

FRATIA, SALVATORE

M.N. Dec. 2/98



Tuba soloist Salvatore Fratia guests with the Mississauga Symphony Orchestra.

## Tuba solo with MSO

By JOSEPH CHIN *Peel Bio. Dec. 2/98*  
Special *MN*

Salvatore Fratia didn't set out to become a professional tuba player.

As a 13-year-old high school student trying out for the school band, he lost a fateful coin toss — and was stuck playing the cumbersome low-pitched wind instrument.

Twenty-six years later, the Mississauga resident has no regrets; he's still playing the tuba, and very successfully too.

Fratia is the soloist at Saturday's Mississauga Symphony Orchestra's (MSO) *Once Upon a Time* concert in Hammerson Hall at the Living Arts Centre (LAC). Curtain time is 8 p.m.

Fratia's piece — one of three presented in the concert — is the Ontario premiere of Canadian composer Elizabeth Raum's tuba concerto *The Legend of Heimdall*.

"It's written in the form made famous by Richard Strauss: that of programmatic music," said Fratia.

"It was conceived with a story in mind. It's beautiful, visually and aurally."

Heimdall was the ancient Norse god who kept watch over Asgard, the city of the gods. When he sensed danger, he would lift his gigantic gjallarhorn to his lips to sound the alarm.

The introduction to the first movement finds Heimdall, portrayed by Fratia's solo tuba, brooding on the hill over the city, waiting and watching.

Heimdall is constantly alert and his warning calls are answered in the orchestra.

As the music grows in intensity, the second and third movements represent an attack on the city with wild medieval dancing and a final call to battle.

"It's very dramatic," says Fratia. "The piece lends itself well to the tones of the tuba."

The concerto was commissioned by the CBC and written especially for John Griffiths, the well-known Regina Symphony's tuba player.

It's luminaries like Griffiths who are responsible for the "explosive popularity of the tuba in the last 15 to 20 years," noted Fratia.

After graduating from the University of Toronto, Fratia won a spot with the Winnipeg Symphony where he remained for five years.

Since then, he has kept busy. Besides freelancing with numerous symphonies, and performing with his own quartet, Fratia is a tuba instructor at the University of Toronto.

Performing with the Mississauga Symphony is "sort of a coming home for me," he said.

"I knew John Barnum (MSO conductor) from way back when I was a student. I played for him once then," recalled Fratia.

Among other works complementing Raum's *Heimdall* will be Wagner's *Götterdämmerung*, Siegfried's *Rhine Journey*, and Rimsky Korsakov's *Scheherazade*.

Tickets start at \$25. Call LAC box office at 306-6000.