



Jack Price
Managing Director

Michelle Rubin
Founding Director

5555 N. 7th St., Suite 134
PMB 533
Phoenix, AZ 85014

e-mail:
dt@pricerubin.com

phone:
866 PRI RUBI

fax:
888 334 8054

website:
www.pricerubin.com

Kermit Poling

CONDUCTOR



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BIOGRAPHY

Kermit Poling continues to bring his energetic and enthusiastic approach to music making to audiences in the United States and throughout the world including recent concerts in Mexico, Europe and the Far East. His most recent guest conducting appearances have included the Mexico State Symphony, the Guanajuato (MX) Symphony Orchestra, the Shenzhen (China) Symphony, the Filarmonia Veneta of Treviso (Italy) and others. In August of 2005, he was invited as one of only 3 Americans selected to serve as international judges for the 2nd Annual Young Artists Competition in Beijing, China in conjunction with the China National Symphony. An avid enthusiast for working with young people, he recently conducted the Ohio All-State Orchestra in Cleveland, an orchestra he performed with as a student some 27 years earlier. A virtuoso violinist, he became Concertmaster and Assistant Conductor of the Shreveport Symphony in 1985. Since then he has served in the capacities of Associate Conductor, Resident Conductor and Interim Music Director of the SSO, having also performed many times as a concerto soloist. Currently the Music Director of the South Arkansas Symphony and Shreveport Metropolitan Ballet, he has previously served in similar positions for the Boston Festival Pops Orchestra, the Boston Conservatory Chamber Orchestra, the Brookline (MA) Symphony, the Puerto Rico Chamber Orchestra, the Centenary College Chamber Orchestra, the Ruston Symphony and the Ark-La-Tex Youth Symphony Orchestra. Poling received the Outstanding Artist in Music Fellowship in 2000 from the State of Louisiana and the Music Fellowship from the Shreveport Regional Arts Council in 1996. He was awarded a conducting scholarship to the Tanglewood Music Center in 1987, studying with Leonard Bernstein, Kurt Masur, Gustav Meier and Seiji Ozawa, and also received major scholarships from the Boston Conservatory of Music and the Cleveland Institute of Music. Most recently, Mayor Keith Hightower proclaimed May 13, 2006 as *Kermit Poling Day* in the city of Shreveport. Also a composer and arranger, Poling's first ballet *Snow White*, was commissioned and premiered by the Shreveport Metropolitan Ballet in the spring of 2003 and was repeated in 2004. He has arranged orchestral shows with Grammy nominated and winning artists including the Cox Family, Cynthia Scott, Irma Thomas, Kenny Wayne Shepherd and others. His symphonic holiday piece, *Candles and Dreidels* has been performed by symphonies throughout the country. His latest ballet, *The Wizard of Oz* premiered to rave reviews in March of 2006. In 1998 he was chosen by Emmy award winning artist William Joyce to compose the music for his stage adaptation of *The Leafmen and the Brave Good Bugs*. This project was sponsored by the National Endowment for the Arts, and the CD of this music was released the following year. Maestro Poling has been a featured conductor on NPR's *Performance Today*, the Arkansas Educational Television Network, the Red River Radio Network, WGBH Boston and others. He appeared as concertmaster and violin soloist on the PBS-Showcase national broadcast of *Evangeline: the Musical* Poling also has produced a number of recordings, including *Reflections* by the Shreveport Symphony in 1999, and *Alive with the Spirit* by the Faithlink singers in 2003, on which he also appears as conductor. Poling is very familiar to radio audiences in Louisiana, Texas and Arkansas as the voice of classical music (and the Shreveport Symphony) on the Red River Radio public radio network.

CRITICAL ACCLAIM

"Poling led the orchestra in a polished performance. He proved himself to be an intelligent, knowledgeable leader on the podium and...(the orchestra) played superbly." David Connelly, **SHREVEPORT JOURNAL**

"With a wave of his hands the entire theater was transformed into a powerhouse of symphonic music." Barbara Cotton, **THE TIMES**

"Outstanding violin solos. Frankly, Poling could not be featured enough!" Lane Crockett, **SHREVEPORT TIMES**

"The orchestra responded well to Poling's instructions and urgings. The same enthusiasm percolated through the performance of the Prokofiev." John Andrew Prime, **SHREVEPORT TIMES**

"Poling's directing style is dynamic and graceful, but not overdone...a rousing performance." Gayle Wokey, **EI DORADO NEWS TIMES**

