

OUR OPINION

Applause For Haig's Musical Leadership

Susan Haig made history in Tampa when in 2003 she was named associate conductor of The Florida Orchestra and became its first woman maestro. But it is her grass-roots approach to classical music that has earned her a permanent place in Tampa's cultural heart even now, as she is preparing to leave at the end of the season in May.

Haig came to Tampa with the view that classical music should be accessible to the masses, and she carried out that mission in a variety of venues, including children's concerts and weekday "coffee" concerts. Audiences love when she turns to them and chats about the music they are hearing. Despite her impressive credentials in classical music, audiences find her anything but stuffy.

Just this year she was named music



Haig

educator of the year by the Hillsborough County Elementary Music Educators Council, a noteworthy honor, given the hard fight to save music education for schoolchildren.

Now after four years, more duties have been added to the associate conductor's job description, and Haig says she is ready to move on to new challenges. Her departure is a loss for Tampa. Orchestra audiences will miss her easy style, her ability to demystify an intimidating art form and her ability to make us feel music in wonderful new ways.

A tap of the baton to you, Susan Haig, for having given this community so many joyful experiences and making us treasure our orchestra all the more.