

Gary Lewis, MOSC Music Director & Conductor



I like the
SOUND
of That

Midland-Odessa
Symphony & Chorale
better serves the communities it
serves with educational
outreach and powerful
performances.

by Becca Nelson Sankey | photos provided by Midland-Odessa Symphony & Chorale

Voices of the Permian Basin Youth Choir,
Directed by Emily Baker



For non-natives of Ector County, Odessa brings to mind snapshots of a West Texas city steeped in tradition: spirited Friday night football games, an esteemed annual stock show and rodeo, and a booming oil industry. But scratch the surface, and there's an unexpected dimension – a thriving arts scene that includes an eponymous symphony and chorale that, for more than five decades, has educated, entertained and captivated local audiences.

The Midland-Odessa Symphony & Chorale (MOSC) was created as a nonprofit organization in 1962 when Midland and Odessa's separate orchestras merged. "There was a longstanding rivalry between the cities of Midland and Odessa," said Jeannette Kolokoff, Executive Director of MOSC. "The Midland-Odessa Symphony & Chorale is recognized in the community as one of the first organizations to bring the two cities together."

MOSC is an example of the adage that there's power in numbers. Despite Midland-Odessa's combined population of 250,000, the League of American Orchestras recognizes it as a metropolitan orchestra, Kolokoff said, adding that metropolitan orchestras typically serve a population of 500,000 or more. In its 55th season, MOSC is West Texas' premier performing arts organization.

More than 70 professional musicians make up MOSC's symphony orchestra. According to the League of American Orchestras, more than 1,800 orchestras exist in the United

States, but only 20 percent are comprised of professional musicians. MOSC's String Quartet and Lone Star Brass were formed in 1981, with the forming of the West Texas Winds in 2000. MOSC is also comprised of an 80-member adult choir and the Voices of the Permian Basin youth choir, which includes 90 children in third through eighth grades, Kolokoff said.

"The symphony orchestra, choral and Voices of the Permian Basin youth choir perform together annually in the 'Sounds of the Season' holiday concert," she said. "It's one of the Permian Basin's most-loved holiday traditions. There will also be an opportunity to see them perform together for the May 12 season finale 'Celebrating Our Heroes.'"

Veterans, active military and first-responders are honored at the latter concert, Kolokoff said, during which more than 200 musicians will collaborate, including the symphony orchestra, MOSC Chorale and Voices of the Permian Basin. "This rousing patriotic celebration of America will feature Aaron Copland's 'Lincoln Portrait,' narrated by Gene Collins, along with many inspiring and entertaining musical works celebrating our freedom and our country," Kolokoff said. "Community sponsorships are available in which local heroes can be honored at the event: For every \$100 sponsorship, two heroes can attend the concert for free. Heroes will be honored at the event and in our concert program."

Midland-Odesa Symphony & Chorale performing at the Wagner Noël Performing Arts Center



Maestro Gary Lewis and the MOSC orchestra standing for applause



On stage with Michael Santorelli (Co-Principal Trumpet) and Eric Baker (Co-Principal Trumpet)



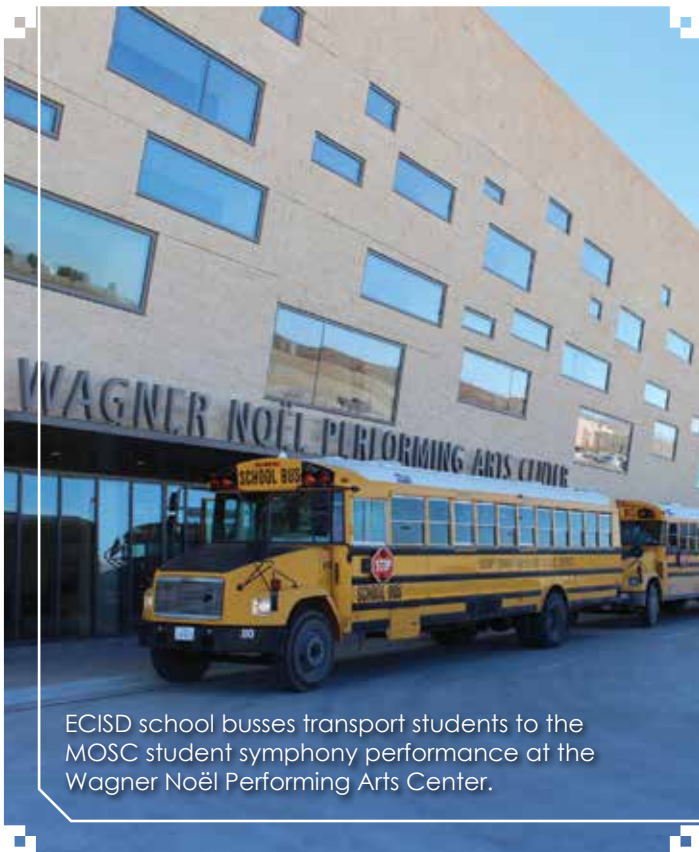
On stage with MOSC orchestra and Tim Mabrey (MOSC Principal Timpani)



