Knox-Galesburg Symphony hires new music director, Vizireanu to take the podium

May 30, 2019

Vlad Vizireanu has been chosen as the next music director of the KGS after a process which has lasted for more than two years. He is “thrilled to have been named the next music director” and is “looking forward to working with these wonderful musicians and board, and to be leading the orchestra into its next chapter.”

The search process has joined together musicians, board members, and people from the community as a search committee, organized and facilitated by executive director Lucas Wood. This committee vetted candidates from around the world and brought the four most qualified candidates to Galesburg as guest conductors. These candidates were each considered after performing a concert and engaging with the community during their week in our community. “As I look back over the past two years, I’m amazed by the dedication of the search committee. Their commitment to this process is what enabled us to bring such fine candidates to our deserving community and present, what I consider, the best season of performances in recent KGS history,” says Wood. “A music director search is certainly the most arduous task an orchestra can undertake, but our fine musicians, dedicated search committee, and supportive and enthusiastic community have turned this daunting process into the most inspiring season in my time with the orchestra.”

The time and organization which led up to this past season cannot be understated. In August of 2017, the KGS published their opening for the music director position and received more than fifty applicants from around the world. The committee split this into two groups and narrowed the pool down to twenty quarterfinalists (a top ten from each group). Applicants were evaluated on musicianship, professionalism, and ability to engage with the community. In February of 2018 the committee met over coffee and donuts in a meeting space provided by the Galesburg Area Chamber of Commerce. At this point they narrowed further to a pool of ten semifinalists, who would each be interviewed in a video conference at The Orpheum Theatre in March. Each candidate brought many outstanding qualities to the table, making a difficult decision for the committee. However, the pastries from Innkeeper’s Fresh Roasted Coffee were very useful in smoothing discussion.
Described as a conductor with “ample gestures, clarity, precision, and genuine passion,” Vlad Vizireanu has worked with numerous orchestras during his active concert schedule over the past several years, which has included a variety of guest conducting engagements, major international competitions, and prestigious masterclasses. Most recently, he debuted with the London Symphony Orchestra at Barbican Hall as 2nd Prizewinner in the 2016 Donatella Flick Competition. He was also among a handful of candidates selected to work with both the Danish National Symphony and Bamberg Symphony at the 2018 Malko Competition and 2016 Mahler Competition respectively. In 2013, he was awarded 2nd Prize at the Cadaqués Competition where he debuted in L’Auditori Hall in Barcelona. He has worked with the Tonhalle-Orchester, Lucerne Festival Strings, Gstaad Festival Orchestra, Castleton Festival Orchestra, New World Symphony, Manhattan School of Music Symphony, and has served as cover conductor for the Los Angeles Philharmonic, and Sarasota Orchestra, among others.

Additionally, he has studied with and served as assistant to some of the finest conductors of our generation, including Bernard Haitink, Kurt Masur, David Zinman, Michael Tilson Thomas, Neeme Jarvi, and Lori Maazel. Vizireanu’s pedigree is indeed impressive. However, it is merely one aspect of why the KGS chose him to be our next Music Director.

While reflecting back on the process, committee member and principal clarinet, Eric Ginsberg said “from the early days of our search, Vlad emerged as a leading candidate for the position. He combines all the technique that one can want in a conductor with an engaging and musical personality. It became apparent during his guest conducting that he easily shares his musicianship with the orchestra members and the community.”

During his stay in Galesburg, Vlad interviewed with radio hosts on WMOI, WGIL, and TSPR. He visited with local music classrooms and met members of the community at various other functions. “By performing exciting repertoire, both old and new, and creating unique community collaborations,” says Vizireanu, “we are going to reach out to a wide ranging audience and make our concerts a welcoming and inviting place for classical music.” Vlad felt that he really connected with the community during his stay in Galesburg. He enjoyed his visits at United Junior High and at Lombard Middle school, asking students about who wanted to be a conductor. He was pleasantly surprised when more than one hand shot up. He spent time in the lobby before the concert and shook hands with anyone and everyone who was interested.

The audience seems to like Vlad as much as the committee and board do. After his concert in April, audience members filled out an anonymous survey to give their
feedback. These, among many other anonymous quotes show the audience’s excitement.

“Fabulous, the best of all. Got better each time. Winner.”
“All four candidates were very good, but I think this guy is another level up. I hope you choose him.”
“Best the orchestra has sounded.”

“The process has been rigorous, but also thrilling,” says Nikki Malley, board member and director of jazz studies at Knox college. “All year, friends, colleagues, students, and total strangers have stopped me to express enthusiastic support for candidates. I am walking away from this year-long process with a new appreciation for the community’s love and investment in the Knox-Galesburg Symphony.” Jeanne Harland, another board member says “the Galesburg area can feel proud that so many extraordinarily talented conductors from around the world want to come make music with the Knox-Galesburg Symphony.”

“Overall this has been an exhaustive and wonderful process. We’ve gotten a chance to meet wonderful conductors and engage with the community in new ways” says David Power, the marketing coordinator for the KGS. Vlad’s post begins in July and season programs will be announced soon. Interested music lovers can visit the symphony website (www.kgsymphony.org) or Facebook page to keep up with all the latest updates and to purchase tickets for performances. Vlad Vizireanu is the newest addition to the KGS and is excited to get to know the community of Galesburg.

###