"Conductor Kermit Poling led the orchestra through Beethoven's Egmont Overture, Brahms Symphony #2 and a Bruch Violin Concerto with guest artist Stephanie Chase. The performance was, in a word, superb." Edward Parham, **THE PARHAM REPORT**

"There is some fine music making going on outside of Little Rock. Conductor Kermit Poling set some good tempos and dynamics and the orchestral balance was particularly good. The finale was brass heaven." Eric Harrison, **ARKANSAS DEMOCRAT GAZETTE**

"With Kermit Poling conducting, 'Judas Maccabaeus' shivered through moments of grief and exulted in celebrations of victory." Alexandyr Kent, **SHREVEPORT TIMES**

"Behind the exuberant lead of conductor Kermit Poling, the symphony put in a bold and graceful performance." Alexandyr Kent, **SHREVEPORT TIMES**

Symphony puts a rousing end to the season
Lane Crockett - **Forum Magazine**

The Shreveport Symphony couldn't have planned a better ending to the 2005-2006 season than the one it offered May 13 at the Shreveport Civic Theater. You not only got passionate Russian composers, but two pianists of the gold medal variety. Guest artists for the program were the co-winners of the 2005 Nena Plant Wideman Piano Competition, Tatiana Mitchko Tessman from Russia and Ji Yeon Shin from South Korea.

For an extra bonus, resident conductor and concertmaster, Kermit Poling, and the orchestra outdid themselves on a stunning concert that was satisfying and thrilling. You want to do that because it makes patrons and prospective patrons ready for the next season. You know, leave them wanting more.

Opening the concert was Dmitri Shostakovich's "Festive Overture." One hates to use the description, but the piece was sprightly and wonderfully played by the symphony. Sprightly somehow doesn't seem compatible with Shostakovich, but it is apt in this case. It's a tight, energetic overture that was tightly and energetically played by the musicians

Kermit Poling

under Poling's baton.

You had to marvel at the orchestra's balance on this piece. If the musicians could play as a unit, then they did on this one. It was an exciting kick off for the program. The symphony should do more Shostakovich. They do him well.

Next was Peter Tchaikovsky's grandly dramatic and lyrical "Piano Concerto No. 1" that has a hallowed history for longtime Shreveport symphony patrons. Van Cliburn, a native Shreveporter, stunned the world and won the prestigious Tchaikovsky International Piano Competition, held in Moscow, in 1958. That even won him a ticker tape parade in New York City and made Americans very aware of this piece.

At the piano this time was Tessman, who, one might say, played the heck out of it. She is a strong, decisive pianist and moved through this flamboyant concerto without hesitation. If there was anything clichéd about this oft-played composition, Tessman bypassed it, offering a fresh, thrilling interpretation that had the audience on its feet. The pianist took charge and was solidly supported by Poling and the musicians. In fact, Poling did an excellent job in coordinating with her. Tessman can go from the big, dramatic sound to the softly lyrical, which this piece demands. She illustrated that further by offering a short encore of a principal theme from the ballet of "Swan Lake," also by Tchaikovsky. Sans orchestra, she displayed her skill in creating and developing the loveliness of this theme.

After intermission came Shin's time, and she equaled Tessman's bravura on Sergei Rachmaninoff's well-loved and beautiful "Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini." If you are a true movie buff, you would have recognized the number's principal theme as the theme from 1953's "The Story of Three Loves."

In ways, the Rachmaninoff is more technically challenging than the Tchaikovsky, but then Rachmaninoff was a pianist and Tchaikovsky wasn't. On this piece, there is crosshand playing, abrupt tempo shifts and an emotional range all over the place. Shin rode the number with aplomb, being big and demanding when necessary and then quiet and introspective. She, too, had the audience on its feet. When she tore into the primary theme, you could feel chills up your spine.

Ending the concert was Nicholas Rimsky-Korsakov's lilting and often fiery "Capriccio Espagnol." This could have been anticlimactic after the pianists, but Poling didn't let it be. He and the orchestra took the listeners on a ride – lots of wonderful percussion work – and finished off the piece on a high, resounding note. On this number, several of the orchestra's players were highlighted but mention should be made of principal clarinet, Thomas Phillips, and principal French horn player, Thomas Hundemer, who both stood out on the Shostakovich, too.

It was a great season ending, and the orchestra is set up for next season. Start renewing now because this symphony is too good not to.

