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— **Carley Miller** manager, Allegro Orchestral Association

Yoga at concert a new stretch of imagination

By **David Gustafson**
Star Tribune Staff Writer

Is your tongue on the roof of your mouth? Are you clenching your fists? How's your posture?

Relax, sit quietly and pay attention. Now hold that pose — for a couple of hours.

The Wayzata-based orchestra Allegro Con Brio understands how difficult it can be for audiences to sit still. The orchestra performs an annual concert festival bringing together top musicians of all ages from across the Twin Cities.

For this year's summer concert, the group is teaming up with yoga instructor Matthew Sanford.

"We're asking them to sit and watch the same thing, in essence, for an hour or two and hear music and just sit still. And that's a very hard thing to do in today's world," said Carley Miller, manager of the Allegro Orchestral Association.

Sanford will lead the audience through the performance, teach a few basic yoga poses

and explain the relationship of mind, body and music.

"Getting them aware that how they sit, what they're feeling, paying attention to not just what they're hearing with their ears but paying more attention to how the music is moving them ... That is part of the full-on listening experience," said Sanford, founder of the Minnetonka non-profit Mind Body Solutions.

This is not the first time Allegro Con Brio has tried something unusual in concert. Last year they performed with stand-up comedian Stevie Ray, trying to show the benefits of finding humor in music by taking a fresh approach to an old art.

By diverging from the usual fare, the orchestra hopes to make classical music more accessible and show that it's relevant to our daily lives.

"I think what any live performance struggles with is how much the world is focused on technology and the media and things that happen in two seconds and just the fast pace. It's very different when you're seeing



Jennifer Simonson/Star Tribune

During an upcoming Allegro Con Brio orchestra performance, yoga instructor Matt Sanford will use yoga poses and storytelling to enhance the audience's listening experience.

● IF YOU GO

WHAT: Allegro Con Brio's "Mind-Body Connection," a concert with pianist Stephanie Wendt. Yoga instructor Matthew Sanford will speak about the connections between mind and body, and music. The top youth orchestra from Allegro's orchestra camp will join Allegro Con Brio for one piece.

WHEN: 8 p.m. Friday.

WHERE: Wayzata Community Church, 125 E. Wayzata Blvd.

TICKETS: \$20 general admission; \$10 for students.

MORE INFO: Call 952-258-0394 or visit www.allegronotes.org.

a live performance," Miller said. "What we're trying to get across is that if you really sit back and pay attention, a live performance can be one of the most exciting things that you'll go to."

Allegro Con Brio chose Sanford as their yoga guru partly because he fit the profile of the listener they hope to attract. Sanford, 39, was raised on rock 'n' roll and never listened to much classical music. He says that has changed since he started listening to and hanging out with the Allegro musicians.

"I've been listening to classical music more since I have been with them. I appreciate it more. I appreciate the whole experience more," he said.

Sanford will lead the audience through a couple of simple yoga poses — participants won't even have to stand to perform them — and demonstrate how body awareness can deepen the musical experience.

"Even though you're enjoying the music, your attention might wane. One of the best ways to recalibrate attention is using your

body," he said.

Sanford knows about the power of reconnecting with your body. He was paralyzed in a car accident when he was 13. More than a decade later, he turned to yoga as a way to get back in tune with his body. He said he can feel energy buzzing through his paralyzed lower body while practicing yoga.

You might not know it, but you already practice simple techniques to refocus your mind and body, Sanford said. You do it when you get up to stretch your legs or take a walk to get a drink of water. Yoga is just a more conscious and sophisticated method of refreshing yourself.

"You might think to yourself that you're taking a break," he said. "I don't think so. You're already bringing your body into your thinking process. ... So a lot of what I say is that, look, you already know that your body is part of your listening experience, you already know that, just make it a little more conscious."

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