

The Community **VOICE** Rohnert Park, Cotati & Penngrove

COTATI PHILHARMONIC GOES NATIONAL, CHANGES NAME

By Nicolas Grizzle

Friday, October 16, 2006, Cotati, CA. The Cotati Philharmonic no longer exists. Replacing it is a more expansive, national entity. The American Philharmonic - Sonoma County is the former Cotati Phil's new name, and already it is stretching its bounds. "It's the Cotati Philharmonic with a different name," said music director Gabriel Sakakeeny. He said the decision to change the name came six years ago, two years after the Cotati Phil's inception, but now "the orchestra's expanded and we're kicking butt," he said, and the time is right to start the orchestra on a national level. The American Philharmonic also now has a branch in Surprise, Arizona, thanks to former Cotati Assistant City Manager Dennis Dorch. Plans are also in the works for San Francisco and Cleveland, Ohio branches. American Philharmonic Board Member Catherine [sic] Bramkamp said the possibilities are endless. "If we have interest in the east we would definitely go there," she said.

The goal is to create 25 orchestras in 25 years. "It was really pretty amazing what happened with the Cotati Philharmonic," said Sakakeeny. "We want to replicate that all over the States." He said American Philharmonic is like a brand name, and starting orchestras all over the country is like franchising. The ideals of the Cotati Phil would remain in place, though. All concerts would be free of charge and the orchestras would exist through audience donations. As with the case with the Cotati Phil, if an orchestra is not supported it will simply go away, as Sakakeeny has said at many concerts. Immediately after the name change became official, some interesting things began to happen. Within a week, composers and soloists from Europe were contacting the orchestra, asking to have their music performed. Sakakeeny said it was unexpected to have it happen so fast, but certainly didn't turn down the offers. The AP - SC will retain its current core of volunteer musicians and board members, but is currently seeking a new practice space. The orchestra cannot afford to continue to pay for rehearsal space as it does now. Currently rehearsals take place in the Ray Miller Room near Cotati City Hall, and Sakakeeny pointed out that though it is "perfectly designed for the orchestra," they cannot afford it. "Musicians are donating their time, they don't get paid," said Bramkamp. She said the AP - SC is looking for a rehearsal space which is centrally located to avoid too much commute for musicians, who come from all over Sonoma County. They are rehearsing in Cotati for their upcoming concert at Spreckels, though. The weekend of Oct. 20 holds a program of "The Drama and Romance of Music," featuring works by Beethoven, Brahms and Saint-Saens and the solo violin of 16-year-old Nigel Armstrong. Sakakeeny calls Armstrong a "completely amazing young man." He has soloed with the Berkeley Symphony Orchestra, San Francisco Youth Orchestra and the Reno Symphony, among other groups.

<http://thecommunityvoice.com/articles/2006/10/16/news/news03.txt>

SPRECKELS SPOTLIGHT: COTATI PHILHARMONIC UNDER ITS NEW NAME ...

Friday, October 20, 2006, Cotati, CA. RP classical music fans will welcome another free performance by the Cotati Philharmonic this weekend on the main stage in Spreckels. Only this time it's no longer "Cotati," but "American Philharmonic - Sonoma County." That's the orchestra's new name but all else is the same with music director Gabriel Sakakeeny in charge and there's never an admission charge. Tonight's performances is an open dress rehearsal starting at 8 pm. The orchestra will be back tomorrow night, Saturday, Oct. 21, for an 8 pm concert and again at 2:30 pm Sunday for the matinee concert. Young violinist Nigel Armstrong is guest soloist in works by Camille Saint-Saens. The orchestra has Beethoven's Leonore Overture No. 3 and Brahms' Symphony No. 3 to fill out the program. American Philharmonic - Sonoma County will no doubt bring memories of the former Rohnert Park Philharmonic under the baton of Karla Lemon. The Cotati Philharmonic also performed in Spreckels before the name change. ...

http://thecommunityvoice.com/articles/2006/10/20/city_of_rohnert_park/city06.txt