



ASO and Riverbender Partner for Holiday Concert

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ALTON – The holiday season is in full swing, and Alton Symphony Orchestra will not let it pass without sharing its own brand of seasonal cheer.

ASO's Holiday Concert will feature Act II of Tchaikovsky's "The Nutcracker" and popular holiday standards like "Sleigh Ride," "Have Yourself A Merry Little Christmas," "Rudolph, the Red-Nosed Reindeer" and "White Christmas," topped off with an audience sing-a-long.

"This December concert will be special," said ASO President Jerre Honke. "The audience will enjoy it, and we enjoy seeing lots of people in the crowd."

During intermission, patrons can browse the annual holiday basket silent auction, bidding on the ones they like best. Around 50 baskets are made by members of the ASO orchestra and board in an assortment of themes, with something for everyone. Selections include candle baskets, spa packages, music CDs, coffee and wine themes, golf, pets and children's favorites, etc. Proceeds help defray ASO's annual expenses.

This year, the symphony is partnering with Riverbender.com Community and Teen Center in support of the center, which is a tremendous community asset, Honke said.

John Hentrich, executive director of Riverbender, said partnerships like this are a great way to let the community know about the center and to introduce the symphony to new audiences.

“We’re really excited about this partnership and hope that it will become a long-term relationship. It’s a win-win,” he said. “We are two nonprofit organizations trying to increase awareness for the center and for the orchestra and its concerts.

“ASO feels it is important to partner with the area’s many fine family-oriented nonprofit groups,” Honke said. “The last three years we have reached out to organizations facing similar economic challenges as the Alton Symphony.”

Riverbender.com is issuing certificates that when presented at the door the night of the concert, and ASO will donate \$5 of the ticket price to Riverbender.com Community and Teen Center, specifically toward its bank vault restoration project. Certificates are available at the youth center or at www.RiverBender.com.

“ASO is happy to make a generous donation to an organization that is making such a difference in the community,” Honke said.

Riverbender.com is transforming the old bank vault in the former bank building it occupies into a multipurpose room for after-school education programming.

As a sort of new age digital classroom, fun educational games like trivia and scholar bowl will keep teens entertained. Also open on dance nights, the room will turn into a Gotham City bat cave with glow-in-the-dark carpet. The vault room will also be available to rent for small business meetings.

“It will be a fun place to learn and meet,” Hentrich said.

ASO’s Holiday Concert will be led by Maestro Leon Burke III, now in his second year as conductor.

“Leon really enjoys the holiday concert, which gets everyone else in the spirit,” Honke said. “It’s always well attended and so enjoyable.”

Honke said Burke has done a wonderful job with the orchestra.

“He’s so talented,” she said. “He’s enthusiastic and energetic and makes everyone want to play their very best.”

Honke has played cello in the orchestra since she was 17.

“But it was called the Alton Civic Orchestra back when I first joined,” she said.

She is thrilled that her granddaughter, Katie Scoma, is now playing cello as well, and her younger granddaughter, Emily Scoma, now plays viola, both enjoying classical music like their grandmother. She hopes they will be a part of ASO someday.

ASO's Holiday Concert will be held at 7 p.m., Saturday, Dec 10 at [Lewis and Clark Community College's Hatheway Cultural Center](#). Ticket prices are \$18 for adults, \$15 for seniors and students. Alton High School and Lewis and Clark Community College students are free with a current ID. Tickets can be purchased at Halpin Music and Duke Bakery in Alton, and Dick's Flowers in Alton and Wood River, at the Web site at www.altonsymphony.org or at the door. For more information, call (618) 463-6933.