Q&A WITH JOSH GATES

Discovery’s ‘Expedition’ host brings experiences to Easton

By Anthony Salamone

Technically, Josh Gates, host of Discovery Channel’s “Expedition Unknown,” lives in Los Angeles with his wife and two children. But he also considers his primary residence “airport floors around the world.”

Not that Gates is complaining. The explorer, who grew up in Manchester-by-the-Sea, Massachusetts, studied film and anthropology at Tufts University in Medford, so it’s no wonder Gates seems like a natural fit for the television screen, which he thoroughly relishes searching for all things legendary or exotic.

Gates, 42, who was host of Syfy Channel’s “Destination Truth,” will bring his brand Wednesday night to Easton’s State Theatre, for what is billed as an evening of ghosts, monsters and adventures.

The audience should expect plenty of humor mixed with nitty-gritty tales. But Gates didn’t divulge too much about the show in his email response to questions.

In fairness, he said he was vacationing on an Indian Ocean island when he wrote back.

Q: Will you show on Oct. 23 mark your first visit to Easton or the Lehigh Valley? What do you know about our area?

A. My first time in the area? I’ve driven through Pennsylvania several times, but I’ve never been through the Lehigh Valley. Another new destination to explore. I can’t wait!

Q. What is your live stage show like? Can you describe a little bit about what you will be offering the audience?

A. It’s a chance to bring my adventures from the road directly to an audience. I spend about 200 days a year on the road, but I’ve never been through the Lehigh Valley. It’s visually stunning, with magnificent stained glass windows, marvelous acoustics, and a tremendous pipe organ up in the front gallery. It will really seem like being at an actual coronation.

In creating “Coronation,” Taylor and his troupe conceived a spectacle that features trumpet fanfares, marvelous instrumental music, a processional that includes the king himself in full royal regalia along with a robed Archbishop of Canterbury, played by Touchstone’s Bill George.

In another departure from recent Bach Choir galas, 20 singers from the choir, in addition to Bach Festival Orchestra concertmaster Elizabeth Field, will be joining Taylor’s mix of Canadian and American singers and musicians in the performance. It’s hard to imagine how Taylor, a Sony Classical recording artist and one of the most sought after counter tenors in the world, finds the time to direct and perform in a group such as the Easton’s State Theatre. In addition to that, he tours six months a year as a soloist, and when back at home serves as professor of voice and opera and head of Historical Performance at the University of Toronto. Taylor appears on more than 100 recordings, including one with Jeremy Irons, which won a Grammy. He has appeared in prestigious concert halls and opera houses throughout the world, and in fact, it was at his 1999 Met Opera debut in Handel’s Julius Caesar where Purdyfield heard him for the first time. “That began a musical and spiritual friendship that has carried now for 20 years,” Taylor says.

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across scenes of my serial, and my experiences on travel and exploration in the 21st century.

Q. Why did you wind up attending Tufts? What was your major?

A. I ended up at Tufts because I fell in love with its unique theater program and because I wanted to go to a liberal arts school where I could study a variety of subjects. Also, my parents were less than an hour away, so I could bring home laundry on the weekends.

I ended up double-majoring in anthropology and drama. Against all odds, both of these fields ended up being really useful in the world and wonderful jobs I have today.

Q. You’ve been described as an explorer, television presenter, producer, and host. What do you consider to be your favorite role?

A. Explorer. I love the unknown, and any day that I get to experience something new is a good day.

Q. The State Theater has a ghost. What do you know about A. Ford Osterstock, aka Fred the Ghost?

Might you be speaking about him, or doing something else?

A. I have to share the stage! Honestly, I’d never heard of that one until now. I understand he manages the theater for many years and sometimes leaves premises on the floor. I’ll be sure to keep my eyes open.

Q. What places haven’t you visited that you want to see?

A. Too long a list. I once thought that the more I traveled, the more my bucket list would become, but it’s exactly the opposite. The more of this incredible world I see, the more I learn about, and the more places I get added to my list.

At the top of my list are [ancient nations] Uganda and Botswana, two remarkable countries I’ve never had the opportunity to visit.

Q. What place or places have you visited that made you say I wish I were there?

A. Currently, I’m sitting at a beachside bar in the middle of the Indian Ocean on Seychelles islands. I’m not sure I’ve ever wanted to live somewhere else as much as this place. Impossibly green peaks, crystalline blue waters, and a mai tai resting on the table.

Dream vacation aside, though, I tend to fall in love with places based on the people. That’s why I love Southeast Asia so much. The people are beyond hospitable, the culture is wondrous and the food is out of this world. I could move there tomorrow.

Q. What is there in life you don’t have that you want?

A. I’ve been really fortunate. I’ve been able to do anything, it’s a privilege that I don’t take for granted. If I could ask for anything, it’s more time at home with my kids – the greatest adventure of all.

