



MAGICAL MUSICAL MOMENTS

Writer Donna Kublin

It takes singers with talent, passion, and commitment to bring music to life, to give us the joy and transcendence that comes from favorite songs well sung. Gifted singers provide magical musical moments, those unforgettable experiences that can transform our mood, our day, or in some cases, our lives.

John Stevenson and Kate Campbell Stevenson, two such gifted people from the East Coast, will perform in North Phoenix and Sun City on October 2nd and 4th. Titled *Sounds of Broadway*, the concerts are a benefit for ProMusica Arizona Chorale & Orchestra of North Phoenix (PMAZ) and will feature them performing “in character,” as they sing our favorite show tunes.

Accomplished singers and actors, John and Kate have performed nationally and internationally, and John recently sang at the Kennedy Center’s Salute to Apollo’s 40th Anniversary. They have performed in beloved musicals including *Oklahoma*, *My Fair Lady*, *Man of*

LaMancha, *Sound of Music*, *Camelot*, *South Pacific*, and *Sweeney Todd*.

Both John’s and Kate’s lives have been shaped by magical musical moments. From the beginning, music was a big part of family life for Kate with some of her earliest memories being of her dad, Richard Campbell, a surgeon and an accomplished pianist, and her family all making music together. But it was age six that was magical and set the course of her life. Her parents took Kate and her three siblings to see the pre-Broadway showing of *Mary Martin* in *Sound of Music*. From that moment, Kate knew singing and performing on stage was what she wanted to do.

Kate studied music at Indiana University then transferred to Michigan State University, when the family tragedy of her brother’s death prompted her to move closer to home. Performing and having her parents attend her performances was the first time Kate saw the power of performing arts as a way of healing.

Continuing to pursue her goals, Kate’s perseverance paid off when, as if in a fairy tale, she was the understudy in summer stock; and the director fired the lead performer; and Kate took the role. She went on to do major roles in musical theater from then on. At age twenty, while visiting family in Washington, D.C., Kate was taken by a theatre critic to some of the theatres in the area. This is when she heard John sing, as he was performing as Rutledge in the musical *1776*. She loved his voice, especially as he sang “Molasses to Rum.” When Kate auditioned for *Camelot*, which John was directing, it turned out that he loved her voice as well – she was selected to play Guinevere.

John and Kate co-starred in many shows together and were married in 1977. Kate describes her experience: “We’d been working together in theatre for twenty-one months, either as co-stars or John directing me in a show. When I’d met John, he was a confirmed bachelor. Within three months I knew with great certainty that John was the one for me, but it took me eighteen months to “convince” him that marriage was a good idea. John and I were married during the run of *Guys and Dolls*.” In *Guys and Dolls*, Sky Masterson (played by John) is really not the marrying type, until he unexpectedly falls in

love with a Salvation Army’s Mission Doll. “Now I’m not quite a Mission Doll... but I did come from a small town in the Midwest,” said Kate with a smile.

As a young girl Kate would sing along with original Broadway show records, dreaming that she was performing duets on stage with Howard Keel or Gordon McCray. “What is wonderfully heartwarming for me is to realize that, as I grew up, studied, and learned my craft, my dreams became reality- especially singing with my husband - my own personal Howard Keel!” said Kate.

Currently, Kate performs across the U.S. in an innovative one-woman musical show, which she created. In *Women: Back to the Future*, Kate portrays three dynamic women with clever onstage costume and make-up changes. She has a “cast” of ten from which to choose, and she selects the women that are most fitting for the occasion.

John Stevenson has always loved to sing and perform. He was in three high school musical groups: chamber choir, the boys’ octet, and the madrigal, which met in the mornings before school started. His grandmother knew he liked to sing, and she sent him the money needed to take voice lessons.



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At Indiana University, John studied with Roger Havranek, head of voice faculty for the School of Music for thirty years. Their son Owen, who is currently singing on a cruise ship, majored in voice at I.U. and studied with Havranek as well. Both John and Owen have fond memories of being part of the Singing Hoosiers, America's premiere collegiate concert show choir.

