

Tuesday Musical presents “Kings ReJoyce!” with Joyce DiDonato, Kings Return, and Craig Terry

by Mike Telin



With the month of December almost upon us, it's always interesting to see which of Northeast Ohio's music organizations will lead the way with holiday programs.

On Tuesday, December 3 at 7:30 pm at E.J. Thomas Hall, Akron's Tuesday Musical will present “Kings ReJoyce!” with celebrated mezzo-soprano Joyce DiDonato, the sensational a capella group Kings Return, and pianist Craig Terry.

The Akron performance is the first stop on a seven-city tour. Tickets are available [online](#).

DiDonato's first-ever holiday show features a treasure trove of seasonal favorites, including “Carol of the Bells,” “Christmas Waltz,” “O Holy Night,” “Sleigh Ride” and “I'll Be Home for Christmas,” as well as a Motown medley, two versions of “Ave Maria,” and a vocalized “Nutcracker Suite.”

Because of time zone conflicts we were unable to connect with Joyce DiDonato by phone, but she graciously agreed to answer questions by email.

Mike Telin: Congratulations on the tour and the great program. This is your first holiday show: why have you waited until now to do one?

Joyce DiDonato: I have no good answer for that, other than I've been otherwise engaged over the years. But growing up in Prairie Village, Kansas, Christmas music was FUNDAMENTAL in my life: my Dad was the church choir director and attending midnight mass to listen and sing along with all the carols was a highlight of the year for me and my family. My sisters and I would walk home still harmonizing to “Silent Night” and “Joy to the World.” So a Holiday program has long been on my bucket list, and

sharing it with Kings Return will be the absolute BEST way to realize my dream! Had you told 12-year old Joyce that she would debut her dream Holiday Concert in Akron, Ohio, I'm not sure she could have comprehended that!

Mike Telin: Like many of us, you discovered Kings Return on YouTube: what about them first grabbed your attention?

JD: Their voices!!! I was immediately astonished. And then their arrangement of "[Ave Maria](#)," which was my first encounter with them, just completely stopped me in my tracks. It was immediately clear that they had a pure joy of singing and harmonizing, which aligned perfectly with what made me first fall in love with music, as well. Theirs is a sound that is utterly unique and truly touched my heart, and resonated with my deep connection to choral music.

MT: You've had a long professional relationship with Craig Terry: why have your partnerships with him been so successful?

JD: Craig doesn't play a single note without true JOY, and this enthusiasm for making music resonates deeply with me. He is the most positive person you could meet, and so to take the stage with him and share this great LOVE for making music with the public matches perfectly my desire to lift up every single person who attends our concert. You can find great musicians along the way — but it's a treasure to find pure JOY in a colleague!

MT: This is a great program. With so many holiday songs to choose from, how did you narrow down the list?

JD: It was an impossible task! There are too many favorites! But at some point one is forced to choose! Essentially we first decided what would work best for our group numbers — what are the pieces that would allow us each to bring our unique traits out, and what would make the most sense of this partnership. Then the Kings added in the pieces they love to sing, and I happily filled in the blanks — choosing the pieces I used to sing at Church, the pieces I've always wanted to sing (along with an edgy surprise or two!).

MT: What about this show excites you?

JD: ALL of it. But perhaps at the end of the day I think it's an important moment to bring us all back around to remember (or, perhaps, to truly *discover*) the true spirit of the season. As cliché as it may sound, this music invites us not only to celebrate, but also to

truly embrace the spirit of Giving, of Harmony, of Peace, and of Joy.

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