

## DSO, Mike Runyan stage musical 'Salute' at Greenfield Village

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Mike Runyan is pretty sure there's a harmonica hidden away in a junk drawer somewhere in your house.

You may remember blowing on it, and even producing some rudimentary music, before tossing it into that drawer. But aside from Billy Joel and Bob Dylan, does anyone actually play the harmonica?

Well, yes, but have you ever heard a real harmonica virtuoso, someone of such wizardly accomplishment that he could play with a symphony orchestra?

That's Mike Runyan, the featured soloist for this weekend's "Salute to America" concerts with the Detroit Symphony Orchestra at Greenfield Village. Performances in the Walnut Grove Historic District of the village are tonight through Sunday.

Gates open at 6 p.m. and there's pre-concert entertainment each night by the River Raisin Ragtime Revue. You can bring your own chairs, blankets, food and nonalcoholic drinks. Food and beverages also will be available for purchase.

"People really don't know quite what to expect when they see a harmonica player come onstage with a full orchestra," says Runyan, a soft-spoken fellow from Indiana who only makes a half-dozen of these appearances each year. As any harmonica player should, he has a solid day job, but we'll get back to that.

Runyan's gig with the DSO should be a riot. On harmonica, he's subbing for the piccolo player in the famous "Stars and Stripes Forever" solo. And he will give the DSO trumpet section time off in what he admits is a showy turn through "Bugler's Holiday." In this version he switches among six different harmonicas.

"I could do it with fewer," he says, "but the fun is trying to get through the choreography without crashing."

Runyan's collaborator on the podium is an old friend, Steven Reineke, music director of the New York Pops and a frequent guest conductor of DSO pops concerts at Orchestra Hall.

Also, a regular guest at the Hollywood Bowl, Reineke says he finds concerts under the stars irresistible family affairs that allow a huge audience to picnic, enjoy nature and -- in the case of "Salute to America" -- revel in an evening of patriotic music.

His program ranges from "Simple Gifts" to "America the Beautiful" and, of course, Tchaikovsky's "1812 Overture" bedecked with fireworks each night.

"Concerts like this create a great sense of community," says Reineke. "I love being outdoors any time."

He's also a big fan of harmonica meister Runyan. They met years ago when Reineke was conducting the Indianapolis Symphony where Runyan is the music librarian. Yes, the harmonica player even holds a Ph.D. in composition from the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music.

So, do his Indy colleagues razz him about the harmonica thing?

"No, they love it," Runyan says. "They'll come off stage after playing Mahler and say, 'That piece could use some harmonica.' "

No Mahler this weekend. Lots of harmonica.

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