



Maestro David Wroe of the Westfield Symphony Orchestra. He was recently named one of the "20 New Jersey Faces to watch in the New Century."

Westfield Entertainer of the Year Continues to Thrill Audiences

By MICHELLE H. LePOIDEVIN
Specially Written for This Is Westfield

Plunging his baton and thrusting his elbows in mid-air with a fevered frenzy, Music Director and Conductor of the Westfield Symphony Orchestra (WSO), David Wroe, possesses the power to conjure up deep sorrow and overwhelming elation in some of the most renowned compositions. One can almost visualize Brahms and Mozart glowing with pride beside him. Doves of concertgoers have been stupefied by Maestro Wroe's notable and incontestable conducting, but how many honestly know the man who poises the baton?

"Actually, I'm a Brit by birth," Mr. Wroe began during a coffee house interview with *This Is Westfield*. He added that when his parents discovered his

treble soprano voice when he was nine-years-old, he was sent away to a private boarding school.

"They initially first saw me as a professional cellist," he added. "But, studying the cello is a rather lonely institution."

Maestro Wroe confided that becoming a conductor was virtually inevitable because he was a "gregarious exhibitionist." The conductor noted that he knew he was "meant to end up on stage."

"I was bathed in the great Renaissance and Baroque musical traditions," he reflected. "I sang through the process of osmosis." Soon, playing soccer in the evening and studying Bach by day became the daily regimen for Maestro Wroe at the private school until his voice broke and changed at the age of 13.

In the next year, the conductor-to-be attended Lansing College as a music scholar. Four years later, he obtained his Bachelor of Music Degree from Manchester University in England.

"That was my first real taste in conducting," Maestro Wroe said of his experience at Manchester. He added that he conducted the university's choir and presented a number of concerts there.

Maestro Wroe became immersed in what he called the "Russian tradition of rigor and discipline" at Northwestern University in Evanston, Ill., just north in Chicago, where he studied under Victor Yampolsky.

Maestro Wroe recalled being coached under the internationally renowned conductor teacher Gustav Meier. "I learned to coordinate gestural movements with feeling in the music."

Eight years ago, up until 1994, Maestro Wroe served as Assistant Conductor of the Boston Sym-

phony Orchestra under conductor Seiji Ozawa.

"He was an enormous influence. It was never a teacher-student relationship. His influence was unavoidable just being around him," Maestro Wroe stated. He added that Ozawa's extreme energy and gesture-empowered technique quickly began to meld with his developing style and virtuosity. Simultaneously, Maestro Wroe was Music Director of the Kansas City Camerata for seven years.

In addition, for two years, he served as Principal Conductor at the City Opera at Heidelberg in Germany - an experience Maestro Wroe labeled as "very intense."

"It gave me access to a whole new area of music making - opera," he noted.

Part of Maestro Wroe's responsibilities as Music Director and Conductor of the WSO includes the Caravan program in which small selections of music are studied by and presented to students in Westfield's public schools.

The nearly hour-long program affords Maestro Wroe the opportunity to serve as the same type of mentor and indelible influence as his mentors, Yampolsky, Meier, and Ozawa. "It is a very intense 45 minutes," he explained. "It gives me the chance to enlighten and enthrall them (the students)."

During the snowy afternoon interview, Maestro Wroe confided proudly that he has stacks of letters from literally hundreds of students with pictures expressing thanks for his contribution to the program.

When asked by *This Is Westfield* about his overall impetus each time he takes the stage for a WSO concert, Maestro Wroe thoughtfully stated, "There is a general philosophy that I have. It is not an

Maestro Wroe With His Flair

erudite and high brow philosophy, but a sophomore mission that I have. I simply want to bring joy, enthusiasm and love of life and let them hear beautifully orchestrated music on whatever terms they want."

Although his accomplishments are innumerable, Maestro Wroe also modestly confided, "It is not the biography of the composer, but rather the music's power."

The composer who has also lent his musicianship to the Tanglewood Music Centre and Boston University Tanglewood Institute, likes to think that upon striding confidently before the orchestra he is "a general messenger delivering the secrets of the magic of music."

"I want the audience to leave enriched, invigorated and revived. I want them to tackle all of their challenges and apply a positive spirit from that moment on," he said.

Surprisingly, Maestro Wroe is a cellist by trade. However, now, his eyes are focused on learning the piano. His fiancée, Shaung Guo, a

pianist with the WSO, is trying to help him achieve that dream.

"She's charging me an arm and a leg," mused the conductor, who recently and officially planted his roots as a Westfield resident.

In discussing his devotion to the Westfield Symphony Orchestra, Maestro Wroe revealed, "I gave up my position in Germany to commit myself more fully to the WSO. I believe in the Orchestra and its future. It is an extraordinarily fine ensemble - one of the best in the country."

When asked by *This Is Westfield* if he plans to continue his contribution to the Symphony in the coming years, Maestro Wroe stated, "I do see a long-term commitment. I want to see the fruits of my labor and the Board of Directors' work germinate and flourish."

Those who have attended a WSO



HOT, HOT, HOT!...Last August, Maestro David Wroe heated up a packed audience at Echo Lake Park in a performance of the Westfield Symphony Orchestra entitled, "Tango in the Park." Audience members fanned themselves continuously, not from the heat, but from Maestro's red hot conducting skills.

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WESTFIELD SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
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David Wroe Music Director & Conductor WSO's David Wroe was chosen by <i>The Star Ledger's</i> Arts Writers as one of the 20 New Jersey Faces to Watch for in the New Century	Star Wars October 2, 2000 Williams <i>Star Wars</i> Holst <i>The Planets</i>	Moonchild's Dream November 11, 2000 Koppel <i>Moonchild's Dream</i> Beethoven <i>Symphony #6, "Pastoral"</i>	"...poised to become the state's leading second-tier symphony - and there is only one at the top!" - <i>The Star Ledger</i> "To have music of this caliber and an ensemble the level of the WSO does our area a great honor." - <i>The Westfield Leader</i>
	Stars Among the Planets Feb 3, 2001 Milhaud <i>Creation of the World</i> with the Umoja Dance Company Mozart <i>Symphony #41, "Jupiter"</i>	Rising Star March 10, 2001 Special Guest Artist violin prodigy Ryu Goto	
	Mars Meets Venus - April 28, 2001 Mozart <i>Marriage of Figaro</i>		

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"I can only recommend that every man, woman and child come to the next concert ..."
- David Palladino, *The Westfield Leader*