**PlattInterview.mp3**

[00:00:00] **Speaker 1** Alright, it's all yours.

[00:00:01] **Speaker 2** John, I am rolling whenever you're ready. OK. Well, thank you for being here. My voice is going to be edited out completely.

[00:00:09] **Speaker 1** Well, that's a relief. We'll have the outtakes on the website.

[00:00:16] **Speaker 2** So, you have been with the La Crosse Symphony for 15 years, since 2010.

[00:00:22] **Speaker 1** That's right.

[00:00:24] **Speaker 2** What originally drew you to this position?

[00:00:27] **Speaker 1** That actually goes back a long, long way. When I finished my work on a Marshall Scholarship at Cambridge University, I was lured, and I say that in the most wonderful way, I was lord to the Twin Cities, to Minnesota for the opportunity to be the guinea pig, as it were, in this newly founded conductor apprenticeship program between the Minnesota Orchestra, the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra, and the Minnesota Opera. So I was living in the Twin cities. And the La Crosse Symphony was looking for guest conductors in 1993, 1994. And I had an absolutely wonderful time, which I just retained in my memory, this wistful time discovering this beautiful city nestled on the banks of the Mississippi. And then so in 2010, the LSO was doing a music director search. So I was at that point, I was like the suitor. standing at the doorbell with the bouquet and the box of chocolates. Because I really wanted to come to La Crosse and settle down and do the work I think I've always been meant to do. So they blessed me with this wonderful job and it was the post 2008 world for orchestras and there were profound financial challenges and we truly met those challenges and through this beautiful community And, um... the ability to just to be enabled to to give lacrosse the best orchestra could possibly have and that's been our journey together.

[00:02:03] **Speaker 2** What were some of the things that you instituted to overcome some of those challenges?

[00:02:10] **Speaker 1** Well, it's not me personally, I mean it's me working with a beautiful collection of people, board members, donors, staff members, we now have a wonderful executive director, Eva Murray Restel, and joining together, banding together, to sound the alarm that, you know, if you want to have a great symphony, it is something in which we all have to make an and just an amazing collection of people. who were able to kind of go around the community and trumpet the cause of the great performances we were doing. And it was, I can tell you exactly when it happened, the moment when that all changed. It was the very end of my first season when because of the financial challenges that we and every orchestra in the world had at that time, we did an all-orchestral program, no soloist. And it culminated in a performance. of the Tchaikovsky Fourth Symphony, after which the audience basically went crazy. And kind of based on that, we were able to build a financial future for this orchestra.

[00:03:19] **Speaker 2** Now, I know that you've served as music director for several symphonies across the country. What makes the La Crosse Symphony stand out? What is it about the people here or the community that has made you want to stay here for the last 15 years?

[00:03:39] **Speaker 1** Oh, what makes me want to stay here? It's La Crosse itself. This is such a beautiful community. It really is, this greater La Cresse community. Again, here on the banks of the Upper Mississippi, this incomparable natural beauty, this kind of pre-alpine setting, the Mississippi Alps, as we call them. And the people are just so nice. The nicest people I've ever met. And everywhere I go, I'm Honestly, I'm at a small business downtown. I'm in a gas station on the outskirts of the city, and people know who I am. And they say, oh, you're here for the next concert. What more could I ask for? And again, we have an orchestra that just gets better and better.

[00:04:27] **Speaker 2** That's perfect, that's perfect. What do you enjoy most about your role as music director here with the LSO?

[00:04:35] **Speaker 1** I honestly enjoy everything about what I do here. I love being out and about in the community. I love meeting people. Again, it's just great to get stopped in the street and say, oh, are you? This is, again, what a conductor dreams of. It's always a pleasure to be, again out and about, out in the restaurants, at church on Sunday. Here are various wonderful colleges, universities to meet with faculty and students. take a class now and then. That's, again, an unexpected joy. But of course, the pinnacle is what we do together on this stage for three extremely intense three-hour rehearsals. And when I came here, they allowed me to adopt the British model of rehearsing, which is a three- hour session. So we have three incredibly intense rehearsals that culminate in but is often a magnificent performance. And the joy of that is that we have been able to put together such a beautiful collection of individuals from this entire region, this coolie region, this what we call this driftless region that truly the performance is the culmination of all of those, all of that intensity of those rehearsals. And you know, whether you're the La Crosse Symphony, or the New York Philharmonic, if you can do that regularly, time and time again, week in and week out, it just doesn't get better as a conductor. It doesn't better than that. And that kind of cloud nine is where we're at in La Crosse at the symphony.

[00:06:19] **Speaker 2** Wonderful. You mentioned a couple of times the community, how wonderful the community is. It is. What are some of the ways in which the community and the orchestra collaborate, or what programs do you have that sort of reach out into the community that involve the community?

