

Renowned conductor heaps kudos on local musicians

BY DAVE GORDON

Since he was just three years old, Kristian Alexander's family began taking him to classical music concerts and ballet performances, where they were sure to have seats close to the conductor.

"For me it was just magic watching the conductor making wonderful sounds with his hands," he recalls. By the time he was five years old, the musical muse came calling, and he decided to tell his mother of his ambition to conduct orchestras.

"From that moment, it is all hard work – a lot of music lessons, countless hours of practicing and constant learning up until now."

There was no looking back, and now, forty years later, Kristian Alexander - the founding music director of Kindred Spirits Orchestra, and artistic director of the Markham Contemporary Music Festival – is gearing up for yet another string of concerts in Markham.

Among his rich dossier of musical experiences, Alexander has conducted orchestras across Ontario – including at Glenn Gould Studio in Toronto and Roy Thomson Hall – as well as in Montreal, Germany and Bulgaria. He has won many awards in various forums internationally.

He was voted thirteen years ago by more than 2,000 conductors and music directors across the globe to represent Canada on the Board of the Directors of the Conductors Guild, an esteemed institute in his field.

Alexander has also been a mentor for many young musicians and conductors through various positions he has held at the International Baccalaureate Organisation in England, the Atelier lyrique de l'Opéra de Montréal, the



Kristian Alexander

International MusicAcademy, the Canadian Conservatory for Music and Arts, among several others. And of course, founder of Kindred Spirits Orchestra.

"I am always excited when there is an opportunity to create an organization where people can get together and engage in meaningful activity," he said of the Orchestra which he created in 2009.

Since then, he has received more than 400 bids from musicians to join.

"There are a lot of excellent musicians in York Region who are always looking to join orchestras and play ...the best part of being part of the orchestra is working together with highly qualified musicians who have the passion for music and several years of experience playing in various orchestras. Bringing out the best they can offer, motivating and inspiring them, as well as creating environment

where every musician can excel and develop – these are the favourite things."

In coming weeks he and the orchestra will continue their performances in Markham, and as they prepare for their concerts, Alexander explains that deciding on the compositions isn't always easy.

"Choosing a répertoire is a complex process. The pieces that we play have to be accessible for the level of the orchestra, stimulating for the musicians, attractive for the new audience, educational for the core audience, versatile in genre and style and representative of various ethnical and linguistic backgrounds," he says.

"It takes a lot of research and time to put together a balanced concert season."

He must be doing something right—in the next calendar year he's back several times, and to be sure, our community will come back to hear the sounds of the Spirits.

More information about the Kindred Spirits Orchestra www.KSORchestra.ca

More about Kristian, www.KristianAlexander.com

Upcoming shows

June 27, with Kindred Spirits Orchestra and Village Voices Choir at the Markham Theatre for the Performing Arts. Repertoire includes Mendelssohn, Symphony No. 5, Op. 107 "Reformation".

July 1, with Kindred Spirits Orchestra, at Unionville Millennium Bandstand, Markham, featuring Mendelssohn, Symphony No. 5, Op. 107 "Reformation", Strauss, Tchaikovsky, Overture 1812 and Brahms.