

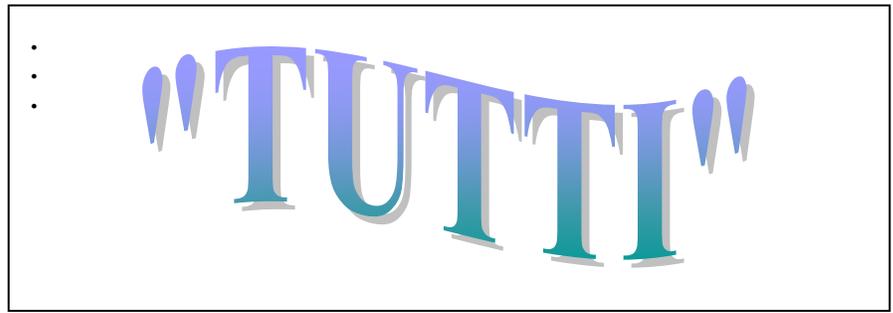
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A Newsletter by and for the La Jolla  
Symphony & Chorus Association

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# CONCERTO FOR MARIACHI AND ORCHESTRA: 'Pasi : : n Mexicana'

Bill Morgan & Diane Salisbury

Mariachi Sol de M9xico, the nation's premier mariachi, lights up the stage on February 21 & 22 when it joins the La Jolla Symphony Orchestra for the world premiere of *Concerto for Mariachi and Orchestra*. This LJS&C commissioned piece was written by UCSD graduate student composer Jeff Nevin and Jos9 Hern<ndez. The Concerto is a 22-minute piece in three movements that takes listeners on a musical journey of the history, drama, and passion of mariachi. [The concert also features Debussy's colorful, evocative *Nuages and FAtes*, and concludes with Stravinsky's blazing *Firebird Suite*, inspired by a Russian folk legend.] Tom Nee is conducting.

### An Overview

The genesis of the *Concerto for Mariachi and Orchestra* came in a conversation between Nevin and Hern<ndez in the fall of 1996. Nevin talked of mariachi style and

history; Hern<ndez mentioned an unfinished show-piece he'd written for mariachi and orchestra. Was the world ready for a symphonic piece with a mariachi soul? Nevin wanted it to be 'cutting edge,' a piece that would be taken seriously in classical music circles. When he presented the idea to the Board's Music Committee, to his surprise it was immediately enthusiastic about the idea. But since Hern<ndez's mariachi had never before performed a piece of music that was not either composed or arranged by him, he was somewhat reluctant to sign over the piece to Nevin – thus a collaboration was born.

The 90-member La Jolla Symphony Orchestra will be joined by Hern<ndez's renowned mariachi, consisting of 14 instrumentalists: 7 violins; 3 trumpets; a Mexican harp (a small, 36-string instrument, without pedals); a vihuela (a 5-string guitar-like instrument); a standard guitar; and a guitarr : : n (a large acoustic bass guitar).

### The Composers

**JOSI HERN;NDEZ** is a descendant of four generations of mariachi musicians, and has been performing since the age of three. Leader of Mariachi Sol de M9xico, Hern<ndez has numerous composition credits to his name, including movie soundtracks for "El Gringo" and "Don Juan de Marco." As composer, arranger, producer, and leader of Mariachi Sol de M9xico, he has bridged the gap between the traditional mariachi form and a variety of media, including classical music, popular music, and the film score. The group has also released five albums of Hern<ndez's innovative takes on traditional mariachi themes. Hern<ndez himself has recorded with musicians such as Selena, Linda Ronstadt, Vicki Carr, Willie Nelson, Lola Beltr<n, Vicente Fern<ndez, Roci : : Durc<l, Guadalupe PiZeda, and most recently, The Beach Boys. His appointment as director of the Las Vegas International Mariachi Festival and the Mariachi USA festival,

held annually at the Hollywood Bowl, is a testament to his status in the mariachi community. And in 1990 Hernandez created the Mariachi Heritage Society, an organization which helps young people connect with the tradition of mariachi by providing musical instruction to thousands of students at seven Los Angeles public schools.

