

Colin Hay, Stephen Bishop to headline benefit concert for arts education

Jeff Goodman



A concert featuring Colin Hay, Stephen Bishop and Venice will support arts programming in local public schools as the Santa Monica-Malibu Education Foundation continues bolstering its endowment in the face of tightened budgets.

Tickets for the Feb. 7 show, which will be held at Santa Monica High School's Barnum Hall, went on sale Monday.

All proceeds from the upcoming concert and live auction will go towards funding arts instruction in the Santa Monica-Malibu school district. The popular series has raised close to \$100,000 per event in recent years, according to SMMEF communications and events manager Ann Conkle.

"Arts programs in public schools are constantly getting slashed, and the budgets are basically nonexistent," said Cris Tortolano of the Artists for the Arts Foundation, which has partnered with the local education foundation for eight years. "Our goal and mission is to help local school districts supplement the budgets they do receive or give them funding to start an arts program."

Funds raised through the upcoming concert will contribute to the education foundation's For The Arts Endowment, which was created in 2003 and valued at \$2.9 million as of June. A portion of money from the endowment is currently supporting a dance specialist and theater programming in local middle and high schools, two music classes at Olympic High School and grants to all secondary visual arts teachers.

This year's edition of the annual benefit includes the return of Hay, a Scottish Australian musician who

performed at Samohi in 2009. Hay has engineered a successful solo career after achieving fame with Men at Work in the 1980s, and his song “I Just Don’t Think I’ll Ever Get Over You” was featured on the acclaimed “Garden State” movie soundtrack.

The event also welcomes back Venice, a locally based band that has performed or recorded with music icons such as Bruce Springsteen, Elton John, Cher and Dolly Parton. Members of the group are active in the Artists for the Arts Foundation.

Meanwhile, the upcoming show will spotlight Bishop for the first time. A singer-songwriter known for his 1977 single “On and On,” he was also nominated for an Oscar for best original song for “Separate Lives” in the 1985 movie “White Nights.”

The musicians will perform some of their own material, and they will likely pay homage to other well-known artists with tribute tunes. Renditions of Beatles songs have been arranged for previous concerts, Tortolano said.

“We’ve had some fantastic philanthropic artists who donate their time, and their passionate fans come out and support the causes that (the artists are) passionate about,” she said.

Band, orchestra and choir members from Santa Monica, Olympic and Malibu high schools will also participate, providing instrumentation as well as vocals. Students are involved in backstage and promotional tasks as well.

“They are part of everything,” Tortolano said. “That really sets our event apart from other benefits.”

There will also be a live auction held during the concert. Items up for bid at previous concerts included signed instruments and tickets to entertainment events.

The emcee for the evening is Cynthia Fox, a radio personality who currently works for classic rock station 100.3 The Sound. This will be her third stint as the concert host.

Ticket prices range from \$50 for balcony seats to \$175 for VIP orchestra seats that include admission to an after-party with the performers.

For more information, visit www.smmef.org or call (310) 396-4557.

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