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orchestra's musicians by reading through movements of Igor Stravinsky's *Soldier's Tale*.

Even though it was an impromptu chamber music experience rather than a full orchestral rehearsal, the exercise still gave the musicians a sense of how each candidate works.

**INSPIRING THE COMMUNITY**

What was the committee looking for?

"We had a pretty long list, some of it musical and technical, some relational, some organizational," Freck says. "First you need a conductor who's going to inspire the orchestra to play really well. If you don't have a great core product, the rest doesn't matter."

But that's only the starting point. Orchestras today can no longer take for granted that just playing the classics with style can — or even should — guarantee success. The symphony music director, in a town with few big arts institutions and deep-pocket donors, has to play a larger role in the larger community.

"Eugene is the kind of place that values commitment," Saydack explains. "Being committed to this orchestra means being committed to our musicians. We can't offer full-time employment to the musicians we have to work with, so it's important they be treated with enormous respect and gratitude for doing the work they do, and to make an effort to engage with them to make music together."

"It's not like 'maestro comes to town and does things his or her way,'" Saydack continues. "It's much more collaborative."

The candidates also have to understand the orchestra's audience, he says. "We're a college town, so our tastes are somewhat venturesome but also at times surprisingly conservative. A music director has to understand that

part of the responsibility is to generate support, which translates into ticket sales, contributions and support," Saydack explains.

"The biggest communities in America have trouble carrying the cost of operas and orchestras," he adds. "In Eugene, the base is small but significant, so this person has to relate to that small community. To do that, they have to spend enough time here to know the place and people."

**FINAL AUDITION**

The committee settled on three finalists.

"All three are wonderful musicians and fulfill the first and most fundamental criterion," Saydack says. "Once we're satisfied a candidate has the technical skills, it becomes a question of who's going to be the right fit, who has the best chemistry with this orchestra, this audience and this community."

So each comes to town this season to lead a regular subscription concert and spend what Freck calls "a very taxing week, in a good way" — by meeting with the symphony's board and volunteers, community members, potential artistic partners and local arts leaders, participating in outreach programs at schools and the University of Oregon and beyond, and rehearsing and leading the orchestra in a full concert.

Saydack says each brings substantial assets.

"Dina Gilbert [who led the orchestra's December concert] comes from a great culture and tradition of music making in Montreal," he notes. "She's deeply committed to contemporary music and formed her own group to present it. If she came, we'd see a style of music making we haven't in the past: exploration of classic repertoire

we haven't dug into deeply and exploration of the newest repertoire being written now.

"She has a wonderful ability to express herself: a persuasive and convincing advocate," Saydack explains.

"Ryan McAdams [who leads the orchestra Jan 26] has received outstanding recognition for his great power as a conductor with the classics but also with contemporary music," Saydack says. "He's a highly proficient conductor who sees the concert venue as a way to explore the arts in general and is in great demand for innovative concert performances. If he came, we'd see that idea of the symphony concert expand in ways we haven't seen in the past."

Francesco Lecce-Chong [whose audition concert is March 16] has been assistant conductor at two larger orchestras, Milwaukee and Pittsburgh. "He brings incredible joy to his conducting — he looks like [former ESO music director] Miguel [Harth-Bedoya] when he conducts — very fluid," Saydack says. "Of all the people I've seen come through these searches, he's probably been the most passionate about outreach. If he comes, he'll make concerts a joyous activity."

What if none of these three makes the cut? The orchestra's excellent track record means it can afford to be picky, knowing that some of the most promising emerging conductors will be interested in leading this relatively isolated orchestra far from major cultural centers.

"We're talking about three exciting, wonderful options," Saydack says. "These folks represent three paths to the future. Which do you go down? These three finalists all have that spark that could catch fire, that could inspire the musicians, the board, the volunteers, the audience. We'll know it when we see it. If not, we'll keep looking." ■



More contemporary classical music by Northwest composers, performed in a decidedly non-classical setting, highlights this month's Songs@Tsunami show Saturday, Jan. 28, at Tsunami Books. Eugene singer **Laura Wayte's** non-stuffy recital series features Eugene Opera soprano **Tess Altiveros** and pianist **Elisabeth Ellis** singing new songs by Northwest composers Thomas Joyce and Emerson Eads. They'll also sing Ravel's ravishing *Five Greek Songs*, Schumann's *A Woman's Love and Life* and music by 20th-century British composer Ralph Vaughan Williams.

Two very different string quintets hit town next week. On Jan. 29, the superb Berlin-based English viol consort **Phantasm** plays music by the two greatest composers of the English Renaissance, William Byrd and Thomas Tallis, plus music by J.S. Bach and Mozart, in a concert at the University of Oregon's Beall Concert Hall. A viol consort uses the half-millennium-old stringed instruments that preceded modern violins and cellos. When played by historically informed specialists like these, the instruments can produce some of the most emotionally affecting music you'll ever hear. There's more early music at the UO's Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art on Wednesday, Feb. 1, when UO musicians play works by Renaissance masters Josquin Desprez and Carlo Gesualdo, Baroque titans Monteverdi and Purcell, and J.S. Bach.

Later Wednesday night at the Shedd, **Chico Schwall's American String Band** plays American folk classics dating from mid 19th century to the end of the 20th. You might have heard "Yellow Rose of Texas" and "Wildwood Flower" in covers by Bob Wills and the Carter Family, but the rest of the program is rarely heard these days, providing a wonderful glimpse into the music that inspired David Grisman, the Band, Bob Dylan, Johnny Cash and others.

Also at The Shedd this Friday, Jan. 27, you can hear another American classic: Best-selling trumpeter-composer-record producer-philanthropist **Herb Alpert** and his wife and fellow Grammy winner **Lani Hall**, former lead singer of Brasil '66, play Brazilian tunes, jazz and, of course, shagadelic Tijuana Brass. ■

Feeling the centimeters of snow that turned what was once America's hipster capital into an ice-bound hell, a pair of Portland bands brings music that appeals to fans of both pop and classical sounds.

**Pink Martini** returns to the Hult Center on Saturday, Feb. 4, with music from their long-awaited album, *Je dis oui!*, and more. They'll be missing the bevy of famous guest artists (e.g. Rufus Wainwright) who decorated the band's bubbly ninth recording, not to mention occasional co-lead singer Storm Large (who's maintained her own solo career), but the substitutes are pretty good: original lead singer China Forbes and our own Eugene Symphony. Classically trained Martini founder-pianist-bandleader Thomas Lauderdale, who sits on the board of the Oregon Symphony, works often with orchestras, which is why the band's many orchestral collaborations sound so natural.

On Thursday, Jan. 26, the symphony accompanies another guest classical pianist, **Andrew von Oeyen**, who'll

star in an American classical masterwork: Samuel Barber's ruggedly romantic, Pulitzer Prize-winning 1962 piano concerto. The other guest: emerging young conductor Ryan McAdams, the second of three candidates auditioning for the orchestra's music director job. He'll also lead the band through Brahms's first symphony and Mozart's dramatic overture to his opera *Don Giovanni*.

Another band of classically trained, pop-oriented Portlanders performs the same night as Pink Martini, Feb. 4, at Whirled Pies. **ARCO-PDX** performs contemporary and classical music with the charisma, amplification, lighting and other stage effects we're used to at rock shows. This time, they're playing music by Philip Glass, the fabulously subversive and entertaining contemporary Dutch composer Jakob TV, and the rising Portland composer Scott Anthony Shell, plus some George named Handel, who was making audiences swoon with his hooky melodies centuries ago.