

# NISO NOTES

Northwest Iowa Symphony Orchestra

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## The Many Firsts of the “Number One!” Concert

By Allison DeWaard

The upcoming NISO concert is set to feature a variety of firsts: Christopher Stanichar’s first season as conductor of NISO, Richard Bogenrief’s first trumpet concerto with NISO, Beethoven’s *Leonore Overture No. 1*, and Kalinnikov’s *Symphony No. 1*. Christopher Stanichar is greatly looking forward to conducting his first NISO concert, noting that Richard Bogenrief is “an example of so many of the talented people who play in our orchestra.”

Richard Bogenrief has been a part of NISO since almost the beginning, and for this concert, he will be the star of the show. Bogenrief is a local crop farmer, but his heart lies in music: he taught at universities and colleges throughout the area between 1991 and 2010. Now, he plays for multiple regional orchestras, and NISO is proud to have him as part of our orchestra as well.

The “Number One!” concert will feature the music of composers such as Ludwig van Beethoven



and Vasily Sergeyevich Kalinnikov. Beethoven often struggled to write operas, and his *Leonore Overture No. 1* is one of four overtures he wrote for this particular opera; he never felt like his overtures were good enough, which is why he wrote so many revisions. Despite Beethoven’s apprehensions,

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-Christopher Stanichar

audiences over the years have been more than pleased with all four of his overtures. Kalinnikov’s *Symphony No. 1 in G Minor* was not necessarily a success during his lifetime, but today, it is viewed as a wonderful symphony. It contains “lots of emotions,” remarks Stanichar.

Both of these pieces are often underperformed, but this fact makes them all the more special to both listen to and perform. According to Stanichar, “People should come to NISO because it is probably one of the finest orchestras for a city of our size in the entire U.S.” NISO represents the talent in Northwest Iowa, and this concert is sure to be a success.

The concert will be held in the B.J. Haan Auditorium at Dordt College in Sioux Center, Iowa at 7:30 p.m. on November 15.

## Celebrity Conductor Contest

By James Koldenhoven

Thanks to a creative board and wonderful constituent support, the Northwest Iowa Symphony Orchestra (NISO) will open its *Fabulous Firsts* concert series with confidence. We are closing in on our financial comfort zone and do not anticipate the need for an April auction. While the auction has been enjoyable, we are looking forward to other opportunities this year.

The board wants to try something new as a fundraiser: we are calling it a “Celebrity Conductor Contest.” In order for this event to succeed, we need aspiring conductors from different towns to collect “votes” (dollars) from friends and neighbors. Whoever comes up with the highest number of votes receives the honor of the baton and will conduct a short number at the Winter Pops Concert on January 21. All contestants will be recognized (and thanked!) for taking an entertaining risk for NISO, but only one celebrity will actually conduct.

If you or someone you know would like to be considered to be a 4-minute “celebrity” conductor, please contact the NISO administrative assistant, Mary Hulstein. You may email her at [niso@dordt.edu](mailto:niso@dordt.edu) or call her at 712-722-6230 during her office hours, which are 11:00 AM – 3:00 PM, Monday – Thursday.

## How Does a Conductor Choose the Season?

By Shirley Matheis

Have you ever wished that the orchestra would play more of your classical favorites? Or would you prefer to have them play some of those wonderful but less familiar pieces? Perhaps you wonder why that “weird” modern selection was included. NISO’s new conductor, Christopher Stanichar, can tell you that program choices are anything but random.

While Stanichar’s desire is to delight the entire audience, he acknowledges that it is impossible to please everybody all the time. It can be a daunting task to satisfy longtime concert goers, those who have never before attended a symphony concert, and younger audiences: they all have unique tastes and perspectives.

A distinct advantage for Stanichar is that his wife has been the music director for Colorado Public Radio for many years. The two of them have honed their understanding of audience preferences by many discussions on that subject. In addition, he credits his mentor at the Cincinnati Pops Orchestra for giving him direction in selecting music that both appeals to audiences and exposes them to old and new work that should be heard.

Juggling his own preferences with those of the audience and the orchestra members, Stanichar takes into consideration the level of expertise of the orchestra. He hastens to add that he thinks that NISO may be the very finest symphony orchestra in the United States for a city the size of Sioux Center. Nevertheless, he is careful to ensure that the selected music is not so challenging that the performance will not measure up to audience expectations.

Stanichar’s standards for selection are apparent in the two NISO concerts he will be conducting this season. The Fall Concert comprises audience-friendly selections by Beethoven; Kalinnikov; and Arutiunian, with trumpeter Richard Bogenrief as guest performer. The Spring Concert includes Rimsky Korsakov’s Scheherazade and Saint-Saens’ Cello Concerto No. 1, along with guest cellist Maxim Kozolov.

## Northwest Iowa Symphony Orchestra

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Office Hours - 11:00 AM - 3:00 PM - Monday - Thursday

## Gary Vander Hart

By Shirley Matheis

When Gary Vander Hart began giving violin lessons in 1956, he never envisioned a day when he would be playing alongside many of his former students in such an orchestra as excellent as the Northwest Iowa Symphony Orchestra.

Gary started string programs at Sioux Center and Rock Valley Christian Schools in 1966 and 1967. Before long, there was a strong core of young string players in Northwest Iowa.

In 1972, Vander Hart collaborated with Dordt music professor Gary Warmink in organizing a group of musicians into an ensemble to accompany performances of Handel’s *Messiah* and *St. Matthews’ Passion*. About ninety percent of the string players were Vander Hart’s students. Dordt students played woodwind and brass instruments, and a few community members filled in as well. The ensemble called themselves the Dordt Orchestra.

The Dordt Orchestra soon developed into an orchestra that played pieces such as *Peter and the Wolf*, Beethoven symphonies, and compositions by contemporary Americans like Copland. Vander Hart never dreamed that he would see a day when more difficult pieces would be played in Northwest Iowa as excellently as they are today.

In 1985, the Dordt Orchestra was restructured and called the Sioux County Orchestra, with Dordt music professor Henry Duitman as conductor. Sometime later, the name was changed to the Northwest Iowa Symphony Orchestra.

Many NISO players studied under Vander Hart at school and took private lessons from him as well; these players include Lisa Miedema, Jennifer Frens, Tim Rylaarsdam, Sarah Te Grotenhuis, and Nancy Vermeer. Dane Hibma and Madeline Wesselius studied with him privately, and David Mortenson is still taking lessons.



Loving music as Vander Hart does, there may be nothing more exciting for him than seeing students get as thrilled about a beautiful piece of music as he is and then seeing them work for hours to perfect it. He laments the fact that there are more areas competing for their attention today than there were in 1966.

Gary served as concert master from 1972 to 1992, but then he began teaching Bible in both Moscow and St. Petersburg, Russia. When that service came to an end in 2007, he was asked to play viola with NISO, which he continues to do today.

Vander Hart expresses special thanks to James Koldenhoven and the hundreds of volunteers who helped to raise the level of that fledgling orchestra much higher than he had ever dreamed. He also thanks Henry Duitman and the other amazing conductors he has enjoyed for almost 40 years.

If not for the dedication of Gary Vander Hart, though, would NISO even exist today? Thank you, Mr. Vander Hart, for your fine work.

