



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**BEACOCK MUSIC OFFERS MUSICAL INSTRUMENT
“PETTING ZOO” AT FREE OUTDOOR CONCERT SEPT 8**

Awadagin Pratt conducts orchestra at Esther Short Park concert

(Vancouver, WA) Music will fill the air in Vancouver’s Esther Short Park on Sunday, September 8, and some of that music will be in the hands of children having hands-on fun with instruments. Starting at 1:45, children will have the chance to get up close and personal with the orchestral instruments they see professionally played on stage in a “musical petting zoo.” The concert, featuring Awadagin Pratt conducting The Vancouver Symphony Orchestra and guest artist baritone Stephen Salters, begins at 3 pm and is free and open to the public. Oregon Public Broadcasting’s April Baer will be master of ceremonies.

The Vancouver Symphony Orchestra is happy to return a beloved Vancouver tradition to Esther Short Park after a five-year absence. The orchestra will play less than two weeks before the beginning of The VSO's 35th season at Skyview Concert Hall.

“Beacock Music is a treasured member of the Vancouver musical community. Thanks to them, we can offer attending families a rare opportunity for children to try instruments they may not otherwise be exposed to and spark their interest in music,” said VSO Board Chair Kathy McDonald.

The program will feature the overture from *La forza del destino* by Verdi, *Old American Songs* by Copland, *Slavonic Dances* by Dvořák, some stirring gospel spirituals and ends with Beethoven's majestic Symphony No. 5.

Premiering with The VSO, Awadagin Pratt began studying piano and violin as a child. He has been the subject of numerous articles in the national press, including Newsweek, People Magazine and New York Newsday. He was named one of the 50 Leaders of Tomorrow in Ebony Magazine's special 50th anniversary issue and has been featured on National Public Radio's Performance Today, St. Paul Sunday Morning and Weekend Edition. On television, Mr. Pratt has performed on the Today Show, Good Morning America and Sesame Street, been profiled on CBS Sunday Morning and was one of the featured soloists on PBS's "Live from the Kennedy Center - A Salute to Slava."

In November 2009, Mr. Pratt was one of four artists selected to perform at a White House classical music event that included student workshops hosted by the First Lady, Michelle Obama, and performing in concert for guests including President Obama. He has performed two other times at the White House, both at the invitation of President and Mrs. Clinton.

This also will be Stephen Salters' premiere with The VSO. He first gained wide attention in 1996, when he took first place in Belgium's Queen Elizabeth International Competition of Singing. His passionate and impeccably articulated performances of a wide range of repertoire have won him acclaim throughout Europe, the UK, Asia and the United States. On the opera stage with over 30 roles played, he excels equally in contemporary works and standard repertoire. He received praise in the role of the Minotaur in the world premiere of Philippe Fenelon's *les Rois* for Opera National in Bordeaux. He created the title role in Elena Ruehr's *Toussaint Before the Spirits* for Opera Boston and has been acclaimed for his performances in *Don Giovanni*, *le Nozze de Figaro* and *Così fan tutte*.

About The VSO

Entering its 35th season, The VSO has been a cornerstone of Southwest Washington's arts community, providing world-renowned classical music, promoting young musicians, and opening doors to classical music for young audiences through events such as the annual In-School concerts, Young Artists Competition and various family-styled special events and performances. With a full-sized professional orchestra of over 70 core members, many of whom are teachers in our school districts and beyond, the orchestra provides our region with a multi-concert classical season every year. The VSO performs at Skyview Concert Hall, 1300 NW 139th Street, Vancouver. Season support for The VSO is provided by Sterling Bank and All Classical Portland. Tickets for the VSO Chamber Series and all VSO symphony concerts are on sale now at (360) 735-7278 or www.vancouversymphony.org.

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