

Lubeck taps internet

'Rejoice - A Holiday Musical Tapestry' features

By JEREMY D. BONFIGLIO
Sight & Sound Editor

BENTON HARBOR — On Aug. 24, Hammered Dulcimer National Champion Ted Yoder walked into his backyard orchard in Goshen, Ind., set up his instrument, turned on Facebook Live, and played a cover of Tears For Fears' 1985 hit "Everybody Wants To Rule The World" for his "Songs From The Orchard" web series.

"I don't know if I ever believed it was a song that was perfect for the hammered dulcimer," Yoder says by phone from his home. "Honestly, it's a guessing game. You start messing with a song and you see how it works. I had messed around with it before, but it wasn't until that morning that it started to come together and I decided to record it. I probably underestimated the popularity of the song."

The homespun video racked up 7 million views in 36 hours, rocketing to 53 million views in four days. On

Monday, Facebook announced that Yoder's performance came it at No. 2 (only behind Candace Payne's Chewbacca Mom) as the most viewed video of 2016 on the social media platform with 85 million views to date.

No one is more surprised than Yoder, who will reprise the song live as part of internationally acclaimed smooth jazz and Spanish guitarist Bryan Lubeck's "Rejoice - A Holiday Musical Tapestry" tonight at Lake Michigan College Mendel Center Mainstage Theatre.

"It's not like I'm any more talented than I was six months ago, but the exposure has certainly helped," Yoder says. "I make more money online now than I ever have before."

Tonight's event - which also features



Guitarist Bryan Lubeck, above and on the cover, will come together with singer Meagan McNeal, below right, for tonight's "Rejoice - A Holiday Mus

saxophone player Phil Denny and gospel vocalist Meagan McNeal, and a backing band of Nick Bisesi (sax), Jon Paul (bass), Rick Vitek (drums), Nate Lacny (Latin percussion) and St. Joseph High violinists Erik Rumsa and Annie Klusendorf - is meant to showcase musicians and instruments that seem, at first glance, to be unlikely pairings.

The hammered dulcimer, for example, is a stringed musical instrument most often associated in folk music that's played by striking strings with small mallet hammers.

In fact, Lubeck wasn't exactly sure how his classical and Spanish guitar approach would mesh with Yoder's instrument.

"When we got together I was trying to figure it out," Lubeck says. "I couldn't wrap my head around it. Then, he and I started playing together and it totally meshed. I was playing Spanish, almost Flamenco style, and with him on the dulcimer, it ended up thinking that the only way it worked but could end the jewel of this show."

Although both Lubeck and Yoder had been in contact long before the video went viral, this will be the first time the two musicians have performed together.

"We didn't go to high school together, but we grew up in



IF YOU GO

What: Bryan Lubeck hosts "Rejoice - A Holiday Musical Tapestry" with Phil Denny, Meagan McNeal and Ted Yoder

When: 8 p.m. tonight

Where: Lake Michigan College Mendel Center Mainstage Theatre, 2755 E. Napier Ave., Benton Harbor

How much: \$24-\$48

Contact: 927-1221 or themendelcenter.com

Artist info: www.bryanlubeck.com; phildenny.com; www.tedyoder.com; meaganmcnealonline.com

... sensation to 'rule' the holidays

... Spanish guitarist with hammered dulcimer whiz Ted Yoder, among others



Photos provided

... hammered dulcimer player Ted Yoder, above right, and gospel ...
... "Cal Tapestry" at The Mendel Center.



