

Todd Baptista's Doo Wop XVIII: The Hitmakers Returns to the Zeiterion on March 28th!

by Sean McCarthy

Todd Baptista knows what goes into an enjoyable evening of doo wop music. As the producer of dozens of doo wop concerts and the author of five books devoted to the musical genre, Baptista will once again enliven the stage of the Zeiterion Performing Arts Center with the sounds that gave birth to rock-and-roll, sounds that resonate with both the young and those who will enjoy revisiting their youth. There is a timelessness to doo wop music. The sounds that were embraced by the youth of the 1950's and early 1960's continue to be enjoyed by people of all ages, bolstered by the devoted fans of the genre as well as those who created it and continue to enjoy performing it. Grab your tickets **HERE**



Baptista will once again bring the sounds of some of doo wop's most classic artists with "Doo Wop XVIII: The Hitmakers," a concert that will feature the Flamingos, The Original Chantels, The Majors, and Kid Kyle – a two-and-a-half hour performance dedicated to the classic sounds of doo wop. The show will take to the stage of the Zeiterion on Saturday, March 28th with a 7:30 p.m. start. Tickets are \$45, \$49, and \$59, and can be purchased at zeiterion.org, by calling (508) 994-2900, or at the Zeiterion box office at 684 Purchase St. in downtown New Bedford.

But Baptista also knows that these evenings can include something special that goes beyond the performance – after the show the artists will be available in the lobby to meet with audience members, having conversations and signing autographs, an opportunity for fans to be up-close and personal with the people who have provided them with so many memories.

"This music was special to a lot of people when they were young, and it will always be special to them," Baptista says. "Popularity may change and they may not be on the top of the

charts anymore, but for the people who grew up listening to it that music is always in their heart. To relive that with the original artists and get a chance to meet them and see them face-to-face is unique and special. The artists enjoy it as much as the audience members."

And the acts that will be performing at the upcoming concert are some of doo wop's most prized performers. The headlining act, the **Flamingos**, are members of the Rock-and-Roll Hall of Fame, and they are also the subject of Baptista's most recent book, "The Flamingos: A Complete History of the Doo Wop Legends," which will be available at the show. The star of the Flamingos' performance will be Terry Johnson, who arranged and sang on the iconic 1959 hit "I Only Have Eyes For You," as well as writing and singing on the classic "Lovers Never Say Goodbye." His romantic tenor voice was also featured on hits such as "Mio Amore," and "Love Walked In," along with memorable ballads including "Golden Teardrops," and "I'll Be Home."

The Original Chantels will feature three original members and are known for favorites such as "Maybe" and "Look In My Eyes." The group scored 10 nationally-charting hit records beginning with "He's Gone" in 1957. **The Majors**, an act out of Philadelphia, will feature original bass vocalist Ron Gathers on hits such as "A Wonderful Dream," "She's A Troublemaker," and "Tra La La."



The evening will also include a high-energy performance by **Kid Kyle**, a 25-year old crooner who recently released his fifth album, "Can't Help Falling In Love." Kyle has spent more than half of his life on the concert stage and breathes new life into some of the classic hits of the early rock-and-roll era.



At the age of 52, Baptista is a New Bedford native who resides in Westport. He has produced 36 doo wop concerts beginning in 1998. He has been hosting shows at the Zeiterion since 2006.

"These shows are about giving flowers to the living, it's

about honoring the pioneers while they're here to perform it," Baptista says. "You can enjoy what they offer today. Sometimes I think about my dad during a performance. He's the one who introduced the music to me and kindled my passion. He's been gone for 15 years, but I still think about him enjoying the show and how he would react." "Life in our era was a lot simpler than it is today," says Louis Harris Powell of the Original Chantels.

"The music was something that could create memories and it was something you could definitely dance to. It made you feel happy. We didn't have electronics and we didn't have flashing lights, we'd just get up there and sing to our audience." "Music was a different animal in the 50s and 60s," Johnson says. "Music helped people fall in love, there was more communication. We didn't have cell phones and things like that, the words meant a lot, they were meaningful."

"I'm a lifelong fan of the music and the men and women who made it," Baptista says. "I build the show, produce the show, and host the show from the perspective of a devout fan. As a fan, I select and suggest songs for the sets and other parts of the presentation all from that perspective. When the audience really responds to an artist and that artist really takes it in and enjoys it, it's a mutual love affair and that feeling never gets old. It's magical."

"It always feels good to be on stage playing my music," Johnson says. "It feels the same way it did when I was 17. At the time I was just doing what I loved but eventually, songs were being used in movies and on television. Doo-wop has stayed alive decade after decade."

"What's interesting to me is that there are so many teenagers who know the music and sing it," Harris Powell says. "I can go online and punch in the name of a song and there will be high school kids singing the songs that we were singing back in the 50s. People are bringing their grandchildren and great-grandchildren to the shows and the kids know all the words to

the songs.”

“The fans are what’s most important, they keep us entertainers alive,” Johnson says. “They make us feel like we have a purpose. I always love the chance to meet with the fans.”

“For all of us musicians it’s unimaginable that we’re still singing after all these years,” Harris Powell says. “We get the audience’s energy – it makes us feel good. The fans help us to do what we do. It’s a beautiful thing to sing these songs that meant so much to people.”

“Quality lasts and great music will endure,” Baptista says. “People enjoy the simplicity of the songs, the message of love as opposed to hate and controversy and the beauty of the harmonies. Doo wop represents a simpler time, a more innocent time, one that people – not just the folks who lived through it – would like to experience again.”

Get tickets here: <https://zeiterion.org/doo-wop-hitmakers/>

