

SPRING ARTS CLASSICAL MUSIC

Anthony Do-Hoon Kim

Conductor is a passionate educator at the San Diego Youth Symphony, which was there for him in his teenage years

BY BETH WOOD

Ask avid surfer and dedicated music educator Anthony Do-Hoon Kim how his avocation and profession contrast, and he answers that they don't. Rather, he maintains, they are alike.

"Both involve riding waves," says Kim, who has been a teacher and conductor at the San Diego Youth Symphony and Conservatory since 2013. "When I'm surfing, it's on liquid waves. When I'm conducting, it's on sonic waves. They're both forms of energy."

"You have to anticipate how a wave is going to form in front of you. You have to read the future and be in the present. Surfers are hyper-aware when they're on the water. When you're conducting, you're highly engaged and in the moment. They are very similar."

On June 8, Kim will conduct the San Diego Youth Symphony's string ensemble concert at 7 p.m. at Copley Symphony Hall.

Born in Seoul, South Korea, Kim moved with his mother and brother in 1994 to Los Angeles. Living primarily in Orange and San Diego counties, he grew up playing violin and participating in student orchestras.

Kim earned his undergraduate and master's degrees not in violin but in piano performance at the University of California Santa Barbara, where he also conducted university and community orchestras. He later received a master's in orchestral conducting from the University of Michigan.

Still fluent in Korean, Kim, 34, lives a few blocks from his mother and brother, all Pacific Beach residents. He became a U.S. citizen last year and voted for the first time in the 2018 midterm elections.

"I tell people that I moved from Korea at 10, which was old enough to be full Korean, but young enough to become fully Americanized," Kim says with a laugh.

Years before Kim joined the San Diego Youth Symphony faculty, he was part of its weekend orchestras while a junior and senior at La Jolla High School. He played violin and also learned viola from his teacher, San Diego Youth Symphony music director Jeff Edmons.

Kim says he spent every Saturday in various youth symphony ensembles in San Diego and never got sick of it.

"Making music brings me joy," he says. "Playing the greatest works — Beethoven, Tchaikovsky and Bach — is mind-blowing. I want to be around young artists and help them be good at it. It's a privilege to share my knowledge with the next generation."

One of the oldest continuously operating youth symphonies in the country, the San Diego Youth Symphony serves students from beginning to pre-professional. There are 600 students in its conservatory program at Balboa Park. Another program introduces music to youngsters, up to age 5. The symphony's Community Opus Project provides after-school instrumental orchestra and band programs for Chula Vista students.

Most of the youth symphony's faculty members — except for director Edmons — are part-time, many holding full-time positions elsewhere. Auditions and rehearsals take place on weekends in Balboa Park.

Over the years, Kim's workload for the youth symphony has fluctuated. He went from leading several orchestras in 2018 to just the string ensemble this year. His thriving Anthony Do-Hoon Kim Piano Studio in Pacific Beach has taken more of his time.

On June 9, also at Copley Symphony Hall, director Edmons will conduct the final performance of the season.

"We're all blessed at the SDYS," Edmons said. "We have a great team of music educators and administrative professionals who all dedicate themselves to aspiring students. Anthony has a wonderful combination of mentor, role model and educator that enables him to provide outstanding guidance and direction and pathways for the students that he works with."

Kim's passion for teaching young people music was partially sparked by his own experience in elementary and secondary schools. Orange County middle and high schools offered music

programs and youth symphonies. When his family moved to San Diego in the early 1990s, he discovered as a junior that La Jolla High School had no music programs.

"I had to find an orchestra and found SDYS to be the best," Kim says. "I auditioned with Mr. Edmons. He also got me in touch with Kay Etheridge, a great piano teacher. Meeting them was life-changing."

In addition to his SDYS commitment, surfing and overseeing his piano studio, Kim is also a backpacking enthusiast. Last month, he and his girlfriend, Ashley Mazanec, a self-described eco-musician, explored a snowy Yosemite National Park. While in Santa Barbara, Kim and some

college friends formed the Catalina Philharmonic Expedition. The group has taken 50 trips, he estimated, backpacking in the western U.S. and India.

Not surprisingly, Kim finds commonalities between playing in an orchestra and backpacking.

"Backpacking takes teamwork," he says. "This summer, we're backpacking in the French Alps, and we're already deciding what we're going to bring. Just getting water has to be organized. We always have a buddy system."

"In orchestras, everybody has to be on the same page, at the same time," he says. "It's the ultimate teamwork, in my opinion, even more than sports."

Wood is a freelance writer.



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Teacher and conductor Anthony Do-Hoon Kim

San Diego Youth Symphony's Showcase and Inspiration Concerts

When: 1 and 7 p.m. June 8 (conducted by Anthony Do-Hoon Kim)

Where: Jacobs Music Center's Copley Symphony Hall, 750 B St., downtown

Tickets: \$25-\$35; \$10 student, child

San Diego Youth Symphony's Ovation Concert

When: 4 p.m. June 9 (conducted by Jeff Edmons)

Where: Jacobs Music Center's Copley Symphony Hall, 750 B St., downtown

Tickets: \$25-\$35; \$10 student, child

San Diego Youth Symphony's Free Concert

When: 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. May 31

Where: Plaza de Panama, Balboa Park

Tickets: Free

Phone: (619) 233-3232 **Online:** sdsy.org