

People & Places

Stage

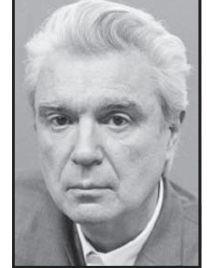
Stutzmann to follow Spano

Audiences thrilled to be in theater: Byrne

NEW YORK, Oct 21, (AP) — Since returning to Broadway's "American Utopia" after the pandemic pause, David Byrne has noticed a few things about his audience: It seems younger, a little more diverse and people are juiced to see live entertainment again.

"They're thrilled, just completely thrilled, to be in a theater, seeing a show, hearing music," he said. "It's like, 'wow, did we miss this or what?'"

"American Utopia" had its formal reopening at the St. James Theatre on Sunday, although there were a few weeks of previews. The music and dancing, performed by a barefoot troupe that operates without wires, is the same as before the break. The theatrical concert is a call for hope, connection and reaching utopia. Byrne has made a few changes to his monologues to reflect the times.



Byrne

Some of the change in the audience composition might be due to Spike Lee's filmed version of "American Utopia," which streamed while the live show itself was dark.

"I can sense that there are audience members who are not as familiar with the Talking Heads songs we play," he said. "They're coming to see it as a show, and they're taking it all in — not simply as music fans but as people who are seeing a show. They have to absorb it and process it in the same way that they would with any musical where they don't know all of the songs ahead of time."

Quickly in the show, he addresses what has kept people away.

"Thank you for leaving your homes," he says. "I used to say that in the old world and it had a different meaning. But many things have changed."

He references COVID-19 in some of his other monologues.

Opportunity

"Because of the nature of the show, because I talk directly to the audience and I'm not a character in a play, I have the opportunity to address a little bit of what we've all been through," he said in an interview. "First I thought, 'how do I do that?' I didn't want to turn the show into being about the pandemic. But I can't ignore it."

During the break, Byrne thought about musical changes, swapping some songs for others in a personal catalogue that encompasses nearly 45 years, but ultimately decided he liked the current mix.

There was no question about bringing the show itself back. All of the pre-pandemic performances had sold out, so he knew there was an appetite for it. He also considers it a distillation of many ideas about performance that he'd been trying through the years, and Byrne thought "I should let this ride for a little bit before I abandon it and go on to something else."

"American Utopia" has performances scheduled through next spring. Byrne has committed to a different theater project in Denver, Colorado, next summer, so it won't go on indefinitely.

Just as importantly, "American Utopia" doesn't feel dated upon its return, he said.

"The show dealt with a lot of issues that really came to the fore during the pandemic, whether it was race and policing or voting," he said. "It was, in a way, lucky, maybe prescient. We just happened to catch the tenor of the times. It didn't seem to lose any of its relevance."

Nathalie Stutzmann, the French-born contralto turned conductor, will succeed Robert Spano as music director of the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra starting with the 2022-23 season and become the second woman to lead a major American orchestra.

The 56-year-old agreed to a four-year contract, the orchestra announced Wednesday, and she plans to spend 10 weeks annually in Atlanta starting in 2022-23.

Marin Alsop was the first woman to head a major American orchestra as music director of the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra from 2007-21.

Spano spent 20 years in Atlanta and left after the 2020-21 season. He will become music director of the Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra in 2022-23.

Stutzmann, who lives in Geneva, will become the ASO's fifth music director after Henry Sopkin, Robert Shaw, Yoel Levi and Spano. She debuted with the orchestra on Dec. 2, 2020, in a program of Lauren Bernofsky's Passacaglia for Brass Ensemble, Wagner's "Siegfried Idyll" and Beethoven's First Symphony. She returned for a second program last February.

"You feel if the connection works," she said. "You feel it the work you are doing if what the musicians are expecting. And as a conductor you feel if the orchestra is in connection with you. And I must say it was very clear that the connection was working very well from the first time I came. And I really liked it because, well, I'm working intensely and my rehearsal work is very demanding and some orchestras are not so interested in this kind of rehearsal. But here they love to work hard."

Repertoire

Stutzmann was a singer before concentrating on the podium.

"I grew up as a musician. I was a pianist, I was a cellist and a bassoon player," she said. "Of course, I adored singing, but it was sometimes a little bit frustrating as a musician to have only one line to sing. And as a conductor, first of all you have an immense repertoire. A full life is not enough to conduct all the repertoire existing. And this is magic because you can pick all the works you really feel for. And, of course, instead of one voice, you have been put all voice in your hands. So it's for me the best way to express the music I have in me."

