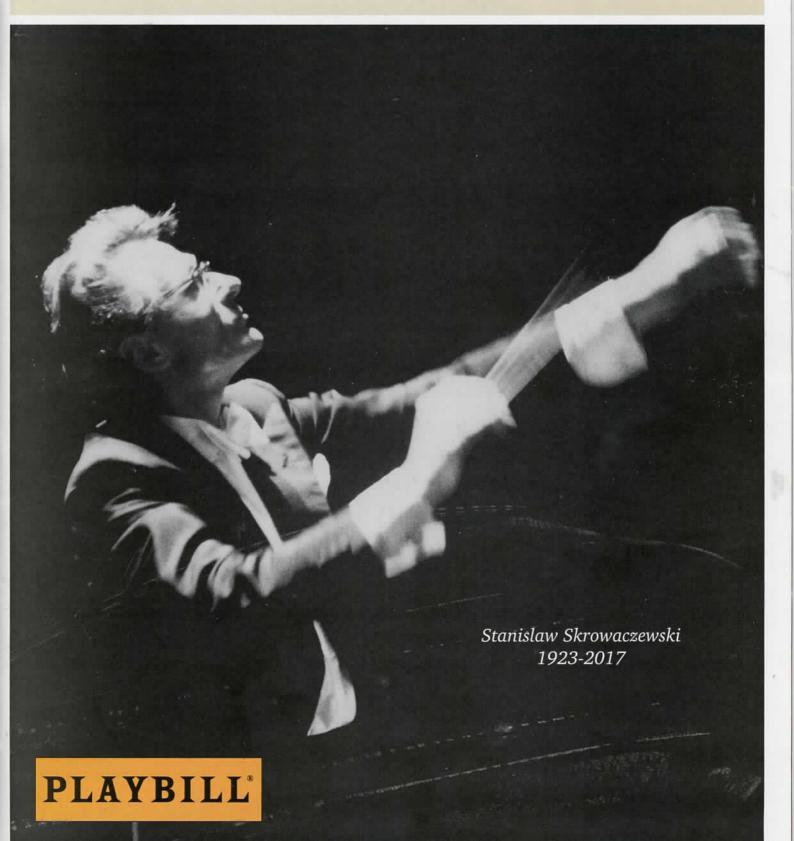


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## Stanislaw Skrowaczewski: remembering a legend

The classical music world lost a legend on February 21, 2017, when Stanislaw Skrowaczewski. the Minnesota Orchestra's music director from 1960 to 1979, died at age 93. The maestro's relationship with the Orchestra began in a high school gym in Brainerd on October 1, 1960, when Skrowaczewski, two days shy of his 37th birthday, led his first concert with the Orchestra, which was then known as the Minneapolis Symphony Orchestra. Skrowaczewski had recently defected from Poland along with his wife Krystyna, escaping from behind the Iron Curtain under the guise of a guest conducting engagement in Amsterdam.

Skrowaczewski, it turned out, had found a permanent home in Minnesota, remaining here after the end of his 19 seasons as music director in 1979. By then, the Orchestra had a permanent home as well-Orchestra Hall, which opened in 1974 following Skrowaczewski's years-long advocacy for the venue's construction. After handing the music director's baton to Sir Neville Marriner, he returned each subsequent season to lead the Orchestra as its conductor laureate.



Skrowaczewski with Music Director Osmo Vänskä in April 2013.

By the time of his death, Skrowaczewski had taken the podium for more performances than any conductor in the Orchestra's history, including such historic occasions as the inaugural Orchestra Hall concert in October 1974, a concert at the UN Headquarters in December 1968, and the emotional first program at the renovated Orchestra Hall in February 2014 that marked a new beginning after the Orchestra's lockout. His 1,584th and final concert last October was an unforgettable performance of Bruckner's Eighth Symphony. In all, the artistic partnership between maestro and Orchestra spanned an extraordinary 56 years.

Beyond his adopted home state, Skrowaczewski was revered as a guest conductor of orchestras throughout the U.S., Europe and Asia, maintaining a busy touring schedule until last fall. Back in the homeland he once fled, the Polish government honored him in recent years with its two highest awards: The Order of the White Eagle and The Order of Reborn Poland.

Skrowaczewski also commanded great respect as a composer whose music was twice shortlisted for the Pulitzer Prize. The Minnesota Orchestra has performed many of his works, and for decades, each new Orchestra season has launched with the sound of his Star-Spangled Banner arrangement.

