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The Pacific Chamber Symphony Expands to Lamorinda

By Sophie Braccini



The Pacific Chamber Symphony Photo provided

Classical music in the United States suffered a decline in popularity during the last economic crisis, but it is slowly bouncing back, according to the 2014-2015 Nielsen music report. And fortunately for Lamorinda classical music lovers, Lawrence Kohl, the spirited director and conductor of the Pacific Chamber Symphony along with his orchestra, is about to open the 2015-2016 concert series in Lafayette, seeking to delight as well as enlighten audiences.

piece is, moving toward romanticism and its heroic power. The third piece will be Violin Concerto #2 by Prokofiev, who was a neo-classic composer at the beginning of the 20th century. Prokofiev adopted the lightness of classicism within the post-romanticism movement that was moving away from the excesses of the romantic movement. Prokofiev's use of modern harmony adds irony to his neo-classic music.

"When I compose a program I always want the pieces to play off one another," says Kohl. "It elucidates something about music." The Nov. 21 concert will start with the Overture of Mozart's *Le Nozze di Figaro* bringing forth the light vein of the classical era music. The orchestra will then play Beethoven *Symphony #2* that was created in a time when the composer realized he was becoming deaf and stretched the bounds of what a classical

"With these three works you are going walk away from the concert hall, whether you are a novice or an enthusiast, with some enrichment in term of what each of these pieces are about and how they relate to one another," says Kohl. "It's opening some new vistas for me, and that is something interesting and fun to share."

While Kohl decides the program, the core group of the orchestra is involved in the discussion. Concertmaster and leader of the violin section, Igor Veligan, has been with the Pacific Chamber Symphony for six years and he had been talking to Kohl for some time about the Prokofiev concerto that he particularly likes. The unique atmosphere of the orchestra and its cohesive nature is part of what makes the group unique and why musicians such as Veligan are so dedicated to it. "This size chamber orchestra allows (us) to build a spirit of collaboration over the years," he says, "like a tight family."

Kohl decided years ago to create this type of chamber group to fit the audiences and the venues of the East Bay, selecting the best musicians of the Bay Area. "These are people who play at the San Francisco Symphony, for the best recording studios," he says, "only top notch artists that have worked with me for years." Kohl first created the chamber orchestra of San Leandro in 1989. "When the times were good we performed in five communities: San Francisco, San Leandro, Napa, Walnut Creek and Pleasanton; and when the times were bad, we had to pare down," says Kohl, who moved from San Leandro to Orinda and now lives in Moraga. Over the years the orchestra received many outstanding reviews for its work, which Kohl largely attributes to the quality of the musicians and the cohesiveness of the ensemble. The Pacific Chamber Symphony gives the audience the feeling of participating in a spontaneous interpretation. "This unique relationship is recognized as a thing of its own," says Kohl. "Its personality comes out as the musicians and myself draw out the best in each other."

The Pacific Chamber Symphony's board is based in Livermore where active volunteers built a

strong following. Now that the economy has improved, the orchestra has started to expand again. "With the support of the Dean and Margaret Leshner Foundation we were able to expand first to Orinda, and now in Lafayette," says Kohl.

The orchestra developed many educational programs for Livermore schools, such as the mixed quintet that performs at the elementary schools. "We do a series of very fun interactive educational programs such as postcards from around the world to illustrate different musical scales," he says. "By the end of the series, the kids are able to recognize by ear and name what is a major scale, a minor scales, an harmonic minor scale, a melodic minor scale, a pentatonic scale, or a middle-eastern scale." Kohl hopes to develop a board of directors in Lamorinda and increase the orchestra's involvement in his community.

For more information and to purchase tickets, visit <http://www.pacificchambersymphony.org/>.
Upcoming Pacific Chamber Symphony Performances at the Lafayette Library

Beethoven, Mozart, and Prokofiev
Saturday, Nov. 21, 7:30 p.m. at Lafayette Library
Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Overture to "Le Nozze di Figaro"
Sergei Prokofiev: Violin Concerto #2
with Igor Veligan, Soloist
Ludwig von Beethoven: Symphony #2

Delightful Strings and Joyful Songs
Feb. 27, 2016 at 7:30 p.m. at Lafayette Library
Alessandro Scarlatti: Su le Sponde del Tebro
for Soprano, Trumpet and Strings
Antonin Dvorák: Serenade for Strings

Majestic Masterpieces
April 16, 2016 at 7:30 p.m. at Lafayette Library
George Frideric Handel:
Coronation Anthems

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