

Conductor Gives It 'All'



FRANCESCO DIBLASI

By JAN WILLIAMS
When you give something all you have it usually pays off.

It always has for Francesco DiBlasi and he's hoping it will again with the new Oakway Symphony Orchestra.

The orchestra, which serves Livonia, Farmington, Southfield and Birmingham-Bloomfield, opens its first season Sunday, Oct. 28, with DiBlasi as conductor. The concert is scheduled for 4 p.m. in Mercy High School, Farmington.

DiBlasi, of Livonia, has devoted his entire life to music. "To do something really well, you have to give it all you've got, including your time—music takes all of my time."

DiBlasi says he had been playing with the idea of forming a symphony orchestra for this area for the past couple of years.

"I felt there was a definite need in this area for a symphony orchestra. The only way to have a quality orchestra was to combine the communities."

DiBlasi had put the idea off, however, until recently, because he was too involved with other commitments.

Besides playing trumpet for the Detroit Symphony Orchestra, a post he has held for 10 years, he also freelances, doing recordings in New York.

"I usually spend the month of September doing that. But I had to give it up this year when I committed myself to this orchestra."

DiBlasi attended Juilliard School of Music and made his conducting debut in New York. Since his debut, he has conducted the Philadelphia Orchestra, the Grand Rapids Symphony, St. Cecilia Orchestra of Rome, Italy, Bal-

let Russe de Monte Carlo for three years and the Scandinavian Symphony.

He was director for five years of both the Michigan Grand Opera and the Detroit Little Symphony. As a musician he has been associated for many years with the Metropolitan Opera, Radio City Music Hall, the American Symphony Orchestra and the Detroit Symphony Orchestra.

Until 1970 he was assistant conductor of the Buffalo Philharmonic Symphony Orchestra where, among his numerous appearances, he narrated as well as conducted more than 30 youth concerts.

It was this same year between Buffalo, Detroit and New York that he either conducted or played more than 230 concerts.

DiBlasi feels the Oakway Symphony has the support of area residents, but says it still needs backing from businesses.

"The first concert will determine our following. I predict it will be a big one."

The orchestra itself is considered to be a big one. It has 85 members who range in age from 17 to 55.

"I wanted a big orchestra so in the future we can take a chamber orchestra into area schools."

DiBlasi says he also hopes to do summer concerts, pops and cabaret, as well as double the number of concerts in each area and present children's concerts.

DiBlasi says he constantly holds auditions for string players, which include violin, viola, cello and base. The woodwinds and brass, however, are set for the year.

DiBlasi predicts it will take five years to build up the orchestra successfully.

"But I think it can be done. At least I'm going to give it all I've got in trying."

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