Toshi and the PSO: A Brief History

Toshiyuki Shimada’s arrival in 1986 as the 11th music director and conductor of the Portland Symphony Orchestra was celebrated with a grand opening night celebration. That evening heralded the start of a new era of major artistic development and involvement in the community by the then 62-year-old orchestra.

In the succeeding 20 years, the PSO increased its number of concerts, performed regularly in Maine’s towns and cities, and produced outstanding education programs for children. The growth in the artistic excellence of the orchestra’s members was recognized nationally with the awarding of several grants from the National Endowment for the Arts, and by sell-out audiences that enthusiastically applauded whenever the PSO’s own members were the guest soloists.

Toshi thoroughly enjoyed living in the Portland area and working with resident musicians and performing ensembles. Concerts often featured the Choral Art Society, the Portland Community Chorus, musicians and ensembles from Maine’s colleges and universities, children’s choruses, and many others. Toshi championed the works of today’s composers and works by several of Maine’s classical music composers were programmed during his years in Portland. He gave countless in-school programs, taught at the University of Southern Maine, and gave acclaimed pre-concert lectures.

Toshi received several honors in recognition of his contributions to the community, including the Italian Heritage Center Cultural Award, Maine Publicity Bureau Cultural Award, Portland Fire
Department Honorary Fire Fighter and the 2004 New Ariel Artist of the Year award, and, as an advisor to Valid Technology, promotes the arts in business environments.

Under Toshi’s baton, the PSO’s “Magic of Christmas” concerts, started in 1980 with two performances, attracted thousands of people and grew to 15 concerts. Audiences eagerly anticipated the moment when he would invite a young girl or boy to stand before the orchestra and conduct, and watched as Toshi quietly walked to the side of the stage, smiling as the youngster discovered the joy of making music with a live orchestra. Later, as he donned his Santa hat and the orchestra members decked themselves out in the most imaginative headwear, great applause would greet the first few measures of the perennial favorite, Leroy Anderson’s “Sleigh Ride.”

Starting in early 1995 and continuing for two concert seasons, City Hall auditorium was closed for extensive renovations. With a spirit of artistic adventure, Toshi led concerts at the State Theatre, Cumberland County Civic Center and Eastland Hotel that not only sustained the PSO’s audiences, but took advantage of the unique performing spaces with programs that featured large choruses, visiting instrumental ensembles, projected visuals, and dancers. He conducted a gala concert in March 1997, when the magnificent Merrill Auditorium was rededicated as Portland’s signature facility for live entertainment.

Toshi Shimada is music director of the Yale Symphony Orchestra, and a frequent guest conductor in the United States and Europe. He is music director and chief creative officer of Trinity Music Partners, LLC, in New York City, which holds the worldwide rights to the Vatican Library Music Collection, and is principal conductor of the Vienna Modern Masters record label in Vienna, Austria.

The Portland Symphony Orchestra treasures its distinguished history and honors the extraordinary contributions that Maestro Toshiyuki Shimada has made during his long and illustrious tenure.
Welcome
Jeff Kane, President

Presentations
David Ott, President, TD Banknorth and PSO Trustee
James Cohen, Mayor, City of Portland

Musical Interlude
Members of the Portland Symphony

Remarks
Jane Hunter, PSO Executive Director
Peter Plumb, PSO Distinguished Service Trustee

Video

Toshi Shimada Guest Artist Fund
Jeff Kane, PSO President, Sally and Ron Bancroft,
TGAF Co-Chairs, Debbie Galarneau, PSO President-Elect

Presentation Of Gifts

Remarks
Toshiyuki Shimda, PSO Music Director and Conductor

"Auf Wiedersehen"
Many thanks to the following Portland Symphony Orchestra musicians performing this evening:

Kathy Foster
James Kennedy
Laurie Brown Kennedy

Judith Lee
Holly Ovenden
Ann Stepp

Matthew Watras
Joanne Woodward