

*For immediate release
October 28, 2008*

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A NEW NAME FOR A NEW SEASON

The Westmont Orchestra will perform for the first time without “chamber” in its name. With 52 student musicians, the ensemble has outgrown the title. The orchestra’s inaugural concerts will be Friday, Nov. 7, at 8 p.m. in Hahn Hall at the Music Academy of the West, and Sunday, Nov. 9, at 3 p.m. in First Presbyterian Church at the corner of State and Constance downtown. Admission is \$10, free for students.

The 2008-2009 orchestra season is sponsored by members of the newly-formed Westmont Music Council, which includes Stephen Adams, Barrie Bergman, Dan Burnham, David MacCulloch and Lady Leslie Ridley-Tree.

Also new this season is a music patron program. Patrons receive season tickets and preferred parking and seating at all orchestra concerts and the Annual Christmas Festival, and invitations to special musical receptions, in recognition of gifts of \$100 or more.

The orchestra has taken many forms over time, and in the 1990s consisted of a few student musicians and several faculty and community members. In 2005, Michael Shasberger was hired as Adams Professor of Music and Worship, leading the department to form a full orchestra. With the hiring of world-class violinist Philip Ficsor and several adjunct professors in 2006, the Westmont Chamber Orchestra produced its first full season of concerts and touring with 24 student musicians. In 2007, the ensemble added a brass section and more strings for a total of 38 students, and this fall has grown into a fully symphonic orchestra. Two faculty members and a Westmont parent complete the ensemble.

The music program attracts increasingly talented students, and four of the orchestra’s 14 section leaders are high-caliber first-year musicians. Orchestra members come to Westmont from 12 states, Zimbabwe and France. Forty six students in the ensemble receive music scholarship funding, including 27 Adams Music Scholars.

No venue on campus is big enough to house the orchestra and an audience. A chapel scheduled for Phase I of Westmont's Master Plan will provide a performance space for this and other ensembles.

The program for the November concerts, "Words of Life, Words of Hope," features Beethoven's "Coriolan Overture," Dvorak's "Slavonic Dances," and Copland's "Letters from Home." Students from the theatre arts department will read excerpts of letters to and from American soldiers from the Revolution through Vietnam. Professor Ficsor's violin work will highlight Wieniawski's "Polonaise."

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