**JEFF NEVIN** is the first recipient of the newly created Thomas Nee Commissioning Endowment that honors retiring Music Director Tom Nee by promoting the work of talented young composers. Nevin was a fifteen year-old trumpet player when he was asked to joint a band. He had no idea what he was in for, however, for it was only after he enthusiastically accepted the invitation that he discovered it was a *mariachi* band. 'Mariachi Los Changuitos Feos' (The Ugly Little Monkeys), a youth project originally founded to keep kids out of trouble, grew from this membership of three to fifteen players which, over the next few years, performed successfully throughout Tucson and southern Arizona. For Nevin, the 'accidental mariachi,' this period was the beginning of a passion that has spanned half his life and has been a major influence on his musical career.

Jeff earned his bachelor's degree in Music Theory & Composition at the University of Illinois, where he'd been recruited to study after having been heard performing mariachi. He then returned to Arizona to study for his master's in Composition at Arizona State University in 1990; at the same time he joined his first professional mariachi. Currently a Ph.D. candidate in Music Composition at UCSD, he also teaches the first course in mariachi ever offered at Southwestern College; plays trumpet with the La Jolla Symphony Orchestra and is a member of the Board; composes; guest-lectures on mariachi;

is working on his first book, Virtuoso Mariachi; and records lullabies with his wife, Debbie.

## NEWS FROM THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

*Colin M. Bloor*

**Music Outreach '98.** This is our new program to introduce the benefits of music to San Diego County school children as a way of augmenting the limited resources the public school systems make available for music education. Through the combined efforts of Tom Nee and Kathleen Stoughton, Director of the UCSD Art Gallery, we have scheduled five music presentations (the first is scheduled for February 26) during the remainder of this season. These presentations will be given by our Young Artist Competition winners and selected members of our ensembles. The individual events will be part of the San Diego County school children's day at UCSD and will be held in either the Recital Hall or the Art Gallery at Mandeville Center.

**Executive Director.** At its January meeting the Executive Committee unanimously recommended that Bill Morgan's title be changed from 'Interim Executive Director' to 'Executive Director.' This recommendation will be presented to the full Board of Directors at its February meeting. Since his initial appointment Bill has performed in an exemplary manner. We wish him well in his new responsibilities, and urge everyone in the Association to make his acquaintance and let him know how much we appreciate his efforts.

**VISION 2000: Priorities for This Year.** The Executive Committee has continued its discussions of the top priorities identified earlier in the year, namely: (1) excellence in the ensembles; (2) a solid sense of identity, within and without; (3) strong enrollment, succession planning, and volunteer development; and (4) a new concert hall. At our last meeting a detailed discussion focused on excellence in the ensembles, including players, singers, and conductors.

In developing an action plan for the next sixteen months we agreed on the following as goals for excellence in the ensembles. Successful completion of the action plan will result in La Jolla Symphony & Chorus Association programming that attracts the highest caliber performers in the region. Competition for membership in the

ensembles being keen, individual members will continue to develop their musical

skills and eagerly embrace an always challenging repertoire. The commitment and musicianship of the performers will continue to inspire the conductors who, together with the musicians, bring a devotion to their work enabling them to fulfill the high expectations that the conductors and ensembles have for each other. Celebrated guest conductors will seek out the opportunity to conduct the ensembles. A mutual love of music will generate a synergistic relationship that creates musical experiences of the highest order.

An action plan was discussed. The proposed plan has four specific initiatives for the Orchestra and four specific initiatives for the Chorus to attain our mutual goals. As these discussions move forward to the full Board, we will provide more progress reports in future issues. If you have any comments, please contact Colin at 459-7665, or Bill at 534-4637.

