

News *from*

The Philharmonic of Southern New Jersey

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Three Finalists Contend for Philharmonic's Podium

Three talented conductors will vie for the position of Conductor and Music Director of the Philharmonic of Southern New Jersey during its 2011-2012 season. The three conductors each will helm one of the orchestra's subscription concerts, the first of which will be held on Sunday, November 6, at 3 p.m. at the Eastern Regional Performing Arts Center in Voorhees. Following the conductors' performances, the orchestra, board of directors and patrons themselves will vote on who will succeed retiring music director Philip F. Travaline, who has led the all-volunteer regional orchestra for two decades.

Following Travaline's announcement a year ago of his impending retirement, an ad-hoc search committee, comprised of players' representatives from the orchestra and members of the PSNJ board of directors, combed the nation for his successor. More than 70 candidates from across the nation and abroad applied for the position. Based upon interviews and performance evaluations, three high-caliber candidates were chosen. "Following recommended procedures of the League of American Orchestras, the search committee and board of directors of the Philharmonic have given each of these three finalists the opportunity to show the players—and the audience—what they've got to offer," said search committee chair Michelle Grygo.

These three gifted individuals, Matthew Oberstein, Brian Norcross and Reuben Blundell, will each conduct one of the Philharmonic's subscription concerts for the 2011-2012 season. Each candidate's performance will be evaluated by the orchestra and an opinion survey will be given to the audience at each candidate conductor's debuts.

Kicking off this truly unique season will be conductor Matthew Oberstein, a Manhattan native with highly lauded skills, who will conduct the Fall Concert, entitled "Romantic Masterpieces." Rehearsals have been underway for the Fall Concert since early September. "The feedback from the orchestra has been tremendous. Our players are

coming to us and letting us know how impressed they are with the qualifications and talents of each of the conductors, and they're excited about the vision each candidate has for the future of the organization," said Tricia McCunney-Thomas, president of the philharmonic's board of directors. "Thanks to the hard work of the search committee, we've truly got three of the best possible candidates for the job. Choosing just one of them is going to be quite a tough decision."

The Philharmonic has posted video interviews with each of the candidates on the main page of its website at www.psnj.org to give patrons a glimpse of what's to come:

Matthew Oberstein is the conductor of the Artemis Chamber Ensemble, assistant conductor for Regina Opera, and founder and music director of the Purchase Chamber and Pops Orchestra. Mr. Oberstein holds a Bachelor of Music from New York State University, and completed a Performers Certificate and Conducting Fellowship in Vienna, Austria. He is consistently awarded for his conducting skills, which are showcased worldwide. Mr. Oberstein will make his debut at the PSNJ's Fall Concert, entitled "Romantic Masterpieces," on November 6, 2011.

Brian Norcross is artistic director and conductor of the Allegro Chamber Orchestra and the Allegro Youth Chamber Orchestra in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, as well as conductor of instrumental ensembles for Franklin & Marshall College. Dr. Norcross holds a Doctor of Musical Arts from the Catholic University of America, a Master of Music Education from the New England Conservatory of Music, and a Bachelor of Music from the University of Massachusetts. Dr. Norcross will make his debut at the PSNJ's Winter Concert, entitled "The Spirit of Music," on February 12, 2012.

Reuben Blundell directs the Hunter Symphony at Hunter College on New York's Upper East Side. He made his debut as Principal Conductor of the New York Chamber Virtuosi in May 2011, conducting at Merkin Hall. His New York debut was in 2008, conducting for Tony Award winner Garth Fagan, at Joyce Theater. Mr. Blundell completed his DMA from Eastman in January 2010 and has conducted the Melbourne Symphony (Australia) and Naples Philharmonic (FL) in concert, and in workshops with the orchestras of Rochester, Richmond, Omaha, Norwalk, Sydney, Hobart, and Perth. Mr. Blundell will make his debut at the PSNJ's Spring Concert, entitled "Russian Fireworks," on May 20, 2012.

During the 2011-2012 season, Travaline will stay on as Music Director and Assistant Conductor to ensure that this transition season is as smooth "as a soothing Brahms concerto," McCunney said. "This is an historic season for the Philharmonic of Southern New Jersey as it is the first time since its inception that this impressively large

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and talented all-volunteer orchestra has seen a change of the conductor's baton," McCunney-Thomas added. "Thanks to the leadership of maestro Travaline, the orchestra has continued to grow its audience."

Travaline said he expects great things from both the orchestra and its new conductor and music director. "I have met and/or spoken with all of the candidates and I have no doubt that the orchestra is in good hands. I'm so proud of the search committee, which has kept the players and audience in mind throughout the entire process. The torch will be carried into a bright future of optimistic growth, vision, and great success."

The Philharmonic of Southern New Jersey is an 80-piece, all volunteer classical orchestra that performs three subscription concerts per season, in November, February and May. The orchestra also performs a beloved annual children's concert, to be held in March 2012.

For tickets and information, visit www.psnj.org

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