

Owensboro Symphony CEO touts upcoming season

By Bobbie Hayse
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Owensboro Symphony CEO Gwyn Payne announced the group's 2021-22 season Wednesday during a virtual Rotary Club luncheon.

Payne was the group's guest during the meeting which was broadcast virtually via Zoom.

She talked about how the group spent a difficult 2020, but also unveiled upcoming events that will kick off June 5 with a Summer Salute free community concert featuring Lee Greenwood. That event will take place in McConnell Plaza.

"It has been 15 months since the Symphony performed on the stage at the RiverPark Center" for a concert in which the community was invited, Payne said. "Throughout this year, we have focused on staying present in the community, and we wanted to do as much as we could."

In the past year, the group created the Symphony Stroll, which took place downtown and enabled small musicians to perform live in front of audiences as they took a walk throughout Smothers Park. It also for the first time ever pre-recorded and televised its holiday concert on KET.



Gwyn Payne

Payne said the past year was difficult, but it allowed Symphony organizers to get creative and think outside of the box in terms of community involvement and outreach, which wasn't necessarily a bad thing.

Another event will be the Symphony's annual Concert on the Lawn which typically takes place each year on Kentucky Wesleyan College's front lawn. This year's event, titled "Tribute to the Circus" will take place Aug. 28. This performance will feature Laura Dickinson performing "Never Enough" from "The Greatest Showman."

Returning will be the Symphony Stroll Oct. 1 in Smothers Park, an event Payne said could be considered a positive outcome of the pandemic, as it was popular among audiences and musicians.

The 2021-22 season officially will kick off with the "Home for the Holidays" Christmas show in Cannon Hall on Dec. 11. The show will feature timeless classics from "The Nutcracker," "Scrooge," "White

Christmas,” and more. It will feature vocalist Michael Preacely, the Owensboro Symphony Chorus, and the Youth Orchestra.

Kicking of the new year will be “A Night at the Oscars” Jan. 29, 2022 in Cannon Hall. This show will include Oscar-nominated and Oscar-winning songs from movies such as “The Godfather,” “La La Land,” “The Lord of the Rings,” “Titanic,” and others. It will also include piper Eric Rigler as a featured soloist.

“Stairway to Schumann” will be next in the line-up, with a performance in Cannon Hall on March 5, 2022. This show will fuse rock with orchestra, with selections from rock group Led Zeppelin’s masterpiece, “Stairway to Heaven,” and German composer Robert Schumann’s “Fourth Symphony” and the “Saint-Saëns Cello Concerto No. 1.

”On April 16, 2022, “Superheroes: Avengers, Superman, Mahler, and more!” will take place in Cannon Hall. This performance will include classics by Austrian-Hungary composer Gustav Mahler’s “Titan” Symphony No. 1 alongside selections from “Batman” to “The Avengers.”

The last performance of the season was intended to be the season opener, but Payne said rather than risk having to cancel or reschedule the show to COVID-19, officials within the Symphony Orchestra opted to perform the show May 21, 2022. “One Fein Night featuring Michael Feinstein” will include five-time Grammy nominated and multi-platinum selling pianist and vocalist Feinstein.

Debbie Zuerner, Rotary Club president, asked Payne how the Symphony is handling ticket sales and promoting the upcoming season considering the pandemic, and Payne said that process is still on-going.

“Going into next season, we have a few game plans depending on where we are at that moment” in terms of COVID cases, she said. “If we have great restrictions, we are prepared to do multiple concerts with smaller crowds if we have to.”

She said the Owensboro Symphony is ready to move forward, and that musicians are eager to get back on stage in front of live audiences.

“This is what they thrive on,” she said. For more information about the Symphony’s upcoming performances and season, visit theoso.com or call 270-684-0661.

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