



NEWS

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El Camino College Staff Member Conducts the Premiere of Contemporary Work

El Camino College Center for the Arts promotions specialist Hector Salazar recently took the stand as the new conductor of the Carson-Dominguez Hills Symphony.

Salazar, also an accomplished music director and instructor, presented his debut concert – the world premiere of a new contemporary work, “Timothy and the Magic Garden,” a children’s tale for narrator and orchestra with music by local composer and retired Dean of Fine Arts Philip Westin (music) and ECC theatre educator Burt Peachy (lyrics). Karen Sharp, host of KOST-103.5’s “Lovesongs on the Coast” narrated the piece, a story designed to introduce young listeners to the instruments of the orchestra in the tradition of Sergei Prokofiev’s “Peter and the Wolf.”

Salazar was introduced to classical music while he attended Killingsworth Junior High (now Fedde Middle School) in Hawaiian Gardens, a day he remembers well. He said that introducing young scholars to music can change lives.

“It’s wonderful to introduce them to a new piece, to tell a story, to watch their eyes light up when you show them a new instrument,” he added. “You can see the little wheels turning. I remember that, because that’s what happened to me. The L.A. Philharmonic came and played a concert for us at school and I said, ‘Wow, I’d like to do that.’”

Salazar, who started out playing the trombone, was encouraged to try his hand at conducting, after an injury from a car accident. He also dabbled in percussion, but enjoyed the way a conductor was able to mold music and work with musicians to create the best compositions.

The Carson-Dominguez Hills Symphony includes members from throughout the local community as well as musicians from students, faculty, staff and alumni of CSU Dominguez Hills. Salazar was appointed to take over the orchestra from his former professor and mentor, Dr. Frances Steiner, who led the ensemble since its beginning in 1976.

Salazar leads not only the Carson-Dominguez Hills Symphony, but also serves as the assistant conductor of the Chamber Orchestra of the South Bay. Salazar has worked extensively in film and musical theatre. His film credits include music preparation and arranging for “The Big Brass Ring,” “The Apostate” and “The Sisters.”

A great fan of musical theatre, Salazar has conducted productions throughout the United States, including a highly acclaimed production of Kurt Weill's "The Threepenny Opera" as part of the 2000 Kurt Weill Centennial Celebration at Cerritos College. He is also the conductor of a production of Stephen Sondheim's "Sweeney Todd" at El Camino College. In addition, he is a music and theatre instructor at Cerritos College, where he earned his associate of arts degree in music. He transferred to the California State University, Dominguez Hills, where he completed his bachelor's degree. He continued to California State University, Long Beach to earn a master's degree.

Despite the challenges of maintaining a career in music, Salazar said that the greatest reward he has experienced has been "the ability to express myself as an artist in my field and equally to share my years of experience with students, fellow artists and audiences alike."

"I encourage everyone, young and old to enter into the arts with an open heart," said the maestro. "In these difficult times that we live in, it is the arts that give us hope and a renewed sense of life."

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