

Stratford Symphony Begins Search for Principal Conductor

The Stratford Symphony Orchestra will ask its audience, as well as members of the orchestra, to weigh in as it launches a search for a principal conductor.

The process begins with the orchestra's March 1 concert, Dramatic Beethoven, conducted by Daniel Warren, one of six candidates for the position. After the concert, audience members and SSO musicians will fill out questionnaires asking for their views on various aspects of the conductor's performance.

Another candidate for principal conductor, Paul Pulford, will conduct the SSO's April 12 concert, Classical Masters. The other four candidates, yet to be announced, will conduct concerts in the 2014-2015 season, with questionnaires following each concert as part of an audition process overseen by the orchestra's Principal Conductor Search Committee, chaired by Randi Patterson.

The process will culminate with the March 7, 2015 concert. The SSO board of directors will then evaluate the candidates and name a principal conductor, who will lead the SSO into its eleventh season (2015-2016).

"This is a very exciting time for the SSO and this conductor search is a further step in our progress over the last two years," says Nigel Howard, president of the SSO board of directors. "To actually be in a position to have a search says a lot about how far we have come."

The Stratford Symphony has not had a permanent conductor since music director Jerome David Summers left in April 2011. Mr. Summers was a co-founder of the orchestra, originally known as the Stratford Civic Orchestra, with Yootha Neller in 2004.

The decision to name a principal conductor rather than a music director was recommended by the SSO's Artistic Advisory Committee and reflects a desire to foster a collaborative relationship among the conductor, the committee and the board of directors on budget and artistic matters.

Since the departure of Mr. Summers, a number of guest conductors have appeared with the orchestra. They include Mr. Warren and Mr. Pulford, as well as Michael Purvis-Smith, Roberto De Clara, Judith Yan, Ben Bolt-Martin, Nigel Evans, Ronald Royer and Evan Mitchell. Howard Cable last fall led the orchestra for his Big Band Swing show.

J.A. Berthold Carrière, longtime Stratford Festival music director, and Barbara Steed Young, also a Festival veteran, stepped into leadership roles in February 2012, assuming the title of co-music directors. Mr. Carrière conducted a concert

featuring music from H.M.S. Pinafore (and will conduct The Mikado in Concert May 10) and Ms. Young conducted A Celtic Celebration in January.

Both Mr. Carrière and Ms. Young are on the search committee. Other committee members are Ms. Patterson, representing the SSO board of directors; Deb Wunder, concertmaster, musician representative; James Colbeck, audience representative; and John David Sterne, SSO artistic manager.