

# Michael Feinstein:

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# KEEPING "THE AMERICAN SONGBOOK" OF POPULAR MUSIC IN MOTION

by bill biss

Michael Feinstein is going to be making beautiful music under the stars with two of Southern California's finest symphonies in July. On Friday, July 15 and Saturday, July 16, he brings the music of George Gershwin and Cole Porter to the stage of the San Diego Symphony "Summer Pops" series and later in the month hits the stage of The Hollywood Bowl for what has been coined "Michael Feinstein and the Singing Stars of Television" on Friday, July 29 and Saturday, July 30. Here, for *The Rage Monthly*, he elaborates on his upcoming shows, speaks of his collaboration with Cheyenne Jackson on *The Power of Two*, one of his latest CDs and shares the joy of making an impact on the youth of today by being somewhat the "Martha Stewart" of The Great American Songbook.

**You have two upcoming performances here in California. One with the San Diego Symphony Summer Pops and another at The Hollywood Bowl. For someone who has never attended a performance at The Hollywood Bowl, how would you describe the experience?**

Going to The Hollywood Bowl is like going to a big party. It's an overwhelming experience because it's such a beautiful place and a great setting for music. It was created in the 1920s, when they discovered this natural acoustic amphitheatre. It's one of the great things to do in Los Angeles. The communal experience to be with that many people, all enjoying the same concert is really very, very special. The seating is tiered so no matter where you sit, there's not a bad seat in the place.

**What is it like performing on stage at The Bowl?**

I first did it in 1987 and it was the highlight of my career at that point... and it still is. There's something despite the grandeur of it that feels intimate to perform on stage. Working with the L.A. Philharmonic is also very exciting because they are one of the great orchestras.

**Have you ever shared the same stage with Dick Van Dyke? [Feinstein will be joined by special guests, Florence Henderson, Wayne Brady, Cheyenne Jackson and Dick Van Dyke for these performances.]**

No, I haven't. I know him socially. I've known Dick for years and his late wife, Michelle, who died fairly recently. He's a wonderful guy. I've sent him sheet music for songs he's desired to find here and there, but this will be the first time actually being on a stage with him.

**Will you be singing any selections from your recent album, *The Power of Two* with Cheyenne Jackson?**

Yes! Since Cheyenne is part of the concert, we're excited about doing one or hopefully, two duets from the recording.

**How did this collaboration with him come together for the record?**

I met Cheyenne at a Christmas tree lighting show that was broadcast on CBS. It was in New York. Cheyenne was performing and so was I and we just started talking and became friends. I invited him and his partner, Monty, over to dinner and we talked about doing a show together some time. The next time I was scheduled to appear at my own club in New York; Feinstein's at the Regency, I called Cheyenne to see if he might be interested in putting something together. We created an act which was performed there to such acclaim that we decided to record it. Subsequently, we performed at other places as well.

**Nice, every performance for you is different of course. You have performed with The San Diego Symphony many times and now, you've got the "Summer Pops" performances coming up. I couldn't think of a better double-bill for these shows than Gershwin and Porter. What have you thought of to bring to the San Diego audience for this evening under the stars?**

The objective was to pick music that is perfect for the setting and a lot of upbeat material as well. Celebratory is the best word. Working with that orchestra is so wonderful because they are great musicians and they have no snobbism about the music that they play as do some orchestras, so I put together a real mixture of my favorite love songs and up-tempo things. The mood in doing an outdoor show like that is always relaxed and fun. It's fun to look at the faces of people in the audience... people are in all different modes of relaxing and enjoying (laughter).



