

MUSIC MAKES THE SEASON BRIGHT

Popular Vocal Group Brings the Tinsel to Kansas City

Noctave



By Patrick Neas

It's the most wonderful time of the year, as the classic song goes, and one of the things that makes it so wonderful is music. The Harriman-Jewell Series always does its part to make the holidays special by providing memorable concerts that truly celebrate the season.

This year, the Series presents Voctave, one of the most popular vocal ensembles in America, in its Kansas City debut, on Dec. 9 at 7 p.m. at the Folly Theater. It promises to be the sort of joyful holiday concert that the Harriman-Jewell Series is known for, with appeal to a wide range of ages and beliefs.

"We've done holiday concerts previously with all kinds of different groups," said Clark Morris, executive and artistic director of the Harriman-Jewell Series. "We've done them with the Kings Singers a couple of times, with Wynton Marsalis and Jazz at Lincoln Center, with the Canadian Brass. It's always a powerful, joyous experience."

The 11-voice a cappella group Voctave knows something about putting people in the holiday spirit. They've made several holiday albums, including their latest, "The Spirit of the Season," Deluxe Edition, which hit No. 6 on the Billboard charts.

"Voctave is very well-known, especially on social media," Morris said. "I think they have over 150 million views on social media because they do these really interesting and tight arrangements of lots of music that the world is familiar with."

Voctave has a strong connection to Disney. Several of its singers are members of The Voices of Liberty, an a cappella group that performs at Epcot Center's Adventure Pavilion at Walt Disney World. In fact, Voctave got its social media start when they posted a video of themselves singing a Disney medley on YouTube. Arrangements of Disney songs often make their way into their concerts.

"I haven't seen the exact program of what they'll perform in Kansas City, but I would think there's a 99.9% chance that there will be some Disney music," Morris said.

This is a non-staged concert, but Morris says to expect some razzle-dazzle.

"I think they will base the concert on the strength of their voices, but they are showmen and women, so I would expect there'll be some theatrical elements to it."

At this time of year, it's easy to get caught up in the pressures of shopping and spending and assorted other annoyances. The Voctave concert will be a perfect opportunity to take a deep breath and put everything in perspective.

"Even though it's a busy season and maybe even a little stressed, it always feels that once the music starts, all of that goes away and we kind of melt into our seats and we are reminded of the great things about the season," Morris said.

For the Harriman-Jewell Series, as 2022 draws to a close, it's a chance to reflect on the past year and look forward to the year ahead.

"It's a time to commemorate the great gifts that we've been given, the artists that have come from all over the world and dropped into Kansas City and shared their art and their music with us," Morris said. "To get to celebrate that every December is the cherry on top of the sundae."

It has truly been an outstanding year for the Harriman-Jewell Series. They have presented an extraordinary variety of world-class talent, from hometown superstar diva Joyce DiDonato to jazz great Terence Blanchard. And there's much more to come in 2023.

"The Harriman-Jewell Series wants to celebrate and bring out the best in all of us," Morris said. "I think that centers around our love for each other and our love for our community. We hope we will continue to bring joy and celebrate joy throughout the coming year, and that all of our community has a very blessed and happy holiday season."

7 p.m. Dec. 9. Folly Theater, 300 W. 12th St., \$12.50-\$75.

For tickets and a complete listing of all concerts, go to hjsseries.org.