



STANDING ROOM ONLY

« Formed in the 1960s as a doo-wop-influenced R&B quintet, **The Manhattans** reinvented themselves as sweet, smooth soul balladeers during the '70s, scoring a No. 1 hit in 1976 with "Kiss and Say Good-bye." 8 and 10 p.m. Saturday and Sunday; Blues Alley, 1073 Wisconsin Ave. NW; \$43; bluesalley.com.



Each Vagabond Opera show is a potpourri of numbers inspired by the world of cabaret and Kurt Weill-type musicals. - Courtesy photo

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Old World, new sound

Vagabond Opera turns classic music on its head

By Emily Cary
Special to The Examiner

Vagabond Opera weaves an Old World tapestry of Bohemian cabaret rich with Eastern European flavor to create an interactive program with crowd appeal. Its Washington debut introduces the eclectic troupe that has been featured on NPR and in Jazziz Magazine, recorded two albums and performed on stage with the Oregon Symphony, Pink Martini, Al Franken and various other unlikely partners.

Based in Portland, Ore., Vagabond Opera was founded in 2002 by European-trained tenor and composer Eric Stern. His reinvention of classic opera sans restraints is an ethnic musical paradise of Parisian jazz, klezmer, Ukrainian folk-punk ballads, Turkish belly-dancers and six musicians singing in 13 languages as they play a variety of instruments in diverse and unexpected styles.

"We have one foot in the Old World and one tentatively in the new," Stern says. "I sang opera in Europe and love the Western European tradition that incorporates the study of languages, but not the bulky scenery and the institution itself that forces singers to jump through hoops.

"After discovering that it wasn't the best fit for me, I saw that the rooms and clubs of Eastern Europe constantly draw enormous audiences and I realized that people go there to be energized by what they see and hear. Vagabond Opera takes opera out of the stuffy opera house and adds many exciting elements to give both opera fans and opponents a fun-filled experience."

Each show is a potpourri of numbers inspired by the world of cabaret and Kurt Weill-type musicals. A typical evening is a mix of arias made distinctive by Stern's ornamentations, Duke Ellington jazz, swing, old-timey gut-bucket styles, tangos, Arabic forms and torch songs a la Edith Piaf, all performed with electrifying passion.

"We offer something for everyone," Stern says. "There will be forms they like mixed in with those they don't know, and they'll quickly discover that opera is not an old stereotype. As composers and musical artists, we're painters who are able to use the many colors on the palette."

STAGES » MUSIC

A choral tribute to Dr. King

Civil rights activist Julian Bond honored at annual event

By Emily Cary
Special to The Examiner

Julian Bond has devoted his life to emulating Martin Luther King Jr.'s example of nonviolent struggle to achieve civil rights. In recognition of his many contributions to society, the 2008 Humanitarian Award will be presented to him during the Choral Arts Society's Annual tribute to King on Sunday.

"I'm one of the very rare persons who attended one class Dr. King taught in 1960 at Morehouse College in Atlanta, where I was a student," Bond says. "It was a survey course in philosophy, and I was one of only six people in attendance. He was famous then, but not nearly so

famous as he was going to be.

"At that time, many people knew that he was a tremendous critic of war, all war. He believed strongly in an interracial movement involving all races, not just black and white, and he emphasized that promoting nonviolence, racial equality and peace is something everyone can become involved in without special training."

The MLK choral tribute was first performed 20 years ago by the CAS under the artistic direction of Norman Scribner. It has grown in scope to embrace musicians from throughout the area in a spectacular multicultural production.

Broadway star Ben Vereen hosts the program of gospel and classical favorites performed by the CAS, the Maryland State Boychoir and



Bond



The Choral Arts Society performs its annual tribute to Martin Luther King Jr. Sunday.

the 2008 Martin Luther King Tribute Choir. The massed choir from churches in the Greater Washington metro area is conducted by Linda Edge Gatling, who serves with Scribner as co-music director of the event. Throughout the concert, the audience will view projections of images from "Voices: Reflections on an

American Icon Through Words and Song." The new book and CD set celebrate the life and legacy of King and the concert's 20th anniversary with music from past years.

As a civil rights activist, Bond has faced jail for his convictions, was a founder of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee and has served as chairman of the Board of the NAACP since 1998. At the 1968 Democratic Convention, he was nominated for vice president, but had to decline because he was too young. In 2002, he received the National Freedom Award in honor of his many contributions to society.

A writer and commentator, he narrated the Academy Award-winning "A Time for Justice," the celebrated series "Eyes on the Prize" and numerous documentaries. Today he serves on several boards, holds 25 honorary degrees and is a distinguished professor at American University and professor of history at the University of Virginia.

"Of all the things I've done, teaching gives me the greatest satisfaction," he says. "I tell my students that, although Dr. King was the primary figure of the civil rights movement, he was not the only one. Hundreds of thousands of people, most of them anonymous, contributed and the young people I'm teaching have the opportunity, as well, to play a vital role."

If you go

» When: 7 p.m. Sunday
» Where: Kennedy Center
» Tickets: \$20
» More info: 202-467-4600 or www.kennedy-center.org

If you go

» When: 6 p.m. Saturday
» Where: Kennedy Center
» Tickets: Free
» More info: 202-467-4600 or www.kennedy-center.org

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\$17 Chicken Cacciatore & Fettuccini-Braised Chicken, Portobello Mushroom & Marsala Tomato Sauce. 10% proceeds donated to DC Central Kitchen				