



**Jack Price
Managing Director**

220 West Pershing
Phoenix, AZ 85029

e-mail:
jp@pricerubin.com

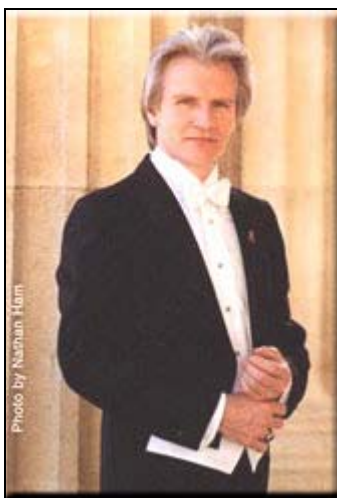
phone:
1-800-848-3360

fax:
1-888-439-1186

web site:
www.pricerubin.com

JOHN STRICKLER

CONDUCTOR



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BIOGRAPHY

The 2005-06 season is the seventeenth for John Strickler as Music Director of the Topeka Symphony Orchestra. Since his appointment in 1989, the Symphony has achieved a high level of excellence and distinction, prompting the press to call performances “inspired” and “superb.” Dr. Strickler is spoken of as a “true master at programming,” putting forth performances that contain a “judicious balance of the familiar and the progressive.”

Prior to his appointment with the Topeka Symphony, Dr. Strickler held various positions with orchestras in California including the Long Beach Community Orchestra, Coterie Symphonique, San Gabriel Valley Junior Symphony, and the USC Symphony and Community Orchestras. He has guest conducted in Mississippi, Wisconsin, Kansas, California, and Alaska, and he recently returned from Romania where he conducted three highly successful concerts with the Philharmonic Orchestras of Ploieste, Bacau, and Brasov.

Dr. Strickler has performed with such distinguished artists as Itzhak Perlman, Frederica Von Stade, Andre Watts, Daniel Adne, Jon Nakamatsu, Stephen Salters, Janet Bookspan, Xiang Gao, Sandra Rivers, Wendy Warner, the Elaris Duo, the Gramercy Trio, and the Canadian Brass. This season is highlighted by performances with cellist Steven Elisha, bass-baritone Wayne Shepperd, and Romanian pianist Horia Mihail.

A native of Wisconsin, Dr. Strickler received his Bachelor’s degree in Music Education from the University of Wisconsin, and his Master of Music in Conducting and Ph.D. in Music Theory from the University of Southern California. His conducting teachers include Daniel Lewis, H. Robert Reynolds, Jon Robertson, Herbert Blomstedt, Jorge Mester, and Joseph Gifford.

In May of 1999, Dr. Strickler conducted the Gulf Coast Symphony in Biloxi, Mississippi. That performance resulted in his appointment as Music Director and Conductor of that orchestra, a position that he holds concurrently with his Topeka appointment.

In 1998, Dr. Strickler was a recipient of the Kansas Governor’s Arts Award.

CRITICAL ACCLAIM

From the Press

“Maestro John Strickler and the orchestra were in superb form, both as accompanists and in the US Premiere of the deeply affecting Symphony by Croatian composer Frano Parac....Few conductors anywhere can so meaningfully put together a program...”

Michael Myers, The Topeka Capital-Journal

“Musically, this Pirates is nearly flawless, thanks to the Savoyards’ excellent singers and orchestra under the direction of John Strickler. The performers and musicians are always in balance with each other, bringing out the best of Sullivan’s demanding score.”

Michael Chase, The Capital Times

“Wednesday evening’s concert...confirmed the orchestra’s improving form, the inspiration on and off the podium of music director John Strickler, and the pleasure repeatedly available to Topeka concert audiences in the form of performers such as Frederica von Stade....It is indeed a sign of a new era when, under Strickler’s direction, the orchestra appears to relax, dig down and play with the verve that is at the heart of musical communication.”

Michael Myers, The Topeka Capital-Journal

“The concert brought further confirmation of the near revolutionary improvement of the orchestra under the superb leadership of Music Director John Wesley Strickler. Not only has the playing of the orchestra advanced steadily in quality over the last six years, the programming has been a judicious balance of the familiar and the progressive.”

Michael Myers, The Topeka Capital-Journal

“Strickler’s beat is clear, his gestures minimal but expressive. He gets on well with music lovers, students and musicians, and as a music director he knows the score, both musically and financially. Topeka chose well.”

