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DIRK MEYER IS DSSO'S INSPIRATIONAL MUSIC DIRECTOR

by Sheryl Jensen



German-born Dirk Meyer is celebrating his 10th year with the DSSO. Photo submitted.

Charles Munch, the French-German conductor best known as the Boston Symphony Orchestra music director, said, "The conductor must breathe life into the score. It is you and you alone who must expose it to the understanding, reveal the hidden jewel to the sun at the most flattering angles."

As the Music Director for the Duluth Superior Symphony Orchestra (DSSO) since 2013, Dirk Meyer has been breathing life into scores and revealing the hidden jewels of the music in each concert ever since.

This year marks the 10th DSSO season for Meyer, and it will be a celebration of both him and all the wonderful music he and the DSSO have made together.

Extensive Resume

Meyers is originally from Dusseldorf, Germany. He received his Bachelor's Degrees in music from the Folkwang Conservatory in Germany and the University Duisburg-Essen for philosophy. He holds a Doctor of Musical Arts and Masters degrees in orchestral conducting from Michigan State University,

He explained, "I originally moved to the U.S. to pursue my graduate studies, thinking that I'd probably be back in Germany after four or five years. That was 21 years ago."



After completing his graduate studies at Michigan State, Meyer served as Music Director to the Sarasota Youth Orchestras, giving his Carnegie Hall debut in New York City with the Sarasota Youth Philharmonic in 2008. Meyer also served as Assistant Conductor (https://destinationduluth.org) and later Principal Guest Conductor, of the Sarasota Orchestra in Florida.



Dirk Myer thought he would return to Germany after his studies in America. Photo submitted.

Other appointments have included Assistant positions with the Traverse Symphony (MI) and Missouri Symphony Orchestras and the Music Director position with the Mason Symphony Orchestra in Michigan. In 2012, Meyer was named the winner of The American Prize in orchestral conducting.

Outside of North America, Meyer has conducted many orchestras in Europe and abroad, including appearances in South Africa, the Czech Republic and Germany. In the operatic world, he has led performances of Carmen and Don Giovanni with the Plovdiv Opera in Bulgaria and served as Assistant Conductor to the Michigan State University Opera Theatre.

Besides being the DSSO Music Director, Meyer is currently Music Director of the Augusta Symphony Orchestra. In Duluth, he is also Music Director of the Lyric Opera of the North (LOON).

“When moving to Duluth, I was very fortunate to quickly become friends with Sarah Lawrence and Cal Metts, the Artistic Directors of LOON. Lucky for me, they appreciated my love for opera and my desire to work with singers, and I soon became Music Director of that company. We have worked on many productions since. I have loved every single one of them!”

Welcomed in Duluth

Of his path to Duluth, Meyer explained, “In 2011, the DSSO started the search for a new Music Director. I knew our former principal flutist from conducting in Orlando, where she played as well. She mentioned this search to me and raved about the orchestra and the community. Of course, that got me intrigued, and I was thrilled as I progressed in the search. After I had visited Duluth for the first time during my audition process, I was sold! A great orchestra in a wonderful community, in the most amazing natural setting: What more could I ask for?”

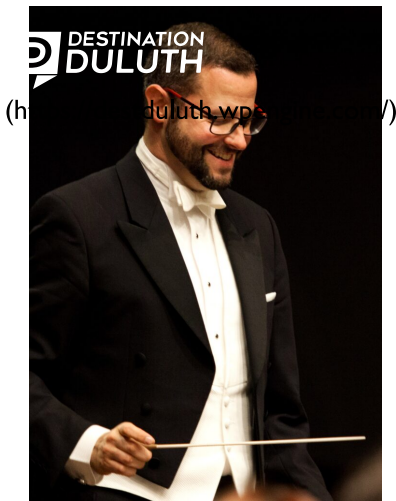
“From my first arrival in Duluth, the Twin Ports have been welcoming and supportive to me, my family and, of course, the DSSO. The support we get from our patrons is simply wonderful,” said Meyer.

He added, “Look at this past season: After a long Covid hiatus, the community came out again to support their orchestra! We had two sell-outs last season, and another one just now in August with Jurassic Park.”

Orchestral Memories

When asked about some of his most memorable concerts with the DSSO, he replied, “There are so many! To me, many of our most memorable concerts have involved our wonderful chorus – another fantastic group of musicians that we are fortunate to have as part of our family. It is thanks to the combined artistry of chorus and orchestra, as well as the amazing chorus repertoire, that these concerts were so special. Our performance of Mahler’s Symphony No.2 comes to mind, for example.”





Dirk Myers has many memorable moments with the DSSO. Photo submitted.

He added, “Then there were unforgettable moments with some of our guest artists. Working with our concertmaster Erin Aldridge as soloist every year is a treat. Finally, there were those concerts with those inexplicable moments where the audience and musicians collectively hold their breaths. Those are experiences that stay with us, like when we performed the Brahms’ Violin Concerto with Geneva Lewis or our Michael Tippett’s A Child of our Time.”

Home Time

While he is incredibly busy with his crowded concert and opera calendar, he especially enjoys family time and time in the kitchen. “I love to cook and try new things in the kitchen. It’ll mostly be dishes from Germany, but also some other cuisines and anything that can be prepared on the grill. I absolutely love Indian cuisine and would love to learn more about that as well.”

Dirk’s wife Paula is from Fosston, Minnesota. She started as a lawyer with a firm in Duluth and then switched to a Minneapolis-based law firm, where she works remotely.

Dirk and Paula have two little boys, Sebastian (4) and Felix (3), who keep the couple busy. Both of the boys have just started soccer.



Dirk and his wife Paula and their sons, Sebastian and Felix. Photo submitted.

Meyer said that his kids’ musical tastes now are consumed by “music” from “Spider-Man” and “Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles.” Sebastian will soon start on his first instrument, the piano. Dirk was adamant that he would not be his son’s piano teacher, since as “Dad,” it would be hard to be taken seriously.

“I am the only one from my family who lives in the U.S. My mother, sister, cousins all live in Germany. That’s why we try to visit every year so that the kids can grow up knowing their Grandma and extended German family,” Meyer said. “In addition, they are growing up bilingual and spending time in Germany and visiting a kindergarten while there is amazing

for their language development.”



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Dirk and his two sons, Sebastian and Felix. Photo submitted.

He said, “The kids are still a bit young, but my wife very much enjoys music and visiting my concerts. She is also an active board member of the Lyric Opera of the North. We also have two little dogs, Harvey and Teddy, who like to take us on at least two walks a day.”

Orchestral Music For Everyone



Recreating his first concert in Duluth ten years ago, pianist Orion Weiss will perform with the orchestra. Photo submitted.

“Orchestras around the globe have not been very good at communicating the experience that they can deliver,” said Meyer. “Most people still think that an orchestral concert is a stuffy affair and something that their parents or grandparents enjoyed. In most cases, those same people have never been to a symphonic concert. If someone loves music (of any kind) and enjoys sharing an experience with other people around them, they should try out the orchestra! I am convinced they will be surprised how welcoming, open and fun it is.”

Meyer invites everyone to enjoy this season's concerts. To kick off the season, they bring back pianist Orion Weiss to perform the Grieg Piano Concerto with the orchestra – just as he did ten years ago for Meyer's first concert as Music Director with the DSSO.

For more information about DSSO concerts and tickets, visit dssso.com (<http://dssso.com>)