**Tom Nee Commissioning Endowment Fund.** Many thanks to all of you who have already contributed to the fund! Contributions continue to come in. The endowment goal is \$36,000 -- we still need to raise \$8,000 more to reach that goal. If you know of potential donors, please ask them to contact Bill in the LJS&CA Office. This fund is truly a fitting tribute to all that Tom has given to music, to our Association, and to San Diego County over the years.



### 'MUSIC WITH LOVE' ~ IN APPRECIATION ~

*Thelma Parris*

The 'Music with Love' benefit committee would like to thank all the musicians and volunteers who helped make the Sunday, February 8 event such a pleasure. Love and thanks also go to Tom Nee and David Chase for arranging the musical program, as well as to those who so generously donated items for the very successful silent auction and for the reception that followed.

The program included the following:

*Scherzo in B minor, Op. 20, by Frederic Chopin*, played by Kian Freitas; a "Medley on the Campus Fence" for violin, cello and piano by *Charles Ives*, featuring Bridget Dolkas, Marjorie Prescott, and Jeannie Saier; a medley of Mexican and Spanish songs, including *Granada*, by *Augusta Lara*, beautifully rendered by Florenzia Tinoco Barone, accompanied by Jeannie Saier on piano; several *Liebeslieder Waltzes, Op. 52a*, by *Johannes Brahms*, featuring Connie Venti, Heidi Lynn, Max Chodos, and Kenneth Bell; and some 'North County jazz' from the Dolkas Duo of Bridget Dolkas on violin and her father, Steven, on guitar.

We can report that to date \$5,700 has been raised by this year's event! A full report on the fundraiser by committee chair Jan Sharpless will be brought to you in an upcoming issue...

## YOUNG ARTISTS COMPETITION WINNERS



Thelma Parris

A successful Young Artists Competition on Saturday, January 31 saw 65 participants vying for top prizes and the chance to perform with our Orchestra, and other venues. The winners were:

**JUNIOR INSTRUMENTAL:** 1st Prize – Sara Chazin, violin; 2<sup>nd</sup> Prize – Lilly Bee Pierce, violin; 3<sup>rd</sup> Prize: Jon Lacy, horn; Honorable Mention – Cindy and Sandy Mong, violin and viola; and Christopher Westlake, guitar.

**JUNIOR PIANO:** 1st Prize - Derek Polischuk; 2<sup>nd</sup> Prize – Tammy Zhou; 3<sup>rd</sup> Prize – Cory Bonn; Honorable Mention – Xi Liu, Trevor Olson, and Nathan Fleischaker.

**SENIOR INSTRUMENTAL:** 1st Prize – Kian Freitas, piano; 2<sup>nd</sup> Prize – Marisela Sager, flute; 3<sup>rd</sup> Prize – Allen Carter, tuba; Honorable Mention – Chris Corelli, guitar.

**JUNIOR VOCAL:** 1st Prize – Miranda Thorman; 2<sup>nd</sup> Prize – Samantha Perez; 3<sup>rd</sup> Prize – Charla Ausman.

**SENIOR VOCAL:** 1st Prize – Robert A. Felbinger; 2<sup>nd</sup> Prize – Gregorio Gonzalez; 3<sup>rd</sup> Prize – Priti Gandhi; Honorable Mention – Stephanie Kressaty.

Jeannie Saier, along with her committee, once again did a bang-up job of managing the entire event. Thanks to all who helped and participated!

## UCSD Department of Music: This Month's Events

**Saturday, February 14**  
**8 PM, Mandeville Recital Hall**  
**'Soirée for Music Lovers'**

Violinist János Nagy and Friends perform the annual Valentine's Day Soirée of traditional chamber music, preceded by a dinner and followed by a reception in the UCSD Faculty Club. Dinner package is \$35. For more information, call 534-0876.

