FAVORITES RETURN TO PEACE

New season includes Gill, Cosby, Bell

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Country music superstar Vince Gill, beloved comedian Bill Cosby and Grammy-winning violinist Joshua Bell are three of the popular entertainers returning to the Peace Center in the 2012-13 season.

Gill will open the season on Sept. 12 and inaugurate the newly renovated TD Stage, the amphitheater behind the Peace Center next to the Reedy River.

Bell will perform a recital in the Peace Center Concert Hall on Feb. 24, and Cosby will bring two shows to town on April 20, Peace Center officials said Friday.

Greenville's cornerstone performing arts venue will feature a wide array of entertainment next season, encompassing dance, comedy, music and Broadway shows.

Other popular performers to be featured include singer-songwriter Joe Jackson (Sept. 16), country music star Martina McBride (Oct. 19), humorist David Sedaris (Oct. 25), singer LeAnn Rimes (Nov. 15), trumpeter Chris Botti (Nov. 16), singer Bobby McFerrin (April 11) and singer-songwriter Boz Scaggs (April 17).

"I'm really pleased with the season," said Peace Center president Megan Riegel. "We've got a number of big names returning and several others coming for the first time."

Furman grad and internationally renowned conductor Keith Lockhart will bring the Boston Pops to the Peace Center on Feb. 26.

Innovative dance company Joffrey Ballet will make its first appearance at the Peace Center on March 11.

More than two dozen groups and individual entertainers will be featured during the season, with about a dozen more to be added later thanks to renovations to the TD Stage and the addition of a new cabaret space called Genevieve's next to the Peace Center Concert Hall.

The Peace Center's recent $21.5 million renovations, due to

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be completed next month, are expected to significantly boost the number of shows to be presented throughout the year.

"There's no question that there'll be more performances," Riegel said. "It's an exciting opportunity."

The Peace Center had previously announced its Broadway Series of musicals: "Million Dollar Quartet," "Mary Poppins," "Sister Act," "Billy Elliot the Musical," "Blue Man Group" and "Jersey Boys."

In putting together the season, Peace Center officials strive to offer a wide variety of both familiar performers and younger talents.

"We are so dedicated to blending popular commercial programming with world-class and emerging artists," Riegel said. "I feel very good about the quality of everything."

The Peace Center will continue its Place for Everyone Series, which offers tickets at half the usual price.

Among the performers on that series are guitarist Milos, the Joffrey Ballet, singer Bobby McFerrin, singer-songwriter Sarah Jarosz, the New Century Chamber Orchestra and acrobatic dance company Motionhouse.

Season subscriptions currently are on sale. For more information, call 864-467-3000 or go to www.peacecenter.org.