

Holiday Pops Concert



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Light classics and holiday favorites.

What will a Stradivarius sound like in the fabulous acoustics of the Maui Arts & Cultural Center's Castle Theater? Maui music lovers will find out when renowned violinist Frank Almond plays the newly rediscovered Lipinski Stradivarius with the Maui Pops Orchestra for the annual Maui Holiday Pops Concert in the Castle Theater on Sunday, Dec. 7, at 3:30 p.m.

Almond, concertmaster for the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra, will be the special guest as Maui Pops Music Director and Conductor Stuart Chafetz presents a repertoire of light classics and traditional holiday favorites.

The Stradivarius adds a whole new dimension to the annual concert, especially in the hands of Almond. "He is phenomenal!" said Chafetz, who has held the position of concertmaster with the London Symphony under Kurt Masur and with the Rotterdam Philharmonic under Valery Gergiev.

The violin is the legendary Lipinski Stradivarius, built in 1715 in Cremona, Italy, and played by some of the greatest virtuosos in history. In addition to Polish violinist Karol Lipinski, the instrument's famous players included its first known owner, Giuseppe Tartini and Joseph Joachim, for whom Brahms composed his violin concerto. The Strad had dropped out of sight following the death of its last owner, finally coming out of storage last May after Almond received a mysterious email asking if he wanted to see the instrument. Considered to be in the upper echelon of the 614 Stradivari violins in existence, it's now in Almond's hands on an indefinite loan from its Milwaukee-area owner.

The concert, designed as an elegant start to the holiday season, "is a great chance to let the orchestra shine," along with Almond and other special soloists, Chafetz said.

Chafetz is a familiar face to concert-goers in the islands, where he has been principal timpanist and assistant conductor of the Honolulu Symphony and was music director and conductor of the Maui Symphony Orchestra (1999-2003). In addition to his work in Milwaukee and Maui, Chafetz has recently guest conducted several orchestras, including his third appearance with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra last May.

Almond holds two degrees from the Juilliard School. At 17, Almond was one of the youngest prizewinners in the history of the Nicolo Paganini Competition in Genoa, Italy, and five years later was one of two American prizewinners at the Eighth International Tchaikovsky Competition in Moscow, which was documented in an award-winning PBS film. Since then, he has kept up an eclectic mix of activities in addition to his concertmaster duties, appearing both as a soloist and chamber musician.

Almond holds the Charles and Marie Caestecker Concertmaster Chair at the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra (MSO), and will continue as a guest concertmaster with the Seattle Symphony. He returned to the MSO in the 2003-04 season after holding positions as concertmaster of the Rotterdam Philharmonic and the London Philharmonic. He has been a member of the chamber group An die Musik in New York City since 1997 and also directs the highly successful Frankly Music Chamber Series based in Milwaukee. He continues an active schedule of solo and chamber music performances in the U.S. and abroad.

Almond has recorded for numerous labels and has appeared many times on NPR's Performance Today. Almond's latest CD with William Wolfram was named a "Best of 2007" by the American Record Guide. His next CD of American violin and piano music will be released in 2009 with pianist Brian Zeger.

This is the fourth season for the Maui Pops Orchestra, a nonprofit organization based in Kula that offers "Light Classics in Paradise."

For tickets, visit The MACC Box Office or call 242-SHOW (7469) to charge by phone Monday through Saturday, 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. For patron convenience 24 hours a day, purchase tickets online at www.mauiaarts.org.

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