

LOST AND FOUND



Giacchino Longobardi, artistic director of the Neapolitan Music Society, instructs students of the McCallum Fine Arts Academy Chamber Orchestra. They will perform a concert this Sunday to raise money for a trip to perform at Carnegie Hall in New York.

Courtesy of David Stence

Orchestra to play Carnegie

By Raquel Villarreal
Daily Texan Staff

Rare 15th-century music from Naples that hasn't been played for more than 200 years will come to life again this Sunday at The Long Center for the Performing Arts.

The Neapolitan Music Society premieres "A Neapolitan Revival" with the McCallum Fine Arts Academy Chamber Orchestra, a student orchestra.

"This will be the first orchestra in the world to do this program," said Peter Ravella, chairman of the Neapolitan Music Society Board of Directors.

"Our orchestra has been invited to perform this concert at Carnegie Hall," said Michael Coughlan, president of the McCallum Performance Fund. The Sunday concert is a fundraiser to help get the students to Carnegie Hall in June 2009.

"Part of the proceeds will go to fund scholarships for the trip next summer," he said.

They're also the first student organization to perform in the Long Center.

Caitlin Coughlan, first viola, feels excited about playing there.

"I'm looking forward mostly to being able to play in the Long Center just because it's an amazing space and it was designed specifically for musicians," she said. "It is a theater that musicians play in, so the acoustics are really great."

The orchestra will play a repertoire transcribed from the original manuscript by NMS Artistic Director Giacchino Longobardi and NMS Assistant Artistic Director Alberto Vitolo.

"These are pieces that have never been transcribed — no one knows how to play them anymore," Ravella said. "Longobardi and Vitolo were trained by the old masters, so when they bring the pieces, each one is handcrafted for presentation in modern musical form."

Apart from the challenge of learning a new musical style, the orchestra made up of high school students has prepared the concert in the same time frame that a professional orchestra would have done:

a week. Marlene Meador, mother of first violinist Michael Meador, was astonished.

"They went from getting the paper with the music on one day, and then less than 48 hours later, they were playing the pieces. I was in absolute awe," she said.

It's fitting for a student orchestra to be premiering this music. Conservatories were created to teach a trade to the abandoned children of Naples in the 1600s.

"The conservatory tradition comes from the education of young musicians; that's why it was formed," Ravella said. "They became experts in producing accomplished musicians. They were the best at the time."

A great tradition of Italian classical music existed decades before the music of European classical composers like Mozart and Beethoven reached its zenith.

"There is something beautiful that has been lost," Ravella said. "Like discovering a vault full of beautiful Renaissance paintings that no one has hung at any museum, and they're stunningly beautiful."

