

**LeVeck to host 'Night at the Symphony' in St. Louis Feb. 1**

The public is invited to take part in a bus trip to hear Beethoven’s beloved Symphony No. 5 performed live by the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra.

The Mattoon Arts Council will sponsor “A Night at the Symphony” on Feb. 1 as part of an evening that also will include dinner at Zia’s On The Hill. The event will be hosted by former MAC chairman and well-known Mattoon musician Thomas LeVeck.

Ludwig Van Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony begins with four opening notes that are considered by many to be classical music’s most popular ever played. In addition to Beethoven’s masterpiece, Jaap Van Zweden will lead the orchestra in Dmitri Shostakovich’s Symphony No. 5, which also is known for its opening sequence.

LeVeck, a violinist who was a member of the St. Louis Symphony for 21 years, has performed both of these classical works. He will share his own history with the symphony and educate trip participants about these classical compositions during a program at The Depot prior to departing for St. Louis.

“I’ve played both of these pieces many times,” LeVeck said. "I’m delighted that we chose to attend this program because Beethoven’s Fifth is certainly the most well known and popular piece, and Shostakovich’s work is a more contemporary classical work that is an audition piece for violinists.”

German composer and pianist Beethoven composed his Symphony No. 5 between 1804 and 1808, while Russian composer and pianist Shostakovich composed his in 1937.

“They were all looking at each other’s work and inspired by each other,” LeVeck said, adding that Beethoven studied previous composers such as Mozart and Bach.

LeVeck said he also learned a lot by performing with other musicians, as well as working with many conductors and guest conductors during his time with the St. Louis Symphony.

“I learned some of my most valuable things I ever used from other colleagues, not from teachers,” he said. “I didn’t know I’d get that there, but I did.”

LeVeck came to the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra after performing as a member of the U.S. Military Academy String Quartet at West Point and playing with the Dallas Symphony Orchestra. He earned bachelor’s and master’s degrees from the University of Michigan and studied at the Juilliard School of Music in New York.

He has taught music at St. Louis University, Eastern Illinois University and Millikin University, and continues to give private violin lessons. He was a founding member of the LeVeck String Quartet and was a 2009 recipient of the Jefferson Award for Public Service because of his longtime dedication to music and the arts in the Coles County area. He and his wife, Dr. Kathleen LeVeck, have two children, Damien and Danielle.

LeVeck encouraged community members to take advantage of the opportunity to hear these recognizable classical pieces performed live.

“Live performance is like, if you go to a football game -- I like to be there and I like to be on the 50-yard
line,” he said. “You can see the people really performing, hear the music of the composer coming to life. Live performance is what makes me feel good.

“It’s different than any recording will ever be, and it’ll be different than the performance the next day. Each performance is unique.

“It’s a great program – having both of these composers on the same program is wonderful,” LeVeck said. “It’s the real deal. If you want to get exposed to classical music, it’s a great concert. This is it.”

Reservations for the arts council’s “A Night at the Symphony” will be taken on a first-come, first-reserved basis. The group will meet at 2 p.m. Feb. 1 at the new Lone Elm Room in The Depot for LeVeck’s program. Patrons will then board a charter bus for the trip to St. Louis, where they will enjoy dinner at Zia’s On The Hill, followed by the symphony performance.

The cost of “A Night at the Symphony” is $80 per person. This fee includes the LeVeck program, transportation, symphony ticket and refreshments. Patrons will purchase their own dinner.

To reserve your seat, contact Mattoon Arts Coordinator Mindy Sanders at SandersM@mattoonillinois.org, stop by the arts and tourism office at The Depot, or call 258-6286. Tickets must be reserved by Jan. 10.