

Trans-Siberian Orchestra to perform 'Beethoven's Last Night' at Civic Center

Magic City Productions presents Trans-Siberian Orchestra (TSO) at the Mid-Hudson Civic Center on Saturday, May 21, at 8 p.m. Doors open at 7 p.m. for TSO's performance of "Beethoven's Last Night."

TSO founder Paul O'Neill has been working on a concept he likes to call "rock theater," which combines a theatrical experience with arena rock.

With "Beethoven's Last Night,"

O'Neill and TSO set their sights on one of the most beloved and important composers the world has ever seen, Ludwig van Beethoven.

"I was always fascinated by Beethoven. Beethoven did not come from a rich family, made his way to Vienna—which at that time was the capital of the musical world—and by the time he was 21 was recognized as one of the greatest piano players in the

world by the likes of Mozart," said O'Neill. "By the time he was 25, he realized he was going completely deaf; and if he had just crawled into a corner and given up on life, nobody would have judged him harshly. But instead he went on to write some of the greatest music that has ever been created, music that would bring joy, happiness, peace to countless billions of people but that he himself would never hear."

Reserved tickets are \$53.50 and \$43.50 and go on sale Saturday, March 19, at noon. Tickets will be available at the Mid-Hudson Civic Center Box Office (14 Civic Center Plaza, Poughkeepsie) and through Ticketmaster, www.ticketmaster.com or (800) 745-3000.

For additional information about TSO, visit www.trans-siberian.com.

Hollywood on the Hudson

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ing for blood to go everywhere," said Matt. "You care for certain characters and you can identify with people."

In making the movie, Rich and Matt had a tight budget of \$1,500. They sent e-mails to local actors they knew, including the County Players, and to other friends to help with the behind-the-scenes activity. Several casting sessions were held to assign roles for the

production.

"These are all volunteers who are getting paid with food and with credit toward a film reel that they can add to their resume," said Matt.

Rich said he accomplished most of the writing on train rides during his commuting to Hunter College between home and New York City in 2009 and during breaks from classes.

Filming was done in Poughkeepsie, Hyde Park, Wappingers Falls and Pawling from March 2010 through August 2010. The post-production work took place from September 2010 through February 2011.

Shooting the film required planning and patience to accommodate the various participants with their jobs and schedules. Rich and Matt also had to block out time with their own schedules.

"We still went to Hunter College, which we commuted from here [Wappingers Falls], about an hour and a half, each way," said Matt. They were both going to school full time and working full time to raise the needed money to invest in the film production. In addition, Matt also had an internship to fulfill during the making of the movie.

"There's three things pulling at you, while you have the fourth thing [the film] that's your true passion to do," said Matt. "If it's your calling, your passion, not matter what, it's going to happen. You're going to get it done, and it is done."

Matt did most of the editing, spending countless hours to complete the task.

"Once you get into the editing process, whether it's sounds or throwing in effects, anything, [it] takes the movie from great to amazing," said Matt.

"The other day, I saw a finished scene and it gave me the chills," said Rich. "It was incredible: A film that scared the crap out of me and I knew what was coming, because I wrote it."

"Z-Day" has original music created by a friend of Matt and Rich, who is attending college in Boston.

"It's really exciting, I can't wait 'til the premiere," said Rich. "We're hoping to pack out the James and Betty Hall Theater."

They chose Dutchess Community College to show their film, because it's where they began their college education.

"It's our roots, we started at Dutchess, that's where we started film making," said Rich. "Dana Dorrity, the chairperson, was the first person I had teach me screenwriting."

Rich said it's a good way to promote the communications program and the school, "to show the local area that they have an excellent college that's right in their backyard."

"It [film] came out better than I thought it would," added Matt. "It's an amazing experience as well as an addition to the resume; and we're going to send this out to film festivals."

"Do what you love, not what's convenient," added Rich. "I guess that's my motto."

'Circle Mirror Transformation'

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ordinary lives of otherwise unremarkable people.

Direction by Josh Hecht is impressive in its attention to detail. Every actor is contributing to every scene at nearly every moment, even when our attention is drawn to but one or two of them. We might question whether it was necessary to give Schultz a Red Sox T-shirt. After all, there are certainly some Yankee fans to be found in Vermont and Schultz is such an otherwise simpatico guy. On the other hand, that's hardly a showstopper.

The only other suggestion we might offer is that an intermission or at least a "Seventh Inning Stretch" might be inserted somehow. Maybe as a part of one of the acting exercises? Two hours on the very hard seats at Cunneen-Hackett reminded us of the wisdom we

learned years ago from Syd Silverman, the great and long time publisher of *Variety*: "The mind can only absorb what the bottom can endure."

All of that said, it's an exceptional evening of theater. Half Moon Theatre specializes in bringing us a sophisticated, high quality, if often quirky, authentic Off-Broadway experience in the shadow of the Mid-Hudson bridge. They don't promise us "Finian's Rainbow," just fascinating theater for its own sake. Local lovers of theater will not be disappointed with "Circle Mirror Transformation."

Jim Donick is an award-winning automotive writer who dabbles from time to time in other topics, including theater and travel. He is the editor of Vintage Sports Car magazine and contributes to a number of publications.

'The Drowsy Chaperone'

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local theater. This is a "Big Broadway Musical." To succeed it needs a lot of great singers, a bunch of competent dancers, a band and all the support folks to make it happen. There isn't a badly delivered song in the entire evening. Heck, there isn't even one we would have thought of as "so-so."

Victoria Howland is Mrs. Tottendale, the dotty old lady who is the hostess for the wedding. She's marvelous and appears as out of touch with reality as one could hope for. One could be excused for believing she had been spending her time on another planet.

Overall, Michael Britt does well as the man in the chair.

Thomas Webb is at his very best ever playing Feldzieg, the producer.

Aldolpho is played by David Foster with exquisite timing and a nicely caricatured phony accent.

The gangsters are hard not to love. They are clearly "borrowed" from Cole Porter's "Kiss Me, Kate," where they sing "Brush Up Your Shakespeare." Our gangsters are played by Dietz Farther and Michael Frohnhoefer.

Maria Hickey displays an elegant singing voice as Janet Van De Graaff and does her own star turns as a dancer.

Matthew Patane is amazingly believable as a 1920s sort of leading man. He sings marvelously and he's not a bad tap dancer either. His dancing on roller skates is an unexpected dividend.

The orchestra/band never once overpowers the singers and leaves us with the impression they are a larger ensemble than the program indicates—an exceptionally well balanced backdrop to a superb show.

The man in the chair wraps it as well as it can be wrapped. He finishes his description and says: "I know it's not a perfect show ... but it does what a musical is supposed to do; it takes you to another world. And, it gives you a little tune to carry with you in your head for when you're feeling blue."

Don't miss it.

Jim Donick is an award-winning automotive writer who dabbles from time to time in other topics, including theater and travel. He is the editor of Vintage Sports Car magazine and contributes to a number of publications.

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