One of John's most thrilling experiences was when he was part of the Army chorus, and they sang the Military Mass written by Czech composer, Bohuslav Martinu. It was the first American performance in 1968 during the uprising, and the score had been smuggled out of then Communist Czechoslovakia. "The piece was so emotional, especially the last line which goes 'cut us off from our enemies,' said John. "I will never forget the moment we sang it."

After the military, John became involved in musical theater in earnest and went on to perform and direct more than sixty musicals, including productions in Northern Indiana for Wagon Wheel Playhouse and in Washington, D.C., for the Burn Brae Dinner Theater, one of the top theaters of its kind in the U.S. for over thirty years. He did a few things in New York City, but realized it wasn't the lifestyle he wanted.

After marriage and family, John shifted his focus to a more stable career and joined Voice of America where he now serves as Director of the English Division. His division provides fourteen hours a day of daily, worldwide radio programming and weekday TV programming to Africa. His so-called Special English programming is broadcast world-wide and provides daily radio programs for those who are learning English, and their active Internet sites are moving to mobile devices, Facebook, Twitter, and podcasts.

John also is the Director of Music for Colesville Presbyterian Church in Silver Spring, Maryland, which has a wonderful musical



program with many active members, including Kate. With John as conductor, the full choir and an orchestra of fourteen instruments recently performed John Rutter's *Magnificat*. "It was a great moment," said John. "It was the perfect piece for the choir, and I loved conducting it."

Daughter Juliana, who is an accomplished pianist and singer, received her MSW this past May and is a social worker at a middle school in Harlem.

With their many talents, John and Kate also believe in using them to help worthy causes. "Last year we did a benefit concert, and that triggered getting us back to singing together," said Kate. "We had a lot of fun singing songs that have meant so much to us."

Kate remembers a benefit for the hospital in her hometown of Ionia, Michigan, in 1993 where she hadn't been back since age eighteen. Her dad played the piano, and she sang songs people had heard her sing before, as well as ones from her career. "It was a musical celebration with a standing room only crowd of 900, and it was a wonderful validation that paid tribute to my whole family."

John and Kate feel privileged to use their talents to help raise money for PMAZ. "We are so impressed with what they have accomplished over the past six years, and we are happy to support them," said Kate. This is not the first time Kate has helped PMAZ. She performed her one-woman show in Anthem to a sold out crowds in the Fall of 2004.

Asked about the *Sounds of Broadway* concert, John said, "I think people will enjoy this concert. The music is wonderful, and people love listening to it. And it will be entertaining as well, since Kate and I love to share our stories." With these talented singers, the concert is bound to provide many magical musical moments for all of us.



ABOUT THE CONCERT:

"*Sounds of Broadway*"

Friday Oct 2, 2009 @ 7:30 PM

Desert View Bible Church

105 W. Carefree Highway, Phoenix 85086

Ticket price: \$20

There will be a silent auction and refreshments at 6:30 PM

Sunday Oct 4, 2009 @ 3 PM

American Lutheran Church of Sun City

17200 N. Del Webb Blvd, Sun City, AZ 85373

Ticket price: \$15

Where to buy tickets: www.promusicaaz.org, Anthem Community Center, Andrew Z Fine Diamonds and Jewelry, at the door.
Ticket email: tickets@promusicaaz.org Phone: 623.465.4650

Selections from *Oklahoma*, *Sound of Music*, *I Do, I Do*, *Camelot*, *Shenandoah*, *The Fantasticks*, *Into the Woods*, *Phantom of the Opera*, *Porgy & Bess*, *Ragtime*, *A Little Night Music* and more. The Stevensons will be accompanied by PMAZ pianist, Karen Taylor. This festive event will also feature performances by PMAZ's small vocal and string ensembles. The Friday concert also includes video and a silent auction.

ABOUT PROMUSICA ARIZONA CHORALE AND ORCHESTRA

In its seventh season, ProMusica Arizona Chorale and Orchestra is a community chorale and orchestra comprised of more than sixty singers and forty-five musicians from throughout the North Valley. PMAZ is committed to building community through music by providing performance opportunities for talented musicians and delighting audiences of all ages.

More about Kate Campbell Stevenson can be found at www.katecampbellstevenson.com

SOUNDS OF BROADWAY

FRIDAY, OCT 2 2009
AUCTION 6:30 SHOW 7:30




TICKETS \$20

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