David Levinson, Long Beach Press-Telegram

“Musical Director John Strickler has managed to blend not only a talented orchestra, but also dynamic solo performers with an incredibly professional sounding chorus. The a cappella section of the finale to Act I by the chorus is literally breathtaking in its beauty.”

Robert Miller, The Topeka Capital-Journal

“The Choral singing and the orchestra, under the direction of the Topeka Symphony’s John Strickler, are flawless.”

Topeka Metro News

“Strickler’s support from the podium was perfect. Tempos and balances were just right and the music revealed its wonders unselfconsciously and with great poise. Mahler’s score [Songs of a Wayfarer] is intricate and precise. This is exactly how Strickler conducted it, while allowing the music to breathe and unfold naturally....A rewarding evening with special accolades to Strickler and [baritone Lee] Snook for Topeka’s history making Mahler performance.”

Michael Myers, The Topeka Capital-Journal

“The Topeka Symphony under Maestro John Wesley Strickler is truly amazing. Rarely has the improvement of an orchestra been so steep and consistent....Strickler has transformed this ensemble from bush-league, ragtag status to a genuine artistic force beyond Topeka’s modest demographics.”

Michael Myers, The Topeka Capital-Journal

“...Maestro Strickler just never conducts a mediocre concert....There is a feeling now that each symphony performance is an event....Strickler needs to be presented with a magician’s cap for the positive changes he has wrought with the orchestra. It must rank among the better success stories across the country...”

Michael Myers, The Topeka Capital-Journal

“...audience members were on their feet applauding conductor Dr. John Strickler and the symphony for their tour de force performance of Dmitri Shostakovich’s Fifth Symphony....Reaction was nearly immediate. The only hesitation among audience members to rising to their feet for an overwhelming and extended ovation was the need for a moment to catch one’s breath.”

Bill Blankenship, The Topeka Capital-Journal

“Maestro Strickler continues to bring new music to symphony audiences on a regular basis, all the more admirable since he consistently avoids modern composers who have rejected melody and some measure of harmonic consonance as a means of musical communication.”

Michael Myers, The Topeka Capital-Journal

“By now concert-goers should know that maestro Strickler is a true master at programming. He can mix moods and periods, stay within the limitations of his orchestra and produce an evening that is emotionally and intellectually satisfying.”

Michael Myers, The Topeka Capital-Journal

“...what really distinguishes Strickler’s programs is the way he not only seeks to reach, entertain and uplift his audience, but innovate while he maintains the highest standard in the repertoire he presents.”

Michael Myers, The Topeka Capital-Journal

CURRICULUM VITAE

Music Director & Conductor 1989-present
Topeka Symphony Orchestra Topeka, Kansas

PROGRAMMING/ARTISTIC

Directed the growth and development of the TSO from a volunteer community orchestra to a per-service, professional ensemble.

Expanded the season to include classical, pops, holiday and educational concerts.

As a result of artistic growth and development, the TSO now regularly features distinguished guest artists such as Itzhak Perlman, Frederica von Stade, Andre Watts, Dave Brubeck and the Canadian Brass.

Presented six world premieres (two TSO commissions), two US premieres, and several regional premieres including works by composers such as Michael Abels, John Adams, Robert Aldridge, Zamir Bavel, Roger Bourland, Libby Larsen, Lanette Lind, David Ott, Arvo Paert, Frano Parac, Einojuhani Rautavaara, Tomas Svoboda, and Joan Tower.

Since 1993, the TSO has been on the touring roster of the Kansas Arts Commission.

AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT

Initiated a pops series to attract new audience, which accounted for increased ticket revenues.

Oversaw the growth of the pops series, which necessitated a move to a larger venue.

Initiated "family pops" concerts to attract younger audiences.

EDUCATIONAL OUTREACH

Initiated school-day concerts that reach more than 4,500 students annually.

Initiated master classes with visiting guest artists and in-school visits by visiting and local artists.

After restructuring, the nearly defunct Symphony-sponsored youth orchestra program has grown from 35 students in 1990 to include three orchestras that serve the needs of more than 200 students, grades 3-12.

Coordinate and administer annual youth talent auditions for the opportunity of soloing with the TSO.

Volunteer as a clinician for area schools.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Serve as spokes person and advocate for the TSO in the community, including radio/television interviews.

Work with area schools to enhance music education in the curriculum.