Skrowaczewski is beloved by generations of audiences, musicians and other members of the Minnesota Orchestra family, and is survived by his two sons, Paul and Nicholas; his daughter, Anna; and two grandchildren. The Orchestra's season-opening concerts in September 2017 will be dedicated to his memory.



## Reminiscences from the Minnesota Orchestra family

"Stanislaw Skrowaczewski was such an important conductor for the Minnesota Orchestra, as well as many of the world's other great orchestras. I learned many special things about Bruckner's music from Stanislaw and, just a few months ago, was privileged to hear his grand performances of Bruckner's Symphony No. 8. He was a consummate musician and conductor, and he will be greatly missed."

- Osmo Vänskä, music director

"Stan was an ardent advocate for letting music speak for itself and for the musicians who bring it to life. Even in his final years, the robust energy he brought to the podium was an example for us all."

- Greg Milliren, associate principal flute

"When Stan conducts many works, it feels like the composer is listening!" - Anthony Ross, principal cello

"Stan has a special place in my heart. I was the last violinist he hired during his tenure as music director. I looked forward to his many guest appearances over the years."

- Jean Marker De Vere, second violin

"One thing I appreciated about the maestro was that he liked a robust bass sound. Some conductors will shush the basses, but not Skrowaczewski. I think this is one of the reasons why he achieved a great sound from the orchestra."

- Robert Anderson, bass

"I am grateful for the deep friendship we shared as musicians with our Stan, and for his unbridled joy when he was with us at Orchestra Hall. His willingness to speak truth and his unwavering commitment to the service of music and our community will live on."

- Wendy Williams, flute

"Stan is my hero. Without him our world feels a bit more empty." – Marni J. Hougham, English horn and oboe

"I enjoyed the insights I gleaned from his rehearsals, as there were always new things to learn from him regarding balances to allow a melody to be completely clear. Most important to me, though, was his interest and generosity with my Minnesota Youth Symphonies. He donated many pieces of music along with his scores and the markings that came along with them. What a fantastic gift to the coming generations!"

- Manny Laureano, principal trumpet

"Skrowaczewski had a vision, an intensity, and a drive that brought out the pain, joy, strife and passion in the music. For a few moments a magnificent artist led a group of talented musicians to bring out the unique sounds that touched our souls. He conducted Bruckner's



















The Minnesota Orchestra's sixth, seventh and eighth music directors at Orchestra Hall in 1986: Skrowaczewski, Sir Neville Marriner and Edo de Waart, who returns here to conduct this month.

Eighth last October without a score. When the music is engraved in your heart you do not need the script."

- David Balto, audience member

"Stan did not simply build Orchestra Hall, he also filled it. From its opening in 1974 to his stepping away as music director in 1979, his concerts were virtually packed to capacity. During those years the Orchestra's performing (and employment) season worked its way from 30 weeks to year-round. The breadth of the repertoire he provided reflected not only the masterworks of the past, but also kept pace with creativity taking place in the latter stages of the 20th century. The programs also showcased a veritable 'who's who' of international concert stars. After Stan's time as music director ended, my relationship with him blossomed into a more personal bond. This reached a particularly poignant peak a couple of months ago when he called saying that he was experiencing a low point and simply wanted to hear 'a warm, familiar voice.' How much I wish I could now ask that of him."

- Richard Cisek, general manager, 1965-1978; president and CEO, 1978-1991

"In 1961, as my husband John and I were planning a trip to Europe, Stan asked if we could please include Warsaw on our itinerary since, because of the Russian government, it was difficult for him and his wife Krystyna to communicate with their families, and they could not return there without being detained. We spent five days in Warsaw, and Krystyna's parents came there to be with us. They were full of questions about how Stan and Krystyna lived, the Orchestra, their home, their friends. Eventually, of course, the Russians left Poland, so Stan and Krystyna could travel there and be reunited

with their families. For me, this has been a friendship for 57 years, and I was so glad I could attend his last time with the Orchestra, when he conducted one of his favorite Bruckner symphonies."

– Betty Myers, Minnesota Orchestra life director

Visit minnesotaorchestra.org/showcase to read more reminiscences.

Orchestra horn player Ellen Dinwiddie Smith and Skrowaczewski posing with Wagner tubas in hand after Skrowaczewski conducted Bruckner's Eighth Symphony in April 2012.

