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THE ROANOKE TIMES

EXTRA

Symphony conductor celebrates 25th season

MIKE ALLEN
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A 29-year-old assistant conductor with the Minnesota Symphony came to Roanoke in October 1995 to lead the city's orchestra in a concert that ended with a performance of Czech composer Antonin Dvorak's "From the New World."

The late Seth Williamson, reviewing the piece for The Roanoke Times, wrote that "the performance got many shouts of bravo and a quick standing ovation for a triumphant end to this audition season."

With the COVID-19 pandemic shutdowns over for now, that same conductor, David Stewart Wiley, is preparing to celebrate his 25th season as Roanoke Symphony Orchestra's music director and conductor.

"My heart is full that we are back doing live performance," Wiley said. "We are so hungry to get back, because we miss that special relationship with our audiences."

RSO has announced a full 14-concert season. The final performance in the upcoming masterworks series will conclude with Dvorak's "From the New World," the symphony that introduced Wiley to Roanoke.

"It's been many years since I've done it here," Wiley said. "It happens to be, along with some of the core Beethoven symphonies, probably one of the most beloved and important pieces" in classical music. "I've kind of been saving it for this season."

(By the way, for those of you who, like me, aren't deeply educated in classical music, Dvorak is typically pronounced by Americans as "di-VOR-zhak.")

The Roanoke symphony has brought back the employees who were furloughed during the pandemic shutdowns, said RSO Executive Director David Crane. "We're walking into a new season with a fresh start. We're all full tilt, full steam ahead!"

RSO has received a federal



THE ROANOKE TIMES, FILE 2021

In May at Elmwood Park, David Stewart Wiley and the Roanoke Symphony Orchestra performed before a live audience for the first time since the COVID-19 shutdowns.

Roanoke Symphony Orchestra 2021-22 season

Aug. 28, 7 p.m., Elmwood Park: "Symphony Under the Stars" with Southwest Virginia Ballet. Free.

Oct. 16-17, Jefferson Center, Shaftman Performance Hall: Masterworks, "Maestro Wiley & Friends: From Baroque to Billy Joel." Celebrating 25 years of Wiley's RSO leadership.

Oct. 29, Salem Civic Center: Pops, "Sting & The Police" tribute concert with Jeans 'n Classics.

Nov. 13-14, Shaftman: Masterworks, "Wilson Plays Mozart," featuring pianist Terrence Wilson.

Dec. 3, Salem Civic Center: "Holiday Pops Spectacular" with RSO Chorus, Roanoke Valley Children's Choir, tenor Brian Thorsett, trumpeter Ashley Hall and more.

Dec. 10, Cave Spring United Methodist Church: Destination Concert, "Holiday Brass."

Dec. 14, Shaftman: Handel's "Messiah" with Roanoke Symphony Chorus.

Feb. 12-13, 2022, Shaftman: Masterworks, "Vienna Valentine."

March 6, Cave Spring UMC: Destination Concert, "Serenade to Music," RSO principal winds play Mozart.

March 13, Shaftman: Masterworks, "Transcendent Mozart," featuring four soloist singers.

April 6, Grandin Theatre: Destination Concert, "Lights! Camera! Classics!" themes from the silver screen.

April 22, 2022, Salem Civic Center: Pops, "Sweet Caroline: Music of Neil Diamond" with guest singer Jay White.

May 7, 2022, Berglund Center, Berglund Performing Arts Theatre: Masterworks, "From the New World" by Dvorak.

June 17, 2022, Salem Civic Center: Pops, "Hotel California: A Salute to the Eagles."

Subscription packages are on sale. For more information call 343-9127 or visit <https://rso.com/packages-group-tickets/>.

Shuttered Venue Operators Grant, funds from a program intended to help performing arts organizations, museums, movie theaters and similar businesses hurt by the pandemic closings. Crane declined to disclose the exact amount of the grant.

"We're going to use these funds to pay musician salaries, rent the halls," he said.

"We're not asking for a reduction from the concert halls because we've all had a bad year. We can go forward and support our partners, support our artists fully!"

The grant also will assist with operating expenses. Given the uncertainty over how confident patrons will be about returning to concert halls as the news carries word of virus flare-ups, "we

expect ticket sales to potentially be light," Crane said.