Work closely with the Kansas Arts Commission, both as a grant review panelist and arts advocate.

On-air spokesperson for public radio and television semi-annual pledge drives.

FINANCIAL

Increased revenues more than 800% to support expanded programming and development of a per-service orchestra.

Cultivate and develop corporate sponsorships, which account for 25% of the annual budget.

Write grants for support from the Kansas Arts Commission, which has increased by 500%.

Music Director & Conductor 1999-present
Gulf Coast Symphony Orchestra Biloxi, Mississippi

PROGRAMMING/ARTISTIC

Expanded season to include classical, educational, holiday and family concerts.

Initiated and implemented free annual outdoor Memorial Day weekend concerts, audiences for which have grown by 400%.

Initiated annual holiday and family concerts.

In April of 2000, the GCSO was selected to perform with Luciano Pavarotti, and was invited to tour with Andre Bocelli.

Initiated plans for free outdoor concert to be held Labor Day of 2005.

AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT

Increased subscription base by 100%.

Initiated first pops concert. Plans for a summer pops series under discussion.

EDUCATIONAL OUTREACH

Present school concerts that reach over 4,000 students annually.

Initiated master classes with visiting guest artists and in-school visits by visiting and local artists.

Initiated grant proposal to fund a youth orchestra program, which was started in September of 2001, and in-school performances by small ensembles.

Implemented a concert preview program for adults, which is presented twice the week of each subscription concert.

Volunteer as clinician for area schools.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Serve as spokesperson and advocate for the Gulf Coast Symphony.

Work with area schools to enhance music education in the curriculum.

Other Conducting Experience

Music Director & Conductor

Madison Savoyards	Madison, WI	Summer 1996
Topeka Civic Theatre	Topeka, KS	Summer 1993
Long Beach Community Orchestra	Long Beach, CA	1986-89
San Gabriel Valley Junior Symphony	Pasadena, CA	1979-81

Associate Conductor

Coterie Symphonique	Long Beach, CA	1981-86
San Gabriel Valley Junior Symphony	Pasadena, CA	1976-79

Assistant Conductor

Opera Department, California State University	Long Beach, CA	1982-83
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USC Symphony Orchestra	Los Angeles, CA	1978-80
USC Community Orchestra	Los Angeles, CA	1978-80
Haydn Performance Seminar	Eisenstadt, Austria	Summer 1977

Recent Guest Conducting

Philharmonic Orchestra of Ploieste	Ploieste, Romania	June 2003
Philharmonic Orchestra of Bacau	Bacau, Romania	June 2003
Philharmonic Orchestra of Brasov	Brasov, Romania	June 2003

Academic Experience

Washburn University	Topeka, KS	1997-99
Chapman University	Orange, CA	1986-87
Long Beach City College	Long Beach, CA	1986-89
El Camino College	Torrance, CA	1986-89
University of Southern California	Los Angeles, CA	1983-86
Millikan High School	Long Beach, CA	1980-83
University of Southern California	Los Angeles, CA	1978-80
College of the Canyons	Valencia, CA	1976-77
Mohawk Junior/Senior High School	Columbus, OH	1975-76

Education and Training

PhD – Theory; University of Southern California	Los Angeles, CA	1989
MM – Conducting; University of Southern California	Los Angeles, CA	1980
BM – Music Education; University of Wisconsin	Madison, WI	1975

Private Study

Joseph Gifford, Boston University	Boston, MA	1994-98, 2000-05
Jorge Mester, Pasadena Symphony	Pasadena, CA	1996
Jon Robertson, Redlands Symphony	Redlands, CA	1985-89
Daniel Lewis, University of Southern California	Los Angeles, CA	1978-80, 1984
H. Robert Reynolds, University of Wisconsin	Madison, WI	1973-75

Master Classes and Workshops

Kenneth Keisler & Joseph Gifford, Conductor's Retreat	Medomak, ME	1997, 1998
Jorge Mester and Joseph Gifford, University of Utah	Salt Lake City, UT	1996, 1997
American Symphony Orchestra League Workshop	Salt Lake City, UT	1994
Leonard Slatkin, Saint Louis Symphony (auditor)	Saint Louis, MO	1992
American Symphony Orchestra League Workshop	Boston, MA	1992
Jon Robertson, Redlands Conducting Institute	University of Redlands, CA	1987
Herbert Blomstedt, Blomstedt Institute	Loma Linda (CA) University	1985, 1986
Haydn Performance Seminar	Eisenstadt, Austria	1977

