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Sutton Foster is Headliner At PSO/McCarter Opener



NEW COLLABORATION: The Princeton Symphony Orchestra and McCarter Theatre Center have joined forces for a new Princeton POPS Series, which will increase the number of concerts and broaden each organization's scope. The PSO is shown here in a previous pops concert at Richardson Auditorium.

By Anne Levin

Two of Princeton's major cultural organizations are collaborating on a new series that will combine elements of musical theater with live orchestral concerts of popular and light classical works. A co-production of the Princeton Symphony Orchestra (PSO) and McCarter Theatre Center, Princeton POPS means a larger venue and more concerts for the PSO, while bringing musical theater back to the forefront for McCarter.

The series begins Friday, November 8 with a concert featuring Broadway and television star Sutton Foster. It continues January 31 with a staged reading of the new musical comedy *The Big Time*, and concludes May 9 with *The Art of the Movie Score*, conducted by PSO music director Rossen Milanov.

"The Princeton Symphony has been doing a Saturday Evening pops concert for the last 15 years, and it has been very popular on our calendar," said Marc Uys, PSO executive director. "Our hope is

that this kind of programming will strengthen both the PSO and McCarter, enabling us each to do things we haven't done before. For us, it's almost a maturing of our series. We've been doing the pops concerts only once a year, so let's go big. McCarter is a larger venue than Richardson, so we can feature bigger stars like Sutton Foster."

McCarter Managing Director Michael Rosenberg said the two organizations have been interested in finding a way to work together for a long time. "It has been a while since McCarter has done a musical theater piece," he said. "To have Sutton Foster, and the reading of a new musical, is just great for us. She is somebody we've been talking about having at McCarter for a gala or something, but scheduling has always been in the way. Now, it's really going to happen."

Foster, a two-time Tony Award winner for *Thoroughly Modern Millie* and *Anything Goes* and star of the television series *Younger*, will present "An Evening With Sutton Foster," sharing Broadway tunes and her personal song favorites. She will be joined on stage by the PSO.

The Big Time will feature musicians from the PSO along with Broadway performers. "Wait till you see the cast," said Rosenberg. "It's going to be extraordinary."

The musical comedy will be performed as a staged reading. Created by Douglas Carter Beane, author of *Broadway's Sister Act*, *Cinderella*, and *Xanadu*, and composer Douglas J. Cohen, the show takes place at the height of the Cold War "when Russian spies take over an ocean liner holding all of NATO," according to a press release. "Leave it to the lounge singers on board to save the day by teaching the communists to put down their AK-47s and pick up singing, dancing, and comedy."

The final concert will feature violinist Daniel Rowland in a night of film music including scores from *Star Wars*, *Harry Potter*, *Vertigo*, *La La Land*, and more.

Uys is hoping that Princeton POPS will broaden the orchestra's audience. "There's a fair amount of crossover between our classical and pops audience," he said. "We feel there is a whole other part of our community that is interested in coming to us and hearing other genres. Classical music is not something we want to force on anyone. It shouldn't be a bait-and-switch, but give it a try. Have fun at a pops concert, and then try one of the classical ones. Because they are pretty great, too."

Tickets are available at www.mccarter.org or www.princetonsymphony.org. McCarter is at 91 University Place.