**Wednesday, February 18**  
**8 PM, Mandeville Recital Hall**  
**'SONOR Concert'**

Harvey Sollberger conducts works by Brian Ferneyhough, Erik Ulman, Salvatore Martirano, and [THE], with Edwin Harkins and Philip Larson. Pre-concert talk at 7 PM. Tickets: \$10/\$8.

**Thursday, February 19**  
**8 PM, Mandeville Recital Hall**  
**'Graduate Performers' Forum'**

Graduate performance students present the results of an improvisation/composition focusing on works by Anthony Braxton, Anthony Davis, and George Lewis. Admission is FREE.

**Sunday, February 22**  
**7 PM, Mandeville Recital Hall**  
**'Undergraduate Performers' Forum'**

Soloists and small ensembles play chamber music. Admission is FREE.

**Wednesday, February 25**  
**8 PM, Mandeville Recital Hall**  
**'Duo Violin Recital'**

János Nagy and Péter Nykter present works by Nicolas Verin, Hans Otto, Adam Greene, Alex Hills, Piotr Moss, and Giacinto Scelsi. Tickets: \$8/\$6.

**Thursday, February 26**  
**8 PM, Studio A, WLH**  
**'Music Technology Concert'**

Students of Miller Puckette combine their musical talents with technical knowledge in

a concert of new compositions. Tickets: \$5/\$3.

## QUESTIONS & ANSWERS: How Are Our Soloists Selected?

Eric Bromberger

A number of specific considerations govern the selection of these instrumentalists and singers. First, we have made a conscious decision not to bring in well-known soloists. Not only are they too expensive, but also the presence of 'names' would, we feel, deflect attention from what we consider our primary mission: to present unusual music, and to give good non-professional community musicians high-quality groups with which to perform.

We have occasionally had well-known individuals solo with us in the past ... for example, pianists Earl Wild and Ursula Oppens, and guitarist Christopher Parkening. And we have occasionally had young soloists who went on to become famous, such as Glenn Dicterow, who is now concertmaster of the New York Philharmonic.

Instead, we usually choose high-quality musicians from the San Diego or Southern California area. Usually these are individuals who our conductors have heard or have had recommended to them; often they are musicians who are building their careers locally. These include such recent soloists as pianists Nicolas Reveles and Irina Bendetsky, and singers such as Virginia Sublett, Sylvia Wen, and Martha Jane Weaver.

We occasionally also draw soloists from the UCSD community, like violinist Mark Menzies, recorder player David Bellugi, and pianist Cecil Lytle. Sometimes, as was the case with the percussion group NEXUS and violinist Daniel Mason, we have soloists who have appeared with one of our conductors at concerts elsewhere. And occasionally (this is particularly true of singers) our soloists are former winners of our Young Artists Competitions. But the primary consideration of our conductors as they choose soloists is to find interesting local musicians who will, they believe, make attractive additions to our programs.

*Heartfelt condolences are extended to Harvey Sollberger and family on the recent passing of his father-in-law.*

## PERFORMER PROFILES: 'SPLIT PERSONALITIES'

Barbara Peisch & Sharon Jones



Singers, have you ever wondered what it's like to be in the Orchestra? Instrumentalists, have you ever wondered what goes on in Chorus rehearsals? Well, we've found and talked with two individuals who've been 'pulling double-duty'-- believe it or not -- in **both** groups.

We hope that their stories will illuminate the different experiences of being in the Chorus vs. being in the Orchestra, from their unique point of view.

**Steve Shields** is one of our members with a 'split personality.' He's played clarinet in the Orchestra for over twenty-five years, but has recently begun singing [baritone] with the Chorus ... Orchestra schedule permitting. Because he has had a chance to participate in both groups, we asked him to compare and contrast the two experiences.

Steve says that both groups are inspiring to perform with. Both call for a great deal of musicianship and require a lot of their members, and each has its own 'feel.'

The Chorus, Steve feels, has a great feeling of camaraderie, of being an extended family. It's common to see people from different sections mingling at break. Everyone seems to have friends in each section and enjoys getting together with them. (The Chorus potlucks are fabled – and with good reason!)

