

Meet bass Jared Schwartz: Small town Indiana boy carves out career in music

Written by By TERRY MATHEWS, News-Telegram Arts Editor
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Even though bass singer Jared Schwartz grew up in the small Indiana town of Berne, he was exposed to great music.

“The largest Mennonite church in the United States is in Berne,” he said during a recent telephone interview from his home in Dallas. “They have their own oratorio society, so for having grown up basically in the middle of nowhere, I could hear them perform Handel’s ‘Messiah.’”

The singer, whose impressive credentials include 19 years of piano, 14 years of violin, seven years of French horn and a Master of Music from the Eastman School of Music in New York, started his music career early.

“I started playing piano when I was three because my brother played,” he said. “I started passing him.”

Schwartz said he began playing multiple instruments because Mozart did.

“I decided I’d better start learning violin,” he said. “So my parents found a violin teacher.”

He also sang in community musicals and choirs.

The ultimate overachiever, Schwartz began college as a piano and French horn performance and chemistry major. He auditioned for college in voice, piano and French horn.

“It’s called never, ever sleep,” he said with a laugh. “I would run to the chemistry lab with my French horn and leave the chemistry lab early to get to orchestra.”

The pace became too much, so Schwartz concentrated his efforts on music.

“I thought, ‘I could always come back and be a doctor,’” he explained.

When he developed issues with his wrists, he started taking voice lessons.

“A year and a half later, I auditioned for the Eastman School of Music and got in for my master’s,” he said. “I’ve been singing ever since.”

It was on a spring break trip to New York City that Schwartz realized people make music for a living.

“It was a life-changing trip for me,” he explained. “Growing up in a town of 4,000, it’s not an option.”

When he completed his masters at Eastman, Schwartz knew he would not be landing any opera roles.

“I had just turned 24,” he noted. “I was too young for low-voiced male parts.”

So, he weighed his options. He could return to Berne, with its 4,000 citizens and one spotlight. Or he could follow friends’ advice, move to Dallas and open a voice studio.

“Dallas or Indiana,” he mused. “Hmmm. Dallas.”

His initial plan was to stay for one year.

“I didn’t expect to still be here,” he said. “But within about three months of teaching, I had 60 students. It just exploded and has stayed at that level.”

Two of his students are on Broadway and one is currently in an off-Broadway production.

In 2011, Schwartz was selected as one of the top young voice teachers in the nation and was

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invited to participate in the National Association of Teachers of Singing's (NATS) Intern Program.

Now that Schwartz is 31, the time is right for him to make his mark in the world of live performance, which means recitals, entering vocal competitions and auditioning for parts.

On Wednesday, Oct. 30, Schwartz will be in recital with pianist Mary Dibbern, a PhD student at the University of Texas at Dallas-Richardson campus. The two artists have invited fine arts students from SSISD to attend the performance, including a meet and greet afterward.

Dibbern and Schwartz are familiar with Hopkins County. Dibbern visited last year with "Doctor Miracle," The Dallas Opera's the children's production that was a hit at the middle school. She will be returning with the group this year with a production of "The Elixir of Love" in May.

Schwartz' friend, Cal Brim, grew up in Sulphur Springs. When Cal's mother, Mrs. June Marie West Brim, died in 2008, the family asked Schwartz to sing at the funeral held in First United Methodist Church.

A year later, the family asked him to come to Sulphur Springs again for a memorial service.

"When you've got somebody going through something like that, you can't give them any words," he said. "But maybe you can give them a song. That's a reason to sing."

Another reason to sing is to be noticed by management teams.

"I'm trying for the Naumberg," he said, referring to the International Vocal Competition in Concert Repertoire hosted annually by the Walter M. Naumberg Foundation. "I do competitions for the exposure. Maybe the people who hear me can help me go a little further down the road."

Whatever happens in his career, Schwartz is grateful for the opportunities his talent has afforded.

"I just step back and think how the right things have come into my life at the right time," he mused. "Why in the world? I feel like God is leading the way."

For more information and to watch clips of Jared in performance, visit www.jaredschwartz.com

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