

Holiday concert features Billboard-charting youth orchestra from Utah

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Kayson Brown is director of the Lyceum Philharmonic, which will be performing on Friday, Dec. 6, at the Jaynie Nye Memorial Holiday Concert at Weber State University in Ogden.

Sure, it's a youth orchestra. But this isn't your nephew's earnest-yet-undisciplined junior high school band.

Don't believe us? Just ask Billboard.

The Lyceum Philharmonic, a youth orchestra based out of American Fork, currently has an album, "Turning Hearts," at the top of the Billboard Classical Music charts.

"It's fun for high school students to be able to say, 'Have you seen my latest album? It's No. 1 on the Billboard charts!'" said orchestra director Kayson Brown. "You've got a youth orchestra from American Fork — made

entirely of teens — on top of the Billboard charts with artists like Andrea Bocelli, Yo-Yo Ma and Lindsey Stirling.”



Singer-songwriter Lexi Walker is set to perform at the Jaynie Nye Memorial Holiday Concert, coming Friday, Dec. 6, to Weber State University in Ogden.



The Lyceum Philharmonic will play with tenor Nathan Pacheco and singer-songwriter Lexi Walker at the Jaynie Nye Memorial Holiday Concert on Friday, Dec. 6, at Weber State University in Ogden.



Nathan Pacheco will be a guest artist at the Jaynie Nye Memorial Holiday Concert on Friday, Dec. 6, at Weber State University in Ogden.

This weekend, the Lyceum will join tenor Nathan Pacheco and singer-songwriter Lexi Walker for a trio of concerts in Ogden and Provo.

On Friday evening, the music begins at 7:30 p.m. in the Browning Center at Weber State University, in Ogden. On Saturday, performances start at 2 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. in the American Heritage School, in American Fork.

The WSU performance is part of the annual Jaynie Nye Memorial Holiday Concert, which raises money for cancer services at McKay-Dee Hospital in Ogden. Jaynie Nye died of cancer in 1980, at age 15. For more than 35 years, her family has honored her memory by raising funds at an annual concert.

Brown, who is the director of the Lyceum Youth Orchestras Program at American Heritage School, said this is his group's fourth year participating in the Jaynie Nye benefit concert.

"It really is a meaningful way for people to keep their donation funds local," Brown said. "There's not any of us who hasn't had a life affected by cancer — almost every family has — and Jaynie Nye was an amazing young woman. This is a way to remember her and help those who are struggling with this illness, so it's for an excellent cause."

Saturday's two performances in American Fork are also being billed as benefit concerts, to support music education.

The program will feature uplifting Christmas music, mixed with tunes from the rest of the year, according to Brown.

"It'll be holiday favorites, as well as our guest artists' greatest hits," he said. "So you'll hear Lexi's 'Ave Maria,' but also 'Tiny Voice,' which is more of a pop song with a big following. And Nathan will not only sing his

transcendent 'O Holy Night,' but also 'Bring Him Home' from 'Les Miserables' and 'Nessun Dorma' — basically, it's what any Lexi or Nathan fan would want to hear.”

But along with professional artists Pacheco and Walker, the evening will also feature a 100-piece youth orchestra and 100-voice youth choir. Brown points out that Walker was a student at American Heritage School, graduating early to pursue a professional career in music.

“To be honest, it's pretty rare to get the opportunity to hear these guest artists with a full-blown orchestra,” Brown said. “More often, you'll hear them with a 10- or 12-piece ensemble. But the energy when you have 200-plus youth performers on stage with them is phenomenal. These kids are 'all in' ... this youth orchestra doesn't sound like a youth orchestra.”

Although based at American Heritage School, the Lyceum Philharmonic is an after-school program that draws serious youth musicians from more than 25 schools across Utah. The young musicians have done a number of music videos with artists like Pacheco, The Piano Guys, and Paul Cardall.

“We have students driving from as far away as Tooele, Brigham City, Logan and Beaver,” Brown said. “This really is a Wasatch Front orchestra that takes the best talent from across the state.”

And Brown said the Lyceum Philharmonic is about more than musical excellence — which it has in abundance — it's about service, “dedicating your talents to make the community and world a better place.”

Brown insists that music education is becoming especially valuable at a time when the rising generation is used to immediate reinforcement and instant gratification.

“To take something as old as the violin and master it, it teaches them deep and slow learning,” Brown said. “Then, when you also teach them to serve others, it becomes a transformative experience.”