

Toledo Symphony Excels Under New Artistic Leadership

When former music director Andrew Massey announced that he would be leaving The Toledo Symphony (TSO) in 2002, TSO set out to find new leadership to take the orchestra to even greater artistic heights. According to Kathy Carroll, TSO's executive vice president, development, "The music world is intimate and it stretches around the world. The most important part of the search process is to describe what you're looking for, where you want the orchestra to go, and determine what expertise will help you meet the artistic goals." Once the search committee, led by Thomas Schmidt, vice chairman of the TSO board, with representatives from the orchestra and the board had accomplished this task, they were able to begin a more precise search. Through artists' managers and connections with other American orchestras, they were able to become aware of many potential candidates. The credentials and talents of many conductors were reviewed, and several were invited to Toledo as guest conductors.

Stefan Sanderling, one of the conductors invited to Toledo as a guest conductor, was particularly impressive. Once he performed here, TSO began to actively pursue him as its leader. Once the negotiations were finalized, Stefan and Isabelle Sanderling were casually introduced to Toledoans on a fine summer evening at Music Under the Stars.

Maestro Sanderling is now in his second full season as the TSO principal conductor and artistic advisor, and is showing the greater Toledo area that the TSO board made the right decision in its selection. Sanderling's role is to develop the orchestra and the quality of the art it presents. When you attend one of his concerts, there is no doubt that, through his leadership, the orchestra is continually achieving new artistic heights. The faces of the musicians show that they are really connecting to their conductor and benefiting from his leadership. The faces of the ever-increasing crowds at the Peristyle, Stranahan, and Franciscan Center show pure delight in a variety of musical performances.

One of the highlights of the TSO's sixtieth season occurred at its premier performance in September. Sanderling told the audience that it had been a difficult decision to be in Toledo that weekend as it was his father's 90th birthday. "When I told my father of my dilemma, he asked me what music was scheduled. When I replied, 'Tchaikovsky's Symphony No. 4,' my father told me it would be a great tribute to him if I conducted that symphony in his honor, as he has conducted it many times throughout his career." Sanderling then faced the orchestra, picked up the music stand, and carried it off to the wings of the stage. He returned to center stage, and proceeded to conduct one of the most powerful symphonies from his head, and from his heart.

This is the kind of magical moment that longtime and new concert-goers have come to expect when Sanderling has the baton.

Chelsea Tipton, new to the TSO this year as its resident conductor, is elated to be part of this artistic team. He notes, "Maestro Sanderling has prepared a wonderful season that begins in September. Great things are on the horizon!"

Next month, you will hear about Tipton's contributions to our dynamic music community and some of the highlights of the 2004 – 2005 season. TSO ticket hotline: 419.246.8000. Visit TSO on the web at toledosymphony.com

Article & photo by D. Ellen Critchley, Critchley Creative