

Waxahachie Symphony Association to host world-renowned artists

By Ashley Ford | aford@waxahachietx.com

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Take two trumpets, one French horn, a trombone and a tuba — put them in the hands of virtuoso performers — and you have the Saint Louis Brass. Dispelling the myth that brass music is aimed solely at classical music lovers, their performances are punctuated by humorous antics that audiences love.▲



Sean Chen is lauded as a charismatic rising star with a "million-volt smile" and a "formidable set of fingers." The Van Cliburn's 2013 bronze medalist returns to Texas for an intimate, engaging appearance, where he will perform his own transcriptions of famous pieces, as well as improvisations based on audience suggestions.▲

WAXAHACHIE

The Waxahachie Symphony Association has embarked on its most ambitious season yet.

"Whether brass, classical or jazz, each performer is renown in their genre of music and will bring something special to the WSA stage," said Melissa Chapman, Waxahachie Symphony Association President.

Along with the three classical performances, the organization is introducing two outstanding musical acts — Saint Louis Brass and Henry Brun and the Latin Playerz.

Saint Louis Brass is a group that dispels the myth that brass music is aimed solely at classical music lovers as their performance is punctuated by humorous antics that audiences of all ages will enjoy. This is the first year for Henry Brun and the Latin Playerz to perform.

"Henry Brun and the Latin Playerz are renown for their talent through the United States," Chapman elaborated. "Their show is reminiscent of the old time band leaders like Ricky Ricardo and will be sure to have everyone swaying to their Latin beat."

Saint Louis Brass is scheduled to perform Oct. 6 while Henry Brun and the Latin Playerz will take the stage Feb. 23. Pianist Sean Chen will follow on April 6 and the Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra plays May 4.

The WSA is a nonprofit that receives funding from the Texas Commission on the Arts, which maintains a juried roster of Texas touring artists. Chapman stated the board reviews the artists first with TCA and then considers other groups from the DFW area such as Van Cliburn medalist winners.

"We generally try to provide three classical performances each season, and then two performances that are more of a Pops program in nature," Chapman explained.

The WSA was established in 1976 to enrich Ellis County through musical influence with excellent symphonic performances, education and services. By bringing world-class musicians to Ellis County, the association develops new audiences and provides educational programs to inspire the next generation of musicians without having to travel to the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex and costs a fraction of the price.

Also, the final show of the season by the Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra is free to all Ellis County fifth graders, as well as, the Shirley Singleton Memorial Children's Concert on Nov. 13, which is a private event for schools. "For many of the 1,500 children who attend this

performance, this is the first time they've ever seen an orchestra or been exposed to live music," Chapman explained.

All concerts take place at 7 p.m. at the Hagee Center on the campus of Southwestern Assemblies of God University. Shows last an hour and 30 minutes with a 10-minute intermission. Chapman has been involved with the WSA and said there has been a steady increase in season ticket holders and individual concert sales.

"Last year, we had a 274 percent increase in the attendance to our Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra concert from where we'd been in 2015," Chapman elaborated.

BEYOND THE MUSIC

The WSA does not only bring in musical talent to Waxahachie but also hosts community events and annually provide \$5,000 of scholarships to Ellis County high school seniors.

Since 1990, the WSA has hosted the Belles and Beaus program for high school juniors and seniors to raise students' awareness of the symphony and provide them with education in music appreciation, life skills and etiquette. Belles and Beaus was established by the former chair 20 years ago by Mary Baskin. Since the program started, approximately 500 students have gone through.

Area experts in life skills in money management, interviewing skills and dressing for success, manners, correspondence and social media, train the Belles and Beaus. Participants in the Belles and Beaus program support the WSA by ushering at concerts and representing the WSA in the Christmas parade.

Amanda Lee Hing, a SAGU professor and piano coordinator who also serves as the WSA Music Director, said the WSA has also partnered with Southwestern Assemblies of God University to offer workshop and masterclasses for students in college, public school, as well as private school and who are homeschooled.

"These workshops and masterclasses are conducted as part of the concert series offered by the artists," Hing elaborated. "WSA and SAGU have established a great mutual partnership bringing the wealth of arts and music to a whole new level to the community of Waxahachie."

For more information on the WSA, log onto waxahachiesymphonyassociation.org or follow it on Facebook. Season tickets vary per age and bundle prices are available. Individual tickets cost \$20 per adult, college student tickets cost \$8 while children 18 and under are free.