

NBSO chooses new music director

Thursday

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By Keith Powers, Contributing Writer

NEW BEDFORD — The search is over. The New Bedford Symphony Orchestra will announce today that Yaniv Dinur has been chosen as its next music director.

Dinur succeeds maestro David MacKenzie, who retired at the end of the 2015-16 season after 10 years. Dinur was chosen from four music director finalists, all of whom conducted one concert this past season. A letter detailing the choice has been sent out to all subscribers and symphony supporters on Thursday.

Dinur will join the NBSO with a three-year contract, and, as the orchestra's president and CEO David Prentiss says, "it is our intent that he become an integral part of our community. We chose him, in part, because we were convinced that's what he wanted, too."

Dinur will maintain his current position as assistant conductor of the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra, and in addition will lead the NBSO in "all of our subscription, pops and educational programs," according to Prentiss.

Each of the four finalists — Dinur, Christopher James Lees, David Amado, and Dirk Meyer — spent a week in rehearsals with the orchestra, met with NBSO supporters, gave a pre-concert lecture, and then conducted a concert.

The process engaged the community in unexpected ways, said Lee Heald, director of AHA! New Bedford, who attended three of the four finalists' concerts.

"I was on the board of the symphony years ago," she said, "and this board has done a spectacular job of involving the community in the process of choosing a new director.

"It was brilliant to get people engaged. There was more conversation in the audience about the style and the engagement and the choice of music, and I think it really connected people with the fun and excitement — and the difficulty of choosing."

Dinur led the January subscription program, which included John Adams's "Short Ride in a Fast Machine," Rachmaninov's Fourth Piano Concerto with soloist Yakov Kasman, and Tchaikovsky's Fourth Symphony.

He drew high marks not only for the music-making, but also for his communication with the musicians in rehearsal and with the audience.

"After every concert we gave a survey to all of the musicians," Prentiss says. "We got great input; our musicians took it very seriously. Obviously, individual musicians each had a favorite, but there was a high level of respect for all of the candidates."

In the end, the final decision came down to a 12-person search committee comprised of six musicians and six trustees, including Prentiss.

"The discussion we had was really fascinating," Prentiss said of the committee. "Each of the finalists had only one week, and so we had to extrapolate: 'If he worked with us for a whole year, what could we do together?'"

"We were also very focused on rehearsals, and Yaniv got really high marks on that."

After a season of well-regarded concerts featuring a wide range of repertory and conducting styles, in the end, there could be no bad choice, Prentiss said.

"All of them had something special to offer," Prentiss said. "It was interesting to see how the season went. Toward the end, a lot of momentum was built up. I'm curious to see how that translates to next year."

Dinur, in an emailed note, said, "It is a joy to be joining such a wonderful group of musicians, and a passionate and innovative staff. The week I spent making music with the New Bedford Symphony was not only inspiring and rewarding — it was also great fun."

The orchestra and the community get a chance to welcome Dinur to New Bedford with an open reception on Tuesday, March 28, from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. in the Harbor View Gallery at the Whaling Museum.

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