

## Punta Gorda Symphony to hold outdoor concerts



Maestro Raffaele Ponti smiles proudly during the applause of an enthusiastic audience at the end of the 2019-2020 season finale performance. Photo by [Jerry Beard](#).

Punta Gorda Symphony has plans for live and livestreamed programs.

Making modifications due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, plans can move forward safely with two exciting programs for the 2020-2021 season: outdoor socially-distanced concerts and an online livestreamed lecture series.

“There’s no substitute for live performance,” declares Maestro Raffaele Ponti. With musicians and audiences alike yearning for in-person cultural experiences, Punta Gorda Symphony is aiming to produce outdoor concerts on Dec. 19 and Feb. 6 in partnership with Florida SouthWestern State College Charlotte Campus.

Held in an outdoor amphitheater, concerts will be limited to socially-distanced audiences of 250, and will follow standard COVID-related health and safety guidelines.

Executive director Craig Badinger says, “We’re working to make a safe and enjoyable experience for everyone – audience, musicians, staff and volunteers alike.”

In two daytime concerts on Saturday, Dec. 19, Punta Gorda Symphony will present “Holiday Pops Outdoors!” which showcases Maestro Ponti’s unique programming with a mix of both seasonal favorites and fun new orchestrations. Performances will be at 11 a.m. and 2 p.m. on Dec. 19. The size of the orchestra will be scaled down to about 40 pieces (as compared to its normal 70 pieces).

Chairs will be set up in grids on the lawn to maintain social distancing.

In two daytime concerts on Saturday, Feb. 6, Punta Gorda Symphony returns to the dynamic and rich orchestral programming that audiences have come to expect from Ponti. Both are certain to be crowd-pleasers.

Due to the limited audience size, Punta Gorda Symphony staff will be attending to existing subscribers and ticket-holders first. New ticket buyers may visit the website at [www.PGSymphony.org](http://www.PGSymphony.org) to place themselves on a ticket waiting list. “We know not all of our subscribers will choose to attend an in-person concert,” says Badinger, “and we hope we’ll be able to accommodate every interested patron.”

All tickets will be \$49 for general admission. Patron seating on the lawn will be filled in order of arrival, guided by staff and volunteers to the next available space – a process familiar to those who visit theme parks in Orlando.



Executive Director Craig Badinger waves from the stage of the FSW Charlotte Campus natural amphitheater. Photo by [Punta Gorda Symphony](#).

Parties of two to four patrons will be provided chairs within their own 6-foot grid on the lawn, face masks will be required, hand sanitizing stations will be available, and direct person-to-person contact will be kept at a minimum.

To buy tickets, go to the website and sign up for the wait list. More details are available at [www.PGSymphony.org](http://www.PGSymphony.org).

“Obviously, we have to stay nimble in case the pandemic takes a serious turn for the worse,” assures Badinger. “But our partnership with FSW is making this work easier. We are staying optimistic and we’re excited to be moving forward!”

Meanwhile, Maestro Ponti’s popular Behind the Notes lecture series will be livestreamed online and made available free of charge to all patrons. Ponti will host and interview audience-favorite guest artists and Punta Gorda Symphony musicians alike, ending with an extensive question-and-answer session. Over the series, audiences will revisit with pianist Terrance Wilson from February 2019, violinist David Kim from January 2020, and composer Kenneth Fuchs from March 2020; they will recognize longtime Punta Gorda Symphony percussionist Dean Anderson, bassist Laurence Glazener, and harpist Richard “Dickie” Fleisher. “We want audience engagement with these livestreams,” explains Ponti, so he has chosen an online platform that allows anyone watching to type questions to the moderator. “By now, we’ve all spent a lot of time just sitting and watching our screens – so we’re giving you a good reason to be involved!”

Scheduling for Behind the Notes began in November. The next live stream lecture is planned for Dec. 4 at 4 p.m. Further details will be available on the website at [www.PGSymphony.org](http://www.PGSymphony.org).

“Like so many other organizations, everything we do this season is an experiment,” says Badinger. “The effects of this pandemic have challenged everyone’s resilience. But we’re a tight community, and we’re aiming to provide a welcome respite for our folks. And if things go swimmingly, we’ll be able to add more programming!”

For further details about Punta Gorda Symphony, visit online at [www.PGSymphony.org](http://www.PGSymphony.org).



*Punta Gorda Symphony musicians. Photo by [Jerry Beard](#).*