

Insider
For April 15, 2009
By Kim Burger

Lions and tigers and bears, Oh My! Always looking for new ways to bring the joy of music to their audiences, the Waterloo-Cedar Falls Symphony Orchestra brings the timeless American Classic, *The Wizard of Oz*, to a whole new level of artistic originality when they make everything that is old new again on the big screen. On April 25th this re-mastered MGM classic will be shown in the Gallagher-Bluedorn Performing Arts Center and accompanied by the Waterloo-Cedar Falls Symphony. Hear Judy Garland's voice in song, backed by the WCFSO. The entire soundtrack will be accompanied by the orchestra, from Dorothy's rescue of Toto, to the tornado, the definite realization that she is no longer in Oz, all the way to meeting her new friends and their adventures throughout Oz.

When it comes to innovation with their music, the Waterloo-Cedar Falls Symphony are masters, bringing the joy of music to young and old alike. They have a history of finding new ways to make orchestra music come alive in their patrons, while always looking to intrigue the novice listener. The orchestra worked with local artist Gary Kelley in a classical Concert entitled Gary Kelley's Planets. They have performed sold out performances with Yo-Yo Ma and have been joined on stage with Victor Borge, Ferrante and Teicher, Robert Merrill, Peter Nero, The King's Singers, Isaac Stern, "Doc" Severinsen, and Nadja Solerno Sonnenberg.

G.T. Bennett, Director of the East Waterloo High School Orchestra; Ralph Pronk, director of the West Waterloo High School Orchestra; (Mr.) Cressy Whalen, then president of the Waterloo Musicians Union; and the late Myron Russell, emeritus head of the School of Music at the University of Northern Iowa founded the orchestra in 1929, calling it the Waterloo Symphony Orchestra. They performed their first concert at East High School on February 6, 1930.

Other than a brief suspension of the orchestra in 1944 due to WWII, the WCFSO has grown over the years to encompass Classical Concerts, Chamber Music, Pops, and Lollipop Concerts for children. In 1969 they changed their name to the Waterloo-Cedar Falls Symphony Orchestra and in 2000 took up residence at the Gallagher-Bluedorn Performing Arts Center.

Over the years they have flourished under the direction of 14 directors. G.T. Bennett and Ralph Pronk conducted the first two concerts and Dr. Edward Kurtz, the head of the Orchestra Department at Iowa State Teachers College, was made official conductor in 1931. In 2001 Jason Weinberger was chosen to be Symphony's 14th music director and remains in that position today.

The Symphony is governed by a board first called the Waterloo Symphony Association. Cressy Whalen was the first president. Current board president is Russell Curtis.

The Friends of the Waterloo-Cedar Falls Symphony has been very instrumental (pardon the pun) in the success of the Orchestra, raising \$20,000 plus annually to support symphony activities. The Friends group also assists in coordinating and facilitating Youth Concerts and Lollipop Concerts, bringing free orchestral experiences to children ranging in age from 4 to 12.

Thank you to Rebecca Klatt Kuhlman and Vicky Bailey for providing information for this article. I encourage you to take advantage of this excellent community resource and get your tickets NOW by calling 319-273-4TIX or 877-549-SHOW.