

# Artistic director brings a birthday gift for MIM

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*Special to The Union*

**M**usic in the Mountains' artistic director Gregory Vajda will be a familiar face around town from mid-June to mid-July, when he will be here to lead SummerFest 2011, the organization's 30th anniversary season.

It's been just a few short months since he brought us the sell-out SpringFest concert series and as usual he's had some interesting travels and accomplishments in between.

Most recently, Vajda (pron. Voy-da) was appointed Music Director (the top artistic position) of the Huntsville Symphony Orchestra, a prestigious advancement in his career. This gives Vajda the two main foundations of his conducting year.

"It's a perfect balance — the seasonal festivals in Nevada County with MIM and the ongoing orchestra series," he explains.

Vajda has made two recent trips back to Hungary to visit friends and family. While there, he conducted the musical group, Ensemble UMZE, in a concert broadcast live by Hungarian Radio. "We did some new music and the amazing 20th century classic, 'Chamber Concerto for Violin, Piano and 13 Winds' by Alban Berg," Vajda commented.

Vajda has also been doing some composing in his spare time, writing "Csardas Obstine," an homage to Franz Liszt, for piano and orchestra. In classical



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**Gregory Vajda, right, has been hired by the Huntsville Symphony Orchestra in Huntsville, Ala. as music director and conductor. He plans to also continue his role as artistic director with Music in the Mountains.**

music circles throughout the world, 2010 and 2011 have been designated "Liszt Years," and many orchestras are featuring his works. The West Coast premier for this piece will be in the June 26 "Orchestra Masterworks" concert in the MIM SummerFest.

"I wanted to give a very special gift to MIM for its 30th Birthday," says Vajda. "I wanted to write a piece that captures the 'Hungarian spirit' — the picture of how I see Hungarians after all these years living abroad. It is a very groovy and energetic, sometimes weird and definitely very

virtuosic piece of music."

A few days before he returns to our area Vajda will conduct at the International Festival Institute in Round Top, Texas with renowned pianist James Dick, who will also be coming to Nevada County for the June 26 concert.

"I can't wait to get back to the Nevada City/Grass Valley area," Vajda said. "(Music in the Mountains) is such a strong, high-energy organization, it's really unique in the entire country for a small community to produce these high-caliber festivals.

"We have planned a great series of concerts for this summer," he continues. "One of the highlights will be Cirque de la Symphonie, where I will have performers flying over my head and even working me into a magic act. When I performed with Cirque de la Symphonie and the Seattle Symphony last season we sold out five houses. You have never seen anything like this here.

"We are also playing Beethoven's 5th Symphony for the first time in MIM's history, which will be a fantastic summer treat for everyone."