



An inspirational night at the Woodlands

By JEFF MEEK / Managing editor

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"We wanted selections for this performance to be meaningful, inspirational," J. Mark McVey told the Hot Springs Village Voice backstage on Wednesday night. Well, he and the rest of "The Inspiration of Broadway" were successful in doing so as the group brought a nearly full Woodlands Auditorium crowd to its feet several times.

The group is made up of Ernie Haase, a Grammy nominee, McVey, who among many accomplishments, did 3,268 performances in "Les Miserables," Paul Harkey, Dustin Doyle and Devin McGlamery.

Accompanying the group was Tyler Vestal on piano and David Griffith, who played several instruments during the show.

Beginning with "Get Happy," the group got the crowd going right away. They followed it with the rich, powerful sound of "Any Dream Will Do" from "Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat."

Haase then stepped forward and told the audience they put this show together four years ago. "When we did, we decided we wanted to travel to play in two special places, Carnegie Hall and the Woodlands Auditorium," he joked.

After introducing the others, the men sang "Together." "We call it our theme song," said Haase. Next came "Sunrise, Sunset."

When Harkey sang his bass part, I swear my seat was vibrating from the incredible sound of his low voice, just amazing. In my opinion, the range of their voices during this song was remarkable.

Haase said, "We're thrilled you love these classic songs. They're great because they've stood the test of time."

Harkey got my seat moving again when he did "Ol' Man River," a "Showboat" classic. This was a crowd favorite, as they cheered and whistled in appreciation. "Get Away Jordan" was next. This one got just about everyone in the audience clappin' and tappin.' The album of the same name won a Dove Award for Southern Gospel Album of the Year and the song was nominated for Southern Gospel Song of the Year.

McVey then beautifully sang "Music of the Night," a seductive hit from "Phantom of the Opera." He did it with such passion it gave me a few goosebumps and the audience responded with another standing ovation. Several other hits followed, like "Sit Down You're Rocking the Boat," and "Climb Every Mountain," which closed out the first act. "Blow, Gabriel, Blow," "The Impossible Dream" and "Seasons of Love," as well as Vestal's piano playing "Great Is Thy Faithfulness," another crowd favorite, followed.

Next came one of my favorites, an immensely powerful song, "Bring Him Home." You could hear a pin drop in the auditorium until McVey finished, then a thunderous ovation for this very talented man.

Next came a touching moment when each group member spoke of what they hoped the audience would take home from the performance. "It's the intention of the show to inspire and it's my hope you leave here inspired. That a passion burns within you to climb that mountain," said McVey.

"Be inspired to see the beauty of the little things in life," said Harkey.

"Forgive and don't keep score," said McGlamery. "Take advantage of every sunrise and sunset."

"Take time to smell the roses. Wake up every morning to know there is someone bigger than you," added Haase.

They then performed "You'll Never Walk Alone," which together with their previous comments made for a few emotional moments as the performance neared its end. It was very touching, personal and so heartfelt. I felt like I was in Sunday morning church service and I loved it.

After yet another rousing ovation, the group closed its performance with an encore of the Fifth Dimension's "Let the Sunshine In," which was very uplifting.

Also announced during the evening was the 2017-2018 Concerts Association schedule. Sept. 6-8 is "The Carole King Song Book," by Suzanne O Davis.

"The Broadway Boys" take the stage from Oct. 11-13. "Shadows of the '60s" performs Nov. 8-10, followed by "Presley, Perkins, Lewis and Cash," Feb. 14-16, 2018.

Closing out the season March 14-16 will be "The Doo Wop Project."

Membership subscriptions for all five shows is \$100. Current members can renew beginning May 1.

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