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The holiday revue provides musicians a chance for a spotlight.

BY MICHAEL MORAIN • MMORAIN@DMREG.COM • NOVEMBER 28, 2008

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Bow and Arrow Productions, a stage production company based in Des Moines, has had its fair share of big shows. It lit up stages for Keith Urban at the Sydney Opera House, Andrea Bocelli in Rome and Bon Jovi in Honolulu, Hawaii.

But soon the company and several of its partners will shine their spotlights on musicians from central Iowa. The team of technicians will spend the next week decking the Scottish Rite Consistory with speakers, lights and a handful of high-tech tinsel for the third annual "Jingle Bell Bash," a musical revue with singers, a 20-piece orchestra, dancers and a few members of the Boys and Girls Club of Central Iowa.

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"The event provides local talent with a national caliber platform," Bow and Arrow owner Michael Mars said.

In its first two years, the Bash hired singers from Broadway, including J. Mark McVey, who starred in "Les Miserables," and Christy Tarr from "Tommy." But this year, the talent is entirely homegrown.

"There's a handful of really talented people - no, there are two handfuls of really, really talented people in the show," said Carey Crowson, one of this year's two featured singers. "We don't have to import that element to make a good production."

The other featured singer is Alexis Van Vleet, a junior at Drake University and one of the top 40 "American Idol" finalists five years ago.

Like other holiday shows, the Bash is something of a potluck: part concert, part play, part warm and fuzzy fable about "the real meaning of Christmas," according to promoters.

This year's story follows three harried shoppers in the "Mall of Amazement," where a Nativity scene designed by "Ty Penneyless" disappears. There are a few surprises along the way, but it's safe to assume there's a happy ending.

"At the foundation of the whole thing is the story of the Christ child, the birth of Jesus," said Crowson, who with his wife directs music ministries at Hope Lutheran Church in Des Moines.

(If Crowson's name isn't familiar, his voice is: He sings advertising jingles for companies such as Hy-Vee, Kum and Go and McDonald's.)

In keeping with the show's message of giving, a portion of the proceeds from the event will benefit the Boys and Girls Club. Mars even convinced some of his company's out-of-state clients to contribute equipment and volunteer labor.

The combined effect of their work, he hopes, will surpass the show's past performances — even without the big names from Broadway.

"I was thrilled with the energy of the whole production," frequent concertgoer Rosalie Gallagher of Des Moines said of the Bash she saw two years ago.



Special to the Register

Carey Crowson and his wife direct music ministries at Hope Lutheran Church in Des Moines. He also sings advertising jingles such as "Come on Over to Adventureland."



Alexis Van Vleet, a junior at Drake University, will perform at the Jingle Bell Bash.

Jingle Bell Bash

WHEN: 8 p.m. Thursday-Dec. 6 (with dinner catered by Baratta's at 7) and 3 p.m. Dec. 7 WHERE: Scottish Rite Consistory, 519 Park St., Des Moines TICKETS: \$55; \$25 for just the show DETAILS: (515) 953-2355, jingle-bell-bash.com

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