Review: Cellist as rock star? Symphony shines with Shauna Rolston

April 2, 2006

**By Alexandyr Kent
akent@gannett.com**

For the Shreveport Symphony Orchestra's "April Fools" concert on Saturday, cellist Shauna Rolston walked on stage wearing high heels and carrying a black cello with her bare arms. Buoyed by a mix of charisma, precision and fearlessness, Rolston rocked her way through a Tchaikovsky favorite and a haunting contemporary piece by Doug Schmidt.

Symphony patrons who stayed home to watch the Final Four missed electrifying solo work.

Resident Conductor Kermit Poling led the orchestra through a fun program of music celebrating humor. Poling also was brave enough to provide an update of the LSUCLA

game. LSU was down 48-27, and the audience's collective groan was the evening's only down note.

The concert started simply enough with a tight performance of Rossini's Overture to "The Barber of Seville." Sitting next to me was a spirited young man making the most of the piece by jockeying his seat through the most carefree moments. A goofy theme deserves a goofy reception, and one can hardly fault the tyke for expressing his approval.

Rolston's take on Tchaikovsky's Variations on a "Rococo Theme" was next. It inspired many audience members to their feet. Rolston, who can and does leave her stamp on a piece, was brilliant here. It was most impressive watching the virtuoso showcase her athleticism. With the lean arm muscles in plain view, the audience could see just how precise a soloist must be to successfully mold a simple theme into so many different frames. Whether slow and patient or frenzied and aggressive, Rolston delivered arresting solo work.

Mozart's "A Musical Joke" led the program into intermission. The orchestra musicians made the most of the opportunity to air the delightfully messy piece for appreciative ears. Concertmaster Elizabeth O'Bannon was a standout, and she earned a big laugh in third movement when she ended her meandering violin solo with a pretentious pluck.

After a short break, Rolston returned for "Grandma's Aching Back," a piece written for her by Schmidt. It is based on stories from Heinrich Hoffman's "Der Struwwelpeter," which warn of dire consequences for children who do the wrong thing. The first movement is about playing with matches. The second punishes a thumb-sucker. And the third and final illustrates a kid being blown away by the wind for playing outside during a thunderstorm. Again, Rolston's work was impressive, especially the showy bit when she played with two bows.

Though the audience apparently wasn't down with the piece's dissonance, it was hard not to be impressed by its theatricality. The third movement finished with Rolston putting down her cello, stepping over to a microphone, and slowing whistling her way off stage. It was a menacing moment that's bound to stick with listeners who love a good fright.

The evening closed with pleasant playing of Haydn's Symphony No. 94 in G Major ("Surprise"). The house, which appeared a bit less than half full, applauded its approval for an evening that featured many different hues of humor.

The Shreveport Symphony Orchestra's next Master Series concert, "Piano Virtuosity," is set for May 13.

**©The Times
April 2, 2006**

CURRICULUM VITAE

QUALIFICATIONS:

Over 25 years as a professional conductor, 30 years as a violinist and pianist. Education at two of the world's most prestigious music schools and a student of several world renowned musicians. A published composer and arranger, and a recording artist.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

A proven audience builder:

Shreveport Symphony: Over the course of the 3 seasons of Maestro Poling's tenure as the Interim Music Director, there was a significant increase in audience size and contributions to the orchestra. The audience for the 2005-06 SEASON had the largest audiences in years, including two sell-outs. Audience for the 11th annual People's Concert of the Shreveport Symphony, the first major concert led by Maestro Poling since being appointed Interim Music Director, was nearly double the size of previous years' events. The 12th People's Concert had the SSO's largest audience ever. Audiences for the South Arkansas Symphony have increased over 200% in the past several seasons. Income in all categories has increased by 40% and the orchestra has eliminated a long-standing accumulated deficit.

A novel and entertaining programmer and conductor

Programs for the Shreveport Symphony have taken on a fresh design, with much effort being made to collaborate with other organizations and outside performers. Actively involved in creating new and interesting educational and outreach programming.

Programs for the South Arkansas Symphony have included premieres every season, including 5 world premieres and newly commissioned works. Guest artists of both regional and international interest have been featured every season. The quality of the orchestra has risen to one of the top orchestras of its size in the country.

A high profile leader:

Performances of both the Shreveport Symphony and the South Arkansas Symphony have appeared regularly in the 4 states of Louisiana, Arkansas, Mississippi, and Texas. SASO has been televised state wide in Arkansas. Performances led by Maestro Poling have appeared several times nationally on National Public Radio and on the Public Television Broadcasting network. Articles about Maestro Poling have appeared in regional newspapers such as the Shreveport Times, Forum Magazine, CityLights and the El Dorado News Times, and national magazines such as Ovation.

