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By Charity Apple

Former Burlington resident Mark Janicello wasn't sure if he should cancel his Thursday concert at the Paramount Theater in Burlington or not. Janicello had planned, months in advance, to perform music from Broadway shows and popular Elvis tunes at 7:30 p.m. But after the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, he second-guessed his decision. "When that thing happened, I was in Salzburg taking a break from rehearsals in 'Victor, Victoria,' and I just watched it in horror," Janicello said in a telephone interview from Vienna, Austria, where he now lives. "I was born in New York and lived there for years. I even worked at the World Trade Center for seven years as a temp."

Janicello, whose parents Rose and David Janicello live here, said he didn't have any friends or family that perished in the tragedy, but he's sure former co-workers were in the building at the time. With that knowledge, he said he knew that the concert had to continue. "I said, OK, these are sad circumstances, but let's do something that will entertain people that can bring all of us together," he said.

His one-man show, "Elvis's Greatest Hits and More," will feature songs most people know and some they don't recognize. "Since this happened, people are running to the theater to escape what is going on," he said. He's seen it firsthand. Janicello is currently playing the mafia boss King Marchand in the musical, "Victor, Victoria." "All of our shows in Salzburg have been sold out," he said. "People want something to take their mind off of this."

Using his talent has helped Janicello deal with this horrible situation. His visit to the area will feature a lot of firsts for the 20-year performer. He'll sing the national anthem for the first time during a public memorial service for the victims at 3 p.m. Sunday at the Williams High School football stadium. (For more information, see the story on A1 in Thursday's Times-News.)

The Oct. 4 performance will be Janicello's first show in the area since 1999, when he performed a benefit for Johnny D'Antona, a young boy in Mineola, N.Y. who contracted meningococemia, a rare and deadly form of meningitis. He has never met the boy but said that his family in New York and Burlington has kept in touch and that Johnny is now doing fine. It will also be the first time Janicello has performed at the Paramount Theater since 1981, when he made his theatrical debut by singing "I Could Be Happy With You" from the musical, "The Boyfriend" in a Gallery Players show.

Since then, Janicello has performed in more than 5,000 shows. He has been featured on recordings with the late Frank Sinatra and has performed at Carnegie Hall and Avery Fisher Hall and with the Metropolitan Opera.

He refers to himself as an actor, singer, director, poet, painter and lyricist. In 1997, he starred as Elvis Presley in a musical about Presley's life and became a singing phenomenon throughout Germany. He also wrote, directed and starred in "Be My Love: The Mario Lanza Musical." "It was a huge success here in Vienna," he said. He followed that show up with "Charlie (2001)," about the son of an American soldier who was left behind in Germany. This show will begin touring throughout Europe in February. To say Janicello stays busy is an understatement. He laughed when he said he hardly ever sleeps, but then again, musical theater is his passion. "And to think, it all started in Burlington," he said.