

# JOHN MORRIS RUSSELL

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Maestro John Morris Russell has consistently won international praise for his gift to make extraordinary music and to make a difference. Since his appointment as Music Director of the Windsor Symphony Orchestra in 2001, Mr. Russell has ushered in a new era of unprecedented artistic growth for the WSO and has invigorated the musical life of the Windsor-Essex region. The Windsor Star reported in 2006 that “the Windsor Symphony Orchestra is on a roll...Russell never shrinks from the most demanding works in the repertoire [and] his enthusiasm shows in virtually every aspect of the orchestra.” A two-time recipient of Ontario’s Lieutenant Governor’s Award for the Arts, as well as the Ontario Arts Council’s Vida Peene Award for Artistic Excellence, Maestro Russell and the WSO have also won coveted nominations for both the Gemini Awards (2004) and Juno Awards (2008). In his seventh season, Mr. Russell conducts 15 weeks with the WSO including symphonic and pops subscription programmes, concerts on the Bach and Mozart series, and the prestigious Windsor Canadian Music Festival.

During his tenure, Mr. Russell has attracted many of the world’s most notable soloists to perform with the WSO, including Lara St. John, Stewart Goodyear, Anton Kuerti and Kevin McMillan. He has also championed the works of some of Canada’s most illustrious composers, including Jacques Hétu, Brent Lee and Nathaniel Dett, conducting numerous Windsor premiers of important Canadian works and 40 world premiers of commissioned compositions. Mr. Russell created the WSO’s first multi-year composer-in-residence position, and is deeply involved in the production of the annual Windsor Canadian Music Festival, described by CBC producer David Jaeger as, “one of the most exciting and innovative developments to appear lately in the Canadian musical scene.”

The Windsor Symphony Orchestra has made fifteen national broadcasts with Maestro Russell on CBC Radio and the orchestra's first nationally televised production on the CBC series *Opening Night*, with violinist Eugene Nakamura and pianist Darrett Zusko. The WSO segment from this production was originally broadcast in December 2003 and again in 2004; it was subsequently nominated for a Gemini Award and won the Gold Worldmedal for "Best Performance Program" at the New York Festivals Awards for Television and New Media. In 2005, the WSO and Mr. Russell were featured in the documentary *Clearly Symphony: not all performances are on stage* by filmmaker Nicholas Shields and Suede Productions. In November 2006, the Windsor Symphony Orchestra released its second commercial recording, including Prokofiev's *Peter and the Wolf* narrated by the internationally acclaimed actor, Colm Feore, and *Last Minute Lulu*, composed by WSO Composer-in-Residence, Brent Lee, with text by the Newbery Medal winning author, Christopher Paul Curtis. The recording won a coveted Juno nomination for Best Children's Recording in 2008.

Maestro Russell has taken an active role in creating and revitalizing programmes and programming to develop young listeners and musicians in the region. He crafted two new concert series, *Peanut Butter n' Jam* and *Family Jamboree*, specifically for youngsters and families, and spearheaded the creation of The Windsor-Essex Youth Choir and the Windsor Symphony Youth Orchestra. Mr. Russell's passionate support of music in the schools has forged performance partnerships with the Windsor Centre for the Creative Arts, the University of Windsor School of Music and dozens of choral, dance and performing ensembles throughout the community. His intensive work with educators, administrators, and students, has helped to double annual attendance at the WSO's spring Educational Concerts, reaching over 14,000 students and teachers annually in Essex, Lambton and Kent counties.

As a guest conductor, Mr. Russell has led many of North America's most distinguished ensembles, including the orchestras of Toronto, Detroit, Houston, Indianapolis, Dallas, Edmonton, Minnesota, Louisville, Miami's New World Symphony, the Oregon Symphony, New York City Ballet, and The New York Philharmonic. 2008 marks his eleventh season with Carnegie Hall, where he conducts The Orchestra of St. Luke's in the "LinkUP!" concert series, as well as Carnegie Hall's family concert series. This season Mr. Russell makes debuts with the Victoria Symphony and the Colorado Symphony.

Mr. Russell served as associate conductor of the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra for eleven years where he regularly led concerts at Music Hall and the Riverbend Music Center. Widely recognized for his innovative programming and commitment to attracting new and diverse audiences to orchestral music, Maestro Russell created the *Classical Roots: Spiritual Heights* series, which brought the music of African-American composers and performers to thousands of listeners in area churches, and was also the co-creator of the Christmas spectacular, *Home for the Holidays*. In September of 1999, Mr. Russell replaced Erich Kunzel with an hour's notice to conduct the Pops' opening weekend concerts. The following week he substituted for Maestro Kunzel in concerts on the stage of the famed Musikverein in Vienna, featuring the Harlem Boychoir, the Vienna Choir Boys and actor Gregory Peck. The performance continues to be televised throughout Europe, Japan and in the USA on PBS.

Maestro Russell has also served as associate conductor of the Savannah Symphony Orchestra, director of the orchestral program at Vanderbilt University, and music director with the College Light Opera Company in Falmouth, Massachusetts. He received a Master of Music degree in conducting from the University of Southern California, Los Angeles, and a Bachelor of Arts degree in music from Williams College in Massachusetts. He has also studied at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama in London, the Cleveland Institute of Music, the Aspen Music Festival in Colorado, and the Pierre Monteux School for Conductors in Hancock, Maine.