CURRENT POSITIONS:

Resident Conductor - Interim Music Director (appointed October, '02 through June, '05, extended June '06) **NEWLY NAMED ASSOCIATE CONDUCTOR** starting fall 2006.

Shreveport Symphony Orchestra - a regional orchestra with an annual budget of over \$1.3 million.

As Music Director - oversees all aspects of musical performance by orchestra and ensembles, conducts majority of concerts, run-outs, special events, takes leadership role in concert/season planning, fundraising, etc.

Music Director and Conductor/Executive Director (12 seasons)

South Arkansas Symphony Orchestra - As Music Director - oversees all aspects of musical performances, conducts majority of concerts, plans season, oversees/hires/auditions personnel, selects

guest artists. As Executive Director, oversees the operation of the entire organization, while also coordinating development and fundraising elements. Annual budget of \$200,000.

Music Director and Conductor, (13 seasons)

Shreveport Metropolitan Ballet - conducts performances, plans events with choreographers, and creates new ballets with artistic directors, Annual budget of \$250,000 .

Music Director and Conductor, (first season) River Cities Theater Troupe

conducts performances, oversees rehearsals. The region's first equity theater, fully professional.

OTHER POSITIONS:

most recent guest conducting appearances :

Guest Conductor, Guanajuato Symphony, Mexico, March, 2006

Guest Conductor of the Ohio All-State Orchestra in Cleveland - January, 2006

Guest Conductor of the Shenzhen (China) Symphony Orchestra, November 2005.

Guest Conductor, Guanajuato Symphony, Mexico, November, 2005

International Adjudicator for the 2nd Annual China Young Artists Competition, Beijing, China, Aug. 2005

Adjudicator for the State of Louisiana, Dept. of Arts, grants panels 2005

Guest Conductor, Filarmonia Veneta, Italy, April 2005

Pending commitments, Summer 2007 include Tablisi, Georgia and Croatia, and a return to Beijing.

Macon Symphony, February, 2007

others see below.

OTHER RECENT GUEST CONDUCTING APPEARANCES: Riverside Symphonia, New Jersey, Orquesta Sinfonica del Estado de Mexico, Adrian Symphony, Opera Lewanee, Monroe Symphony, Longview Symphony, Parma Symphony Orchestra, Louisiana Dance Foundation, Ballet Mississippi, Ballet South, Louisiana Tech University Chorus and Orchestra,

Music Director - Marjorie Lyons Playhouse of Louisiana - Summer musicals for last 10 summer seasons.

Tour Music Director - Moscow Ballet/Moscow Chamber Orchestra - November, 2002 - responsibilities included conducting performances in cities such as Phoenix, AZ and El Dorado, AR, and coordinating with production director for hiring of additional musicians.

Concerto soloist with Shreveport Symphony 1990, 94, 97, 99, 2000, 01, 05

Concertmaster - AIMS festival in Graz, Austria, Summer 1996

Music Director, Achill Island Music Fest. (Ireland), Summer, 1994 responsibilities included hiring of guest artists, planning of concerts, leading and performing as part of festival.

Associate Conductor, Shreveport Symphony Orchestra 1987-1993 - promotion from Assistant - responsibilities were similar to below. **RENAMED ASSOCIATE CONDUCTOR STARTING FALL 2006**

Assistant Conductor, Shreveport Symphony Orchestra 1985-1987 - responsibilities included the creation of the SSO's educational programming, with over 150 performances each year for children.

This programming structure continues through the present day. Other responsibilities included conducting @ 45 concerts each season and acting as cover conductor for all other events.

Assistant Conductor, Shreveport Opera 1987-1989

Music Director, Ruston Symphony 1986-1988

Music Director, Centenary College Orchestra 1986-1989

Music Director, Texarkana Community Orchestra 1985-1987

Conductor, Puerto Rico Conservatory Orchestra 1983-1985

Music Director, Puerto Rico Chamber Orchestra 1983-1984

Conductor, Puerto Rico Youth Symphony 1983-1985

Director/Conductor Music Festival for Young Musicians, PR 1985

Assistant Conductor, Brookline Symphony 1980-1982

Conductor, Boston Conserv. Chamber Orchestra 1979-1982

FESTIVALS: in addition to above activities, have appeared as a performer with the following summer festivals: Casals, Colorado Music Festival, Festival Mayormente Mozart, Eastern Music Festival, Interamerican Festival of Contemporary Music, Shreveport Summer Music Festival

EDUCATION and AWARDS: Conducting studies with Leonard Bernstein, Seiji Ozawa, Kurt Masur, Roger Norrington, Gustav Meier while in the conducting class at the Tanglewood Music Institute (Summer of 1987) Violin studies with Max Hobart at the Boston Conservatory of Music and David Cerone at the Cleveland Institute of Music. BM cum laude, Boston Conservatory of Music, 1982. Further studies at

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Cleveland Institute of Music, Boston Conservatory of Music. Conducting studies through the American Symphony Orchestra League with Lawrence Leighton Smith and David Zinman at league seminars as active participant. Scholarship awards at Tanglewood Institute, Cleveland Institute of Music, Boston Conservatory of Music and others.

