

THEATER REVIEW

Opera, Broadway YouTube fundraiser for Fairview school hits a high note

By Connie Shakalis
H-T Reviewer

Professional opera singer and Indiana University Jacobs School of Music grad Richard Lewis said this to his YouTube audience Sunday: "We leave the rest to your sense of duty."

Lewis was quoting from Gilbert & Sullivan's "The Pirates of Penzance," but we might be wise to let our senses of duty urge us to donate to Fairview Elementary School, the organization receiving proceeds from Lewis' show "Madness, Mayhem and Missed Connections — a Tenth-Anniversary Celebration of Broadway and Opera."

Lewis and colleagues soprano Anna Singer, tenor Robert Chafin and conductor Michael Borowitz, at the piano, entertained more than 100 YouTube viewers Sunday, but the video will remain online for continued viewing, at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZnCJ3uvvdyC>.

I wish this troupe of experienced performers would put on monthly shows for us. I know; easy for me to say, but, dang, they're good.

And they're funny.

Zoom and YouTube haven't been the most pleasant ways of transforming what used to be live shows into something we can watch during the pandemic's seclusion.

But "Madness, Mayhem & Missed Connections" fits the video

voice to his presentational skills, and we've got a star.

Best props-and-costumes honors go to Singer, who coordinated her many outfits with her surroundings. Her matching bouquet even shows up again at the finale. I won't spill too much here; you have to see it. At one point, too, she sang from a terrace overlooking the Allegheny, Monongahela and Ohio rivers.

A duet between Lewis and Singer, "So in Love," from Cole Porter's musical "Kiss Me, Kate," misted my eyes. "Staging" for this number — all four performers recorded their separate parts from different areas of the country — had Singer facing Lewis, as they sat at their respective dressing tables. Each wielded a makeup brush as they sang Porter's lyrics, such as "even without you, my arms fold about you." It was my favorite.

Chafin shone in Bizet's "La fleur que tu m'avais jetée," from "Carmen" and in his duet with Lewis, from Puccini's "La Boheme," "O Mimi tu piu non torni." The latter always gets me; this version got me. Oh!

All three of the show's singers are of the double-threat variety, singing and acting their ways into my heart.

Bloomington's Payton Knobeloch serves as video producer, knitting together the four performers with seemingly — no seams.

SCULPTURE

But "Madness, Mayhem & Missed Connections" fits the video platform blissfully.

It might be the humor and charm the performers exude, which seem to work particularly well with in-your-face videos. In stage productions, of course, performers aren't nearly as close to the audience as in videos. We performer types sometimes take ourselves with self-serious gravity, which can too easily come across on YouTube's closeups.

Lewis, Singer, Chafin and Borowitz, instead, are so thoroughly jubilation-filled and spontaneous that their hour of opera and Broadway numbers shot by faster than a soprano's trill.

They dedicated the performance to the late Peter Jacobi, a beloved Herald-Times music reviewer and Indiana University professor emeritus of journalism.

Lewis served as the afternoon's narrator, a role in which he excelled, giving just enough information on each piece, and then reiterating it as the numbers began. I've seen shows injured by the longwinded speaker. Add believable acting and Lewis' baritone

together the four performers with seemingly — no seams.

Fairview Elementary staff provides opportunities for student success through the Artful Learning model. Artful Learning is a national school model arranged by the Leonard Bernstein Center. Fairview Elementary adopted the program during the 2010-2011 school year.

Artful Learning is a school-improvement design inspired by American composer, Leonard Bernstein and is rooted in the arts. Bernstein passed along to others what he learned through his scholarship and artistic work. He saw creating and appreciating art as a way for students to learn, and he believed that art is transferable to any subject.

According to publicschoolreview.com, roughly 42% of public school students in Indiana are eligible for free lunch (2020). Fairview is one of these schools. Approximately 90% of Fairview families face significant economic challenges, and this school gives students educational and artistic freedom to excel in ways they may never have imagined.

Donating to Fairview Elementary

To support these student programs, anyone can make a donation online through Carlson-Palmer Productions' secure PayPal link at <https://bit.ly/2F0FJsb> or send a check. All donations (after any PayPal service or transaction fees) go directly to Fairview Elementary.

TO DONATE BY CHECK:

Make check to "Fairview Elementary School" and write "literacy and arts" in the memo line. Mail to: Concert for Fairview, PO Box 1273, Bloomington, IN 47402-1273.

To learn more about Fairview Elementary School in Bloomington, visit <https://www.mccsc.edu/fairview>.

For more information on the Artful Learning model and the Leonard Bernstein Center, visit <https://leonardbernstein.com/artful-learning>.

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