Maestro Gary Lewis energetically conducting a performance at the Wagner Noël Performing Arts Center



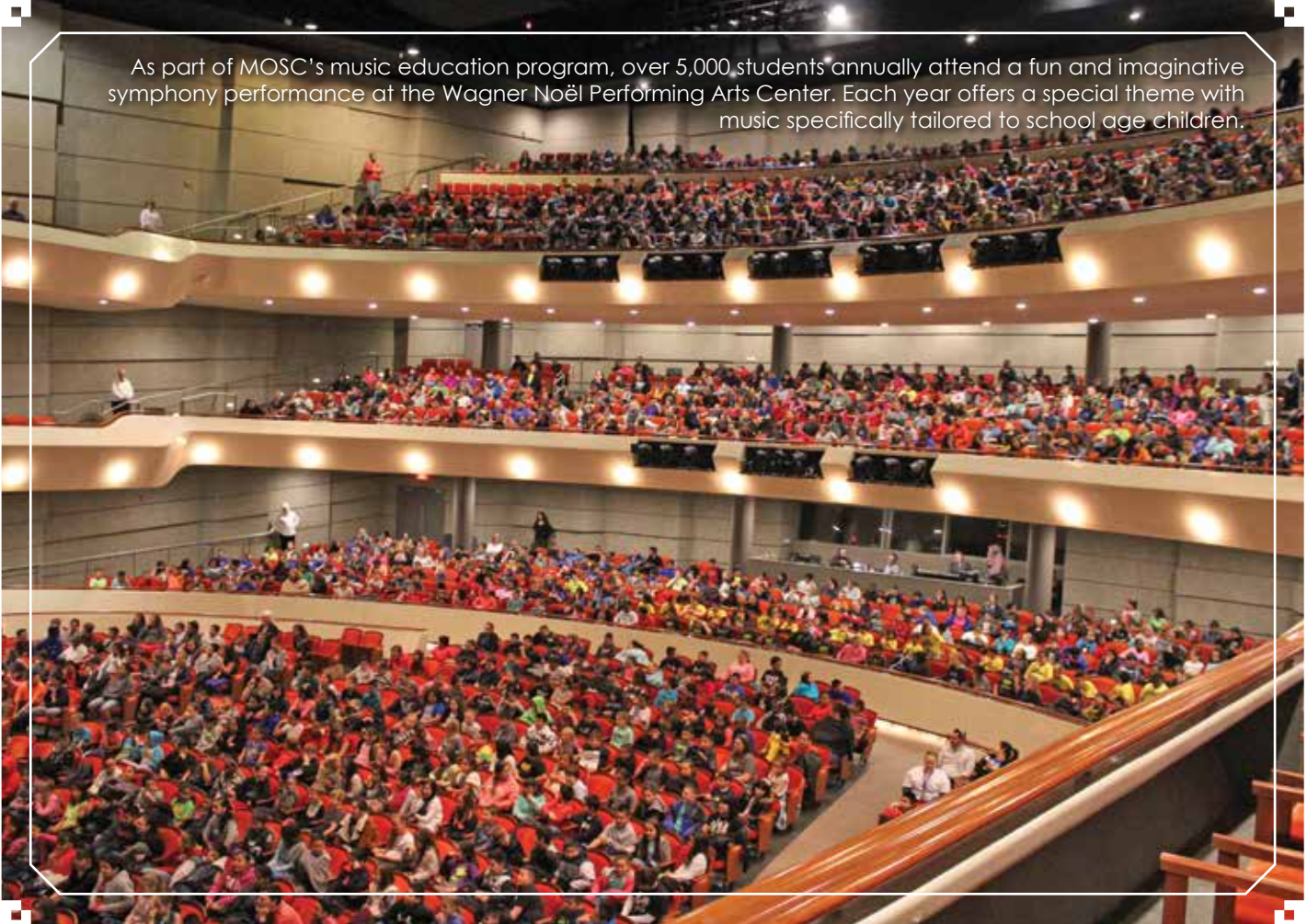
As part of MOSC's music education program, over 5,000 students annually attend a fun and imaginative symphony performance at the Wagner Noël Performing Arts Center. Each year offers a special theme with music specifically tailored to school age children.



ECISD school busses transport students to the MOSC student symphony performance at the Wagner Noël Performing Arts Center.



Kevin Young (MOSC Principal Tuba) shares information about his instrument with children during a community performance at the public library.



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MOSC Music Director and Conductor Gary Lewis and Executive Director Jeannette Kolokoff determine each season's concert programming, which includes four classical Masterworks concerts and four family Pops performances. Concerts oftentimes feature esteemed professional guest musicians brought in from all over the world.

"One of the most challenging and rewarding aspects of being a Music Director is putting together a season that will challenge the musicians of the orchestra, connect to our community, and entertain and inspire our audiences," Lewis said.