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... sort of

... neighboring towns eating the same
... corn diet in northern Indiana," Lubeck
... says.
... "My sister's best friend, Jennifer
... Brown, went to school with Bryan, and
... so once I started performing out live
... doing the hammered dulcimer thing
... she told me about Bryan, and I
... touched base with him years ago,"
... Yoder says.
... "Ted and I talked a little bit back
... and forth for about five years, and then
... when his video came out on Facebook,
... I was like 'Holy crap!'" Lubeck says.
... "... He called me the next day or two,
... and said, 'Bryan, I think I finally made
... it into your league.' And I had to
... laugh. I was like, 'Dude, you are so far
... out of my league now.' But I love to see

... how things that don't normally go
... together can sound so I knew that we
... had to find a way to get together for
... this show."
... Lubeck has built his reputation by
... blending Latin and urban sounds on
... the instrumental CDs "Acoustic
... Vineyard," "Vineyard Groove" and his
... holiday album "We Three Strings." He
... was the featured guitarist at the 2010
... Smooth Jazz Awards, and his latest
... instrumental release, "Tuscan Sky," has
... spent more than 16 weeks in the Top
... 40 of the smooth jazz charts.
... Although he did not grow up in
... Southwest Michigan, Lubeck certainly
... considers it to be his musical home. He
... recorded his first song with St. Joseph
... native and music industry stalwart

Dave Carlock. He credits Tabor Hill Winery in Buchanan, a venue he played early in his career, for inspiring his sound, and the Box Factory for the Arts as the place his instrumental guitar career began. In February, he teamed up with the St. Joseph High School Orchestra for a special Valentine's Day concert at SJHS' John and Dede Howard Auditorium, and he hopes tonight's holiday showcase will be the start of an annual tradition at The Mendel Center.
"Our goal is to really give the audience a boost in holiday spirit," Lubeck says. "Our goal for this is to create something that's both annual and community focused. The idea is to bring in big-name acts, national acts, but also have that community feel. It's really a fabric of all these folks from outside and locally coming together."
In addition to Lubeck and Yoder, the concert will feature McNeal, who has backed up everyone from Eminem to The O'Jays, before launching her solo vocal career in 2008, and Denny, the smooth jazz saxophone player from Lansing whose current radio single "Diggin' On" has reached No. 23 on the Billboard chart and No. 1 on Sirius XM weekly playlist for Dec. 9. Lubeck and Denny paired last December to record the holiday song "Rejoice," which also will make tonight's set list.
"We wanted to do a traditional song in a new way," Lubeck says. "It's really 'O Come, O Come Emmanuel' but we've done it in a groovy, upbeat way. We called it 'Rejoice,' because it sounds more joyful than the hymn everyone is familiar with. ... The idea is to feature each of us in almost a mini show. We will each have almost our own set and we will play together and overlap. I wanted everyone to sort of shine on their own and sort of do their own thing. The fun part about being a musician when everybody is good at their craft is that you know some kind of magic is going to happen. You don't

know when it is going to happen or how it is going to happen or what it's going to sound like, but you know when you hear it."
It's that magic, Lubeck says, that Yoder tapped into with "Everybody Wants To Rule The World." And he isn't the only professional musician who thinks so. It wasn't long after Yoder's video went viral that he was contacted by Tears For Fears vocalist Curt Smith and drummer Jamie Wollam who invited him to their show in Indianapolis.
"Curt said that they were going to be in Indianapolis in a couple of weeks and that they would love to give us tickets to their show," Yoder says. "We went and had backstage passes and when we met them Curt says, 'OK, here's the deal. We have the day off tomorrow because we are traveling to Cleveland. We'd love to come up and meet the family and do a song in the orchard with you.' So that's what we did. They came up and we hung out for about four hours."
The video of Smith and Wollam singing and playing along with Yoder has also been making the rounds on the internet. Yoder plans to include his version of the song on his next studio album, "Songs From the Orchard: Volume 1," slated for a spring release.
In the meantime, he is hoping to showcase how far he can push the traditional folk instrument in tonight's concert.
"We have a very big opening planned," Lubeck says. "Whether you are a fan of the hammered dulcimer or Mannheim Steamroller, you will enjoy our opening number. That's all I will say."
"I think this is actually going to kick Mannheim Steamroller's butt," Yoder adds.
"Oh, I think so, too," Lubeck says. "I think so, too."
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