AroundTown

Resident recalls melodic music career

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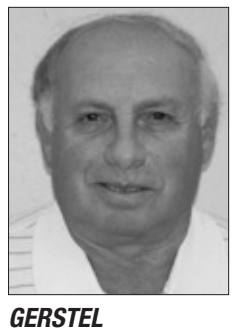
During his career Alan Gerstel aced the world of music, though he's still waiting for his first ace at Palm Aire.

Gerstel was a first violinist with the Detroit Symphony Orchestra for 30 years. When he retired in 2004, he and wife Nina headed for Sarasota and settled into a home in the Palm Aire Community.

A native of Buffalo, his early interest in music was strongly encouraged by his parents and teachers. His father, the principal violinist for the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra, was his first teacher. He became a scholarship student at the New England Conservatory of Music in Boston and at age 20 was named assistant concertmaster of the Florida Symphony in Orlando. He also spent three years with the Buffalo Philharmonic, two years with the Cincinnati Symphony and four at Minneapolis.


GERSTEL

In 1974 he took a first violinist's chair in Detroit, helping to carry the melody for the 100-person orchestra for the next three decades. He is "pleased and honored to have been part of such a fine group of musicians."

Gerstel is often asked about the operations of the orchestra. Instruments are owned by the musicians, and the number of women has increased to about half. Players come from as many as 50 nations.

Like all major orchestras, Detroit has year-round contracts including nine vacation weeks. A usual workweek would consist of four rehearsals and four concerts. There are typically concerts or rehearsals five days a week. There is time leftover to do some teaching, for both school systems and private pupils.

The Detroit orchestra does a substantial amount of touring in North America and Europe, usually one to three weeks per year. In 2001 it reopened the renovated Van Wezel in Sarasota as part of a Florida tour. Later that year it was the first U.S. orchestra to resume European tours after the 9/11 attacks.

Hiring a new orchestra member is a rigorous task involving as many as 150 candidates for one position. The audition committee would sit unseen behind a screen while each candidate played assigned passages. Often there were three or four rounds as the field was narrowed. Sometimes no one was hired, the position left open and a new search continued.

Gerstel is enjoying his retirement. His music involvements in Sarasota are mostly attendance at concerts. He enjoys a wide range of music with special interest in Mahler and Brahms. He and Nina came to Sarasota because they had friends here and they liked the arts and the tempo. They bought their house in 2002, two years before they retired and moved. They are on the golf courses several times a week. Gerstel has a laudable handicap (11 in late May) and is looking for another ace to go with the one he had in Rochester many years ago.

NoteWorthy

MCC groundskeeper earns state certification

Jane Zoland, Manatee Community College groundskeeper and chemical specialist at MCC, is a Florida Nursery, Growers and Landscape Association (FNGLA) Certified Horticulture Professional. She passed an extensive written exam that measures horticulture knowledge and professional skills. Zoland, a Bradenton resident, came to MCC in May 2007. A landscaper for seven years prior, she honed her skills in University of Florida/Manatee County Extension Service training programs and specializes in Florida-friendly landscaping.

Palmetto Elks donate to Virgil Mills Elementary

Palmetto Elks Lodge No. 2449, true to the Elks spirit of Elks Care/Elks Share and recognizing the cutbacks in funds for the local school district, voted at its Aug. 26 meeting to donate $300 to the Virgil Mills Elementary School to purchase school supplies for it's kindergarten class.

Manatee Clerk of Court wins national award

For the 15th consecutive year, the Government Finance Officers Association of the United States and Canada (GFOA) has awarded Manatee County Clerk of the Circuit Court and Comptroller **R.B. "Chips" Shore** with the Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting for the Manatee County Port Authority's Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR). The Certificate of Achievement is the highest form of recognition in the area of governmental accounting and financial reporting, and its attainment represents a significant accomplishment by a government agency and its management.

The report was judged by an impartial panel to meet the high standards of the program including demonstrating a constructive "spirit of full disclosure" to clearly communicate its financial story and motivate potential users and user groups to read the report.

"I am honored to be presented this award as it reflects the diligence and accuracy of my Finance Department," said Shore.

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