The Orchestra members, on the other hand, do much less mingling at break. Typically people from the string section spend their time with other string players, wind players with other wind players, etc. It usually takes a number of years before a member of one section gets to know very many people in the other sections.

Steve is not sure why things seems to work out this way ... perhaps this is somehow related to the difference in the way instrumentalists make music. That is to say, all singers share

a common set of experiences as well as a common 'instrument.' This is not true for orchestra players, who use many different methods, through their various instruments, to create music.

The feel of music-making is also different in the two groups. In the wind section of the Orchestra, for example, there is typically one player per part. Thus many sections of the music have a 'chamber music' feel, each player interacting with a few others. In the Chorus it's rare for any singer to be alone on a part, so there is much more emphasis on blending with each other and matching the sound with the others. This is not to say that orchestra players don't have to blend with each other and play as a section -- it's just that they are called on to be 'soloists' (for a few bars at a time) more often than choral singers are.

Another difference that does not immediately come to mind concerns *tuning*. Wind instruments have relatively well defined pitches for each note. Because of this, modern orchestras typically use an equal temperament tuning system (or 'well-tempered,' as it was called in Bach's time). Singers, on the other hand, tend to lean towards natural tuning, which is more closely aligned with natural harmonic structure (the same is true for string players when playing in a 'strings-only' group). As a result Steve finds that it often takes extra concentration to adjust from one group to the other, especially for a cappella singing.

Steve feels fortunate that he has had the chance to work with the Orchestra **and** the Chorus, and has found it a joy to perform with both groups. In fact, his experiences have made him a better musician. "I wish that I could spend more time with each group, but because of schedule conflicts, it's just not possible. However, I'm appreciative of the time that I do get to spend with each, and of the wonderful experiences that I have been



able to enjoy."

**Kathy Offering** sings alto in the Chorus but calls herself first and foremost an instrumentalist. She learned to play the organ at age five, and "discovered that the coordination required to play with all of my appendages came fairly easy." She's been playing percussion ever since her days in grammar school band.

Singing also came easily to her, however. She sang in her junior high school choir for over a year, but didn't really to start to study vocals and technique until coming to UCSD in 1992. "Shortly after my arrival," she

recalled, "a close jazz piano player friend was messing around on the keys one day, and I just started singing with him. He turned to me and said, 'Kathy, why aren't you singing?' So on his suggestion, I auditioned for a vocal instruction class, and met Virginia Sublett. I studied with her for a year. Since then, I've been singing regularly with her church choir, as well as with the vocal ensemble 'Cappella Gloriana,' which she directs."

Kathy points out that as a symphonic percussionist she's not always needed, so she sings to keep in musical practice when not playing. Playing percussion is more physical, what with running from one instrument to another, so it keeps her in shape. "Although singing requires less 'schlepping,' I enjoy playing and singing equally."

The time it takes to both play in the Orchestra and sing in the Chorus is, for Kathy, simply the commitment of a Monday night rehearsal. How to handle the dichotomy of having to play and sing in the same concert? "Only once was I 'Dr. Jeckel and Mr. Hyde.' It was very exciting, though also very nerve-wracking. To have to change gears between pieces within a short period of time presented quite a challenge. But I'm sure that with practice I will become more proficient at 'changing hats.'"

How to handle both in addition to holding down a regular day job? Since Kathy really enjoys performing, she doesn't mind making the commitment. "Of course, the social gathering is very enjoyable, too!"

*Have you ever wondered about some aspect of the LJS&CA?  $\Phi$  Direct your questions or comments to the Editor at 534-3642, or [scjones@ucsd.edu](mailto:scjones@ucsd.edu), and we'll see if we can address them for you.*

*Special thanks to KATHY FARRELLY for her assistance with this issue of 'TUTTI,' which has been brought to you with  $\emptyset$  by:*

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