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JOINING FORCES: THREE LOCAL INSTITUTIONS COME TOGETHER IN JAZZY CHRISTMAS CONCERT

Concert features Duke Ellington's sophisticated rewrite of Tchaikovsky's holiday classic, Vince Guaraldi's Charlie Brown Christmas and more, with stars including James Tormé, Renee Olstead, Maestro Victor Vener, the Pasadena Jazz Orchestra, Sylvia St. James and the Sacred Nation Gospel Choir. Noted personality Bryan Gallyot hosts the event and future jazz legends the PJI Junior Superstars perform the pre-concert entertainment, setting the stage for some of today's living jazz legends, all the while sharing the Christmas spirit with the community.

PASADENA, Calif. It isn't every day that a jazz orchestra is lead by a classical music conductor. Nor is it usual that the head of a non-profit charity walks on stage to play the drums. What's more, you'd think it a bit out of the ordinary that a for-profit jazz club lends its talent and energies to benefitting an institution that presents concerts that could be considered competition for the same music lovers. But that's just what's happening in Pasadena at The Nutcracker Swings, a benefit concert for the Pasadena Jazz Institute, happening on Saturday, December 19th at the Pasadena Convention Center Grand Ballroom when forces from the Pasadena Jazz Institute, California Philharmonic and redwhite+bluezz meet on the same stage to celebrate Christmas through music.

"I'm returning to my first love, the drums, with great anticipation" notes Paul Lines, Artistic Director of the Pasadena Jazz Institute. It's not that he's decided to forgo his role as head of the Jazz Institute, but after eight years running the organization, he's ready to perform again as well. "For the Nutcracker, I've been practicing—getting my hands back. I feel like a kid again!"

"Although drumming for a 17 piece Big Band is exhilarating and I can't wait to do it, the opportunity to perform isn't the only present this Christmas concert is giving me," says Lines. "I'll be collaborating with Victor Vener, Music Director of the California Philharmonic, who will conduct Duke Ellington's jazzy big band arrangement of Tchaikovsky's Nutcracker Suite. I've been a fan of Victor's for years and am thrilled with the opportunity to work with him."

The Maestro is also looking forward to working with Lines: "I'm happy to make music with Paul," notes Vener. "He's been a leading force in jazz performance and education in the region for almost

a decade. What's more, his keen musical talent, combined with his incredible ability to bring music to so many people make him the kind of artist I love to partner with."

Most people think of orchestra conductors as not being able to swing, but the California Philharmonic's Maestro Victor Vener easily breaks that mold. He's spent the past 24 years bringing a unique mixture of classics, music theatre, jazz, rock and world music to the stage through his work with Cal Phil and before that, the Pasadena Pops. But that's not where his career in jazz began. "I started drumming with big bands, swing groups and small combos at 16" notes Vener. "I've always had a working relationship with jazz, from being selected by noted composer/arranger/bandleader Stan Kenton to be First French Horn in his Collegiate Neophonic Jazz Orchestra when I was 20 to having a successful career in the Hollywood recording industry, performing on soundtracks for major motion pictures, where being a skilled jazz performer was an integral part of every musician's toolbox."

What's more, Vener's known for his infectious chats from the podium, sharing his knowledge of music with concertgoers in an easygoing and witty manner that brings enlightenment and entertainment to all—one of the many reasons he's been voted "Best Local Musician" for both 2008 and 2009 and "Best Local Personality" for 2007 in the Pasadena Weekly's annual Readers Poll. "I'm looking forward to conducting Ellington's Nutcracker. Ellington is an American legend, who was not just a master of jazz—he was a classically trained performer and composer who had the talent, training and technique to take Tchaikovsky's music and literally create a truly new work."

Nutcracker Swings is shaping up to be a real community event. So much so that André Vener, owner of redwhite+bluezz and Pasadena Entertainment is joining the act by spearheading the production end of the event and loaning the redwhite+bluezz all stars, a combo composed of top talent that regularly performs at his jazz club, to perform as a musical core for the evening's varied list of guest artists. "I refer to that young dynamo as 'André the Giant'—every endeavor he puts his name on is a home run, he never misses," notes Lines.

"I love bringing great people and organizations together to make magic" says André Vener, when talking about the concert. "Matching up the all stars with the Jazz Institute and Maestro Vener just seemed like a natural to me. I'm passionate about creating events that give people truly memorable experiences—especially through music—and when it can benefit the community, that makes it even better.

"Many people think that redwhite+bluezz and the Pasadena Jazz Institute are competitors, but nothing could be further from the truth. Paul Lines has been a mentor to me, helping me get my start in the jazz world, and it's a real treat being able to return the favor and help his organization out, with my musicians and through the work of my event production company, Pasadena Entertainment," notes Vener. "I love producing at the Pasadena Convention Center—since presenting the Freedom Concert in the Grand Ballroom last April and the Spazmatics concert on the plaza this summer, I've developed a wonderful relationship with Mike Ross and all the team at the

Pasadena Center Operating Company. I can't think of a better way to share the Christmas spirit with all of Pasadena than through this concert, with these artists at this venue."

Concertgoers will be seated at tables and have the option of purchasing a full service three course meal with their seats for \$35 per person. A self-serve buffet will also be available, with entrées from \$10-\$18. Beverages including wine and a cash bar will also be available. Tickets for the event range from \$30.00 to \$70.00 per seat and can be purchased through Ticketmaster by calling 800 745 3000 or at ticketmaster.com or by visiting nutcrackerswings.com.

Sponsors of the event include Pasadena Entertainment, redwhite+bluezz, Pasadena Independent, Pasadena Weekly and Waltrip's Music. For more information about The Nutcracker Swings, please visit nutcrackerswings.com.

*Dedicated to jazz education, preservation and participation, the **Pasadena Jazz Institute** is a non-profit, community benefit organization that celebrates this uniquely American art form. Known throughout the region for its innovative programming, with series like **Jazz On The Terrace** and **Jazz At Paseo**, the Institute has brought some of the area's most exciting jazz artists to thousands of eager music lovers and have set hundreds of young people on their way to incorporating jazz into their lives as performers and listeners since its inception in 2001. Following on the Institute's successful first season of concerts Lines added **Jazz Camp For Kids** in the summer of 2002 and the **Pasadena Jazz Orchestra** the following December. In addition to its public concerts, the Institute presents school concerts in the Pasadena Unified School District in order to share the legacy of jazz throughout the Pasadena community. For more information on its concerts and programs, visit the Institute online at pasjazz.org or call 626 398 3344.*

Pasadena Entertainment brings the area's best music, venues, wine and event producers together to create incredible events and continue Pasadena's tradition of excellence in community involvement. The company, spearheaded by André Vener, has produced many noted events in the past year including the Freedom Concert, Cal Phil Festival on the Green, Pasadena Wine Festival, an exhibition match between the Los Angeles Galaxy and FC Barcelona and a free concert by the Spazmatics on the steps of the Pasadena Civic Auditorium. For more information, visit pasadena-entertainment.com or call 626 304 0333.

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