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INTERVIEW | Maestro Kristian Alexander On The Magic Behind Your Kindred Spirits Orchestra

By [Anya Wassenberg](#) on August 30, 2023



Maestro Kristian Alexander conducts the Kindred Spirits Orchestra (Photo courtesy of Kindred Spirits Orchestra)

In partnership with Kindred Spirits Orchestra

Kindred Spirits Orchestra offers classical music lovers a unique blend of elements. Music Director and Principal Conductor Kristian Alexander has curated a 2023-24 season filled with rare gems, continuing in his tradition of presenting rarely heard works by famous composers alongside new and lesser-known pieces.

The man behind the music is Maestro Kristian Alexander, who founded Kindred Spirits Orchestra in 2009. We caught up with him this summer to ask a few questions about what makes Kindred Spirits

unique, along with some details about the upcoming season.

Q: What makes Kindred Spirits Orchestra different in the Toronto classical music landscape?

KA: The KSO presents intriguing and rarely performed works by well-known composers. In recent years, we performed symphonies Nos. 2, 3, and 4 by Prokofiev; Nos. 4, 6, 10, 11, 12, 14 and 15 by Shostakovich; symphonies by Wagner, Scriabin, Grieg, Stravinsky, and Richard Strauss.

Many of the instrumental concerti we have presented in the last 5–6 years are also seldom performed on this side of the Atlantic: Lalo's cello concerto, Prokofiev's and Rachmaninoff's Fourth piano concerti, Tchaikovsky's Second piano concerto, along with works by Hindemith, Górecki, Schnittke and other brilliant composers of the 20th century.

The KSO is the first symphony orchestra in Canada to adopt an environmentally conscious business model, migrate to paperless operations and provide all musicians with iPad Pro tablets.

Q: The 2023-24 season is ambitious, with 9 concerts, and several major and challenging works. How do you feel about the launch of the season?

KA: I am very excited about the upcoming concert season. The programming is versatile and includes masterworks from the 19th and the 20th centuries, along with less frequently performed jewels of the orchestral repertoire. Twenty-one pieces will be presented by the KSO for a very first time in a kaleidoscope of music written by German, French, Spanish, Canadian, Polish, Hungarian, Russian, and Chinese composers.

Q: There is such an interesting mix of composers and pieces. How do you choose what to put together in a season's programming? Do some of the pieces have a personal connection?

KA: The KSO has an Artistic policy that guides the programming of every concert season. The policy has about 15 different criteria, and comes down to programming pieces that are enriching and stimulating for the musicians, educational for the core audience, attractive for new audiences, versatile in genre and style.

The concert season is also representative of the local community, promotes emerging artists, artists of colour, Canadian composers, women composers, soloists, and conductors, along with international cultural exchange.

Q: What can the audience expect from a Kindred Spirits performance? What do you think will make them memorable this upcoming season?

KA: During rehearsals, we take a great deal of time to talk about the cultural, social, economic, and political aspects surrounding the creation of the compositions we will be presenting. We aim to recreate the sound that closely reflects the personality of the composer and his historical time.

For our audience, it may feel like travelling back in time and experiencing the emotions that are brought by every piece of music. Prior to each concert, we offer a short recital of chamber music related to the performance, a pre-concert chat about the composers, intermission discussion with Q&A from the guest-soloist or conductor, post-concert reception and meet & greet the musicians.

Each concert is also hosted by Daniel Vnukowski from **Classical 96.3 FM**. We take good care of our audience and hope that our concerts would bring sparkle in their eyes.

Q: Are there any surprises you can hint at, special collaborations, or other elements audiences can look forward to?

KA: Highlights of the season include Tchaikovsky's Symphony No. 5, Shostakovich's Symphony No. 8, Rimsky-Korsakov's Scheherazade, Bizet's Symphony in C, Bruckner's Symphony No. 3, and Honegger's Symphony No. 3 "Liturgique".

I have also included 5 rarities by Stravinsky: Circus Polka (for a young elephant), Scherzo fantastique, Concerto for piano and wind instruments, Scènes de ballet, and Symphonies of wind instruments.

Then, we are very excited about a new concert series, Three at the Meridian, that we will be presenting in the spring of 2024 at George Weston Recital Hall. The series will feature 3 acclaimed pianists: Ludmil Angelov in Chopin's Second piano concerto, Li Wang in the "Yellow River" piano concerto, and Daniel Vnukowski in works by French composers César Franck and Vincent d'Indy.

On the occasion of the 110th birthday of one of the major Polish composers of the 20th century – Witold Lutosławski – internationally renowned pianist Christina Petrowska Quilico will present Lutosławski's Concerto for piano and orchestra. We will also feature Toronto Symphony Orchestra's concertmaster Jonathan Crow in Bartók's avant-garde Violin Concerto No. 2.

Q: What other details can you share about the upcoming season?

KA: The KSO has a few interesting community outreach and educational programs. One of them collaborates with emerging artists to bring their interpretation to communities outside the City of Toronto. Among them is the winner of the Grand Prize of the 2022 International Music Festival and Competition, Sumi Kim. In February 2024, she will make her début at Flato Markham Theatre with Saint-Saëns' Piano Concerto No. 2.

Then, the winner of the Montreal Symphony Orchestra Manulife Competition – Henry From – will present Hindemith's attractive Konzertmusik for piano, brass, and two harps, in April 2024.

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For more details on Kindred Spirits Orchestra season, or to order tickets, see [**HERE**].