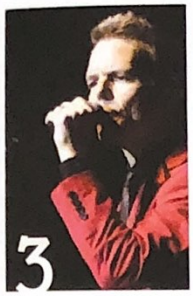
LIGHTS UP! MCS OPAS returns to the stage for its 49th season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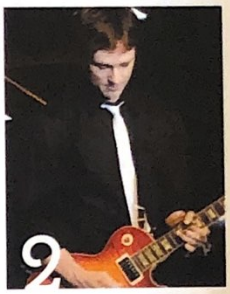
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By **LYDIA HILL**

After more than a year of empty seats and darkened stages, OPAS is bringing Rudder Auditorium and Theatre to life once more. The Texas A&M University organization will begin its 49th season — titled "Let's Get Together" — with four fall performers beginning Sept. 14.

"It feels wonderful to be having live shows," says OPAS Executive Director Anne Black. "Everybody's ready to get back to live theater. When the pandemic hit, we tried to convey a message of bringing people together and why we need the arts. While we were planning this particular fall season, we really kept that in mind and booked programs designed to bring people together."

The fall season kicks off with The Barricade Boys on Tuesday, Sept. 14 in Rudder Auditorium. The group, comprised of "Les Misérables" stars from London's West End, will perform ballads, arias, and songs from The Beatles, Queen, Elton John, and the Rolling Stones. They will also feature Broadway numbers from shows including "Jersey Boys," "The Phantom of the Opera," "Wicked," and "Les Misérables." "They're wonderful and energetic, and it will be a great way to open the season," Black says.

On Wednesday, Oct. 20, singer Michael Cavanaugh will bring Billy Joel and Elton John songs to Rudder Auditorium. The Tony and Grammy nominee previously starred in Billy Joel's "Movin' Out" on Broadway and has since been named "Entertainer of the Year" by Reuters. "He's a terrific pianist with a great band," Black adds. "I think audiences will be excited about his music."

The season continues Tuesday, Nov. 16 in Rudder Theatre with "7,000 Miles to Broadway" featuring J. Robert Spencer. One of the original stars of "Jersey Boys" and a Tony nominated actor for "Next to Normal," Spencer previously appeared in Rudder with The Midtown Men. His show shares the country, rock, and Broadway he grew up listening to while traveling in his family's station wagon. "You'll be hearing some Willie Nelson and country and other genres along the way, in addition to some great Broadway tunes," Black explains.

The Kingdom Choir will conclude the fall slate of performers with a holiday program on Tuesday, Nov. 30 in Rudder Auditorium. "They're a wonderful gospel choir, and we look forward to starting the holidays with some great music," Black says. Formed in 1994 by conductor Karen Gibson, the London-based choir is best known for performing "Stand by Me" at Prince Harry and Meghan Markle's wedding and appeared in Coca-Cola's 2018 Christmas ad singing "Holidays Are Coming."

All showtimes are 7:30 p.m. Tickets are on sale now, but availability is limited. The 2021-22 season will continue in the spring with five Broadway shows, which will be announced this fall due to pandemic-related touring delays. For more information, to purchase tickets, and to keep an eye out for spring announcements, visit MSCOPAS.org. IN

SEE THE SHOWS

1 **BARRICADE BOYS**
Tuesday, Sept. 14 at 7:30 p.m.
Rudder Auditorium

2 **MICHAEL CAVANAUGH**
Wednesday, Oct. 20 at 7:30 p.m.
Rudder Auditorium

3 **J. ROBERT SPENCER**
Tuesday, Nov. 16 at 7:30 p.m.
Rudder Theatre

4 **THE KINGDOM CHOIR**
Tuesday, Nov. 30 at 7:30 p.m.
Rudder Auditorium

RUDDER THEATRE COMPLEX
401 Joe Routt Blvd., College Station
(979) 845-1234 | mscopas.org

PHOTOS COURTESY OF OPAS