Mayoral Proclamation - "Kermit Poling Day", Shreveport, Louisiana 2006

Awarded Outstanding Musician Fellowship 2000 - State of Louisiana - award included a \$5,000 grant from the Division of the Arts, Louisiana . Invited to serve on the arts panels for 2005.

Awarded Outstanding Musician Fellowship 1996 - Shreveport Regional Arts Council - award included a \$2,500 grant from the City of Shreveport, invited to serve on arts panels 2004, 05.

COMMISSIONS: Chamber work to premiere in the spring of 2007 for the Shreveport Summer Music Festival.

Wizard of Oz orchestral suite – Marshall Symphony – pending

Wizard of Oz, original ballet, premiered March 10, 2006

Snow White, original ballet, premiered spring 2002, repeated 2003.

Electra, incidental music, Marjorie Lyons Theater (Centenary College) 2001

As Bees in Honey Drown, incidental music, Marjorie Lyons Theater (Centenary College) 2000

Original Score, Stage adaptation of The Leafmen and the Brave Good Bugs by William Joyce. A special NEA project. 1998 Used later as soundtrack for the Louisiana Public Broadcasting television version.

RECORDINGS: Digital Masterworks, DBB, Strings Attached Prod., others. In each have either conducted or performed as soloist. Soundtrack of The Leafmen and the Brave Good Bugs, (Strings Attached) includes all original music composed by Mr. Poling for the stage adaptation and LPB production.

BROADCASTS:

Performance Today (National Public Radio) concert performances by the South Arkansas Symphony - 1995-1999

Red River Radio (NPR affiliated network), appears weekly as producer of Regional Symphony Orchestra series, also appearing as soloist and conducting regularly on this series. Conducted concerts include performances by the South Arkansas Symphony and the Shreveport Symphony Orchestra.

PBS-Showcase, appears as solo violinist and concertmaster on National broadcast of Evangeline: the Musical

AETN, - (Arkansas statewide public television) - Conducted the South Arkansas Symphony in a statewide broadcast of the Community Concert in honor of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr, February, 2000

Louisiana Public Broadcasting, - Featured as composer/conductor of original score to William Joyce's The Leafmen and the Brave, Good Bugs in 1998. Also, as solo violinist/concertmaster of Evangeline: the Musical

National Public Radio - Produced audio recordings of National Symphony Orchestra, on tour of US.

MEMBERSHIPS: ASCAP, American Symphony Orchestra League, Conductors Guild, AFM - local 116

PUBLISHERS: Luck's Music, Strings Attached Music, MMG music

REPRESENTATION: Price, Rubin and Partners

REFERENCES

Mr. Jeffrey Biegel, Concert Pianist
32 Brook Road
Valley Stream, NY 11581
516-791-9374

James Dunham, Professor of Viola Rice University
Former Violist of Cleveland Quartet and Sequoia Qt.
Shepherd School of Music – Rice University
P.O. Box 1892
Houston, TX 77251-1892
713-348-3782

Mr. Mike Epley, Past President, South Arkansas Symphony Orchestra
Mr. Steven Kott, Past President, South Arkansas Symphony Orchestra
Mr. Robert Terry, Current President, South Arkansas Symphony Orchestra
c/o South Arkansas Symphony Orchestra Society
315 East Oak, Suite 206
El Dorado, AR 71730
800-792-0521

Elizabeth O'Bannon, Concertmaster – South Arkansas Symphony Orchestra,
Assistant Concertmaster – Shreveport Symphony Orchestra
191 Bruce St.
Shreveport, LA 71105
318-865-8564

Timothy Jones, Opera Singer, Faculty University of Texas
3406 Maitland
San Antonio, TX 78259
210-497-2604

Marion Mills, Artistic Director, Shreveport Metropolitan Ballet
Adrian Brooks Williamson, Co-Artistic Director, Shreveport Metropolitan Ballet
c/o 509 Marshall Street, Suite 1015
Shreveport, LA 71101
318-459-1457