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ISTVAN JARAY

CONDUCTOR



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BIOGRAPHY

Istvan Jaray, Music Director of the Johnstown Symphony Orchestra is an internationally acclaimed conductor. He has regularly appeared in concert halls in Europe, Canada and the United States in the last twenty years. His dynamic leadership has brought the Johnstown Symphony to the rank of a high quality Metropolitan Orchestra.

Born in Hungary, Maestro Jaray guest conducted major orchestras in his homeland including the concert Orchestra of Budapest and Savaria Symphony. He also conducted the Radio and Television Orchestra of Zagreb, Croatia that was broadcast live on radio and television. Because of the overwhelming success, Maestro Jaray was invited back to conduct the Zagreb Philharmonic. Other guest conducting appearances include performances with Symphonies of Detroit, Milwaukee, Chicago, Baton Rouge, Binghamton, Brussels Radio Symphony, Orchestra Sinfonica Di Sanremo in Italy, the North Bay and Victoria Symphony in Canada. Maestro Jaray also conducted performances by the Pittsburgh Opera Theater, Wisconsin Ballet and Milwaukee Ballet. In 2001 he guest conducted the Cukorova State Symphony Orchestra in Adana, Turkey and the Debrecen Philharmonic in Hungary. In 2003, he made a second guest conducting appearance with the Debrecen Philharmonic.

At the age of five, Jaray began to study the violin. Later, graduating from the Franz Liszt Academy in Budapest, where he also studied piano, composition, and conducting under the direction of Zoltan Kodaly and Gyorgy Ligeti. After leaving Hungary in 1956, Jaray enrolled at London's Royal College of Music, where he studied conducting with Sir Adrian Boult. Following four years as a member of the British National Opera Orchestra, he freelanced with the London Symphony, London Philharmonic and the BBC Orchestra. This gave him the opportunity to work with Masestri Monteux, Collin Davis, Giulini and Dorati. It was at this time that Jaray formed his own Chamber Opera Company, The Opera Comique.

After joining the Vancouver (Canada) Symphony, he met Otto Werner Mueller, who became his mentor and colleague. They accepted positions on the faculty of the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Concurrently, Maestro Jaray became Music Director of the Waukesha and Fox Valley (Wisconsin) Symphonies. Ten years later, he accepted a faculty position at Carnegie-Mellon University in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. There he led the Camigie-Mellon Philharmonic bringing the Orchestra to Carnegie Hall for its New York debut, which received great critical acclaim.

He is also the Music Director and Principal Conductor of the Livingston Symphony Orchestra in Livingston, New Jersey. In addition, he continues as an adjunct Professor at the University of Pittsburgh at Johnstown teaching classes on "Great Composers".

Because his musical life has encompassed such a wide range; conducting opera, ballet, chamber, choral, jazz and pops concerts, as well as "classical" orchestral repertoire, performing as both soloist and concertmaster, and teaching, Maestro Jaray has been able to offer a unique musical experience to both the Johnstown Symphony Orchestra and the community at large. Under his leadership there have bee many changes in the scope of the Orchestra's programs; productions of fully staged, opera, ballet and musicals featuring local talent, free pops concerts, Annual Young People's concert and a Bi-Annual Young Artist's Competition.

Maestro Jaray lives in Johnstown, Pennsylvania and is married to Renee Shaw. He is an avid tennis player and a gourmet cook.

CRITICAL ACCLAIM

"Mr. Jaray has a baton style almost as quiet as Pittsburgh's William Steinberg, but he plays dramatically with tempos. His accelerandos approach the virtuoso demands that his countryman, George Solti, makes on the Chicago Orchestra."

Milwaukee Sentinel

"Magnificent...Conducted with fire and feeling... Istvan Jaray welded together the singers to make an Opera Comique company worthy to sing in any opera house. Not only the solos, but their duets and ensemble singing are perfectly rehearsed and wonderfully well done."

London Daily News

"Expressive...stimulating...Jaray did a masterful job throughout the concert."

Kenosha News

"Interplay between the orchestral choir was deftly woven by Jaray. He has a keen ability for imbuing his ensemble with fine tone shading, minus the violent leaps and cavorting gyrations which characterize many of today's conductors."

Waukesha Freeman

"High point of the evening was the "Dance Suite" by the Hungarian genius, Bela Bartok. With animation and zeal Jaray led the Milwaukee Symphony in a sparkling realization of the fiery Magyar rhythms and early melodies. The orchestra responded to his involvement, his commitment to the music with a keen and brilliant performance."

Milwaukee Journal

"Istvan Jaray's conducting showed a firm grasp of the structure of Mendelssohn's music. When he conducts a piece there is never any doubt about his understanding and control of the music. He moves from point to point without hesitation and without fuss, and the results frequently are exciting and eloquent."

Appleton Post Crescent

"Conducting without a score Jaray flooded Mendelssohn's Italian Symphony with sunshine."

Milwaukee Sentinel

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