

John Morris Russell

Maestro John Morris Russell has consistently won international praise for his extraordinary musicmaking and visionary leadership. 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. 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). Now in his eighth season, Mr. Russell conducts 16 weeks with the WSO including Masterworks and Pops subscription programmes, concerts on the new Intimate Classics series, and the prestigious Windsor Canadian Music Festival.

As a guest conductor, Maestro Russell has led many of North America's most distinguished ensembles, including the orchestras of Toronto, Edmonton, Victoria, Detroit, Houston, Indianapolis, Dallas, Minnesota, Louisville, Miami's New World Symphony, the Oregon Symphony, Colorado Symphony, New York City Ballet, and The New York Philharmonic. 2008 marks Mr. Russell's twelfth season with Carnegie Hall, where he conducts the "LinkUP!" educational concert series, the oldest and most celebrated series of its kind in the Western Hemisphere, created by Walter Damrosch in 1891 and made famous by Leonard Bernstein. This season, Maestro Russell makes his debut with the Los Angeles Philharmonic at the Hollywood Bowl, return engagements with the Toronto and Indianapolis Symphony Orchestras and a special homecoming performance with The Savannah Orchestra, in Savannah, Georgia.

Under Maestro Russell's leadership, The Windsor Symphony Orchestra has made fifteen national broadcasts on CBC Radio 2, including "The Music of Freedom" on Sunday Afternoon in Concert with Bill Richardson in May 2008. The WSO's first nationally televised production was created with Mr. Russell for the CBC series Opening Night, which subsequently won the Gold World Medal for "Best Performance Program" at the New York Festivals Awards for Television and New Media, as well as a Gemini Award Nomination. In 2006 the Windsor Symphony Orchestra released 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 Mr. Russell and the WSO its first Juno nomination for Best Children's Album in 2008.

Maestro Russell has also taken an active role in creating and revitalizing musical 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 University of Windsor School of Music, the Windsor Centre for the Creative Arts and dozens of choral, dance and performing ensembles throughout the community. With the creation of the One Community—One Symphony project in 2008, Maestro Russell now works with over 500 teenagers in 10 school band programmes, representing French, Catholic and Public School Boards, in rehearsals and performances with the WSO. His enormously successful Education Concerts engage over 14,000 students and teachers annually in Essex, Lambton and Kent counties and are now being produced in both Toronto and Kitchener-Waterloo.