Recognition

Recipient, Kansas Governor's Arts Award	October 13, 1998
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Orchestral Performance

Los Angeles Baroque Orchestra – 1983-86

Coterie Symphonique, Long Beach, CA – 1980-86
Santa Monica (CA) Symphony – 1976-78
Brentwood-Westwood (CA) Symphony – 1976-78
Madison (WI) Symphony – 1971-75

Affiliations

American Symphony Orchestra League
Arts Council of Topeka
Association of Community Arts Agencies of Kansas
College Music Society
Conductors Guild
National Wildlife Federation
Sierra Club

References

Dr. Robert Aldridge

Professor of Composition
Montclair State University
Upper Montclair, NJ 07043
973.655.6983
RBobbyaldrige@aol.com

Dr. Richard Driver

Past President, Topeka Symphony
Washburn University
1700 College Avenue
Topeka, KS 66621
785.231.1010 ext. 1990
DriverRich@aol.com

Mr. Joseph Gifford

Professor Emeritus
Boston University
27 Chestnut Street
Boston, MA 02108
617.723.6048
Joegee27@aol.com

Ms. Sharan Leventhal

Violinist, Gramercy Trio
207 N. Grove Street
Bowling Green, OH 43402
419.352.0269
sharan57@wcnnet.org

Ms. Sandra Rivers

Pianist
1621 S. Dixon Circle

Cincinnati, OH 45224
513.681.0730
RIVERSS@UCMAIL.UC.EDU

Dr. John Robertson

Dean, Lynn Conservatory of Music
14990 S. Belaire Drive
Pembroke Pines, FL 33027
909.633.3595 (cell)
954.322.5400 (home)
jrobertson@lynn.edu

Ms. Natalie Robohm

Executive Director
Gulf Coast Symphony
PO Box 542
Biloxi, MS 39533
228.435.9800
info@gulfcoastsymphony.net

REFERENCES

Ms. Hilary Hahn, violinist

c/o Ms. Charlotte Lee
IMG Artists
825 Seventh Avenue, 8th Floor
New York, NY 10019
212-489-8300
(FAX) 212-246-1596
CJLee@imgworld.com

Ms. Eugenia Zukerman, flutist

41 Fifth Ave
New York, NY 10003
212-529-5066
zuckerflute@aol.com

Mr. Leonard Slatkin, Music Director,
National Symphony Orchestra

2700 F Street, NW
Washington, DC 20566
(TEL) 202-416-8125
(FAX): 202-416-8123

Ms. Phyllis Bryn-Julson, soprano

721 Tobacco Run Drive
Bel Air, Maryland 21015-1331
410-734-4273

Mr. Samuel Adler, Composer; Author; Professor Emeritus,
Eastman School of Music; Professor of Composition,
Cincinnati Conservatory

9412 Sheffield Rd
Perrysburg, OH 43551
419-666-9519
sadlercomp@yahoo.com

Mr. Brian Ganz, Pianist/Musician-in-Residence,
St. Mary's College of MD
St. Mary's City, MD 20686
410-897-0930
brianganz@aol.com

Mr. Carlos Sanchez-Gutierrez,
Composer, Eastman School of Music

585-461-4178
carlossg@esm.rochester.edu

Mr. James Grant, Composer

198 Howland Ave.
Toronto, ON M5R 3B6 Canada
416- 929-4301
jim@jamesgrantmusic.com

Mr. Nathan Snader, Retired Associate Concert Master,
The Cleveland Orchestra; Retired Associate Concert Master,
Bay-Atlantic Symphony

3851 Boardwalk
Atlantic City, NJ 08401
609-347-1221
Mr. David Grant, President and CEO, Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation

163 Madison Avenue
Post Office Box 1239
Morristown, NJ 07962-1239
(973) 540-8442
dgrant@grdodge.org

Ms. Clarena Snyder, Executive Director, The Bay-Atlantic Symphony

59 E. Commerce Street
Bridgeton, NJ 08302
856-305-4608
clarena@bayatlanticsymphony.org

Mr. Eric Beatty, Director, Homewood Arts Programs; Johns Hopkins University

Mattin Center; Johns Hopkins University
3400 N. Charles St.
Baltimore, MD 21218
410-516-0774
ebeatty@jhu.edu