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# Concert review: Yamin shows his talent with standards in 'Pops Holiday' show

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by Susan L. Pena • Dec. 14, 2015 •

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The Reading Pops Orchestra invited vocalist Elliott Yamin to share in "A Pops Holiday," conducted by Willis Rapp - a real celebration of the popular side of Christmas music - Sunday afternoon at the Miller Center for the Arts, in partnership with the Reading Area Community College's Downtown Performing Arts Series.

Yamin, who honed his considerable vocal chops and performance skills as one of the top three winners on "American Idol" in 2006, sang nonholiday original material during the first half of the concert, accompanied by a small combo (piano, bass, drums, guitar) enhanced by the Pops. His renditions of "Can't Keep On Lovin' You" and "Free," both scored by Bob Bockholt, were intense, his voice flexible and pleasing with a tiny, attractive rough edge. His compelling delivery style showed why he has maintained a following long after "Idol." He also sang "Moody's Mood for Love," by Eddie Jefferson based on an improvisation by jazz saxophonist James Moody, arranged by Berks County's own jazz composer, Chris Heslop. The arrangement was lush, under beautiful vocals. The R&B "Self Control," arranged by Matt Catingub, was Yamin's favorite song from his time on "Idol," and his enthusiastic performance affirmed that. "Virginia," also arranged by Catingub, was his ode to the supportive friends in Richmond, Va., where he lived just before his appearance on "Idol," with a promise, "I'm comin' on home to you." During the second half of the concert, he opened

with "Wait for You," his first hit single after "Idol," and then he launched into his holiday material, most from his CD "My Kind of Holiday." The jazzy "This Christmas," a Donny Hathaway song arranged by Reading Pops member Erwin Chandler, was well done, but the rest of the songs showed Yamin in a surprising light, as a skilled interpreter of standards. Something about his voice and his tenderness and touch of swing reminded me of none other than Tony Bennett. His nostalgic "I'll Be Home for Christmas," a sweetly sexy "Let's Be Naughty" and a lovely "Christmas Song" were a great present for the audience. The Pops opened the program with "It's the Most Wonderful Time of the Year" and ended with Leroy Anderson's beloved "Sleigh Ride." They also played Pops tuba player Ken Kemmerer's wacky arrangement of "Twelve Days of Christmas," with each "day" written in a meter reflective of the number. (That means the sixth day was in 6/8; the 10th day was in 10/8, etc.) Full of bird calls and brief musical references (Vivaldi, Bach, Saint-Saens), the piece - which must have been a nightmare to conduct - was performed with great humor and no mishaps, and ended with a cacophony of birds. Contact Susan L. Pena: [life@readingeagle.com](mailto:life@readingeagle.com).

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