[00:06:41] **Speaker 1** Well most recently we have focused, by which I mean the last 15 years, we have focused a lot more on education and building the audience of today and tomorrow. So I mean I'm thrilled to say, again not that I planned this, but our our pre-concert talks with members of our audience are jammed. I mean people want to know more about the music. People, if there is a positive through what we've been through. in the great recession and then the COVID pandemic, it's the people I think take classical music less for granted and they love it and they wanna know as much as they can about it. So with the audience of today, again, that's always a pleasure to talk about the music and why we put a certain program together. But we've also, in the last few years, really built our education programs with young people in the community. through the Boys and Girls Clubs of La Crosse, and some of our great corporate sponsors, in this case the Mayo Clinic, and we've been able to really develop an audience of Tomorrow, and not just for a future audience to be in these seats, you know, listening to their Beethoven 5, but for people, for more people, for as many people as possible in this community, to have classical music as a beautiful part of their life. That's ultimately the goal.

[00:08:12] **Speaker 2** I wanted to ask you a little bit more about the pre-concert talks, because a lot of orchestras they'll put together notes and those notes go in the program, and why take the extra time to meet with people and to go through that in addition to the concert notes?

[00:08:36] **Speaker 1** Well, we have wonderful program notes in the program per se. And I'm very old fashioned and I do believe in having a printed booklet with you when you go into that chair to hear, to have your experience with live performance. But what's beautiful about the pre-concert talk is it allows me to have, to further build a relationship with my audience. And I, for all my faults, I seem to have a gift of walking into a room. and I just start speaking, and in about 35 minutes I stop. I mean, I look at my watch, and I think it's because I, growing up in, I had a wonderful church growing up, and the rector was very proud to say that he composed his sermon as he was crossing the street from the rectory to the church. And I don't know, maybe I'm his disciple. But I've spent my whole life with music. being a student of music. I wouldn't, I'm not a scholar, but a student of music and I like to think a student of history and culture and the arts and I'm, I love sharing with people what I what I do know by this point of the journey about what makes this music great and what makes it so relevant absolutely relevant to our lives and I it's always a pleasure to share what I know and people seem to enjoy it or else they're just being even nicer than I think.

[00:10:05] **Speaker 2** They are nice.

[00:10:06] **Speaker 1** Thank you very much.

[00:10:07] **Speaker 2** We've determined that. Can you talk a little bit about the May 3rd program, about what the orchestra will be playing, what the theme of the concert is, and a little about the works? Thanks for watching!

[00:10:22] **Speaker 1** Well, this is the last big concert of the season, so in the tradition of such a performance in May, it really is the spring fling, if you will, and it brings the whole community together. It's a program that's, it's really a jam-packed program that brings together kind of everything that we've been focusing on throughout the year and years. And we start with two short works. that are conducted by or conducted by two wonderful individuals who have made important donations to the orchestra, we call them the Conductor wannabes, and these winning contestants get to conduct the La Crosse Symphony Orchestra and a short kind of favorite work. We move from them to one of the great world class classical music soloists from right here in the Midwest, one of my greatest Chicago colleagues, the great, great American violinist, Rachel Barton-Pine, with whom I was very privileged to make many years ago, 20 years ago was, what remains a rather famous recording of a piece called The Scottish Fantasy by Max Brook, one of the great works of the late romantic repertoire, which Rachel and I were able to fly over to Scotland and the famous the Usher Hall in Edinburgh with the Scottish Chamber Orchestra. We made that recording which still gets played all over the place. I get about once a month, I get an email from someone saying, oh I was driving through Ohio and I heard your Brooke Scottish fantasy. So we celebrate that great partnership that Rachel and I have had and also not only the personal partnership but again this truly world-class musician who is right here. in our own neighborhood of the upper Midwest, and she's gonna be playing the eternally beautiful violin concerto of Brahms. So that's gonna to be a real honor to work with her on that. Then after the intermission, we wrap up the concert and wrap up the season celebrating one of my great personal loves in the repertoire, which is the French repertoire. You know, we hear a lot of Beethoven, a lot a Tchaikovsky. All those guys, a lot of rock man are off these days, but we tend to forget the French repertoire outside of literally two or three party pieces like Debussy's La Mer and the Berlioz's Symphony Fantastique, which we've done twice actually here in my years with La Crosse. But this is gonna be a celebration of the gorgeous, glorious music of Maurice Ravel, who's one of the great French, one of masters of French Impressionism. and he's very, very famous for a piece called Bolero, which is used in movies and commercials all the time. This is going to celebrate, we've put together, we have a wonderful artistic committee, and they and I have put together a beautiful montage of three works, three of the greatest orchestral works of Maurice Ravel that all center on the dance. An incomparable gem called The Manué Antique, the Minuet, the Antique.