Read more about Gates on his websites: joshuagates.com and follow him at twitter.com/joshuagates.

Morning Call reporter Anthony Salamone can be reached at 610-420-6994 or audreymc@rcn.com.

The Theatre of Early Music will perform “The Coronation of George II” on Saturday, Oct. 26, at St. John’s Lutheran Church in Allentown.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

‘GEORGE’

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The formation of the Early Music Theatre has been a labor of love. In the late 1990s Taylor had been touring with Sir John Eliot Gardiner, the acclaimed English conductor particularly known for his performances of the works of Johann Sebastian Bach.

“At the same time I was being approached by various orchestras to do recitals. But what I found limiting was that it sometimes felt too much like a business — there was little meaning in the process,” the Taylor says.

“Often it just would seem to be thrown together. I was interested in developing a wider performance repertoire, something that would draw the audience into it.”

The opportunity came when he was asked to put a program together based on Purcell’s “Rush” Mix for the Ottawa Chamber Music Festival. “It was really a remarkable offer. I could choose whatever I’d work with and what pieces to include. Due to the revolvers I received I was getting requests nationally asking me to bring my group — which at the time didn’t even have a name,” says Taylor, who founded the Theatre of Early Music in 2001.

“Contrary to what you might think, the popular Netflix TV series “Elis Coven” was not Taylor’s inspiration for the coronation project.

“I had been working with a number of British and European groups that would capture an audience’s attention in a different way. Around 1990 Paul McCreesh had done a recording of a Venetian coronation which missed a lot of Gabriel’s with chant. The attempt was to recreate this in an audience’s mind in a recording,” he says.

“So, in working with such conductors, I started to imagine music being presented in a different way in a live concert.”

“The Coronation of King George II” was first performed in a church in London in 2014, and has since been performed — “staged” — at various early music festivals throughout Canada. Taylor’s musical repertoire for the piece, which runs about 80 minutes without intermission, reaches from the Renaissance to the Baroque to present-day compositions.

Although the actual coronation of King George II and Queen Caroline took place on Oct. 12, Taylor has taken some creative liberties. “I didn’t want to simply recreate one coronation concert. I researched other composers who wrote for the various coronations, including the British composer John Arntz, who died in January 1698, and Charles Hubert Hastings Parry’s piece, ‘I was glad,’ an anthem that was written at the time of King George II, Taylor says. I wanted to modernize it. I thought Joubert should be recognized, and his hymn, ‘O God, the Lord, Maker of All Things’ fits perfectly with the prayerful part of the service.

The program begins with a trumpet fanfare and drum procession, as the King (played by a friend of Taylor) appears in white face makeup, followed by the Archbishop of Canterbury. “We begin with an capella piece then Parry’s ‘I was glad,’ an unadulterated, choral piece performed quite often at weddings and coronations,” Taylor says.

But it won’t just be Taylor’s 20-member choir who will be singing. “I wanted the community to be involved. I’ve found my travels throughout the world that there is a sense of community that doesn’t exist anywhere else,” he says. “So I asked Greg if it would be possible if some of the Bay Choir members join us. They’ve joined us for the Parry and again along with the audience in two beautiful hymns that would have sung at some of the various coronations.”

“One of those hymns, Parry’s ‘Jerusalem,’ became famous from its use in the 1980 film ‘Charity’s Fire.’ It was recently voted the most popular hymn in England.

Every British coronation since King George II has included Handel’s ‘Zadok the Priest,” one of four coronation anthems Handel composed as his first commission as a nationalized British subject. The motif of ‘Zadok the Priest’ is derived from the biblical acclamation of the assisting of Solomon by Zadok and Nathan, and the people of profiting from this event. Imagine the drama as we do a coronation next year during Hadamik’s lofty anthem at St. John’s, church, and then his coronation during another of Handel’s coronation anthems, ‘The King Shall Rejoyce,’ to the resounding cheers of ‘God Save the King’ from one and all in the audience.

Other selections in the coronation include, John Taverner’s ‘Hymn of the Mother of God’ (actually composed hundreds of years after the 1727 event), Henry Purcell’s ‘Remember Not, Lord and Hear My Prayer,’ ‘O Lord, Lord,’ Orlando’s ‘Gibbons’ Drop, drop slow tears,’ and Giovanni Palestrina’s ‘Sen, Ben Admirabilis.’

But what on earth? ‘Well, it just wouldn’t have been done during a coronation,’ says Taylor. “But we ‘would have included some if Greg had gaged.”

Yet Fortinfield thought it best to keep well-enough alone.

“I would have certainly removed it if I thought he would have come to this event and roved in to the making of a film that would have been right up his alley.”

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