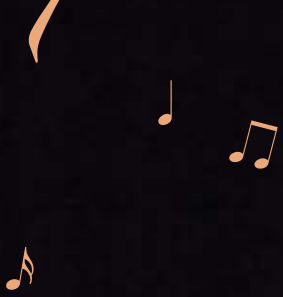



A Harmonic



by Liz Flowers
photography by Heather Smith



Convergence

For those who love the symphony, but don't love the hour and a half roundtrip drive into Atlanta to hear quality performances—not to mention the cost of fuel, parking and ticket prices—there will soon be a new way to get your musical fix in Johns Creek.

J. Wayne Baughman, the Grammy-winning singer who performed under Robert Shaw—the famed 21-year conductor of the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra—is creating The Johns Creek Symphony Orchestra, which kicks off its first concert season on September 30th at a special JCSO-sponsored memorial concert in the Theater of Northview High School.

Wayne has been the music director at St. Benedict's Catholic Church on Parsons Road for the past seven years and prior to that served for twelve years as the music director for Johns Creek United Methodist Church.

An accomplished bass-baritone soloist, Wayne has been on the classical music scene in Atlanta for 36 years. But as a younger man, he had different aspirations. "I was into baseball as a kid, but was fascinated with conducting," said Wayne. "I liked the idea of being able to have lots of people playing different instruments and have it sound really good."

After receiving his undergraduate and Master's degrees from the University of Alabama, Wayne relocated to Ann Arbor, Michigan to study under Elizabeth A. H. Green, acclaimed for her tutorial of strings and conducting. It was there that Wayne received additional graduate training at the University of Michigan. Green strongly encouraged Wayne's conducting, although singing became his artistic medium of choice.

"Mr. Oratorio," as Wayne was dubbed by his colleagues, returned to the Atlanta area and joined the 200-voice Atlanta Symphony Orchestra Chorus, Chamber Chorus and Robert Shaw Festival Singers. Wayne's solo work can be heard on Choral Masterpieces (Telarc, 1990) or Walton's "Belshazzar's Feast" (Telarc, 1989), conducted by Robert Shaw, among many other musical collections.

Wayne's deep roots in Atlanta's symphonic scene and his long-time musical work in Johns Creek make him a natural to lead the local symphony. His entire life has been committed to music. He is intimately familiar with each orchestral organization performing around Atlanta and believes that Johns Creek is uniquely positioned to create its own symphonic ensemble. "This is demographically right," he said. Wayne has also examined similar-sized symphonies around the country, such as those in Woodlands, Texas and Orange County, California, which mirror the population demographic of Johns Creek.

He is easily able to rattle off the characteristics of each neighboring symphony in Gwinnett, Cobb and Sandy Springs and point out what makes each distinct. He also knows the number of violins (16), the number of violas (six), cellos (four) and basses (three) and the number of woodwinds, brass and percussion he will need to kick off a musical journey in Johns Creek. He envisions a minimum 44-member regular orchestra.

Wayne said what will set Johns Creek apart from other area symphonies is the ability to create a fully professional musical organization that does not borrow from the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra (ASO) or use a mixture of professionals and amateurs. "I don't want to be in the summer pops concert business," Wayne said. Instead, he envisions a traditional orchestra, which performs classical and light classical repertoire and is complimented by an educational component. Already, Wayne has entered into negotiations with Northview High School to provide YPC's (young people's concerts) and world-class instrumental instructional support in the form of master classes presented by JCSO principal players.

Wayne believes that Johns Creek will have no problem attracting top-shelf talent for its artistic endeavors. "The talent pool is very deep," he said because of the extremely competitive nature of the orchestral community. "For every position that opens in a major symphony, there can be as many as 500 applications for a single chair. Atlanta is home to many Master's level Julliard, Eastman, etc. graduates." Wayne has already identified a person who may

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become the Johns Creek Symphony’s Concert Master and now is working to raise the funding necessary to endow the position. He said he wants to attract orchestra members who will still be here in ten years and that will require union scale-plus wages.

Wayne intends to grow additional symphony support through a season ticket holder program and he is working with Georgia Lawyers for the Arts to create a non-profit organization that allows for tax-deductible contributions for his musical patrons. Special and ongoing fundraising projects are also planned.

Wayne’s childhood dream of conducting is ever-present—maybe more now. He said, “Good conductors make waving a stick around in the air appear easy and it is easy, after many long practice sessions. When I conduct, I can still hear each individual instrument. It’s like a mosaic. You can see the whole, but you can appreciate each piece. Listening to a musical composition is similar; you can hear all its distinct parts.”

For those who think classical music is a snoozer, be prepared to have your mind changed. J. Wayne Baughman understands how to mix crowd pleasing favorites, such as a Mozart overture with Bizet’s Symphony in C. Still not convinced? Then plan on enjoying your winter holiday season at the symphony’s Christmas Gala that will be held at St. Benedict’s on December 1 where you will hear old favorites such as “White Christmas,” sure to warm your heart and promote easy listening in Johns Creek.

*For more information on the Johns Creek Symphony Orchestra,
send an e-mail to jcsinfo@yahoo.com.*



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