

Kids' Concerts at Green Center

'Snoopy and Friends' kicks off family series at new Weill Hall

By Diane Peterson | THE PRESS DEMOCRAT

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Thousands of children will march, dance and wiggle their way into Weill Hall at 3 p.m. Sunday, Oct 14 when the Santa Rosa Symphony kicks off a new three-concert family series at the freshly opened Green Music Center at Sonoma State University.

The first concert, "Snoopy and Friends Go to the Orchestra," offers a wide range of film, cartoon and contemporary music attuned to the ears of young audience members.

"This is really aimed at families with children in elementary school," said Alan Silow, SRS's executive director. "We didn't want people to perceive that our presence in the hall is only for the older generation."

The new Sonoma Paradiso Foundation Family Concert Series augments the symphony's already ambitious education program, which reaches an estimated 20,000 kids a year through its four youth orchestras, summer camps, free concerts and programs in the schools.

"We probably have the most comprehensive youth music program for a regional symphony orchestra in the state," Silow said. "So this is a natural outgrowth of that mission."

The idea for the Family Concert Series took root about four years ago, when the orchestra was strategizing about the opening of the new hall and wanted to carve out their own niche in the programming.

The symphony had presented children's concerts in the past, but never a series. For the past six years, however, the orchestra has offered a summer concert for kids in partnership with Sonoma Paradiso, a foundation started in 2004 to help children in the community.



The Magic Circle Mime Company will perform Peter and the Wolf in February.

Teaming up again with the foundation for the series, the symphony will present Prokofiev's perennially popular "Peter and the Wolf" in February and a rhythm primer program, "The Beat Goes On," in April.

All three Sunday matinees feature the full professional orchestra plus actors and narrators. Richard Loheyde, the symphony's youth orchestra and assistant conductor, will lead the first two concerts.

"Clearly, great classical music is the foundation for all this," Silow said. "But you build on it, making sure it's a fun, memorable experience."

This Sunday (Oct 14), the symphony will showcase young apprentices from Roustabout Theater dressed up as familiar figures such as Superman and Batman, Charlie Brown and Snoopy. Marcy

Smothers will narrate the performance, introducing the instruments and different sections of the orchestra.

“We can’t just be auditory,” Silow said. “It has to be visual. That is the current reality.” The musical program opens with Julius Fucik’s “Entrance of the Gladiators,” better known as the march played during the entrance of the circus clowns.

It continues in bold, brassy fashion with John Williams’ “Superman March,” Danny Elfman’s Music from “Superman,” and Hans Zimmer’s Suite from “Batman: The Dark Knight.” Henry Mancini’s “The Pink Panther” follows on the heels of “What’s Up at the Symphony,” a collection of great classical tunes from Bugs Bunny cartoons.

Finally, bringing home the theme, Ellen Taaffe Zwilich’s 1997 “Peanuts Gallery” brings the characters of the popular comic strip to life in short pieces, from “Snoopy Does the Samba” to “Lucy Freaks Out.” Vince Guaraldi’s “Linus & Lucy” brings the concert to a close on a jazzy note.

“To start with, ‘Snoopy and Friends’ is true in many ways,” Silow said. “First of all, Snoopy is a major icon in Santa Rosa, with the (Charles M. Schulz) Museum, and (Schulz’ widow) Jeannie Schulz is on the board of the Sonoma Paradiso Foundation.”

Sonoma Paradiso has provided free concert tickets to 650 underserved children in the community at Sunday’s concert, which is expected to be sold out.

Before and after the concert, kids will be able to get up close and personal with instruments of the orchestra during a pre-concert “Instrument Petting Zoo.”

“There will be violins and cellos and flutes, with staff there giving supervision,” Silow said. “We have some in-house musical instruments.”

But the most educational event of all may be the chance to experience the intimacy and acoustics of the hall itself.

“It’s just wonderful for young people to see that hall,” Silow said. “And perhaps, they will be prospective college students for Sonoma State. ... I think President Armiñana will be happy about this.”

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What: The Santa Rosa Symphony led by Assistant Conductor Richard Loheyde presents “Snoopy and Friends Go to the Orchestra,” with narrator Marcy Smothers and Roustabout Theater’s Apprentice Program, the first of a three-concert series for families.

When: 3 p.m. Sunday

Where: Green Music Center’s Weill Hall, Sonoma State University, Rohnert Park.

Tickets: \$15 adult, \$10 child (age 12 and under); subscriptions to the three-concert series are \$39 adult, \$24 child. Family packages start at \$102. Parking is \$10, or \$24 for a three-concert parking pass.

Reservations: 546-8742 or santarosasympphony.com

FUTURE CONCERTS IN THE SERIES: Feb. 24, 2013 “Peter and the Wolf” and April 28, 2013 “The Beat Goes On.”