She is a full-time conductor but sings occasionally. "I literally have very little time for it," she said. "It's just a pleasure sometimes to come back to my original instrument."

Stutzmann is in her first season as the Philadelphia Orchestra's principal guest conductor, will serve for the rest of this season as Atlanta's music director designate and is in her fourth season as chief conductor of Norway's Kristiansand Symphony Orchestra. She was principal guest conductor of Ireland's RTE National Symphony Orchestra from 2017-20.

She was to have made her Metropolitan Opera debut last month in Gluck's "Iphigénie en Tauride" but the production was dropped in schedule revisions caused by the pandemic. She is now scheduled for a Met debut next season.



This image released by Netflix shows Michaela Boehm, (left), and Gwyneth Paltrow in a scene from the Netflix series 'Sex, Love, and Goop.' (AP)

Television

Netflix show aims to entertain and inform

Paltrow tackles 'taboos' in new show

NEW YORK, Oct 21, (AP) — Gwyneth Paltrow admits she has insecurities about her physical appearance in an episode of her new Netflix series "Sex, Love & Goop," but she's working on that. The Oscar-winner and entrepreneur behind the goop beauty and wellness brand opens up in the six-episode series, aimed at improving the relationships and personal lives of six courageous couples.

When some women on the show cited body image as an obstacle to sex, Paltrow shared her experience. She explained that after growing up in the public eye since she was 22, she was always trying to fit some ideal.

"I don't think I've ever met a woman that feels completely great about her body, and that's a real shame," Paltrow said in a recent interview with The Associated Press.

"That means that we're holding ourselves to some other standard that's been prescribed to us and it's very external as opposed to internal. At this point in my life, I'm definitely not a perfect person, but I'm always on a journey toward self-improvement. I really like myself. I know my faults. I don't think I have blind spots anymore, and I'm trying to sort of cultivate that same feeling about my body."

Paltrow, 49, also points out that she wanted to "show up for vulnerability" since she was asking the couples to do the same. The six pairs include people of varying ages, races, and sexual orientations working with experts to learn new ways to see each other and increase intimacy, while using methods and tools to enhance their relationships.

One of goop's missions is to encourage curiosity and "eliminate the shame around female sexuality" through its content and products. Paltrow says there's no better way to achieve that than by talking about sex and giving people permission to ask for what they want in the bedroom.

"Female pleasure is still considered a taboo and I think that if you look back throughout history and you understand how controlling women's pleasure or lack thereof or, you know... separating pleasure from morality, it's a way to make women not feel fully themselves," she said.

The show's experts - a Sexological Bodyworker, a Tantra and Sacred Intimacy coach, and an Erotic Wellness coach -- help couples through deep discussions and physical exercises.

Many couples volunteered to be on the show in hopes of working through disagreements or attitudes toward sex, which ranged from differing levels of desire to complaints of losing spark in a relationship.

Michaela Boehm, an intimacy expert on the series who has worked with Paltrow personally, says she is excited about "Sex, Love & Goop" because it will make her advice more accessible to people who might otherwise be reluctant about sex therapy.

Privacy

"You are doing it in the privacy of your bedroom or your living room, where you are watching. There's no stigma attached, and you are not having to expose yourself. You get to inch into the water, so to speak, one little toe at a time," Boehm said.

"People, because we don't talk about these things, they think they are broken or the only one experiencing this," Boehm said. "So seeing it and being presented with it as something that happens, that in itself takes so much pressure off and that opens a door and creates a belief that then can lead to a deeper relationship."

Both Boehm and Paltrow said they were humbled by the courage the couples showed. "It requires a certain amount of bravery to submit yourself for something like that," Paltrow said. "A lot of those couples really have almost that like, movie star thing that

you just care and you want to watch them."

The show - which starts streaming Thursday - has an onscreen note at the beginning saying it's "designed to entertain and inform, not provide medical advice," a disclaimer in anticipation of the criticism Paltrow and goop often receive. Some of the sessions showing couples experimenting with sex toys and accessories, including paddles, blindfolds and a metal "Wolverine claw," are sure to get attention.

Goop has been scrutinized for promoting unconventional products and experiences in the effort to educate consumers, and Paltrow has been an easy target as the recognizable face leading the brand. "I have incredible admiration for her because she is willing to put herself in places that I personally, I don't know if I had the fortitude to be criticized to that extent," Boehm said.

"When she decided to really go into being very conscious about the uncoupling and all of those things, everybody was rolling their eyes, everybody was ridiculing her. But now you look and people are actually more willing to accept that they could have co-parenting situations and blended families that are a lot more functional, and that is to a large extent because she put herself out there."

