"New' Cal Poly Symphony to Play Harman Hall Nov. 22

SAN LUIS OBISPO -- Clifton Swanson, a Cal Poly music professor for more than 35 years, will lead the newly named Cal Poly Symphony on Nov. 22 in what will be one of the maestro's final concerts of his university career.

The Symphony (formerly the Cal Poly Chamber Orchestra) will perform at 8 p.m. in the Christopher Cohan Center's Harman Hall. Music Department faculty members William Terrence Spiller and Susan Azaret Davies will appear as soloists.

"The program will open with the beautiful 'Pavane,' by Gabriel Faure, followed by the scintillating Concerto for Two Pianos, composed by Francis Poulenc," Swanson said. "This is one of the most appealing concertos ever written, with continually contrasting sections of virtuosity, intoxicating melodies, shimmering harmonies, and the typical Poulenc wink of the eye.

"After intermission, the orchestra will demonstrate the depth of its resources with the expressive and dramatic Symphony No. 8 in G major, by Antonin Dvorak," Swanson said. "This is one of the great romantic symphonies, and it has been an honor and a thrill to rehearse it with these students. I expect it to sound especially effective in the splendid acoustics of Harman Hall. We are all excited about this concert."

The concert, which opens the Cal Poly Symphony's 2003-2004 season, is symbolic on more than one level, according to Swanson.

"It's not only the first concert performed by the newly named ensemble and one of the last concerts to be conducted by Professor Swanson, but the concert date, Nov. 22, is St. Cecilia's Day; St. Cecilia is the patron saint of music."

The orchestra was established in the mid-1960s as the Cal Poly Little Symphony and included Cal Poly students, community performers and violin students. When Swanson joined the music faculty in 1967, he assumed responsibility for the orchestra, which then had 17 members. Within two years the orchestra changed its name to the Cal Poly Chamber Orchestra and grew to approximately 35 musicians.

The ensemble rapidly gained in reputation and attracted such soloists as cellists Gabor Rejto and Jeffrey Solow, guitarist Laurindo Almeida, flutist Louise DiTullio and violinist David Abel. In 1970, when oboist John...
Ellis declined an invitation to play for the Ojai Festival so that he could participate in a Chamber Orchestra concert, he suggested that San Luis Obispo consider a summer music festival. The rest, as they say, is history.

Co-founded by Swanson the following year, the San Luis Obispo Mozart Festival will celebrate its 34th anniversary in summer 2004. Ellis has served as principal oboist of the festival for 31 of its 33 years. Swanson has served as the festival's music director and conductor since its inception.

Swanson is a graduate of Pomona College and earned his master's degree in music literature from the University of Texas. He studied string bass with Paul Gregory and Peter Mercurio at the Music Academy of the West.

As a bass player, Swanson has performed with many organizations, including the Group for Contemporary Music in Portland, the Peter Britt Festival, San Luis Obispo Mozart Festival, and the Pasadena and Austin symphonies. He is currently principal bass for the San Luis Obispo Symphony.

He conducted the San Luis Obispo Symphony from 1971 to 1983, served as head of the Cal Poly Music Department from 1983 to 1996 (a position he has held again since spring 2000), and has received numerous awards, including the university's President's Award for Contributions to the Arts of San Luis Obispo County. He has served on the board of the Association of California Symphony Orchestras, directed Cal Poly's London Study Program, and served as a panelist for the California Arts Council.

Tickets, from $6 to $11, can be bought at the Performing Arts Ticket Office 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday, and 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Saturday. To order by phone, call 756-2787 or fax orders to 756-6088.

The concert is sponsored by Cal Poly's Music Department, College of Liberal Arts, and Instructionally Related Activities program. For more information, call the Music Department at 756-2406.

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