

# The New Crossroads of American Music

Press Release



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## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **GERARD SCHWARZ TO BE RECIPIENT OF 2009 FIRST CITIZEN AWARD**

*Greensboro, NC* – **Gerard Schwarz**, Seattle Symphony music director since 1985 and **Eastern Music Festival music director**, is this year’s recipient of the 2009 Seattle-King County First Citizen Award. Maestro Schwarz, an exemplary music director, conductor, visionary leader, collaborator, and educator, will be honored at a civic banquet on October 7.

In announcing the selection, the award sponsors said Schwarz “rose to the top” of a long list of worthy nominees. He joins an esteemed list of recipients from humanitarian organizations, charitable and educational institutions, arts groups, the environment, and other civic endeavors. This year marks the 71<sup>st</sup> anniversary of the prestigious award, which the Seattle-King County Association of REALTORS® created in 1939 to celebrate community leadership, volunteerism and public service.

Event chair Roni Strupat said Schwarz was selected for his remarkable achievements since joining the symphony in 1983. “His artistic leadership and passion for symphonic music have garnered international acclaim. It is especially fitting that we commemorate his distinguished tenure and stellar contributions during his transition to a new role as conductor laureate,” she noted.

Schwarz recently announced he will step down as music director when his contract expires at the end of the 2010-2011 season. Beginning with the 2011-2012 season, he will assume the lifetime title of conductor laureate and return to conduct the orchestra for several weeks each season.

“Jerry is a superb choice,” remarked Susan Hutchison, chair of the Seattle Symphony Board of Directors. “His contributions to the arts and culture of this region have resulted in a world-class orchestra, the creation of Benaroya Hall, which is a civic gem, and the enhancement of music education throughout the region. He’s brought this region great pride and recognition,” she proclaimed.

Under Schwarz’s tenure, he and the Seattle Symphony have collaborated on more than 125 recording projects, resulting in twelve Grammy nominations and two consecutive Emmy Awards for televised performances from Benaroya Hall. Their recording of Samuel Jones’ *The Shoe Bird*, released in September 2008 and based on Eudora Welty’s only children’s book, is up for a Grammy at this weekend’s (Feb. 8) awards event in the category of “Best Musical Album for Children.”

“One of the core principles of the REALTORS® Quality of Life projects is focused on building better communities,” said Keith Nelson, president of the Seattle-King County Association of REALTORS®. “By many measures, Maestro Schwarz has made extraordinary contributions to enriching our community, so it is our privilege to honor him as 2009 First Citizen.”

In the announcement of Schwarz’s decision to step down as music director, Seattle Symphony officials said his “greatest achievement on behalf of Seattle Symphony was perhaps his vision to create a great concert hall for the citizens of Seattle.” Designed exclusively for concert performance, the acoustically superb facility opened its doors to the public in 1998. Since then, the award-winning building has helped revitalize the surrounding downtown district and has served as a model for other cities. More than 315,000 people attend Seattle Symphony performances each year.

During his time with Seattle Symphony, Schwarz, 61, has amassed numerous accolades and awards:

- Since joining the symphony in 1983 as music advisor and becoming music director in 1985, the number of subscribers is up sevenfold, from 5,000 subscribers to 35,000 subscribers.
- Fundraising jumped from an endowment of \$2 million to more than \$30 million in 2008.
- Musicians’ salaries have increased 500 percent.
- The symphony’s education and community programs annually reach more than 90,000 people of all ages, including more than 35,000 students from elementary school through college.
- Under his leadership, the Seattle Symphony was recognized nationally for its adventurous programming in 1996 and 2004, when it received the First Place Award for Programming of Contemporary Music from ASCAP (American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers).

- In May 2002, the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers (ASCAP) recognized Gerard Schwarz as a champion of American music and the music of our time.
- In 1994 he was honored as Conductor of the Year by *Musical America International Directory of the Performing Arts*, the first American to receive this award.

Among other notable achievements, he created several new series catering to diverse audience tastes, including Basically Baroque, Mainly Mozart, Organ and Guitar recitals, Tiny Tots, Musically Speaking, Popular Culture, Visiting Orchestras and a new chamber music series. Also widely praised is his collaboration with local universities, schools, ensembles, and numerous music and cultural organizations.

Schwarz began his conducting career in 1966, and within ten years he was appointed music director of the Waterloo Music Festival, Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra and New York Chamber Symphony. In 1981, he founded New York's Music Today Contemporary Series and served as its music director through 1989.

Schwarz co-founded the New York Chamber Symphony in 1977 and served as its music director through the ensemble's 25th anniversary season in 2002. He is now conductor emeritus of New York's Mostly Mozart Festival, following 20 years as music director there. He has also served as music director of the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra and artistic advisor to Tokyu Bunkamura's Orchard Hall with the Tokyo Philharmonic. He is currently music director of Eastern Music Festival in North Carolina.

Born to Viennese parents, Schwarz is a graduate of the High School of Performing Arts and The Juilliard School. He is a recipient of the Ditson Conductor's award from Columbia University, and holds numerous honorary doctorates, including ones from The Juilliard School, Cornish College of the Arts, Seattle University, University of Puget Sound and Fairleigh Dickinson University. In 2001, he was named Honorary Fellow of Liverpool John Moores University.

The Seattle-King County First Citizen Award and civic banquet, believed to be this region's most senior citation of its kind, has no fund-raising expectation, but instead is designed solely as a not-for-profit celebration of community involvement. Banquet details, including ticket information, will be finalized in the next few months. The Oct. 7 event will be held at the Sheraton Seattle Hotel.

The Seattle-King County Association of Realtors is a nonprofit professional trade association whose goals include promoting business practices that reflect a strict code of ethics and supporting policies that preserve and expand real property rights and housing affordability. Based in Bellevue, SKCAR has 8,600 members and is one of 1,800 local associations of the National Association of Realtors.

Now in its 48th year, the Eastern Music Festival & School is recognized for its prodigious contributions to the field of American music and its commitment to nurturing talented American and international youth through a collaborative learning process. The program brings together a cross-section of America's most sought-after artists with pre-professional students in a five-week schedule of 90 concerts and music-related events. Music Director Gerard Schwarz heads a distinguished list of participating artists scheduled for 2009, including **Peter Serkin, Sarah Chang, Horacio Gutiérrez, Nadja Salerno-Sonnenberg, and Xavier Phillips**, plus many others. The Festival also produces a popular *fringe* series of alternative programming, featuring everything from Americana to alt country, blues, jazz and gospel to be announced soon.

The 2009 season is sponsored in part by the United Arts Council of Greater Greensboro, the North Carolina Arts Council, WFDD Triad Arts Station, Greensboro's News and Record, Continental Airways, and Piedmont Music Center (Steinway Pianos).

For more information about EMF or its programs, please visit [www.easternmusicfestival.org](http://www.easternmusicfestival.org), or call toll-free: 1-877-833-6753

*\*Dates, programs, venues, and artists are subject to change.*

*The Eastern Music Festival's mission is to promote musical enrichment, excellence, professional collaboration, innovation and diversity through a nationally-recognized teaching program, music festival, concerts and other programs which will enhance the quality of life, health and vitality of our region.*

EMF is a 501(c)3 non-profit organization.  
All contributions are tax deductible to the full extent allowed by law.

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