

“John Axelrod is a highly imaginative and dynamic musician, whose rich musicological background and historical insights combine with intellectual drive and charismatic enthusiasm for people and for life, to get probing, rigorous and richly characterized interpretations.”

— Remy Franck, Pizzicato

In 2026, Maestro John Axelrod will celebrate his 60th birthday and 30 years of experience conducting nearly 200 orchestras around the world. Seasons 2025-2026-2027 will celebrate that anniversary with the many orchestras with whom he has long term relationships, including returns to the Orchestra Sinfonica Nazionale della RAI in Torino, the Orchestra Sinfonica di Milano, Teatro Petruzzelli di Bari, Sinfonia di Siciliano and the Teatro la Fenice in Venice, Symphony Orchestra Lichtenstein, the City of Kyoto Symphony Orchestra, Aichi Chamber Orchestra, Hiroshima Symphony and the Sendai Philharmonic in Japan, the Belgrade Philharmonic, the Nuremberg Symphony Orchestra, the PhilZuid in the Netherlands, the Romanian Radio Orchestra, and Sinfonietta Cracovia, among many others.

Since 1996, Mr. Axelrod has established a visible profile as one of today's leading international conductors, with an extraordinarily diverse repertoire, from core classics, both orchestral and operatic, to contemporary to crossover, his innovative programming themes, musical depth and charismatic performance style have been widely praised and recognised by both audiences and critics. In 2020, Maestro Axelrod received the Special Achievement Award from the International Classical Music Awards for his outstanding contributions and interpretations.

Since 2022, John Axelrod is the Principal Conductor of the Bucharest Symphony Orchestra and President of the Jury of the Bucharest Conducting Academy and International Competition. Since 2024, Maestro Axelrod is the Esteemed Guest Professor of the Tokyo College of Music and Guest Professor/Conductor for the Concertmaster Diploma program at the Stauffer Academy in Cremona. Mr. Axelrod is also the Founder and Artistic Director of Culinary Concerts and IamBacchus.com.

In September 2023, a special recording with the Bucharest Symphony Orchestra was released to critical acclaim on Orchid Classics and distributed by Naxos, featuring the two versions of Robert Schumann's Symphony 4, op. 120. Entitled

Schumann 41/51: Florestan and Eusebius, Maestro Axelrod explores how Robert Schumann's bi-polar disorder influenced the original and revised versions of this beloved work which provides a compelling reason for the first time in recorded discography that both are released on the same recording, resulting in a 2023 International Classical Music Awards Best Orchestral Recording nomination.

In 2020, during the pandemic, Maestro Axelrod created CMO: Conductors Masterclass Online, and presents a Great Maestros Masterclass Online Series, featuring such great maestros as Leonard Slatkin, Frédéric Chaslin, JoAnn Falletta, Carlo Rizzi and more.

Among his many other titles, Maestro Axelrod had the honor of serving as the first invited Music Director of the Swiss National Orchestra's National Day Concert in 2024. From 2018-2023, Maestro Axelrod became the Principal Guest Conductor of the City of Kyoto Symphony Orchestra. From 2014-2020, Maestro Axelrod was the Artistic and Musical Director of the Real Orquesta Sinfónica de Sevilla. Other titled positions included Principal Guest Conductor of Orchestra Sinfonica di Milano from 2011-2018, Principal Conductor of the Pacific Music Festival from 2016-2018, Music Director of the NHK Jazz at the

Metropolitan Theater from 2014-2016, Music Director of the l'Orchestre National des Pays de la Loire from 2009-2013, Music Director of "Hollywood in Vienna" with the ORF Vienna Radio Orchestra from 2009-2011, Music Director and Chief Conductor of the Lucerne Symphony Orchestra and Theater from 2004-2009, as First Conductor of Sinfonietta Cracovia from 2001-2009 and as Founder and Artistic Director of his hometown Houston's OrchestraX from 1997-2003.

Among his many other relationships, invitations and recordings with orchestras include Berlin's Radio Symphony Orchestra, NDR Symphony Hamburg (ElbePhilharmonie), Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchester, Filarmonica della Scala, Orchestre de Paris, NHK Symphony Orchestra, Danish Radio Symphony Orchestra, Prague Radio Symphony Orchestra, Camerata Salzburg, Weimar Staatskapelle and the Mozarteum Orchester Salzburg, among others. In the USA, Mr. Axelrod has conducted the Chicago Symphony, Los Angeles Philharmonic, and the Philadelphia Orchestra among others. Maestro Axelrod debuted in 2018 to great acclaim with the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra and returned with the Philharmonia Orchestra UK in Teatro alla Scala for the MITO Festival 2022. Other important regular festival engagements include the Enescu,

Salzburg, Lucerne, Montreux Jazz, Beethoven Easter and the Schleswig Holstein.

John Axelrod's important opera activity includes Bernstein's *Candide* at Théâtre du Châtelet, Teatro alla Scala and Maggio Musicale Fiorentino, Eugene Onegin at Teatro San Carlo in Naples, Kurt Weill's *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny* at the Rome Opera, and Martinu's *Mirandolina* at Il Teatro la Fenice. For the Lucerne Festival, other operas conducted include *Rigoletto*, *The Rake's Progress*, *Don Giovanni*, the *Three Penny Opera*, *Falstaff* and *Idomeneo*. Maestro Axelrod conducted Gianni Schicchi to open the 2020 Puccini Festival and returned in 2021 to conduct a new production of *Turandot*, directed by Daniele Abbado.

Mr. Axelrod has recorded core and contemporary repertoire for Sony Classical, Warner Classics, Naxos, Ondine, Universal, Naïve, and Nimbus, and released a cycle of Brahms Symphonies and Clara Schumann lieder with the Orchestra Sinfonica di Milano Giuseppe Verdi and vocalists Dame Felicity Lott, Nicole Cabell, Indra Thomas and Wolfgang Holzmair, entitled *Brahms Beloved* on Telarc, produced by Grammy winner Michael Fine.

Actively committed to working with young professional musicians for over three decades, Mr. Axelrod has

toured with the Schleswig Holstein Festival Orchestra to the Salzburg Festival, the Santander Orchestra and the Sinfonia Iuventus in Poland, the Orchestra Giovanile Italiana in Italy, the Accademia della Scala to Muscat, the Norddeutsche Junge Philharmonie in Germany, and the Vienna Jeunesse Orchester in Austria. In 2025, Mr. Axelrod conducted the KunstUniGraz orchestra in the Musikverein für Steiermark and the combined orchestra of the HEM Geneva and ZHdK Zürich in both Victoria Hall and the Tonhalle.

Mr. Axelrod graduated in 1988 from Harvard University. Trained personally by Leonard Bernstein in 1982, he also studied at the St. Petersburg Conservatory with Ilya Musin in 1996 and was mentored by Christoph Eschenbach from 1997 until 2000 when he made his professional debut as assistant conductor for Parsifal at the Bayreuth Festival.



credit Daniel Vass

credit Istvan Kohan for the three photos that follow





BIOGRAPHY 2025-2026

