Mesilla Valley home to numerous Christmas, holiday concerts

Bulletin Staff Report

As the holidays head into full-swing, the Mesilla Valley comes alive with seasonal, holiday and Christmas concerts and musical performances galore.

The season begins this evening – Friday, Dec. 4 – with two holiday-themed musical performances: the New Mexico State University Choirs’ “Holiday Spectacular” at St. Paul’s United Methodist Church and the Santa Fe Opera’s Holiday Show at the Rio Grande Theatre, both at 7:30 p.m.

At St. Paul’s United Methodist Church, 225 W. Griggs Ave., the New Mexico State University Choirs will present their annual “Holiday Spectacular,” featuring K. Lee Scott’s “Christmas Cantata” along with traditional holiday favorites. Tickets are $10 for adults and $5 for students. Call 646-2067 or visit www.music.nmsu.edu.

As a “special gift” to the citizens of Las Cruces, the Santa Fe Opera Educational and Community Outreach Department and the Doña Ana Arts Council present at the historic Rio Grande Theatre, 211 N. Main St., a free holiday concert by the Santa Fe Opera, featuring arias, songs of the season, musical theater selections and sacred music, all performed by up-and-coming opera stars accompanied by SFO Musical Director Kirt Pavitt. All seating is first-come, first-served general admission. For more information, call 523-6403 or visit www.riograndetheatre.com.

Closing out the weekend and the Rio Grande Theatre is “Holiday Magic” by the Mesilla Valley Chorale, set for 3 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 6. The Mesilla Valley Chorale, a community chorale of 60 voices under the direction of Nancy Ritchey, presents this annual holiday concert with a diverse program including sacred selections, spirituals and exciting choral arrangements of holiday favorites with instrumental backup. Doors open at 2:30 p.m. and the show begins promptly at 3 p.m. Tickets are $10 general admission. For more information, or to reserve tickets, call 647-2560.

For its twice-monthly Every Other Tuesday concert series, which offers a free venue for local performers to showcase their talents, the Rio Grande Theatre presents at 6:30 p.m. Tuesday, Dec. 8, a preview of the upcoming “Feliz Navidad! Christmas in Song and Dance” highlighting the cultural celebrations of the Borderlands, which opens the following weekend – more on that below. Admission to Every Other Tuesday is free and open to the public. Call or visit the Rio Grande Theatre’s website for more information.

At 6 p.m. Thursday, Dec. 10, the Las Cruces Ukes, a community group of ukulele enthusiasts, will perform a free holiday concert at Good Samaritan-Las Cruces Village, 3011 Buena Vida Circle. Under the guidance of Chief Musical Officer Bob Hull, they’ll be featuring beloved songs of the holiday season, along with some of their any-time favorites. Attendees will sure to be tapping their toes with songs they know. Bring the family for a fun evening where one can sing along or just sit back and enjoy the show. Good Samaritan’s auditorium is located downstairs in the Social Center. More information about the group can be found at www.facebook.com/lascrucesukes. The Las Cruces Ukes will return for a second concert in December for its annual holiday concert at 7 p.m. Dec. 10.
Composed of key members of the El Paso Symphony Orchestra and other distinguished musicians from the Southwest, El Paso Brass ensemble is renowned for outstanding musicianship and the diversity of its repertoire. Doors open at 6:30 p.m. Adult general admission tickets are $15 and children ages 6 to 8 are $7.50. Tickets are available at www.riograndetheatre.com, the Rio Grande Theatre box office, KRWG FM, The Cutter Gallery and Better Life Pet Food.

Kick off next weekend’s holiday cheer with a Christmas performance from the Mesilla Valley Teen Singers at 7 p.m. Friday, Dec. 11, at University Presbyterian Church, 2010 Wisconsin Ave. “Christmas, Here & Back Again” is the theme for this year’s free holiday performance, featuring a blend of holiday music traditional and modern, including choral songs such as “Carol of the Bells,” “Hush, My Babe” and “I Wonder as I Wander,” as well as some songs performed by the young men and women separately. The singers are accompanied by pianist Barbara Toth.

