

ARTS

Spyres family performing ‘Home for the Holidays’ concert at Gillioz Theatre

The talented siblings say the concert will be reminiscent of Bing Crosby’s ‘Merrie Olde Christmas’



by Mary Ellen Chiles
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From left: Michael Spyres, Erica Spyres, Tara Stafford-Spyres, and Sean Spyres. (Submitted photo)

Patrons can enjoy a cozy evening of seasonal music and glad tidings at the “Home for the Holidays” concert, featuring the Spyres family and special guests, at 7:30 p.m. on Friday, Dec. 20, at the Gillioz Theatre. Proceeds benefit Ozarks Lyric Opera (OLO).

Keeping a family tradition alive

It’s hard to get the Spyres siblings in one place, especially during the holidays. Sean, Michael and Erica all sang with parents Eric and Terry in Mansfield, but as they grew up, they got more gigs. Still, the family kept one tradition.

“The one thing we did growing up was every Christmas Eve we invited friends, and we caroled,” Erica Spyres said.

She will be flying in from New York, where she often performs on Broadway, to sing with her brothers and Michael's wife, Tara Stafford-Spyres.

"I want people to think of this as in the vein of Bing Crosby's 'Merrie Olde Christmas,'" Erica said.

That's the most famous of the crooner's holiday TV specials, in 1977, and features a surprisingly moving duet with David Bowie, performed just weeks before Crosby's death.

In other words, expect cozy décor, and guests at the door.

"It's not like we're going to stand and sing classical opera music the whole time," Erica said. "We're going to sing our favorites."

Creating Community

If you feel like singing along in parts on Friday, go right ahead.

"We want people to be able to create community with those around them and sing right next to them," Erica said.

Michael just performed the title role in Hans Pfitzner's "Palestrina" at Vienna State Opera House. In January, he will return to Wien to sing Richard Strauss' "Ariadne auf Naxos."

Tara, who is based in Rogersville, will perform with Michael at a New Year's concert on Dec. 29 in Novi Sad, Serbia. The two will spend the day after Christmas – their anniversary – in flight.

Hopefully with champagne.

Expect several generations of Spyres on Friday, including bright-eyed and charismatic children, and an orchestra, too.

A Blue Christmas

This will be a bittersweet holiday season for the Spyres siblings as they mourn their aunt, Tanya Cooley Williams, who passed away on Nov. 28.

The family spent time together that day, as they often do.

"Even on Thanksgiving – the day that my aunt died – we went ahead and had dinner and laughs and drinks," Sean said.

Then, on Dec. 12, OLO resident stage director and community engagement coordinator Jay Jackson died at 57.

Jackson and his mother Rosemary were involved with the former Springfield Regional Opera for decades. Jay also directed operas around the country, but he relished working with OLO.

“There is for sure a massive hole in my heart right now because of all the things that we wanted to do,” Sean said. “But we will keep making magic without him and without my aunt.”

Doors will open at 6:30 p.m. for the 7:30 p.m. performance. You can [buy tickets online](#) or at the Gillioz Theatre. Afterward, join the Spyres family for a HO-HO-OLO Encore Party in the gallery upstairs. You can [find tickets here](#).

Free valet parking is available.



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More by Mary Ellen Chiles