## STARSPANGLED POPS

Marvin Hamlisch kicks off the series as he conducts the 4th of July spectacular, guest performers are, *American Idol's* David Hernandez and Lakisha Jones. **July 1, 2, and 3**

## MOTOWN'S GREATEST HITS

Motown comes alive with the music that defined a generation. Relive the hits of the Motor City: "My Girl," "Tears of a Clown," "Heat Wave," "Baby Love" and more **July 8 and 9**

## MICHAEL FEINSTEIN

Gershwin, Porter and more, delivered by today's best interpreter of the Great American Songbook. **July 15 and 16**

## CIRQUE MUSICA

Specular Music with soaring acrobatics, feats of strength with grace, elegance and power. **July 22 and 23**

## RHAPSODY IN BLUE

Grammy nominated jazz pianist Eldar Djangirov delivers an evening of jaza favorites in his debut with the Pops. **July 31**

## BURT BACHARACH

His songbook is filled perennial favorites, the maestro and trio envelop the evening with memories and magic. **August 7**

## BEATLESTIBUTE: THE CLASSICAL MYSTERY TOUR

The British Invasion is relived as The Classical Mystery Tour pays tribute to the group that started it all! From *The Ed Sullivan Show* to Abbey Road, The Beatles are in a class of their own. **August 19 and 20**

## OZOMATLI

Culture-mashers and considered the voice of the city of Los Angeles and their music is a collision of hip-hop, salsa, samba and funk. **August 21**

## WYNONNA

Come for a wild country night as the "best country singer since Patsy Cline" performs her myriad of number one hits. **August 26 and 27**

## 1812 TCHAIKOVSKY SPECTACULAR

This is the seasons finale; the 1812 Overture complete with booming cannons over the bay! **September 2, 3, and 4**

# SUMMER POPS MUST SEES

## SPOTLIGHT



**Now with the wealth of material from both Gershwin and Porter... do you have a favorite film musical that showcases Gershwin and one that has songs from Porter?**

I adore *Shall We Dance* [1937] with Astaire and Rogers, not only their performances, but the orchestrations. With Porter, I love *High Society* [1956]. The orchestrations for that are fantastic because it's a combination of Nelson Riddle and Conrad Salinger. You've got Bing Crosby, Frank Sinatra, Louie Armstrong and Cole Porter... it's an embarrassment of riches!

**This latest moniker for you of "ambassador" That reminds me of Ethel Merman in *Call Me Madame*. However, it fits for you because *The American Songbook* is quite foreign to the younger generations. You represent this presentation of the music to others.**

One of the great things about this music is that it constantly finds new audiences, as it is a multi-generational thing with the Internet being what it is. It is possible for young people to find and discover all kinds of music and singers, songwriters and jazz. I find the popularity grows because of the potential of access. My audiences have become much more diverse as time progresses, which is fantastic.

**I just won't call you, "The Hostess with the Mostest" [a song of Ethel Merman's from *Call Me Madam*].**

Ah, you can if you want! (laughter).

**How do you unwind when you are NOT working?**

When I'm in Los Angeles, I like to go hiking in the hills behind my house, Griffith Park, which is absolutely wonderful. I do like to go to clubs and hear music, even though there aren't many places to go, compared to what used to exist. In New York, I go to hear this vintage swing band, Vince Giordano and The Night Hawks, which is a lot of fun. Also, I like to go to flea markets and places and look for various artifacts. One of the things that I'll frequently do in New York is get on the subway, take it to a stop that I've never experienced before and just wander around the city.

**Will you share one recollection of performing and receiving positive feedback from the younger generation about the music that you love?**

I recently appeared at a junior high school in Los Angeles and was thrilled with the response from the students. I was asked to introduce this music to them. I just said, "This is music that appeals to me, I don't know how you'll feel about it." I told them these stories and put it out there. The response was so resoundingly positive. There was such adulation that it caught me by surprise—I didn't expect to have that kind of huge reaction. It just made me remember that if you listen to anything without prejudice and just listen to it for what it is, it can be a very powerful experience. That's what happened. These kids were just listening to music without peer pressure or other people saying, "That's old or that's this or that." The experience was such that it really captivated them and it reminded me that there are a lot of young people who resonate to this and all different kinds of music. But, they're not represented by shows like *American Idol*.