Lewis' selections clearly resonate with the community. All of MOSC's performances are held at the Wagner Noel Performing Arts Center, which seats 1,700 people. Kolokoff said sell-out concerts in this state-of-the-art venue are not uncommon.

Concert patrons come from all walks of life, Kolokoff continued. "As with most orchestras throughout the United States, over the past 55 years we have moved from a very formal dress attire to now creating a more casual inviting atmosphere for all attendees," she said. "Likewise, one does not need prior knowledge of the music or composer when attending a concert, as Maestro Lewis shares background information with attendees throughout the performance."

Audiences also vary widely in age, she said. "We have a Symphony Young Professionals (SYP) group made up of working professionals between the ages of 21 and 40

who share an interest in networking and have a passion for music and the arts," she said. "The SYP offers fun social networking opportunities with exclusive behind-the-scenes access, mixers and other exciting experiences involving the Midland-Odessa Symphony & Chorale."

MOSC's mission is to "enhance the quality of life in Midland, Odessa and the surrounding area by presenting outstanding symphonic, choral and chamber music performances, and music education programs," according to its website. "We believe that by offering a variety of musical experiences to our community we are able to fulfill our mission," Kolokoff added. "It is our goal to offer meaningful musical experiences to people of all ages and backgrounds. We believe that music changes lives."

Kolokoff has witnessed firsthand the reaction some of MOSC's youngest patrons when they first enter the Wagner Noel Performing Arts Center, where 5,000 Ector County ISD, Midland ISD, Crane and home school students are bused in each year for a symphony concert geared specifically for them. (MOSC's music education program also provides students of all ages free admission to all Masterworks, Chamber and Choral concerts.) "A lot of them have never even been to the Wagner Noel or a symphony concert. When they come in they're just really excited, and we're excited to offer them that opportunity," Kolokoff said. "It's a wonderful program, and we're very fortunate to be able to offer them free admission to our Masterworks concerts."



Midland-Odesa Symphony & Chorale performing at the Wagner Noël Performing Arts Center

Upcoming concerts:

MR. TAMBOURINE MAN

Saturday, April 7, 2018

7:30 PM | Wagner Noël Performing Arts Center

Gary Lewis, Music Director & Conductor

Amy Burton, soprano

Corigliano - Mr. Tambourine Man: Seven Poems of Bob Dylan

Corigliano - Voyage

Debussy - La Mer

SYMPHONY SOUNDBITES

Saturday, April 7, 2018

6:00 PM | Rea-Greathouse Recital Hall at Wagner Noël Performing Arts Center

Join us before the "Mr. Tambourine Man" performance by purchasing a ticket to the scrumptious pre-concert supper. Dine with your friends as Maestro Gary Lewis and guest artist Amy Burton provide you with an insider's view of the evening's program.

Bring your friends and make new ones as you learn about the music and enhance your symphony experience.

CELEBRATING OUR HEROES

Saturday, May 12, 2018

7:30 PM | Wagner Noël Performing Arts Center

Gary Lewis, Music Director & Conductor

Gene Collins, Narrator

MOSC Symphony Orchestra, MOSC Chorale & Voices of the Permian Basin MOSC offers a musical celebration honoring our veterans, active military, first responders and those who selflessly serve our communities and our nation. This rousing patriotic celebration of America will feature Aaron Copland's Lincoln Portrait, narrated by Gene Collins along with many inspiring and entertaining musical works celebrating our freedom and our country.

Maestro Gary Lewis conducting the orchestra during a performance at the Wagner Noël Performing Arts Center



The Lone Star Brass, West Texas Winds and Permian Basin String Quartet also each year perform in-school chamber concerts to ECISD and MISD elementary school students. "This interactive, educational outreach program provides fun, experiential music educational learning opportunities for the students, allowing them an up-close and personal experience with professional musicians," Kolokoff said. "It's wonderful. It's getting children excited and passionate about music. Music just brightens everybody's lives."

Kolokoff said MOSC's success in providing educational outreach to local students is largely due in part to strong community support: exactly that which has made the organization as a whole thrive the past 55 years. MOSC has "a loyal group of subscribers and patrons who are passionate about music and understand the importance of music education," she said. "Support from local businesses in the form of sponsorships allows the MOSC to grow while remaining financially stable."

In addition, Kolokoff said, "It's so much hard work from

a huge number of people, from the musicians to the staff to the volunteers."

But the benefits of being home to an iconic symphony and chorale are mutual, as Midland and Odessa arts patrons can attest. "Having a professional orchestra in our community helps attract people to want to live in Odessa and Midland by providing local cultural and musical opportunities for residents and visitors alike," Kolokoff said.

Ticket sales account for 24 percent of MOSC's budget, Kolokoff said. Along with distributions from its endowment, the nonprofit relies on the annual fund drive, grants, sponsorships, and an annual fundraiser to fulfill budgetary requirements so that it can continue to provide invaluable educational programming and powerful unparalleled concert experiences – all in a West Texas oasis.

For more information on Midland-Odessa Symphony & Chorale or to help support the organization, visit www.mosc.org, or call 432-563-0921. †