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# NARUTO: The Symphonic Experience coming to town

by LIZA MITCHELL  
STAFF WRITER

There’s a common misconception that the symphony is a stuffy, buttoned-up affair. The NARUTO: The Symphonic Experience is equal parts anime and rock concert with a sweeping score that brings the beloved characters to life on a grand scale.

The two-hour event features a film montage of iconic scenes from over 220 episodes, synchronized to a live orchestra performing Toshio Masuda’s original score. Fans will relive Naruto Uzumaki’s journey to become Hokage, facing rivalries, challenges, and growth along the way.

NARUTO: The Symphonic Experience is presented by the FSCJ Artist Series at 7 p.m. Sunday, May 4 in the Moran Theatre at the Jacksonville Center for Performing Arts, 300 W. Water Street, Jacksonville. Tickets are available at [www.fscjartistseries.org](http://www.fscjartistseries.org).

The orchestra performs not only Masuda’s unforgettable soundtrack but also the series’ most famous openings and endings, inviting the audience to sing along with the music they love. This interactive element draws fans closer

to Naruto, celebrating the powerful, shared bond the music creates.

This event is truly exclusive: the film and musical montage created for NARUTO: The Symphonic Experience can only be seen at these shows. Unlike traditional symphony events, audience participation is encouraged. Fans can sing, laugh, cheer, and feel the excitement of seeing their favorite characters on screen, experiencing the full range of emotions that Naruto inspires.

“This is the very first time people have been able to hear this music live with the accompanying picture. Even though the name says symphonic experience, it’s not that traditional symphony experience where you have to know when to clap, when to emote,” said the event’s Associate Conductor Heidi Joosten.

“I think the whole sit still and only golf clap when you are able to came about with the recording age. We want people to treat it like a concert. If something makes them excited, we encourage people to clap and to cheer and be a part of it the same way that we’re a part of it. If you know the song, come on and sing along. We’re

here to bring the joy of Naruto across the country.”

With Masuda’s dynamic soundtrack, blending rock, pop, and traditional Japanese instruments like the Shakuhachi and Shamisen, the live music elevates each scene’s impact, immersing the audience in Naruto’s story.

“This particular score is just so rich. It really encapsulates all of the emotions we’re feeling when we’re watching on stage,” said Joosten. “The music underneath the fight sequences is so cool, and then is contrasted so well orchestrally with these beautiful, bombastic moments when we see the villain, or if there’s a scene that’s sad and sorrowful, it’s these gorgeous piano themes. It’s truly been a treat to deep dive and see what has worked and what has made this music so timeless over the last 20 years.”

Joosten is a Jeff-Award-winning music director, composer, orchestrator, multi-instrumentalist, vocalist, and teacher. Since 2014, she has collaborated on over 125 new theatrical, comedic, and concert productions, including Barbie: Live in Concert at the Hollywood Bowl, Avatar: The

Last Airbender in Concert, Spider-Man: Into the Spider-Verse, Grease, Beauty and the Beast, and American Psycho.

As a prolific classical and educational composer, Joosten’s works have been performed across the United States, Canada, Europe, and Australia. Her theatrical writing credits include “The Bone Harp,” “Queer Eye: The Musical Parody” which had a successful 13-week run at the famed Second City, “Micro”, and “Sain Hildegard.” Joosten holds degrees in composition from UW-Eau Claire and CCPA, and is a member of ASCAP and the Dramatists Guild.

“If I’m in front of an orchestra conducting, my job is to help give the orchestra members everything they need to create the sound that they need, and that’s exactly the same thing here,” said Joosten.

“The difference between conducting Mahler and conducting Naruto is there’s a click track involved to make sure we are lined up with the screen. The energy that’s required of me through all the different conducting styles just gets channeled differently.”

Whether a devoted fan or

new to the series, NARUTO: The Symphonic Experience offers an exclusive, unforgettable way to celebrate Naruto’s epic journey and music in a truly one-of-a-kind setting. There is no dress code required for the event, and audiences are encouraged to come as their favorite character.

“It’s really a big community event and we have so much fun looking out into the audience and saying that’s this character and there’s that character. We’re here to bring the concert to you that you’ve only heard in your living room,” said Joosten, who is learning to appreciate the world of anime with this production.

“I’m definitely having more fun because the music is so current. I think I’m allowed to have a little more fun with this because it is like rock ‘n roll music. It has that pop-rock element to it. I’m dancing to it and having a great time getting to watch some of the greatest musicians I’ve ever worked with that have become my friends perform this music every single night. I definitely have the best seat in the house on the podium.”

## Arts & Entertainment

### THEATRE

**Through May 4**  
**DRACULA: A COMEDY OF TERRORS:** Very loosely based on the novel Dracula by Bram Stoker, by Gordon Greenberg and Steve Rosen. Bram Stoker’s legendary vampire tale is hysterically twisted in this lightning-fast, laugh-out-loud, gender-bending romp. When her sister Mina falls ill with a mysterious disease of the blood, Lucy Westfeldt and her fiancé, Jonathan Harker, enlist the help of famed female vampire hunter Doctor Jean Van Helsing. Their hunt for the dangerous and sexy Count Dracula abounds with clever wordplay and quick-change antics. Five actors play over a dozen roles in this bloodcurdlingly uproarious send-up of the literary classic. Tickets are \$33. Theatre Jacksonville, 2032 San Marco Blvd., Jacksonville. The show starts at 7:30 p.m. on Fridays and Saturdays and 2 p.m. on Sundays. [www.theatrejax.com](http://www.theatrejax.com).

