

World-renowned trumpeter to join SPO for Valentine's concert Saturday

By Dan Armonaitis

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The last time world-renowned trumpeter Jens Lindemann performed as a guest soloist with the Spartanburg Philharmonic Orchestra, the Valentine's Day pops concert ended in spectacular fashion.

During the grand finale performance of the jazz standard, "A Night in Tunisia," Lindemann and Spartanburg Jazz Ensemble saxophonist/director Tom Wright engaged in a friendly, improvised duel that concluded with Lindemann playing "Taps" as he lay defeated on stage.

"I've been practicing and I plan on taking him down this year," Lindemann said with a laugh as he recalled the show-stopping moment from 2013.

The concert three years ago was such a success that the Spartanburg Philharmonic Orchestra is bringing Lindemann back for another Valentine's pops concert, which will be held at 8 p.m. Saturday at Converse College's Twichell Auditorium.

"We're bringing this concert back by popular demand," said SPO music director/conductor Sarah Ioannides. "Everybody had such a good time that last time, and everybody was asking, 'When can we have Jens back?'"

"We've basically got a similar concert, but it's not identical. There are lots of different numbers."

Saturday's concert also will feature acclaimed vocalist Tish Oney, who has been a mainstay in the New York and Los Angeles jazz scenes and now resides in Greenville.

“The program leans, naturally, towards the romantic side of things because of Valentine's Day, so (the audience) can look forward to a romantic duet,” Oney said, referring to a song she'll sing with Spartanburg Jazz Ensemble vocalist Darin Dotson. “I'm not going to say what it is because I want them to be surprised, but it's one that everybody knows and it should be very cute and funny and enjoyable.”

Of the Spartanburg Jazz Ensemble's participation in the concert, Wright said it's an honor to have the opportunity to work with the Philharmonic again.

“They approach music so differently, and it's always so instructive to listen to how they do it,” he said. “When we collaborate, Sarah Ioannides and I have to get on the same page because the way I count off a tune and the way she starts off a piece is very different.

“But it makes you more aware of what you're doing and makes you think a little bit more about it, which is always really cool.”

Aside from being a world-class instrumentalist, Lindemann is known for his ability to engage the audience through his affable stage presence.

“He's a great personality, and he's very much a comedian as well. He's very funny,” Ioannides said. “And he also has such finesse and elegance as a trumpeter.”

The latter will be on full display in the piece that Lindemann said he's most excited about performing at Saturday's concert: “Dreaming of the Masters” by contemporary composer Allan Gilliland.

“It's a fantastic work that I commissioned a few years back, and I've done it all around the world, including its U.S. premiere at Carnegie Hall,” Lindemann said. “What's really great about 'Dreaming of the Masters' is that it's stylistically engaging in that it covers a number of different grooves — everything from the blues and swing to contemporary and a Latin salsa, which is very fiery.”

Among the trumpet masters who have influenced Lindemann over the years is South Carolina native Dizzy Gillespie, who was born in Cheraw and went on to become a jazz icon.

“Dizzy Gillespie was the first person to sign my gig bag, back when I was 12 years old,” Lindemann said. “I went to a concert of his, and I didn't even know what to say. I was stammering. The only question I could ask him was what size mouthpiece did he play?”

“It was very, very exciting, and I still have that trumpet case. Who knows, I might even bring that trumpet case and leave it on stage while I play.”

Lindemann, who has lived in Los Angeles since 2001 but was raised in Canada, was recently awarded the prestigious Order of Canada.

“That was probably the most humbling thing that's ever happened to me in my career to date,” Lindemann said. “The Order of Canada is our highest civilian award. We don't knight people anymore, but it's something to that extent.

“Boy, when something like that happens, aside from the fact that it's humbling, you feel a tremendous sense of responsibility.”