

# Pink Martini leaves audience shaken and stirred with excitement

## Pink Martini Review

BY VICKIE KENNEDY

Take a lexicon of languages, a plethora of percussion instruments, a vivacious vocalist, a prodigious pianist and mix well with an excited audience.

What do you get?

Pink Martini!

Pink Martini was presented by SEAc coast Entertainment Association on Nov. 18 and 19 at the Florence Events Center.

Thomas Lauderdale, Bandleader and pianist, describes his little orchestra this way, "Pink Martini is a rollicking around-the-world musical adventure... if the United Nations had a house band in 1962, hopefully we'd be that band."

In 1994, in his hometown of Portland, Ore., Lauderdale was working in politics, thinking he would run for mayor. Like other eager politicians-in-training, he went to every political fundraiser. He was dismayed to find the music at these events lackluster, loud and unneighborly.

Drawing inspiration from music from all over the world and crossing genres of classical, jazz and old-fashioned pop while hoping to appeal to con-

servatives and liberals alike, he founded the "little orchestra" Pink Martini.

Pink Martini provided more beautiful and inclusive musical soundtracks for causes such as civil rights, affordable housing, the environment, libraries, public broadcasting, education and parks.

On Nov. 18 and 19, Pink Martini came to Florence not only to make music but to change lives by including community members in its production. One gentleman, who had a chance to talk to Lauderdale prior to the concert, was invited to join the band during "Dosvedanya Mio Bambino," playing a mean triangle and ending the piece with a cymbal crash.

Pink Martini has achieved worldwide acclaim, but the musicians haven't forgotten their musical beginnings. The band members are always eager to help young musicians.

There was a coordinated student outreach with Chris Rowbotham, Siuslaw High School's Band director, to choose two students to perform "Hang On Little Tomato" with Pink Martini.

All band students were encouraged to learn the music and create a video audition. These videos were reviewed by Lauderdale. The selection decision was not an easy one.

Blake Morrow on the vibraphone Friday night and Nic Wilkinson on trumpet Saturday night were selected as best fitting the Pink Martini sound.

The band was excited to involve SHS's best and brightest young instrumental musicians on stage. The hope is that this will encourage the students to pursue music beyond high school.

The students weren't the only people to be encouraged to "live" the music.

The vivacious vocalist, China Forbes, owned the stage and invited the audience to participate in the music through clapping and dancing. Spontaneous dancing on the stage and in the aisles was encouraged during "Song of the Pine Squirrel."

While talking to a couple of dancers after the show, audience members emphatically exclaimed they weren't long time fans of Pink Martini. Still they couldn't stay in their seats during this tune that exuded unparalleled energy.

The sound system was perfect for this show. Every instrument could be heard equally well.

Gavin Bondy was the trumpeter par excellence. Every note was strong and true. There were two songs that were sung back to back that provided different views of the same love story: "And Then You Were Gone" Forbes' lament about her errant boyfriend, and "But Now I'm Back." Timothy Nishimoto's explanation of "boys will be boys."

The prodigious pianist was more than that. Lauderdale owned that piano.

He could tickle the ivories lightly or bang out a bawdy tune. He was in control of the band and of the keyboard. It was a love affair with both.

As for the "lexicon of languages," songs were sung in French, German, Armenian, Arabic, Chinese and English.

The last song, "Pata Pata," was a particular favorite. It is a South African folk song that encourages dancing.

After a standing ovation, the band played two more songs,

"Una Notte a Napoli" and "Bitty Boppy Betty."

Lauderdale encouraged an energetic conga line to snake through the hall for this tune. Every member of the audience left the FEC with a bounce in their step and a smile on their face.

Don't miss SEA's next concert, the witty, charming and tremendously entertaining Joe Trio on Saturday, Jan. 21.

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