Yes, goop wants to educate and empower, but it's also a business after all, so as the series launches, the website is also highlighting two new tie-in products: a vibrator and a female libido supplement.

"I think largely women have been inculcated with this idea that we don't deserve to ask for those things, and I think it really hinders us," Paltrow said. The topic of sex is such a great way to kind of really take a bulldozer to try and bust through all of this because it's something that we all do, and it's something that really connects us to ourselves."



Comedian Amy Schumer, (right), with husband Chris Fischer, (left), attends the Broadway reopening of 'David Byrne's American Utopia' at the St. James Theatre on Sunday, Oct. 17, in New York. (AP)



Dion



Netrebko

Variety

LAS VEGAS: Celine Dion is delaying the opening of her new Las Vegas show due to muscle spasms that have kept her from performing.

A statement posted on her website on Tuesday said the singer has been having severe and persistent muscle spasms and she is being evaluated and treated by a medical team.

"I'm heartbroken by this," Dion said in the statement. "My team and I have been working on our new show for the past eight months, and to not be able to open this November saddens me beyond words."

Shows scheduled for the Resorts World Theatre on Nov 5 through Nov 20 and Jan 19 through Feb 5, 2022, are being canceled. The statement said that her world tour is still scheduled to resume in March 2022. (AP)

WASHINGTON: Soprano Anna Netrebko needs shoulder surgery and has canceled performances in Verdi's "Nabucco" at the Vienna State Opera.

The 50-year-old was to have sung Abigail on Nov 1, 6, 9 and 12, the first three with Amartuvshin Enkhbat in the title role and the last with Plácido Domingo.

"I have been suffering from debilitating pain in my shoulder for many months now and my doctor has advised me that I must undergo urgent surgery on my shoulder followed by physical rehabilitation immediately after in order to address this," she said in a statement Tuesday.

The company did not immediately announce a replacement. (AP)

SAN FRANCISCO: San Francisco police say a concert-goer who fell to his death from the upper level of a basketball arena is believed to have "leapt from an elevated area of the arena," causing his death.

"Immediately before the victim leapt, he did not appear to have any physical contact with any person or barrier/railing," Officer Grace Gatpandan said in a statement Tuesday.

The American jam band Phish, which has devoted fans across the country, was performing at Chase Center Sunday when on-duty officers were alerted shortly before 9 pm to a man who had apparently fallen and needed medical help, police said. The 47-year-old man died.

Nearly an hour later at 9:45 pm, on-duty

officers were alerted to another man who had fallen. He was taken to the hospital with non-life threatening injuries, as was a man he fell on. Police have not provided any details about what caused that incident.

Chase Center is home to the NBA's Golden State Warriors.

A spokesperson for the venue and the Warriors told the San Francisco Chronicle

that the arena was safe.

"Chase Center was built and is operated in accordance with all safety standards and requirements governing facilities of its kind in the state of California and the city and county of San Francisco," Kimberly Veale said.

The man who was injured by the second fall told CBS affiliate KPIX that he had



Pianist Bruce (Xiaoyu) Liu of Canada reacts after being named as the winner of the 40,000-euro (\$45,000) first prize in the 18th Frederic Chopin international piano competition, a prestigious event that launches pianists' world careers, at the National Philharmonic in Warsaw, Poland, on Thursday, Oct. 21. (AP)

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moved from his assigned seat in an upper tier to a flatter, more protected area because he "didn't feel safe dancing there." Evan Reeves of Oakland, whose leg was injured by the fall, received permission from an on-site doctor to watch the rest of the show while waiting for his wife to pick him up and take him to a hospital. (AP)

GULF SHORES, Ala: The latest batch of police recruits in an Alabama beach town faced an interview board that included law enforcement experts and a civilian who was recognizable by his voice if not by his face: Hollywood actor Morgan Freeman.

Freeman, a Mississippi native who owns property in Gulf Shores and spends time in the town of 12,000, was part of a seven-member panel that interviewed nine potential officers for the Gulf Shores Police Department last week. Deputy Chief Dan Netemeyer sat Wednesday.

The department sometimes asks residents to participate in such screening committees, Netemeyer said. Freeman knows some people who have helped and volunteered to serve.

"It was kind of a last minute thing, but he was an active participant," Netemeyer said. Known for roles in movies including "The Shawshank Redemption," "Driving Miss Daisy," "Unforgiven," and "Million Dollar Baby," Freeman sat at a table asking questions with other interviewers including Netemeyer, the police chief, a criminal justice professor and others.

"He had a hat on, and he was kind of sitting back. When he introduced himself it was almost like an old 'Candid Camera' scene," Netemeyer said. (AP)