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ABAC Performing Arts Series Kicks Off Third Season September 29
TIFTON— The third season of the ABAC Presents! Performing Arts Series at Abraham Baldwin Agricultural College features five performances ranging from the classic sounds of a symphony orchestra to a phenomenal jazz saxophonist.

The series kicks off at 3 p.m. on Sept. 29 at the Tift County High School Performing Arts Center with the performance of “East Meets West” by the Albany Symphony Orchestra featuring internationally-renowned guzheng artist Su Chang. The guzheng is a Chinese-plucked zither with 18 or more strings and movable bridges.

Chang will be featured in “The Identity Concerto,” a striking piece that combines the orchestra with a 3,800 year-old Chinese folk instrument. Music Director Claire Fox Hillard is the conductor for the orchestra.

Other performances in the series include “It’s A Wonderful Life Live from WVL Radio Theatre” on Dec. 5 at 7 p.m. in ABAC’s Howard Auditorium, the Azalea Quartet on Feb. 18, 2014 at 7 p.m. in Howard Auditorium, the Fisk Jubilee Singers on March 29, 2014 at 7 p.m. at First Baptist Church of Tifton, and jazz saxophonist Roger Pemberton on April 17, 2014 at 7 p.m. in Howard Auditorium.

The Albany Symphony Orchestra will also perform Paul Hindemith’s 20th century masterpiece, “Symphonic Metamorphosis of Themes by Carl Maria von Weber.” The second movement of this piece features themes from Weber’s music for Schiller’s Chinese-based tale, Turandot. Rounding out the concert will be Weber’s Overture from Oberon and “Symphonic Poem on 3 notes: La-Si-Do,” by Oscar Award-winning composer Tan Dun (Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon).
On Dec. 5, theatergoers can see a fresh new adaptation of Frank Capra’s classic Christmas staple, “It’s A Wonderful Life” performed by the fictional studio employees of WVL Radio Theatre. The story line for the play involves a blizzard which prevents the professional voice actors from reaching the theatre to perform the Christmas classic. But the show must go on so a small but intrepid band of employees manage to create the dozens of movie characters and scenes using just their voices and a sound effects table.

The company's meticulous attention to detail gives way to nostalgic charm for the audience sharing in this holiday masterpiece. The sincerity, warmth, and untainted professional thoroughness from the cast shines through the moment the cast comes in the stage door. The added bonus of a localized and customized radio commercial of a local business or sponsor being advertised circa 1946 gives the program that extra-added authenticity.

The Azalea String Quartet is comprised of Steven Taylor on cello, Lauren Burns on viola, and Nina Lutz and Brent Williams on violin. All principal players with the Valdosta Symphony Orchestra, the ensemble performs regularly in Georgia, Florida and South Carolina and is also available for concerts and educational demonstrations. The musicians who will perform on the ABAC stage on Feb. 18 appeared as a featured string quartet for the International Bartok 2000 Congress in Austin, Tex.

Since their formation in 1871, the Fisk Jubilee Singers are known internationally for their authentic singing of spirituals. The group has performed for hometown crowds as well as heads of state and is recognized for its preservation of spiritual singing. Directed by Dr. Paul Kwami, the Singers, along with the Colquitt County High School A Cappella Choir and the
ABAC Chamber Singers, will give a joint concert on March 29 of some of the world’s most moving and unique American music.

Pemberton will close out the series on George Scott Day on April 17 on the campus and as part of the ABAC Jazz Festival. He will be accompanied by the ABAC Jazz Ensemble, whose award-winning performances have taken the group to some of the world’s greatest stages, including the Montreaux Jazz Festival in Switzerland and the North Sea Jazz Festival in Amsterdam.

One of the most respected jazz performers and educators in the Southeast, Pemberton has been a featured performer with some of the most renowned names in the world, including Woody Herman, Maynard Ferguson and Les Hooper. He is Distinguished Professor Emeritus at the University of South Carolina, where he spent a career turning out some of the nation’s finest performers and music educators.

While available tickets will be sold at the door for each show, Series Director Wayne Jones encourages advance purchase of tickets to ensure seating for patrons. Tickets for the entire series are $50 for adults, $20 for students under 18 years of age, and $125 for a Family Pass that includes two adults and two or more student passes. Tickets can be purchased online at www.purplepass.com/abac or by phone at (229) 391-4895. Individual tickets for each event are $15 each for adults and $10 each for students under 18 years of age.

The series is supported in part by the Georgia Council for the Arts (GCA) through the appropriations of the Georgia General Assembly. The series is also supported, in part, by a generous grant from South Arts. GCA and South Arts also receive support from their partner agency, the National Endowment for the Arts.