"We respect the science and make sure that we respect doing what is safe and allowed for our patrons and our musicians," Wiley said.

Orchestra Long Island in New York, the other symphony that Wiley leads — and uses to make connections with soloists whom he subsequently brings to

Roanoke — also has weathered the pandemic. In fact, he recently conducted a concert celebrating his 20th anniversary with the Long Island outfit.

"We kept the music alive there," he said. "We just adapted, you know. Like here, we did online things during the pandemic. To my knowledge, we were the only professional orchestra on Long Island that kept doing stuff during the pandemic."

Longtime RSO patrons can expect to see favorite guest performers return this season, including mandolin player Jeff Midkiff, soprano Amy Cofield and cellist Zuill Bailey, who won a Grammy in 2017 for best classical instrumental solo.

The symphony also will introduce pianist Terrence Wilson to Roanoke audiences. Wiley described Wilson, a Bronx native, as "a real rising American star." In a November concert at Jefferson Center in Roanoke, Wilson will play works by Mozart.

That same program also will feature the Roanoke premiere of "Perseus," a relatively new piece from Korean-American composer (and James Madison University graduate) Soon Hee Newbold inspired by the adventures of the hero from Greek mythology.

Putting together a concert and a season is "all about these collaborations, and a live performance that honestly people can't get with streaming," Wiley said. "I guess my message to the community is, if people are getting tired of all of the streaming stuff that they're seeing online, to reconnect with the arts. It's so important, now more than ever, that people support us through their attendance and participation in all that we do."

■ **ONLINE:** Go to this story at [roanoke.com](https://www.roanoke.com) for more photos and a video of David Stewart Wiley talking about the RSO's new season

Out & About: Old Fiddlers Convention

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Very little has stopped the Old Fiddlers Convention, in Galax, from its multi-decade mission of old-time music competition and fun.

World War II knocked out one year, due to travel restrictions, according to the event's website. Then came the COVID-19 pandemic, which last year kept organizers from pitching the 85th go-round.

Even as Delta variants and breakthrough infections — not to mention the unvaccinated — continue to make news, the convention is on, starting Monday at its

longtime venue, Felts Park.

Youth category fiddlers will see it off on that day, while such contests as old-time fiddle, bluegrass banjo, band and folk songs are part of the days to follow.

Galax-based Moose Lodge No. 733 posted on the event's website: "This year's convention will go on as scheduled!!! *** All Covid protocols in effect at the time of the convention will be strictly followed ***"

As usual, the real fun happens at night in the park's campground, as jam sessions emerge under the moon and stars — or clouds, rain, and mud, as has been the case frequently enough.

Old Fiddlers Convention

When: 5:30 p.m. Monday (youth fiddlers), 6 p.m. Tuesday (old-time fiddle, Dobro, mandolin), 6 p.m. Wednesday (bluegrass fiddle, dulcimer, bluegrass banjo), 6 p.m. Thursday (clawhammer banjo, autoharp, guitar), 6 p.m. Friday (old-time band and bluegrass band), noon Saturday (folk song, flatfoot dance), 6 p.m. Saturday (bluegrass band, old-time band); winners announced early Sunday

Where: Felts Park, Galax

Tickets: \$7 Monday-Aug. 12, \$11 Aug. 13, \$13 Aug. 14, children free with paying adult, \$45 full session, \$100 camping

More info: 276-236-8541, oldfiddlersconvention.com

Resuming a national tour? Oh, Hall & Oates can go for that

MARK KENNEDY
Associated Press

NEW YORK — John Oates of Hall & Oates, the multi-platinum soul-pop duo behind hits like "Private Eyes," "Rich Girl" and "Maneater," is eager to return to concert stages again and prepared for an extra loud reaction when he does.

"I think there's definitely going to be an energy there that is very unique. No one's ever experienced a time like this in our modern world," he said. "Quite honestly, this is the longest I have not played live in my en-

tire professional career."

Hall & Oates had planned to tour in 2020 but only managed one stop at Madison Square Garden in late February before COVID-19 restrictions led to the nation's concert venues being shuttered.

The new tour kicked off Thursday in Mansfield, Massachusetts, and hits such cities as Philadelphia, Cincinnati, Milwaukee, Denver, Los Angeles and Honolulu, before ending with a two-night stand Dec. 3-4 in Mashantucket, Connecticut.

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