

# Big John knows how to please a crowd

By KATHARINE SEALEY <sup>Peel Biog.</sup> May 5/99 <sup>MN</sup>  
Special

He may not be legendary showman P.T. Barnum, but Mississauga's John Barnum knows a thing or two about crowd-pleasing performances.

"It's all about what the audience wants," said Barnum, who is celebrating 20 years as conductor and musical director of the Mississauga Symphony. "We have a mandate to cover all types of styles, but to maintain the audience you already have, you play what they want to hear."

Saturday night at the Living Arts Centre (LAC), the Symphony ends its season by presenting *Voices of Spring*, featuring soprano Donna Ellen Trifunovich and the music of Strauss, von Suppe and Lehar. Curtain time is 8 p.m. for the concert that takes place in Hammerson Hall.

The Symphony moved into the LAC last year after 25 years of performances at Cawthra Park Secondary School. "It was a natural progression," said

Barnum of the move. "When the symphony formed in 1972, Mississauga was a much smaller city and we were a much smaller group ... only about 55 players. We grew as the city grew. We now have 92 players and like Mississauga, we have improved our size, stature and standards."

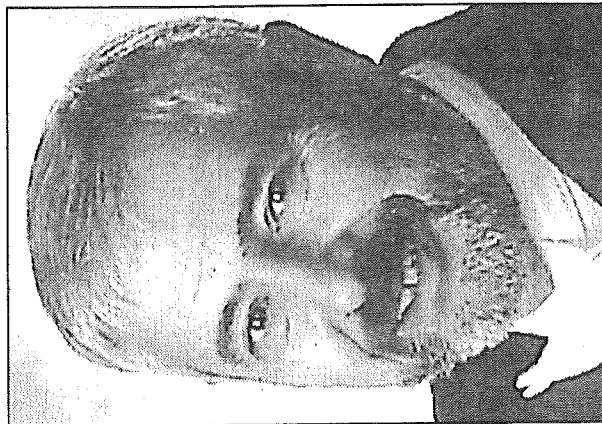
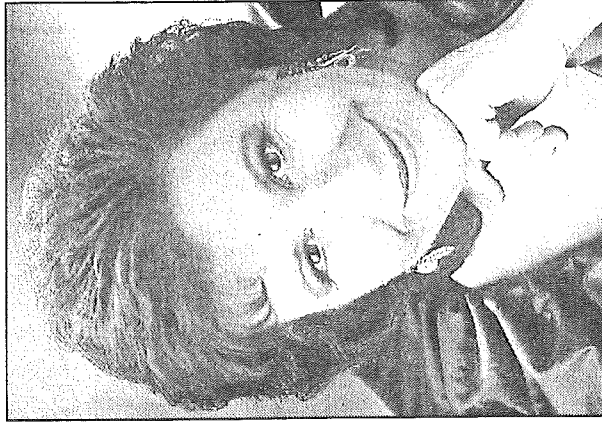
Barnum got his musical start at the Royal Conservatory of Music during his childhood in Guelph. He continued his studies as the University of Toronto and has since trained in various programs including a year spent in Italy and France. He began his professional career as a viola player.

"I was just a musician who had taken a few courses in conducting," said Barnum, 51. "I was offered the opportunity to demonstrate my skills and took it. I guess I sort of fell into it."

In 1978, he came to the Mississauga Symphony for what he thought was a short-term guest spot.

"I didn't know I was going to stay this long," he said, "but it's been fabulous."

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