of Summer

Savannah VOICE Festival Returns

By Lesley Francis

The Savannah VOICE Festival (SVF) will return to the Hostess City for the sixth straight year, for “Stories Great and Small,” August 4 through 26. Marking the second year of the festival’s expansion to three weeks, attendees will be treated to several extra days of delightful musical offerings.

This season’s lineup includes a selection of more than 30 concerts, classes and operas, featuring more than 115 artists from 14 countries. Each performance will be staged in and around Savannah, offering stories from classical opera to contemporary musical theater, and more. For the first time, Skidaway Island, home to many SVF supporters, will host the Festival Finale at the Plantation Club at the Landings. SVF artists will gather for this special concert featuring highlights of the season and glimpses of what is to come, followed by a gala dinner.

Toby Hollenberg is co-chair of this year’s SVF. A native New Yorker, she was thrilled to discover the broad range of music available to Savannah audiences. She was invited to an SVF event and was intrigued to meet opera legend, Sherrill Milnes, and Maria Zouves. Though having no formal connection with music, Hollenberg found the quality of the SVF offerings to be exceptional. She became a committed supporter, especially of the way the SVF nurtures and supports young singers. Having attended several master classes, she has experienced the rare treat of going behind the scenes and discovering how singers prepare for their performances.

“Watching them perform as studio and festival artists and seeing SVF singers go on to succeed is wonderful,” Hollenberg says. “Carlton Moe is now starring on Broadway, and Meechot Marrero is in the Berlin Opera. The SVF is like a family, and everybody involved feels connected.”

Since her arrival in Savannah 20 years ago, Hollenberg has served on numerous boards, including Memorial Health Foundation, Savannah Jewish Federation, and Congregation Mickve Israel. She was delighted when asked to take on the role of co-chair of SVF earlier this year. The SVF is very fortunate to have her energy and passion.



Toby Hollenberg

“It’s a real treat to have something like this here during the summer when the other events are at a lull,” Hollenberg says, referring to SVF’s unique place in Savannah’s cultural calendar. “Come in from the heat and be wowed by the fact that we don’t have to take a train, bus or plane to get the best of opera and vocal music right here in our backyard.”

Hollenberg believes that Savannah – and Skidaway Island residents in particular – have embraced the SVF because of the broad range of cultural venues available. Many newer residents have brought with them their own passions for music, art, theater, film and literature, and appreciate the opportunity to share their interests with their new neighbors.

Festival favorites such as “Voices in Sacred Song” (a free concert) and “Death, by Aria” will return, along with new offerings such as “Fab Four - The Festival,” which will take audiences back in time to the 1960s, and opera star Marco Nistico in concert with “It’s a Funny Story.”

SVF Executive Director, Maria Zouves, and Artistic Director, Sher-

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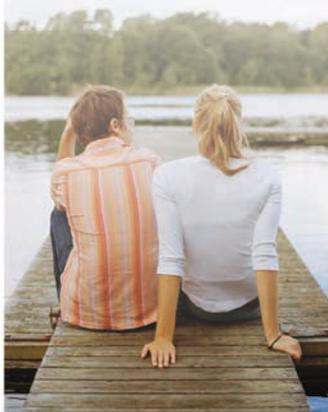
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Tenor Carlton Moe (foreground) leads SVF artists at the 2017 festival finale. Soon after, he was signed for a leading role in Broadway's "Phantom of the Opera."

rill Milnes, will take audiences on a lighthearted journey through memorable concerts and performances, including four full operas: Menotti's 30-minute opera "The Telephone;" Humperdinck's "Hansel and Gretel" at the Yamacraw Performing Arts Center; Verdi's tragic romance "La Traviata;" and composer-in-residence Michael Ching's modern opera performed in English, "Speed Dating Tonight."

As the operatic resource for the Savannah area, Milnes and Zouves are committed to offering productions with the highest caliber of artists. In conjunction with the SVF, they have just launched the Savannah Opera Company

"It's exciting to think of Savannah having its own opera company," says Hollenberg.

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She suggests those who don't care for opera have either never tried it, or haven't fully explored its wide range of music and stories.

"I personally have been pleasantly surprised by the variety and have come to thoroughly enjoy opera despite being somewhat of a novice," Hollenberg says.

Hollenberg is particularly looking forward to several performances. "I've never seen 'La Traviata,' and can't wait to see the festival's production! Last year's 'Barber of Seville' and 'Marriage of Figaro' were just spectacular, and I heard raves from seasoned opera-goers who were able to compare it to some of the top opera companies in the world. Of course, there's always the enjoyable 'Broadway Tales,' which I think would appeal to absolutely everyone."

Hollenberg encourages everyone who can, to experience the festival. "I'm hoping to attend every venue this year," she says, excitedly. "My August calendar says 'SVF' on almost every day!"

She urges her fellow Savannah residents to attend at least one concert, to experience the quality of the voices and learn how the SVF supports young singers, and has become part of the Savannah community. "Once people hear about the SVF, they add it to their list of special cultural events to attend and are rarely disappointed."

She invites her neighbors to become VOICE Society members, to support SVF's music education among young singers, as well as its outreach program in local schools. There are many perks for SVF members, such as discounts through its community partners and other businesses. For details, visit SavannahVoiceFestival.org.



SAVANNAH VOICE FESTIVAL
AUGUST 4 - 26, 2018
Stories Great and Small

WHAT: 2018 Savannah VOICE Festival
WHEN: August 4 through 26
WHERE: Various venues around Savannah (e.g. Charles H. Morris Center, The Westin, Asbury Memorial UMC)
HOW MUCH: \$22-\$125
CONTACT: www.SavannahVOICEFestival.org, 855.766.7372, info@savannahvoicefestival.org
WHAT ELSE: The Savannah VOICE Festival returns for the sixth annual season, themed "Stories Great and Small." This season's lineup includes more than 30 concerts, classes and operas. The SVF Finale is 5 p.m. Sunday, August 26, at the Plantation Club at the Landings.



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