

the Review

Dentist pairs with soccer coach to sing at opera night

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MULTI-TALENTED – Soprano Dr. Sherry Joseph and tenor Christopher Guy will perform “A Night at the Opera” at the Plymouth Arts Center Apr. 28
Photo courtesy of Plymouth PAC

Patients who rely on Dr. Sherry Joseph for their dental care might never guess that once she takes off her lab coat at her downtown Plymouth practice, she often steps up to a microphone and into the spotlight.

An accomplished soprano with impressive musical chops spanning decades, she has performed both as a soloist and choral member with the Milwaukee and Sheboygan Symphony Orchestra Choirs. A standout singer in high school, she was one of two student musicians chosen to represent her home state of Iowa for the “Sound of America” tour across Europe in 1986, toured nationally and internationally with the Nordic Choir of Luther College and plays piano and flute as well.

Her latest musical venture? “A Night at the Opera,” a fundraiser featuring her and tenor Christopher Guy at 7:30 p.m. on Friday, April 28 at the Plymouth Arts Center – which is one

of the beneficiaries along with the Fine Arts and Music Departments of Plymouth and Sheboygan Falls High School.

Taking creative risks is a family tradition for her.

“I grew up with my dad singing all the time. My parents had us all take piano lessons. And most every Filipino household has a karaoke machine, because that’s just what we do,” Joseph recalled. One of her brothers became a dentist, too.

As a surprise for her mother’s 60th birthday, her father – retired surgeon Dr. Pedro “Pete” Atienza, now 81 years old – came up with an Elvis impersonation routine, complete with a convincing costume. The transformation was remarkable.

“My mom did not even know it was him. Then his act caught on and came to be in demand for parties and fundraisers,” Joseph said.

She and her husband and fellow dentist Dr. Tim Joseph are parents of five – Noah, age 24; Connor, 23; Ethan, 21; Amara, 19 and Pria, 16 – and encouraged their own children musically as well. Tim also taught himself to play guitar. Ethan is studying psychology at the University of Wisconsin – Eau Claire and thinking about pursuing music therapy in graduate school. Pria performs with the Plymouth High School Show Choir and received accolades at state competitions.

“All my kids love singing and play different musical instruments,” Sherry noted. “I always wanted to have a family band.”

That dream came true, if only for one performance, during the height of the Covid-19 pandemic.

While holed up in the house, all five Joseph children rehearsed and then recorded their version of “I Can Only Imagine” by MercyMe, viewable at www.youtube.com/watch?v=tItpDmUpGSO. It was supposed to be just a practice run but became the final cut after one of the band members flew the coop.

“All the music lessons we paid for over the years came to fruition,” Joseph chuckled. “I just loved it and still listen to it all the time. It was one of my favorite things ever.”

Her husband Tim, she added, is one reason why she and other members of the family can pursue so many different passions.

“He is my biggest champion and so supportive of anything I want to do,” she said. She is also grateful that he is willing to pull the weight at home when she has been, say, running back and forth to Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra choir rehearsals at night.

But he has no lack of interests himself and enjoys poker, scuba diving, sailing, and running. The two met at Luther College in Decorah, Iowa but did not date until they reunited at the University of Iowa College of Dentistry.

After receiving her doctorate of dental surgery in 1995, Sherry served active duty in the U.S. Air Force as a dental officer at Scott Air Force Base in Illinois and Luke Air Force Base in Arizona. The couple moved to Plymouth and founded Joseph & Joseph Dental in 1999.

But Sherry does not believe in staying still for long, even though she has put down roots here.

“Getting yourself out of your comfort zone creates room to grow,” she said.

That is a philosophy she has pursued in many other ways, both personally and professionally.

Joseph is a runner who has competed in at least 16 marathons in cities across the United States. Preparing to sing for 90 minutes on April 28 also requires stamina-building and is not unlike working out, she said.

She is a committed volunteer, member of Plymouth Rotary Club and past winner of the Plymouth Professional Business Women’s “Woman of the Year” award.

In 2013, Sherry went back to school to earn her license in massage therapy. She then ran a studio, JADE Healing Massage – with an emphasis on Eastern medicine – for more than seven years.

In July 2002, she was awarded a fellowship from Academy of General Dentistry in Honolulu, Hawaii. Then she became one of only about 20 diplomates of the American Board of Dental Sleep Medicine in Wisconsin, closed the massage studio and started the Plymouth Sleep Clinic last fall, where she now works closely with local physicians to treat patients with sleep breathing disorders.

Her latest obsession is making pottery – a pastime resulting from her husband’s 50th birthday gift of a pottery wheel.

“Now I have this pottery studio in my garage. It’s a great creative outlet. There will have to be a store opening or something, because I’m overloaded with cups and bowls and plates I can’t possibly find a use for,” she laughed.

Her musical partnership with Christopher Guy came about as a sort of happy accident.

After Joseph was asked to fill in for other performers and sing a few songs at the Veterans Tribute Concerts directed by Julie Overby at the PAC in November of last year, she got to know fellow ensemble member Guy and they decided to try a duet.

“I turned to Christopher afterwards and said, ‘That was awesome. This should not be the last time we sing together’,” she recalled. “He has a beautiful voice.”

“Sherry is wonderful to work with,” according to Guy. “The first time we sang together, we just wanted to keep on singing. Our times rehearsing together are fun and easy-going.”

Guy is a learning strategist and head boys varsity soccer coach at Sheboygan Falls High School, who has a bachelor’s degree in music from Silver Lake College and is working toward a master’s degree in education-literacy from the University of Wisconsin – Oshkosh. He lives in Plymouth with his wife, Emily, and their two young sons.

“I have always enjoyed singing and performing, as I was brought up singing at Welsh Gymanfa Ganus (hymn sings) throughout Wisconsin,” he noted.

“A Night at the Opera” will feature both solos and duets and a variety of pieces, but his hope is that it will “give off a feel of being at the opera.”

“We want people to know that it’s not just opera,” Joseph added. “I am singing the Ave Maria, we are including some songs from musicals such as Les Miserables and he is singing arias from Handel’s Messiah. There’s a little bit of everything in there. Everyone who has looked at our set list has said, ‘Wow, this is a fun combination of music’.”

Both Guy and Joseph envisioned the event as a fundraiser for causes they care deeply about.

“We wanted to do it for a purpose,” Joseph said. “We don’t get paid for this; we’re doing it because we want to.”

“I believe it is important to share your talents with the community in a way that supports other causes,” Guy pointed out. “Fine Arts/Music boosters are an important part of making sure our public school’s programs have funds for not only their needs, but also their wants, in order to engage students and make long-lasting memories for them within the arts.”

Besides, participating in events like “A Night at the Opera” serves a social function for Joseph.

“It helps me get to know other people, too. When they’re in the dental chair, they can only say so much,” she joked. “It’s nice to connect with people vertically, when they can talk back.”