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## Pianist Garrick Ohlsson to appear at Saratoga High's McAfee Center

By Heather Zimmerman  
For the Saratoga News

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For the 2008-09 season, the Steinway Society the Bay Area is hitting the road in a sense. For the first time, the group will present music nearly at the doorsteps of its West Valley patrons. And not only that, but it's bringing some big names in classical music to town.

The society's first Saratoga concert features renowned pianist Garrick Ohlsson and takes place at 7 p.m. Sunday, at the McAfee Center at Saratoga High School, 20300 Herriman Ave. Ohlsson was the first American to win the Chopin International Competition.

The Steinway Society the Bay Area has been presenting concerts at Le Petit Trianon theater in downtown San Jose for 13 years. The society will continue presenting the bulk of its concerts at Le

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Petit Trianon, but this year has added two concerts at the McAfee Center to its regular subscription season.

Steinway Society the Bay Area artistic chairwoman

Nancy Jensen says the organization aims to expand its reach.

"We wanted to branch out from San Jose," Jensen says, noting that the West Valley was a particular draw "because many of our patrons come from the Los Gatos and Saratoga area, and they have such a beautiful new venue in the McAfee Center."

The McAfee Center is also a larger venue for the Steinway Society, with about 200 more seats than Le Petit Trianon. The society is maximizing that greater capacity by booking the two best-known names in its season at the McAfee. In addition to Ohlsson's performance, the society will present a 2009, concert by Van Cliburn winner and South Bay native son pianist Jon Nakamatsu at the McAfee Center.

Ohlsson, who is also based in the Bay Area, is fresh from a Grammy win for his recording, Beethoven Sonatas, Vol. 3. Audiences at the Steinway Society's concert will get a taste of Ohlsson's award-winning way with Beethoven's sonatas, as the first half of his program features Beethoven's "Piano Sonata No. 8 in C minor, Op. 13," "Pathetique" and "Piano Sonata in B-flat major, Op. 22."

The second half will be devoted to the music of Russian composer Alexander Scriabin, which Jensen describes as "beautiful, lyrical late-Romantic music." The Scriabin half of the program includes his "Desir, Op. 57 No. 1," "Poem and Prelude, Op. 59" and "Vers La Flamme, Op. 72."

And because Ohlsson is famed for his Chopin expertise, it's not out of the question, Jensen says, that an encore might feature a Chopin work.

Ohlsson is also especially acclaimed for his performances of works by Mozart, Schubert and, not surprisingly, Beethoven, as well as the Romantic repertoire.

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Ohlsson is touring the United States and Europe for the 2008-09 season, and this winter is expected to release a recording of his well-received January 2008 recital with contralto Ewa Podles at London's Wigmore Hall.

Jensen notes that Ohlsson is still very much down to earth as a performer, even as his star continues to rise higher and higher. "He is such a nice, gracious guy," she says. "He's such a huge artist, and you see him on television playing with the New York Philharmonic and all around the world, and so I think we're gong to be in for a real treat."

The Steinway Society aims to continue presenting concerts in Saratoga beyond the current season, Jensen says. By bringing such big names to town for its first Saratoga outings, the society certainly seems to be starting off on the right note.

Tickets are \$20-\$55. For more information, call (408) 286-2600 or visit [www.steinwaytheba.com](http://www.steinwaytheba.com).

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