

Moscow orchestra names maestro chief conductor *Support for summer symphony festival grows*

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Maestro Arthur Arnold has been appointed the new chief conductor of the Moscow Symphony Orchestra.

In announcing the appointment, Marina Levine, managing director and founder of the orchestra, said audiences love the combination of Arnold, who has been the principal guest conductor since 2001, and the orchestra and each concert they have done was a success. "But even more important, the orchestra has grown under the guidance of Arnold," she said. "It is the logical next step to appoint Arthur Arnold our chief conductor."

Arnold said it is an honour and responsibility to become the head of the orchestra, which he said is outstanding. He pointed out that it is the only independent symphony orchestra in Russia, "which gives us total artistic freedom. During the last years, the orchestra and I have developed an intense musical understanding. We know each other, each other's strengths and weaknesses, but above all, our combined potential."

Arnold is also the music director of the Pacific Region International Summer Music Academy (PRISMA), an organization that is organizing a summer symphony festival in Powell River in June this year, taking over from the Powell River Academy of Music board decision to suspend the Symphony Orchestra Academy of the Pacific (SOAP). Arnold said there won't be any time conflicts between his new appointment and his involvement with PRISMA.

Arnold and other PRISMA representatives appeared as delegations at both the City of Powell River's and Powell River Regional District's committees of the whole on Thursday, January 17 asking for local government support.

The festival will take place at Powell River Recreation Complex from June 18 to 28, 2013. The group asked the city for an in-kind contribution for the space, as well as an economic grant-in-aid.

Brian Balfe, president of PRISMA and vice-president and an investment advisor for RBC Dominion Securities, said the group has gone through a strategic and business planning road map process that has put the organization of the project on sound footing. The decision by the academy in October didn't give PRISMA time to apply for grants that might have been available this year, he added. "We have gotten a very positive response from the community so far," he said. "We have a number of people that have stepped up to volunteer as well as some rather meaningful donations."

The festival generates a massive amount of economic activity in the community, Balfe said, including drawing audiences from out of town. Balfe and his business partner, Don Sommers, have been active in bringing people from the Comox Valley to SOAP concerts. "We've taken the largest single group to ever go on a BC ferry in the past and our intention is to do this again this year," he said. "The plan is to extend that formula into the Sunshine Coast, because I think there are a lot of patrons that would like to come and experience this wonderful program."

Tobin Stokes, former SOAP composer in residence who holds the same position with PRISMA, travelled from Victoria for the presentations. "As a former resident of this community, I wanted to express that it was so



PERFORMING PASSION: Maestro Arthur Arnold, music director of the Pacific Region International Summer Music Academy, has been appointed chief conductor of the Moscow Symphony Orchestra. Dan Keinan photo

exciting to see this team of people come together with all their expertise to continue this program; not only to continue it, but to expand it,” he said. “There are so many new audiences that are waiting to be tapped into.”

An orchestral program was the one piece of the puzzle that was missing in Powell River as he was growing up, Stokes added. “Now with this program the students of this community can see the potential of where they can go in music, not only through choirs and through the other programs, but also through an orchestra as well,” he said. “Also, there is the quality of life for the residents of the community who aren’t students, to enjoy the orchestral music and the incredible excellence that is coming here.”

The program attracts faculty and students from around the world and all but one of the SOAP faculty have committed to returning for PRISMA.

The organization has also announced that it has hired Michelle Hignell as administrator and Lee Coulter has taken on the role of volunteer general manager. “We’re so happy that Michelle has joined our team as our administrator,” said Paul Schachter, PRISMA secretary-treasurer. “Her experience with running festivals in Powell River is incomparable.”

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