

LOS ANGELES JEWISH SYMPHONY PRESENTS “EXALTATION- BIBLICAL STORIES THROUGH MUSIC”

- by B.Quintanilla



Sunday, August 14, 2011, the Ford Amphitheater - Los Angeles, CA presented "Performance under the Stars". Featured Music was Inspired by Bible's Rich Literary Heritage with Special Guests: Celebrated Vocalist and Two-Time Grammy Nominee Amick Byram and Fifteen-Year- Old Violin Virtuoso Stephen Waarts.

"The Bible is a source of inspiration and tradition for many of the world's religions," says Green, who has brought neglected as well as new and familiar orchestral works on Jewish themes to the concert stage. "Our program celebrates the commonality of the Bible's timeless and heroic stories of love and betrayal, of prophets and people, of kings and shepherds and of good and evil, which serve to link different religions and cultures together."

The evening started majestically with soloist Hanna Drew as she performed the national anthem and made us all feel the lyrics with her talented voice; as an introduction to a great evening where the audience would enjoy an engaging yet celestial musical experience.

The concert, led by Artistic Director Noreen Green, featured a variety of classical, film and musical theatre works. The night's program included two parts; the first being instrumental with music from Franz Waxman and Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco, two film composers among the elite group of European émigrés that immeasurably enriched the cultural life of Los Angeles. On the program, Waxman's lushly romantic film score, "*The Story of Ruth*", a stirring depiction of loyalty, romance, faith and devotion; and Castelnuovo-Tedesco's brilliant and seldom-played *Violin Concerto #2*, subtitled "*The Prophets*", a musical portrayal of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Elijah, featuring Steve Waarts.

This virtuoso violinist delighted us with a three-part concerto that if one could explain the feeling it would have to be the sensation of a journey while traveling to an ethereal world created through a poetic imagination as he played the violin.

The second half of the concert allowed us to appreciate the talent and amazing voice of Amick Byram through vocals and musical theatre works. Amick performed music from stage and screen ranging from Andrew Lloyd Weber's "*Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*", Steven Schwartz's "*Prince of Egypt*" to Jerry Bock's "*The Apple Tree*", from "*King David*"- "How are the Mighty Fallen"...to name a few. In each one of the songs, Amick created a time machine where the audience was taken on a musical journey through the bible times and places reviving through music the magical and meaningful content of such time. A distinctive way of singing and contagious inspiration to celebrate these characters lives in melody.

To conclude the program and saving one of the best melodies for last, "You'll Never Be the Same". A song described by Amick Byram and who along with a friend, co-wrote for the Israeli Ministry of Tourism. It was translated to many languages and conveys the same message of the spiritual experience when you visit Israel.

This truly was an enchanting night and a musical treat under the stars ...the Ford Amphitheater allowed for an intimate musical experience which is just the perfect venue To enjoy such a caliber of artists and their celestial sounds as they played one of the most unique classical concerts of all times.



ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Steven Waarts (Right) -Fifteen-year-old violin virtuoso started his violin studies at age 5½ and piano studies at age 8. He is a scholarship student in the San Francisco Conservatory Preparatory Division, where he currently studies violin and composition. Since January 2009, Waarts has studied with

Alexander Barantschik, Concertmaster of San Francisco Symphony, and he also studies with Baroque violinist Elizabeth Blumenstock. This past November, Stephen won first prize in the 2010 International Louis Spohr Competition for young violinists, Junior Division, in Weimar, Germany, and also a special award for the best interpretation of a romantic concerto. In August 2010, Stephen won first prize in the International Summit Music Festival's Concerto competition, Junior Division, in New York. Prior to that award, Waarts had won First Prize at a number of International and United States music competitions including the 2009 KDFC Classical Star Search Competition.

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