

# COMMUNITY

## ■ WHERE IN THE WORLD IS GREGORY?

# MIM artistic director jets around after WinterFest

*Editor's Note: This is the second installment of the feature "Where in the World is Gregory?"*

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Special to The Union

Many area concert fans had the pleasure of meeting Gregory Vajda (pronounced Voy-da) during Music in the Mountains' WinterFest.

The organization's artistic director wrapped up here on Dec. 15 and has since conducted concerts in Portland, Ore.; Huntsville, Ala.; and Edmonton, Alberta — and visited native Hungary in between.

"Conductors live in airports; it's our way of life," Vajda said. "But it's a lot easier now than in Franz Liszt's day, for example. He had to journey to the U.S. by ship and then travel around by horse-drawn carriage."

Vajda reports that the highlights of the MIM WinterFest for him included the concert with guest pianist Andrew Armstrong and "Home for the

Holidays," where he performed on clarinet with Ryan Murray, MIM's choral conductor, on bassoon.

"We hosted an informal 'talkback' session immediately after the Sunday Serenade concert with Andrew Armstrong," said Vajda.

"About 75 percent of the audience stayed and there were many good questions and lots of laughter. Holiday events are great for getting to know people better. I had a lot of fun joining the MIM Festival Chorale for an after-concert party."

Vajda headed immediately to Portland, his current home base, to rehearse the Oregon Symphony Orchestra and the Pacific Youth Choir for the "Comfort and Joy" concert on Dec. 23.

"This is a really fun annual event," said Vajda. "Our Portland audience loves Christmas music and light classics. I suspect they get shopping done early so they can come to the performance. For the second year in a row we had several

hundred employees from the Northwest's Burgerville chain and their families attending. Not only do they like music, but their burger is pretty awesome, too."



Gregory Vajda

Then it was off to his native Hungary to enjoy the holidays with family and friends. The first week of January he returned to North America for a guest-conducting week in Edmonton, Alberta. He conducted the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra in the glittering Second Piano Concerto of Camille Saint-Saens with pianist Katherine Chi, Dvorak's "Symphony Number 6" and "Canadian Fantasy" by Coulthard.

But Alberta in January?

"I don't know why they always ask me in January," Vajda says. "The day before the concert the scariest snowstorm I have ever seen happened. It's good that they are used to weather like this and got the airport runways in order pretty fast. Or else I'd be still there."

After filling in for a concert with the Huntsville Symphony in Alabama, Gregory is now back in Portland. Oregon Symphony's next concert will be Valentine's Day, with legendary singer Johnny Mathis.

Later in the month, the symphony will perform a piece written by Vajda himself — "DUEVOE for Orchestra" — along with Barber's "Violin Concerto," Bartok's "Rhapsody No. 1" with Jennifer Koh on violin and Dvorak's "Symphony No. 7."

Before returning here for Music in the Mountains' April SpringFest, Vajda will be conducting the Symphony Silicon Valley in March in Brahms' famous "Haydn Variations" and "German Requiem."