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CONDUCTOR FINALISTS HEADLINE CENTRAL IOWA SYMPHONY'S 18TH SEASON

AMES, Iowa – Central Iowa Symphony has selected two well-qualified finalists for its music director/conductor position and invites the community to watch them perform during the orchestra's 2004-05 season, "Tradition and Beyond."

The community orchestra's favorite traditions remain – a December holiday concert and Young Artists Auditions for talented student musicians. But the excitement is building for the future as finalists Alison J. Gaines and James P. Hannon select music, rehearse with the orchestra, and each conduct a concert during the upcoming season.

"This is an exciting year for Central Iowa Symphony as we select our sixth conductor since we began in 1987," said Sandra McJimsey, co-president of the Central Iowa Symphony with Willa Holger. "We'd also invite the community to join in the search process by attending the concerts and completing a comment form about each of the candidates."

As part of their "audition" for music director and conductor, the two finalists were given a budget to plan and conduct one program in Central Iowa Symphony's 2004-05 four-concert series. Each finalist also will rehearse with the orchestra and lead the informal "Concert Conversations" prior to each concert.

Gaines has planned and will conduct the October 17 concert, "Music of Russia," featuring pianist Michael Linville. Hannon, who is Iowa State University's new director of orchestra, has planned and will conduct the February 27 concert, "A Family Vacation."

Guest conductor Matt Smith, associate director of bands at Iowa State University, will preside over the remaining two concerts in the series. "Sounds of the Season" on December 11 will feature holiday selections, including radio personality Mel Crippen narrating 'Twas the Night Before Christmas. "Symphonies!" on May 1 will look at three interpretations of the timeless symphony.

Holger said the search for a new music director and conductor has been an energizing process.

"We're thankful for the assistance from Matt Smith as our guest conductor last year and this year, and for conducting all rehearsals last year," she said. "We've also been impressed with the quality of the candidates who applied for this position."

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Gaines's experience includes appointments as interim director of orchestra at Iowa State University, as music director of the Philharmonic Orchestra of Kansas City, and music director of the Atchison/Benedictine Community Orchestra. She also has served as guest conductor for the Des Moines All-City Orchestra, the Chamber Players in Lawrence, Kansas; the Chamber Orchestra in Breckenridge, Colorado; and the Public Schools All-City Orchestra in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

Gaines expects to complete her doctoral studies in orchestral conducting at the University of Kansas in December 2004. Prior to pursuing a doctorate in conducting, she was a full-time professional bassist.

Hannon moved to Ames from LaCrosse, where he was director of orchestras and violin instructor at the University of Wisconsin-LaCrosse. Previously he was director of orchestras at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, music director of Umeå Ungdomsymfoniker in Sweden, music director of the Philharmonic Youth Orchestra in Belleville, Illinois; assistant conductor of the Symphony Orchestra at Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville, and music director of the Youth Symphony Orchestra in Battle Creek, Michigan.

Hannon is a candidate for a doctoral degree in orchestral conducting from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. In 2000, he received the Richard C. Church Outstanding Orchestral Conductor's Award.

"We're really looking forward to these performances," McJimsey added. "If all goes as planned, we will announce and introduce our new conductor at our Gala in the Gardens next June."

Individual concert tickets are \$12 for adults, \$11 for seniors (ages 65 years or older) and \$5 for students of all ages. Season ticket prices for the four concerts are discounted at \$40 for adults and seniors and \$15 for students.

Season ticket order forms are available on the Central Iowa Symphony web site at www.cisymphony.org. Individual tickets also can be purchased two weeks prior to each concert at Big Table Books and Rieman Music in Ames. To place credit card orders, call Ames City Auditorium offices at (515) 239-5360.

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