

# Badinger brings ambition, skill to orchestra



*"I like creating a sense of community," says Craig Badinger, who was hired in May as the executive director of the Charlotte Symphony Orchestra.*

Craig Badinger calls himself as a "generalist," a guy who can get the job done.

But while he may be able to apply himself to any number of tasks, he has shown himself over the years to be particularly adept at raising funds for nonprofits connected to the arts.

The Deep Creek resident was successful during four years as donor relations manager for the Miami City Ballet. He continued to apply the right touch for two years as director of individual giving for the Martha Graham Dance Company in New York, and continued accomplishing as development director for more than two years at the Hermitage Artist Retreat in Englewood.

Now, he is executive director of the Charlotte Symphony Orchestra. His organization and title

have changed, but the job remains the same: keep his nonprofit fiscally healthy and able to provide the concerts and programs that make it a dynamic institution in Charlotte County.

He wants to perform some community building for the orchestra, which hired him in May.

"I like creating a sense of community," he said.

He plans to get it done.

Badinger's plan is to cultivate a "consistent donor base. I'm talking about the people who can sponsor a concert all the way down to \$50 donations for membership. We're working to create a structure that makes sense for this particular community."

Badinger, 45, a Reading, Pa., native, holds a bachelor's degree in Spanish and international studies from Mount St. Mary's College. He traces his roots in development to the 4½ years he spent working as a concierge for a condominium in Miami.

“I had jumped around a lot in my younger years from career to career, so I went into that position kind of blind,” he recalled. “I saw myself as an ambassador from the city of Miami to these people who had made it their home.

“I tried to create groups from the building to go to see the opera, the botanical gardens, traveling Broadway shows. I had a hard time getting a group of 20 together. I eventually realized that what I really wanted to do was to be on the other side, advocating for arts and culture.”

He broke on through to the other side with Miami City Ballet, and eventually found himself at the Hermitage, the artists’ retreat on the beach that he called a “great springboard for a position like this in an organization of this size.”

The orchestra has scheduled an ambitious six-concert season that will run from November to March 2020 and includes a Christmas pops performance. Its home is the Charlotte Performing Arts Center in Punta Gorda, and it is planning to perform three additional dates in North Port.

It is in its seventh year under the baton of Maestro Raffaele Ponti, whose youth educational outreach includes school visits, master classes and an annual youth concert. His presence in the adult community includes his “Behind the Notes” and pre-concert classes.

Badinger would like to see the concert schedule and programs grow.

“I believe in organic growth, sensible goals,” he said. “The vision for the orchestra is really provided by Maestro Ponti. He’s tossing around some really innovative ideas. He’s an ideas person. Our job in administration is to be able to harness those ideas that we can practically put into place.”

---

### Meet the Punta Gorda Symphony Administrative Staff



*Punta Gorda Symphony administrative staff:  
Craig Badinger, Anne Gutsell, Elise Sherron.*

***Craig Badinger***, *Executive Director*, spent the past decade working in arts and performing arts nonprofits in Washington DC, Miami, and New York City before settling in Punta Gorda in 2016. He has worked for such national organizations as Martha Graham Dance Company and Miami City Ballet. Most recently, Craig served on the executive team of Englewood’s Hermitage Artist Retreat.

***Elise Sherron***, *Operations Manager*, is a classically-trained pianist with a Master’s Degree in International Arts Management with a focus on nonprofit fundraising strategies. She spent the 2018-2019 season as a freelance accompanist, and in patron services and customer care at Artis-Naples.

***Anne Gutsell***, *Office Coordinator*, had an administrative career as a paralegal that included intellectual property, corporate, and international organizations. She has a Master’s Degree in Conflict Management and plays flute in her spare time.