

## The Cleveland POPS opens season with The Texas Tenors on October 4

by Mike Telin



Since their debut on NBC's *America's Got Talent*, The Texas Tenors have amassed a list of awards including three Emmys for their PBS special *You Should Dream*. On Friday, October 4 at 8:00 pm at Severance Hall, opera singer John

Hagen, country music singer JC Fisher, and pop singer Marcus Collins will open The Cleveland POPS' season under the direction of Carl Topilow. The program will feature selections from their latest album, [\*THE TEXAS TENORS: A Collection of Broadway & American Classics\*](#). Tickets are available [online](#).

*Prior to the Trio's October 2017 performance at Stambaugh Auditorium in Youngstown, we spoke with tenor John Hagen. The following article has been edited for content.*

"It's fun to see people stretch their musical tastes in opposite directions," Hagen said. "You take the fan who's at one end of the spectrum, either classical or country, and hear how they have come to appreciate other genres of music that they haven't listened to very often, if at all."

He explained that the Trio's first PBS special, which aired in 2013, came about through a professional relationship they had with the Phoenix Symphony. "Some people from KAET asked us if we had ever thought about doing a Public Television special. Long story short, we collaborated with the Symphony and it was very well received. And when PBS asked us to do another one, we thought, why not?"

Hagen said that PBS is a natural fit, noting that the three of them grew up watching Public Television. "PBS has been, is, and will continue to be an important part of our lives. When I was a kid there wasn't cable TV, it was the three networks and PBS. I watched *Great Performances from Lincoln Center*, and those shows have had a huge

impact on all three of us. And now here we are on PBS Television ourselves. It's pretty wild to think about."

Although JC Fisher and Marcus Collins met nearly twenty years ago when they were cast as production singers for Celebrity Cruise Lines, Hagen met Fisher when they were working a construction job. "You can believe that or not, but we were doing the starving artist thing," he said. "JC had the idea of putting together three tenors of different voice types to cover different genres of music, and this is what we came up with. As they say, the rest is history."

When The Tenors decided to take the audition for *America's Got Talent*, Hagen admitted to being a little skeptical of the idea. "My first thought was, I don't know, because the night I watched it, I saw some pretty strange stuff. But it did end up being a great thing for us. The exposure and publicity you get from being on National TV for twelve weeks in a show that was aired in over sixty countries is priceless. We do feel fortunate because without that exposure, who knows where we would be. It wouldn't be where we are, that's for sure."

Wrapping up our conversation, I asked Hagen how The Texas Tenors have evolved as an ensemble since their breakthrough on *America's Got Talent*. "We've learned how to cross musical boundaries better," he said. "And musically speaking, we've grown significantly, which would make sense after over 1,000 performances. I always laugh when somebody says that we just keep getting better and better — I'm glad that it's not the other way around."

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