Mesilla Valley Teen Singers has been performing under the direction of Terry Kay Gilbert for more than 10 years and presents two concerts each year, spring and winter. The group is made up of more than 40 young vocalists from area high schools, as well as homeschooled students. They will begin preparing for their spring concert in January and new singers are always welcome to join. Admission to “Christmas, Here & Back Again” is free. More information about the group is available at http://mvteensingers.blogspot.com.

A Las Cruces tradition celebrating its 20th anniversary, the Living Christmas Tree Concert at First Baptist Church of Las Cruces begins Saturday, Dec. 12, with five performances through Tuesday, Dec. 15.

Last year, close to three thousand southern New Mexicans attended this unique, festive blend of timeless Christmas traditions with the tools of technology. The Living Christmas Tree Concert is a dramatic announcement of the Celebration of Christmas, drawing audiences from across the region. The performances delight people of all ages with the wonders of Christmas.

Adorned with the traditional evergreen and draped with red and gold lame, this steel structure reaches 24 feet to the ceiling of the First Baptist Church Worship Center and serves as a platform for the 50-voice choir accompanied by a 30-piece orchestra. They are joined by the church’s children, youth and senior adult choirs, and a drama cast, to present a worship experience enabling individuals to encounter the Love of God.

The 90-minute presentation is an incomparable expression of the holiday season’s music. This musical extravaganza is animated with dramatic visual effects that are a unique and inspiring observance of the season. As traditional and contemporary Christmas carols are sung, 65,000 computer-controlled lights dazzle audiences with a dramatic spectacle of exciting color.

Performances are 7 p.m. Saturday through Tuesday, Dec. 12-15, with a special 1 p.m. opening-day matinee Saturday, Dec. 12. Tickets are $5 and are available at First Baptist Church, Johnson’s True Value Hardware, Picture Frame Outlet and The Tanned Calf.

The following afternoon at 3 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 12, New Horizons Band of Las Cruces’ win-
An and Dance.” Enjoy the pageantry of a traditional border/cultural celebration of Christmas through the universal language of song and dance. Doors open at 6 p.m., show starts at 6:30 p.m.

The next afternoon – 2 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 13 – the Rio Grande Theatre will feature an encore show of “Feliz Navidad! Christmas in Song And Dance.” Doors open at 1:30 p.m. Tickets are $32 for reserved seats (all fees included). Ticket price includes a meet and greet, with traditional Christmas “antojitos” one hour before the doors open. For more information, call 523-6403 or visit www.riograndetheatre.com.

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“A John Rutter Christmas” features the choral music of John Rutter, who has been described as “the world’s greatest living composer and conductor of choral music.” His festive and familiar holiday carols are being sung all over the world this season in celebration of his 70th birthday. Please join the Las Cru-
ces celebration, featuring Director Carol Nike, accompanist Ji Young Han and the Celestial Sounds women’s choir.

Performances of “A John Rutter Christmas” are 3 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 13, at Stucky Hall, Good Samaritan-Las Cruces Village, and 7:30 p.m. Monday, Dec. 14, at Peace Lutheran Church, 1701 E. Missouri Ave. Admission is free, with a suggested $5 donation to defray expenses. For more information contact Carol Nike at 202-9646.

Last but not least, the Las Cruces Ukes return for a second performance as guests of the Rio Grande Theatre’s Every Other Tuesday series at 6:30 p.m. Tuesday, Dec. 22. Under the guidance of Chief Musical Officer Bob Hull, they’ll be featuring beloved songs of the holiday season, along with some of their anytime favorites. Admission is free.

For more holiday concerts, performances, special events and more, see our Events Calendar, pages B6-7.

Mesilla Valley Teen Singers, a group of 40 young vocalists and students from local high schools and home schools, will hold their annual holiday performance “Christmas, Here & Back Again” Friday, Dec. 11, at University Presbyterian Church.
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