

Robert Franz

Acclaimed conductor Robert Franz, recognized as “an outstanding musician with profound intelligence,” has held to three principles throughout his career; a commitment to the highest artistic standards, to creating alliances and building bridges in each community he serves, and a dedication to being a strong force in music education. As Music Director of the Windsor Symphony Orchestra, Associate Conductor of the Houston Symphony, and Artistic Director of the Boise Baroque Orchestra, he has achieved success through his focus on each of these values.

His appeal as a first-rate conductor and enthusiastic award-winning educator is acclaimed by critics, composers, and audiences of all ages. Composer Bright Sheng praised Franz for his “extremely musical and passionate approach towards music making” and critics hail his “masterly pace, emphasis and technical control” calling his conducting “viscerally thrilling.” Franz is in increasing demand as a guest conductor, having collaborated with the Cleveland Orchestra, Baltimore Symphony, St. Louis Symphony, Rochester Philharmonic, Buffalo Philharmonic, North Carolina Symphony, Reno Chamber Orchestra, Austin Symphony Orchestra, Winston-Salem Symphony, Phoenix Symphony, and Italy’s Orchestra da Camera Fiorentina, among others. 2021 marks his debut with the Detroit Symphony Orchestra. His versatility has led to performances with a wide array of artists, including James Galway, Joshua Bell, Rachel Barton Pine, Chris Botti, Idina Menzel and Judy Collins on stage, as well as his work with composers such as Aaron Jay Kernis, Michael Daugherty, John Harbison, Jordan Pal and Jennifer Higdon.

In his eighth season as Music Director of the [Windsor Symphony Orchestra](#), Franz is a leader in a vibrant local arts community. The partnerships he has developed and fostered throughout the community as well as his versatility in programming led to being recognized by The Windsor Endowment for the Arts with its Arts Leadership Award. Faced with the challenge of maintaining an active and successful arts organization in the face of a pandemic, the 2020/2021 season included two curated digital concert series that he led and hosted. Both series include his trademark music introductions, interviews with guest artists and composers, and a celebration of multiple works by five composers of color. Recent collaborations include the Windsor International Film Festival, Art Gallery of Windsor, Canadian Historical Aviation Association, Windsor Public Library, and the University of Windsor. In 2017 he led the first bi-annual Conductor’s Guild Workshop with the Windsor Symphony Orchestra to train conductors in the art of creating and presenting effective student concerts. Through his work the WSO has become a cultural hub for a wide variety of artists in multiple genres and disciplines

Franz’ serves as Artistic Director of the [Boise Baroque Orchestra](#) where he curated and led two digital concert series during the 2020/2021 season. Past partnerships with Opera Idaho included a semi-staged performance of Handel’s *Acis and Galatea* featuring Grammy Award winning tenor, Karim Sulayman. Collaborations with educational institutions and the Boise Philharmonic Master Choral broadened the footprint of this ensemble’s vital work in the community. Under his leadership, the orchestra will undertake its first ever commercial recording project of Classical Oboe Concerti for Centaur Records featuring rising star oboist Bhavani Kotha.

This season Franz celebrates his 13th year as Associate Conductor of the [Houston Symphony](#) where he was recently honored with the Raphael Fliegel Award for Visionary Leadership. It was presented to him in recognition of his immense success in advancing the organization’s education

and community engagement activities. The 2020-2021 season featured Franz leading the North American premiere of Author Dan Brown's musical children's book, "Wild Symphony." A tireless ambassador for music education, he has positively impacted student concert attendance during his tenure and has led the Symphony in a broad range of creative, education and engaging family concerts including its summer neighborhood concert series and outreach programs dedicated to bringing music to all of Houston's communities.

Franz is committed to mentoring the next generation of conductors. His *Art of Conducting* workshops at the Fairbanks Summer Arts Festival have resulted in numerous practicing conductors from across North America deepening their awareness of their craft. Under his leadership, the Boise Baroque Orchestra will host their first Conducting Workshop in June 2021.

As Co-founder and Conductor of the [Idaho Orchestra Institute](#), now in its fifth year, Franz takes young musicians on an exploration of major orchestral repertoire in a program that explores the complete musician.

Committed to music education for students of all ages, Franz maintains a comprehensive schedule of concerts and events each season that delivers on his passion for sharing live music. Developing a deeper connection with music making is at the center of his work with young musicians. His work with the acclaimed *Bolton Research Project* led the way to developing his commitment to the art of active listening. Under his direction, both the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra, where he received the BPO/ECMEA Music Award for Excellence and the Louisville Orchestra were awarded ASCAP's Leonard Bernstein Award for Educational Programming. Franz has also created highly respected arts education programs for the Carolina Chamber Symphony, Buffalo Philharmonic, West End Chamber Ensemble, the Winston-Salem Piedmont Triad Symphony, and the Louisville Orchestra. The Louisville Orchestra's award led to the creation of an education program for Kentucky Educational Television entitled *Creating Music and Stories*.

An eloquent speaker, Franz recently presented a TedX Talk entitled [Active Listening and Our Perception of Time](#). The Idaho Legislature recognized his expertise when he was invited to speak to their education committee, and he spoke on broadening audiences through new music opportunities to the League of American Orchestra's conference. While in Louisville, he co-hosted *In a Different Key*, a weekly contemporary classical music radio program on WUOL.

In addition to his current posts, Franz served as Music Director of the Boise Philharmonic from 2008-2016, and the Mansfield Symphony (OH) from 2003-2010. He has held staff positions with orchestras in Buffalo, Louisville, and Winston-Salem, as well as led youth orchestras in Louisville and Winston-Salem. He is Music Director Emeritus of the Carolina Chamber Symphony, an orchestra he founded. Franz has participated in a number of conducting workshops in the Czech Republic, St. Petersburg (Russia), Nashville, the Festival at Sandpoint and was a participant in the Bruno Walter National Conductor Preview.

Franz received his Master of Music degree in conducting and his Bachelor of Music degree in oboe performance from the North Carolina School of the Arts.

When not on the podium he can be found on the slopes, skiing slowly and carefully, stretching in a yoga class, and non-competitively trying his hardest to win at a game of cards with his family.