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Music

Music festival alive and well, organizers say

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APTOS — Despite worries and rumors, this summer's Cabrillo Music Festival is on.

Festival officials said at a press conference Thursday at Manuel's Restaurant in Aptos that with some cutbacks, the festival is in good financial shape, and the show will go on.

Newly elected Board President Maunel Santana and acting Executive Director Michael Stamp

also announced the general plan for the Festival's 27th season.

While artists' contracts are not yet signed, Santana confirmed that Music Director Dennis Russell Davies will be back for his 16th season with the festival.

There has been much concern as to whether the Cabrillo Music Festival would be able to survive the \$126,000 deficit that had piled up over the past several years. But the basic message of Thursday's meeting was definitely upbeat.

"There were so many rumors floating around that we needed a chance to let people know what's going on," Santana said. The deficit necessitated new strategies and considerable belt-tightening, he said, but he said he's confident that it isn't anything the festival can't handle.

"There are certainly problems, but it's not terminal. Most of them are already resolved, it's been very positive. It's a time to bring ourselves back down to ourselves

and strengthen the organization, ... pull in the reigns and shore up the structure."

A venue change is the most conspicuous cost-cutting measure for this summer's festival.

According to Stamp, the UCSC tent in which the festival played for the past three seasons was an exorbitant undertaking, and the budget billowed far beyond its normal size.

"The UCSC campus was never a first choice for the tent. We wanted to use a developed area where there

would be electricity and water hookups. The meadowland was gorgeous but no one expected how costly it would be."

With the tent unaffordable and no performing-arts center in sight, the Cabrillo Music Festival has pulled up the tent stakes and hit the road. This summer's concerts will be at numerous sites in the county, including the First Congregational and Holy Cross churches in Santa Cruz, Twin Lakes Baptist Church in Aptos, and the Fox Theatre in Watsonville. There will also be the traditional trek down to Mission San Juan Bautista, as well as a new move north, to Paul Masson Winery in Saratoga, the festival's first foray north of Santa Cruz.

Organizers plan cutbacks in behind-the-scene areas such as production and marketing, but Stamp and Santana were emphatic that artistic standards will be as high as ever.

Stamp says that the Festival will announce specifics about the season in late March. All that's been revealed so far is that music by six contemporary West Coast artists will be featured, along with major performances of Beethoven, Mahler, Brahms and Shostakovich.