

KCO, Aaron Kula Conductor, Presents 'South Pacific'

Maestro Aaron Kula's 40-member KCO will present the concert version of Rodgers and Hammerstein's 1949 Broadway musical "South Pacific."



BY TERRI BERNS | 5/23/2016

Maestro Aaron Kula's 40-member KCO, joined by a cast of 10 principal actors and singers along with 30-members from the Gay Men's Chorus of South Florida, will present the concert version of Rodgers and Hammerstein's 1949 Broadway musical "South Pacific." This

11th annual Spirit of America concert will be performed on Sunday, June 26 at 3 p.m. at Florida Atlantic University's Carole and Barry Kaye Performing Arts Auditorium, 777 Glades Road, Boca Raton campus.

"South Pacific: In Concert" will include a tour de force cast of more than 80 performers reviving this beloved musical, accompanied by the original orchestration used on Broadway. The audience will experience a concert adaptation created for the 2006 Carnegie Hall benefit concert and broadcast on PBS' "Great Performances."

Based on James Michener's Pulitzer Prize-winning "Tales from the South Pacific," the Tony award-winning play is a story about an American nurse who falls in love with a French expatriate during World War II. Throughout the musical, the story's characters struggle with their ideas of prejudice and interracial relationships while also coping with an evolving world war.

Rodgers and Hammerstein's witty and powerful musical, written almost 75 years ago, still resonates with many complex life issues that Americans continue to struggle with today.

"I have always loved the beautiful melodies and underlying message of hope, faith and love in 'South Pacific,'" said Kula, conductor and director of music performance and education at FAU Libraries. "So many of the show's notable songs including 'There's Nothing Like a Dame,' 'Gonna Wash That Man Right Outa My Hair,' 'Younger Than Springtime,' and 'Some Enchanted Evening,' will surely have the audience singing along and feeling the emotional angst of this story."

Graham Fandrei (Emile) returns to perform with KCO for the fifth time along with his wife, Rebekah, who makes her fourth appearance with KCO. Fandrei, a Miami resident, director of the Young Artist Program at Florida Grand Opera, has performed more than 20 opera roles throughout the United States, Europe and Asia.

Rebekah Diaz-Fandrei (Nellie) has performed extensively across the musical genres: from her performance with Florida Grand Opera's production of Luisa Fernanda under the baton of Maestro Plácido Domingo, to the soloist in George Crumb's eclectic Ancient Voices of Children with the SoBe Institute of the Arts. Diaz-Fandrei serves as director of Education and Community Engagement for Florida Grand Opera.

Avery Sommers (Bloody Mary) has numerous Broadway credits including "Ain't Misbehavin'," "Show Boat," "Chicago," and has toured with Chita Rivera and Joel Grey. She was nominated for Best Featured Actress in New York's Broadway World in 2011 for "Hairspray" and nominated for a Carbonell Award for Best Featured Actress in a Musical.

Daniel Bates (Lt. Cable) a native of Elmira N.Y., recently finished two years as a Young Artist with "Florida Grand Opera" where he performed the many lead roles. Bates has also performed with the Santa Fe Opera and has won many prestigious competitions and awards.

Kula founded KCO in 1997 with a mission to perform music from a broad range of genres, cultures and historical periods from FAU Libraries' print music collections. He is credited with composing and orchestrating more than 200 new works — successfully taking the

library's music from "shelf to stage." The ensemble performs across genres including folk, jazz, classical and musical theater. KCO holds the distinction of being the only professional ensemble-in-residence at an academic library in the country.

The annual Spirit of America concert celebrates FAU Libraries' "Marvin and Sybil Weiner Spirit of America Collection" which was donated to FAU Libraries in 2006. The collection contains more than 13,000 historical printed items from the American Revolutionary era and other imprints, mostly American, British and French dating from the 16th century to the modern era. The broader themes of South Pacific intersect with the Weiner collection on issues such as racism, liberty, war, and oppression.

Concert tickets are \$20 to \$42 and group ticket prices are available. Current FAU students receive a complimentary ticket, and \$5 "NexGen" tickets for young adults 18 years and under are available only at the FAU Box Office on the Boca Raton Campus.

To purchase tickets, call 800-564-9539 or visit **www.fauevents.com** (**<http://www.fauevents.com/>**). To experience KCO, visit **www.youtube.com/user/klezmercompany** (**<http://www.youtube.com/user/klezmercompany>**) or **www.klezmercompany.com** (**<http://www.klezmercompany.com/>**)

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