

SIR GEORG SOLTI MEMORIAL FESTIVAL IN CHICAGO 2016



The Sir Georg Solti Memorial Festival was an epic project for American Music Festivals. We are grateful for the support of so many leading to its success. Upon its conclusion, I have had some time to reflect on the music, the man, and the cultural legacy he has left us in Chicago.

When asked to take on the Festival I did so with humility. I never met Maestro Solti. In my formative years, I respectfully sat in the back of the Orchestral Hall, watching his rehearsals and attending his concerts. Like so many others, I continue to study and enjoy his countless recordings.

My connection to him is through the friendships and concerts I have made with artists invited by the Maestro to join the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. They include Albert Igotnikov, former Assistant Principal Second Violin, John Bruce Yeh, Assistant Principal Clarinet, and Charles Pikler, Principal Viola. Simply put, they are some of the finest musicians in the world.

The participating Chicago Symphony members spoke with reverence for Sir Georg, and how their appointment to the orchestra had changed, or given them, their artistic life. The Festival was the idea of Mr. Igotnikov, and working closely with Mr. Yeh they brought to the Copernicus Center stage a stellar closing performance by Chicago Pro Musica. They also invited their CSO colleagues to join forces with the Lincolnwood Chamber Orchestra for the opening concert, led by Guest Concertmaster David Taylor. Both Albert and John were soloists, and it was a great honor to perform with them.



I was also thrilled to collaborate with vocalists Anastasiya Roytman and her brother Cantor Pavel Roytman. So much of Maestro Solti's life was devoted to opera and nurturing young talent. The Festival included an enormous educational outreach effort realized through our partnership with the Illinois Society for Arts and Music Promotion among Youth.

American Music Festivals mission of cultural exchange was furthered by the Sir Georg Solti Memorial Festival in that it was a real coming together of Chicago's Hungarian, Polish, and Russian audiences. We made many friends and are looking forward to exciting new collaborations with these communities. Special thanks to our General Sponsor Lifeway Foods, The Copernicus Foundation, the Consulate General of Hungary in Chicago, WFMT radio, and all those who helped us realize this dream.

As a native Chicagoan, having a resource like the Chicago Symphony Orchestra available remains nothing short of a miracle. In addition to the above mentioned personal and professional relationships, it has helped develop my musical imagination and appreciation for what is artistically possible for a community, if not all of humanity. Maestro Solti embodied these principals. At the conclusion of the Festival, I was again struck with a profound sense of humility.

Here is tradition, and here is continuity. Opening the score to Leo Weiner's Divertimento No. 1, I was fascinated to see his dedication to Fritz Reiner. Now the baton has passed to Maestro Ricardo Muti, who is again taking the Chicago Symphony Orchestra to great heights, building upon the efforts of so many before him. For those of us fortunate enough to have experienced the Solti years in Chicago we remain grateful to him. Let us never forget the life and inspiration of Maestro Sir Georg Solti, the longtime Music Director of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra

Philip Simmons
Honolulu, Hawaii
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