

Concert to aid Mercy order

Rob Cullivan/Catholic Courier

Fans of music from bygone eras may want to see Michael Feinstein, who is on a mission to bring old-time tunes to the public.

The Sisters of Mercy Founders Club is bringing the Grammy-nominated Feinstein to the Eastman Theatre in Rochester on Dec. 8 at 7 p.m. for "A Holiday Keepsake" concert. Proceeds from the concert will benefit the order's educational and outreach ministries in the Diocese of Rochester as well as in Chile. The proceeds will also fund the sisters' pursuit of educational degrees.

Produced by a generation that saw more rockers than crooners, Feinstein is a throwback to the era when singers like Frank Sinatra ruled the

airwaves. For example, his 1999 album "Big City Rhythms," recorded with Maynard Ferguson, contains songs written by such musical legends as Hoagy Carmichael, Benny Goodman and Leonard Bernstein. Other Feinstein albums feature tunes penned by Irving Berlin and Cole Porter.

"Even though many of the songs I perform are old, they have a timeless quality about them which is why they have survived," Feinstein states in his Internet biography. "I always seek to present the material in a way that is contemporary while touching people's hearts."

Indeed, his career has been built on a reverence for older songs, a reverence that took root when he began playing piano at age 5.



"I loved the music that my parents listened to rather than what was on the radio at the time," he notes. "I was very enamored with show music, and I listened to a lot of the music that I now perform."

As a teen, he played at weddings and parties, then graduated from high school to piano bars. In the late '70s, the 20-year-old singer moved to Los Angeles where he was introduced to Ira Gershwin. He went to work for the famed lyricist by cataloging his recordings.

"Eventually, I became Ira's eyes and ears to the outside world as he was no longer able to go out in the world, becoming his musical assistant."

His love for Ira and his brother, George, has inspired Feinstein to become the best-known contemporary interpreter of their songs. Indeed, his first album, released in 1985, was "Pure Gershwin," which he put together a year after Ira's death. He also recorded a tribute to the brothers in 1996 titled "Nice Work If You Can Get It: Songs by the Gershwins."

Feinstein's made many television and film appearances, scored the music for the film "Get Bruce," and is at work on a Warner Home Video series on the history of American popular song. He plans to help preserve the best of American songs by performing them.

"I always want to present songs in a way that best expresses the intentions of the songwriters, yet also gives me an opportunity to put a personal stamp on the interpretations," he said.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Tickets for Michael Feinstein's concert are available through the Ticket Express Office, 100 East Ave., Rochester, or by calling Ticket Master at 585/232-1900. Tickets may also be ordered on the Internet at www.ticketmaster.com. For information on patron packages, which include premium seats and a pre-concert reception, call Julie Tracz at 585/288-2710, ext. 114.



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