

Music to our Ears: Celebrate Asia!

Ring in the New Year with an astounding music and artistic event sure to leave you breathless!

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Posted in [Arts](#), Volume 38 No. 1





The Seattle Symphony is preparing to Celebrate Asia! in the New Year.

Conductor Carolyn Kuan directs this third annual multi-cultural collaboration between the symphony, local Asian-American leaders, and top musicians from around the world.

Celebrate Asia! committee chair Yoshi Minegishi is proud of the breadth of participation from Puget Sound community representatives and musicians. "This is a community concert," Minegishi says.

The Seattle Symphony Orchestra programming department emphasizes collaboration, working with the Celebrate Asia! committee to select national and international musicians.

"For the pre-concert in the lobby, the committee nominates the local performers," Minegishi says, "and sometimes recommends local performers for the mainstage performance."

The committee itself includes a broad cross-section of Seattle's Asian American communities. As a Seattle Symphony board member and Celebrate Asia! committee chair, Minegishi says, "The recruiting process was rather informal, but done with utmost care."

To build the committee, Minegishi consulted a wide range of local leaders, including Assunta Ng, Jerry Lee of MulvannyG2 Architecture, and Martha Choe, chief administrative officer for the Gates Foundation.

"From the beginning, I wanted the event to be inclusive of major ethnic groups, including Chinese, Japanese, Korean, East Indian, Vietnamese, Filipino," Minegishi says. "We added a Thai member for this year's event. Also, we wanted a good mix of young and veteran community leaders."

But primarily, he says, "the major criteria was that a person had to have passion for elevating Asian culture into the mainstream" in concert with the Seattle Symphony.

Heading into this third annual musical celebration, Minegishi hails the event's success during the past two years and describes the rewards of serving on the committee.

"The community response was great," he says, reporting that the first two concerts performed to sold-out audiences and exceeded their revenue goals.

Other satisfactions of committee service included watching other committee members grow in professional ways. "The planning process broadened their horizons beyond their ethnic/social group and their workplace."

Plus, Minegishi finds the collaboration with Seattle Symphony to be a great reward in itself. "The Seattle Symphony realizes that Asians are a vital part of their future growth," he says. "I feel very blessed that we have this opportunity to introduce Asian fine culture to the Seattle general public."

Through Celebrate Asia!, Minegishi adds, "Asians can support Seattle becoming the most Asian-friendly cosmopolitan city in the world."

"Celebrate Asia!" performs on January 14, at Benaroya Hall, 200 University Street, Seattle.