**Through May 11**  
**BEAUTIFUL:** This jukebox musical tells the story of the legendary Carole King, her early years, and her rise to fame. The album features songs like So Far Away, Will You Love Me Tomorrow, I Feel The Earth Move and The Locomotion. The Alhambra Dinner Theatre, 12000 Beach Blvd., Jacksonville. Tickets are available by calling 641-1212 or online at [www.alhambrajax.com](http://www.alhambrajax.com).

**May 3**  
**OUR TOWN:** APEX Theatre presents Thornton Wilder’s Our Town at 7 p.m. at the Adele Grage Cultural Center, 716 Ocean Blvd. in Atlantic Beach. Hailed as “probably the finest play ever written by an American”, Our Town casts its gaze on the citizens of Grover’s Corners. As the show’s narrator takes the audience through several decades in the life of this community, the everyday moments that comprise the human experience are portrayed with a rolling mixture of laughter, terror,

and wonder. Admission is free.

**May 9**  
**FLY BY NIGHT:** A star-crossed prophecy in a metaphysical musical. A lot of music. Just not a lot of light. In this darkly comic rock fable, a melancholy sandwich maker’s humdrum life is intersected by two entrancing sisters. A sweeping ode to young love set against the backdrop of the Northeast

Rain in Spain. The Alhambra Dinner Theatre, 12000 Beach Blvd., Jacksonville. Tickets are available by calling 641-1212 or online at [www.alhambrajax.com](http://www.alhambrajax.com).

**May 16-18**  
**WAITRESS:** This musical production serves up a deliciously heartfelt story of resilience, friendship, and a dash of romance, all baked into one

Theatre. Shows will be held at 8 p.m. Friday, May 16, 2 p.m. and 8 p.m. Saturday and Sunday, May 17-18. The new location is TBD. Updates are available at [www.playersbythesea.org](http://www.playersbythesea.org).

**May 17-18**  
**BROADWAY BITES:** Local performers Christine Dumars, Zach Rivera, Jenny Medure, Joshua Bond, Chris Berry, Julia Fallon, and Jocelyn Geronimo

gmail.com. The Posting House will have its Full Menu & Bar available to order from during this event. 1018 Hendricks Ave., Jacksonville. Tickets available at [www.artscollectivetheatre.com](http://www.artscollectivetheatre.com)

**May 30-June 15**  
**RHINOCEROUS:** In this action-packed allegory that warns of the dangers of nationalistic fervor, mob mentality, and the rise of destructive political forces, a provincial village is overrun by rhinoceroses. A young man watches his world descend into the chaos of the stampede, and he is faced with the moral dilemma of his own identity in the face of societal decay. The Limelight Theatre, 11 Old Mission Ave., St. Augustine. Tickets are available at [www.limelight-theatre.org](http://www.limelight-theatre.org).

**June 13-21**  
**THE BALTIMORE WALTZ:** When Anna, an unmarried schoolteacher, is diagnosed with ATD, Acquired Toilet Disease, a fatal new malady with a high-risk factor for elementary school teachers, she and her brother Carl take flight to Europe. Anna decides she wants to drown herself in the sensuality of food and sex, while Carl becomes involved in a wild Third Mannish espionage scheme to find a cure for his sister on the Continent. Something is not quite right with the scenario, and the largest hint is dropped when Anna shows slides of their trip to Europe, where each frame looks exactly like Baltimore. This play is not appropriate for children. It contains explicit language, sexual portrayals, and mature themes. Tickets are \$22 online, \$25 at the door. 5 & Dime Theatre. [www.the5&dime.org](http://www.the5&dime.org).

**June 13-22**  
**RPCORD:** This sharp, side-splitting comedy pits two feisty women against each other in a battle of wits, pranks, and surprising revelations! Set in a senior living facility, tension

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Pat Benetar & Neil Giraldo coming to the St. Augustine Amphitheatre today.

photo submitted

blackout of 1965, Fly By Night is a tale about making your way and discovering hope in a world beset by darkness. The Limelight Theatre, 11 Old Mission Ave., St. Augustine. Tickets are \$35 and available at [www.limelight-theatre.org](http://www.limelight-theatre.org).

**May 15- June 22**  
**MY FAIR LADY:** My Fair Lady is the quintessential classic musical based on the classic story of Pygmalion. This timeless musical boasts songs like Wouldn’t It Be Lovely, I Could Have Danced All Night and The

unforgettable slice of musical theatre! Set in a small-town diner, Jenna is a waitress and expert pie maker who navigates the challenges of an unfulfilling marriage and dreams of a fresh start. With the help of her quirky co-workers and a surprising new love, Jenna dares to imagine a sweeter life. Featuring Sara Bareilles’ Grammy-nominated score, Waitress is a tasty mix of humor, heartache, and hope. Players by the Sea will stage the production off-site as staff continues to recover from a recent fire in the Studio

with Stephen Fennell on piano present Broadway Bites: A Taste of the Spotlight in a collaborative effort arts collective theatre + Posting House under the direction of Lee Hamby. It’s cabaret meets charcuterie. Each ticket includes a selection of cured meats and cheeses served with nuts, crackers, and accompaniment as well as a curated selection of dips locally sourced from Town Hall, plus One Mimosa with your choice of juice. A vegetarian option is available upon request by emailing [artscollectivetheatre.lee@](mailto:artscollectivetheatre.lee@)