

# Robert Franz

## THE WINDSOR STAR

### Break barriers with WSO's upcoming 'Music Beyond Borders' performance season

By Lindsay Charlton  
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The Windsor Symphony Orchestra aims to break barriers with the theme “Music Beyond Borders” for its 72nd season kicking off in September.

“The basic idea is this — that music really speaks and takes us beyond language barriers, beyond cultural barriers and is at the core of who we are. We’re always breaking down these borders,” said WSO artistic director Robert Franz.

The WSO gave reporters a sneak peek Thursday of the upcoming season at the Capitol Theatre.

Music Beyond Borders will provide concertgoers with an all-season experience inspired by regions around the world and from across eras.

Among the variety of concert offerings, music lovers will hear a symphony that celebrates the life of a Scottish bagpiper during the First World War and a piano concert that features the music of classic composers Franz Liszt and Frederic Chopin

with poems centered on life in the Mediterranean.

“Next season, we’re going to be bringing in artists and composers that really represent different walks of life, different ways of life - even from different parts of the world,” Franz said.

Each year, said Franz, the WSO tries to encompass a wide range of repertoire to connect

with different parts of the community.

“It’s really important to the musicians and I that we inspire ourselves with music from different cultures, different time periods and really let those different kinds of music feed each other and help develop each other,” Franz said.

The WSO has plenty of other programs set for the 2019-2020 season, including continuing its Classics in the County series, its Pops series which will cover great Broadway choruses and a

new local “W.E. Got Talent” competition for any and all performers from across the region.



The orchestra also announced its next opera will be the classic *Madama Butterfly* - the tragic love story of a Japanese geisha and an American naval officer.

"It invokes so much emotion and it's just all over the board how much it rings and evokes within the audience and the performers," WSO violinist Konstantin Popovic said.

Nearly 80 singers from across the province auditioned to perform Giacomo Puccini's famous opera in Windsor.

Franz said the opportunity to conduct such a monumental piece is high on the list of any conductor.

"I have done *Madama Butterfly* before, but every time I pick it up it's a challenge," Franz said. "It is two and a half hours of some of the most complicated, interesting, romantic music you could imagine."

Franz said he is always looking to step outside his comfort zone, even with productions he has experience with.

"That's really what music is about - finding the new, finding the interesting finding something you didn't know before," he said. Along with the program reveal, the WSO announced a renewed six-year contract for Franz, who has led the orchestra since 2013.

"Coming to Windsor and being part of the community and the Windsor Orchestra family has been a real thrill for me," he said. "So I'm totally honoured and completely gobsmacked to have another six years."

Originally from Kingston, N.Y., Franz loves Windsor's open-mindedness to classical music and the variety of people who make up the area.

"There are so many pockets of interesting and vibrant people throughout the community, and it's been so much fun tapping into those and getting to know those people in different areas," he said.