

Take note: Chamber orchestra goes full time

Renaissance Concerts will create a full-time resident chamber orchestra this spring and begin performing in September. In the style of the 18th century, it will play without a conductor. Misha Rachlevsky, its founder and

artistic director, will leave the Detroit Symphony Orchestra's first violin section at the end of this season to devote his entire time to the new group — Renaissance City Chamber Players. "This is the next logical step for us and the best way to keep building on what we have already done," said Rachlevsky, 37, Moscow-born impresario who came to the United States via Israel and Canada.

"It is the culmination of a six-year effort to develop an audience and support for chamber music. We now have the foundation to make the dream of a first-rank chamber orchestra in Detroit come true," Rachlevsky said at a news conference.

SINCE 1978, Rachlevsky's organization, headquartered near his West Bloomfield Township home, has offered concerts of small ensembles, employing mostly moonlighting Detroit Symphony musicians, and scheduling them around DSO concerts.

A full-time chamber orchestra will be freed from that time constraint, he

said, and have abundant rehearsal time.

Rachlevsky estimated they have been heard live by 200,000 people in 500 live concerts and radio broadcasts. This season his "Music for a Renaissance City" series has scheduled 16 weeknight concerts in Orchestra Hall. Other performances have been in such places as Birmingham Unitarian Church ("Nightcap with Mozart" series), Oakland University and many suburban high schools.

The new, full-time group will perform as an orchestra, as soloists and in trios and quartets.

FIRST STEP, Rachlevsky said, will be to hold seminal auditions in Detroit, New York, Chicago and San Francisco. They are planned for mid-May. In an unusual procedure, the 20 to 25 string player finalists will be invited to Detroit for several days of rehearsals and public concerts, testing not only technical performing skills but their ability to work in small ensembles.

For the first two seasons, the chamber orchestra will consist of a dozen

string players — seven violinists (including Rachlevsky), two violas, two cellists and one bass player. They will be offered 46-week contracts.

"We plan to add four additional strings the second year and a wind complement in the third.

"This will allow us to perfect the string sound first. Of course, winds, guest artists and others will be engaged as needed."



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— Misha Rachlevsky

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