Don’t call it a tryout

But one of these men, who will be guest conductors during the Jacksonville Symphony Orchestra’s Masterworks series next season, could be Fabio Mechetti’s replacement.

Teddy Abrams
Oct. 3-5: Gershwin’s “An American in Paris” and Tchaikovsky’s Symphony No. 4, and will both conduct and play piano on Ravel’s Piano Concerto in G.

Currently resident conductor with the MAV Symphony Orchestra of Budapest and assistant conductor of the Detroit Symphony, Abrams recently made his debut as a guest conductor with the Jacksonville Symphony Orchestra during a concert in Daytona Beach.

Robert Moody
Nov. 21-22: Beethoven’s Symphony No. 3 “Eroica” and Vaughan Williams’ Dona Nobis Pacem

Moody is music director of the Winston-Salem Symphony, artistic director of the Arizona Musicfest and music director of the Portland (Maine) Symphony Orchestra. He has a background in opera.

Cristian Macelaru
Jan. 9-11: Barber’s Symphony No. 1, Britten’s “Peter Grimes: Four Sea Interludes” and Brahms’ Symphony No. 2

Macelaru is associate conductor of the Philadelphia Orchestra, former resident conductor at Rice University and founder/artistic director of Crisalis Music Project. He received the 2012 Sir George Solti Emerging Conductor Award.

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Andre Raphael
Feb. 13-15: Prokofiev’s “Romeo and Juliet” (selections), Mendelssohn’s Violin Concerto and Tchaikovsky’s Symphony No. 2 “Little Russian”

Described by the New York Times as “an agile, demonstrative conductor who is physically drawn into the music,” Raphael has spent 10 seasons as music director of the Wheeling Symphony and is a former assistant conductor for the New York Philharmonic, the Philadelphia Orchestra and the St. Louis Symphony.

Courtney Lewis
March 13-15: Wagner’s “Tristan and Isolde,” Prelude and Liebestod, Rachmaninoff’s Piano Concerto No. 3 and Dvorak’s Symphony No. 7

He is currently music director of Boston’s Discovery Ensemble and associate conductor of the Minnesota Orchestra. The Boston Phoenix has called him “both an inspired conductor ... and an inspired programmer.”

Andrew Grams

He is a former assistant conductor for the Cleveland Orchestra and the Reading Symphony. Grams guest conducted last season for the BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra, the Oslo, Bergen and Netherlands Philharmonics and the Cincinnati, Indianapolis, Sydney and New Zealand Symphony Orchestras.

Shizuo “Z” Kuwahara
April 25-26: Prokofiev’s Piano Concerto No. 3, Khatchaturian’s “Masquerade Suite” and Stravinsky’s “The Firebird Suite” (1919 version)

Kuwahara, who is the music director of the Symphony Orchestra Augusta, was winner of the 2008 Georg Solti International Conductors Competition.

By Charlie Patton

During the 2013-14 season, Fabio Mechetti, the outgoing music director and principal conductor, will lead the Jacksonville Symphony Orchestra during two of the 10 Masterworks concerts.

The other eight Masterworks concerts will be led by eight young conductors. Jacksonville Symphony Association leaders don’t want to label those concerts as auditions or describe the guest conductors as job candidates.

“We’re not using that word,” said executive director Stacy Ridenour.

But there is a strong possibility that one of the eight will be the next music director and chief conductor of the Jacksonville Symphony Orchestra.

“We’re looking at everyone who is coming here through the same prism — that is as possible job candidates,” said James Jenkins, the orchestra’s principal tuba player and co-chair of the search committee.

“It’s a great list,” said Mary Carr Patton, Jenkins’ co-chair. “Now we’ll get to see who comes in and fires up the orchestra. It’s going to be a really exciting season for Jacksonville.”

The committee did a closed search, never advertising the position but collecting the names of about 200 potential candidates from a variety of sources.

“Then we went through an extensive vetting process,” Jenkins said.

“These eight rose to the top,” Ridenour said.

“We very much are looking forward to seeing how they connect with our group of musicians,” Jenkins said.

“It’s like blind dating,” said Richard Naylor, the symphony’s general manager.

“We’ll be asking, ‘Did the week go well?’”

Mechetti’s two Masterworks concerts in March featured young conductors.

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POPS SERIES AND MORE

The Jacksonville Symphony Orchestra’s eight-concert Pops Series will open in October with “Midtown Men,” featuring the original cast of Broadway’s “Jersey Boys.”

ARTS NOTES: “Pierre Matalon and The Masters Collection at Avondale Artworks”

SYMPHONY continues on F-3

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SYMPHONY SCHEDULE

The Symphony has also announced an eight-concert Pops Series, which will open in October with “Midtown Men,” a concert featuring the original cast of Broadway’s “Jersey Boys.” Here is the rest of the Symphony schedule:

POPS SERIES

- “Midtown Men,” Oct. 18-19
- “Simply Sinatra,” Nov. 8-9
- “Holiday Pops,” Dec. 13-14
- “Winter Dance Party,” Jan. 24-25
- “The Barbara Streisand Songbook,” Feb. 21-22
- “Symphonic Celebration,” March 21-22
- “Pops Goes Vegas,” April 11-12
- “Rock Tenors,” May 2-3

SPECIAL EVENTS

- “Classical Mystery Tour,” Nov. 16-17
- “First Coast Nutcracker,” Dec. 6-8
- “Holiday Pops Encore,” Dec. 12 and Dec. 15
- “Handel’s Messiah,” Dec. 21-22
- “Toast! To the New Year,” Dec. 31
- “The Music of Pink Floyd,” Feb. 1
- “The Marriage of Figaro,” Feb. 8
- “Choral Blockbuster,” March 7-8

THE COFFEE SERIES

(abbreviated concerts that take place on Friday mornings)

- “A Rising Star” conducted by Nicholas Palmer, Oct. 11
- Brahms’ Symphony No. 1, Oct. 25
- Beethoven’s “Eroica,” Nov. 22
- “Stars of the Symphony,” Jan. 17
- “Romeo and Juliet,” Feb. 14
- “The Barbara Streisand Songbook,” Feb. 21
- “Symphonic Celebration,” March 21
- “Pops Goes Vegas,” April 11
- “Rock Tenors,” May 2

SYMPHONY

Continued from F-1

next season will be Verdi’s Requiem, performed with the Jacksonville Symphony Chorus Feb. 27-March 1; and Mahler’s Symphony No. 3 May 17-18, the last concert of the season. It’s the same tour-de-force for orchestra and singers with which Mechetti closed his first full season in Jacksonville in 2001.

Mechetti will also conduct Mozart’s opera “The Marriage of Figaro” Feb. 8. It was at Mechetti’s urging that the Jackson-

ville Symphony began doing an annual opera and it will probably be up to his successor to decide whether opera remains a part of each season.

“This could be our last opera for a while,” Ride- nour said.

Renewal notices were sent out Friday to all subscribers. They have until March 31 to retain or upgrade their seating location. Season tickets are now available by calling the box office at (904) 354-5547.

Charlie Patton: (904) 359-4413