**That's excellent. Thank you, Michael.**

Thanks Bill. It was nice speaking to you again. Thanks for writing about the shows.

### Michael Feinstein Sings Gershwin, Porter and More

San Diego Summer Pops Series

Friday, July 15 and Saturday, July 16

[sandiegosymphony.org](http://sandiegosymphony.org)

619.245.0804 to purchase tickets

### Michael Feinstein and the Singing Stars of Television

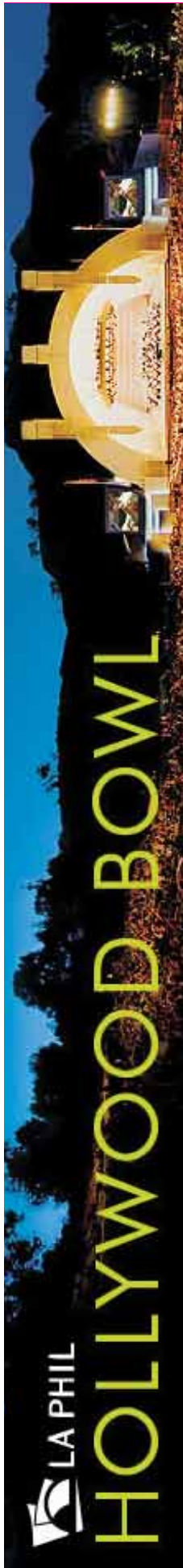
The Hollywood Bowl

Friday, July 29 and Saturday, July 30

[hollywoodbowl.com](http://hollywoodbowl.com)

323.850.2000 to purchase tickets

## HOLLYWOOD BOWL MUST SEES



### CHRIS BOTTI

A virtuoso trumpeter with many Grammys under his belt, is joined by Bobby McFerrin and the Yellowjackets for an evening of jazz and pop. **July 13**

### SARAH MCLACHLAN

The Hollywood Bowl Orchestra teams up with this dreamy songstress for the first time in her multi-Grammy career. **July 15 and 16**

### EDDIE IZZARD

Stripped to the Bowl is appropriately named as this comic brings his hilarity to the stage for a side-splitting, endlessly hilarious stand up show. **July 20**

### DOLLY PARTON

Another bowl debut is had as the beloved Dolly comes to our stage for an extraordinary concert highlighting her 45 year musical career. **July 22 and 23**

### GLADYS KNIGHT

The "Empress of Soul" hits the stage with none other than James Ingram as they blend their voices. **July 27**

### HAIRSPRAY

Where would we be with out Tracy Turnblad? This John Waters extravaganza is sure to leave you with an unstoppable beat! **August 5, 6, and 7**

### RODRIGO Y GABRIELA

This Mexican duo will fill the bowl stage with passion and rhythm as they are joined by vocalist Bulka and guitarist Javier Limon. **August 12 and 13**

### JONI'S JAZZ

Herbie Hancock, Chaka Kahn, Wayne Shorter, Cassandra Wilson and more will be on hand to celebrate the multi-talented Joni Mitchell's music. **August 17**

### JOHN WILLIAMS: MAESTRO OF THE MOVIES

Okay you movie magic buffs, here's your chance to relive the masterful sounds from his most powerful film scores. **August 26 and 27**

### HUMAN LEAGUE

OMG it's the '80s and a totally awesome line up of music includes hits from The B52's, Berlin and the Fixx with Terri Nunn as host. **September 2**

### QUINCY JONES

Global Gumbo joins the men in the band in celebration of Mr. Jones's six-decade career with many, many guest appearances. **September 7**

### A NIGHT AT THE MOULIN ROUGE

Paris comes to the bowl! Watch out front row, the high kicking ladies do the can-can in this jazzy cabaret journey with the Paris Combo. **September 16, 17, and 18**

### SOUND OF MUSIC SING-A-LONG

The hills are truly alive and the orchestra is do-re-mi'd at the largest outdoor theatre for this popular and heart-warming sing-a-long. **September 24**