

# Fort Collins Symphony

by Maryjo Faith Morgan

*Do you think you don't have an ear for music?*  
The Fort Collins Symphony asks you to think again.

Would symphonic music sound appealing if it came teamed with fine food and wine? The Fort Collins Symphony asks you to come to a soiree and find out.

Think you don't know enough to really get into orchestral music? The Fort Collins Symphony invites you to participate in Maestro Musings, Library Talks, or Symphony 101.

Because each time Maestro Wes Kenney picks up his baton, he is passionately focused on one thing.

"I want to make sure that we immediately reach anybody who comes to the concert hall. We don't want you to be the same person coming out of the concert hall as you were coming in."

To that end this season's offerings run the gamut, from what you've come to depend on from this highly skilled orchestra to some delightful surprises. Each season the Symphony endeavors to expand their audience, giving multiple opportunities for audiences to learn what to listen for, where the action is within the pieces being performed, and how to find it.

Kenney explains how to create an ear map for a piece.

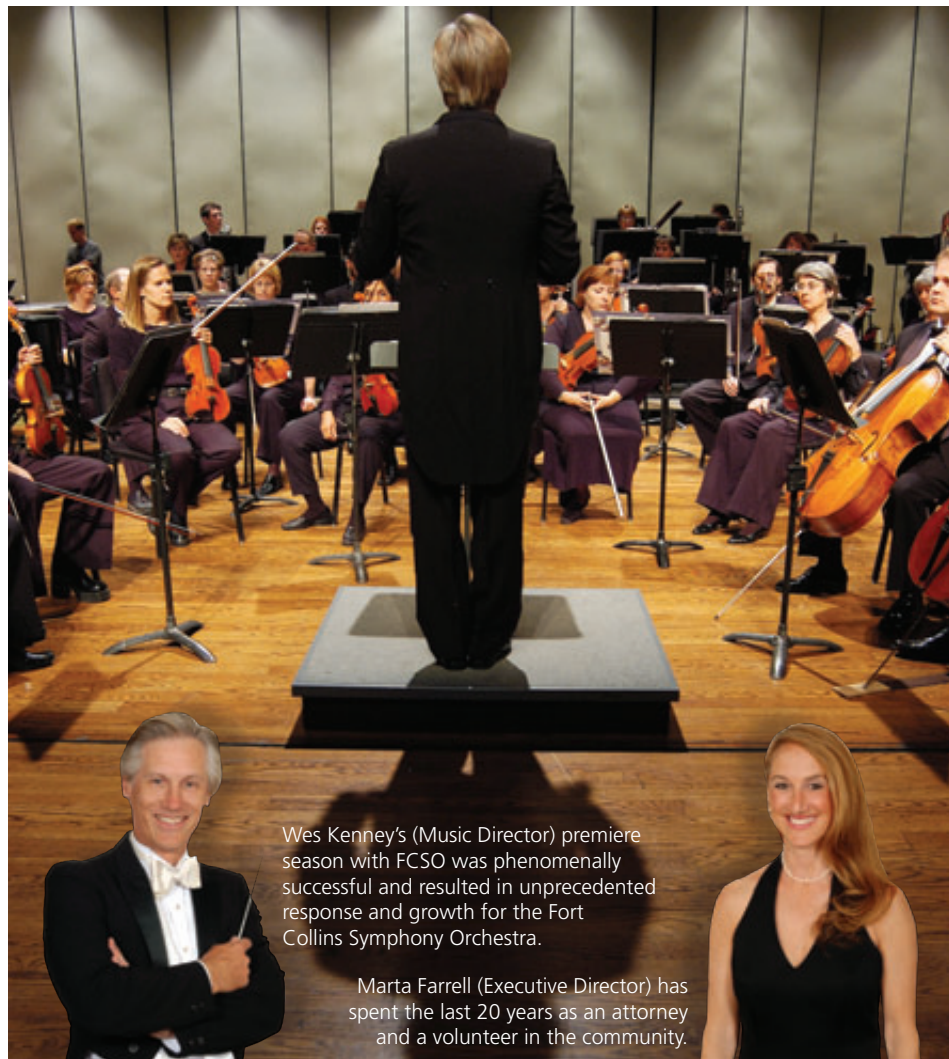
"With 60-80 musicians on the stage you have to know where to look. If you know to watch the timpanist in this place, or another section in that place, the audience has a navigational process to set up some expectations of where they are in that particular piece of music."

He goes on to explain that enjoying an extended piece of music requires a different type of listening than our push-button society is accustomed to using on a daily basis. He stresses the more you know about a piece, the more you'll enjoy it. Kenney is eager to share tidbits about the composer, the type of music common to that time and place when the music was written, and what the composer might be expressing through the notes.

"Boomers grew up with Looney Tunes." He says that's where you learned about concerts but didn't realize it. He ticks off Bugs Bunny, United Airlines and countless cartoons and commercials that have made famous concert pieces immediately recognizable to the public.

## EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

Maestro's Musings is complementary to Masterworks' ticket holders and is sure to broaden your concert hall experience, whether you are a seasoned patron or attending the symphony for the first time. Ditto for Library Talks, which feature retired CSU music history professor Dr. William Runyan. His inimitable style is certain to entertain



Wes Kenney's (Music Director) premiere season with FCSO was phenomenally successful and resulted in unprecedented response and growth for the Fort Collins Symphony Orchestra.

Marta Farrell (Executive Director) has spent the last 20 years as an attorney and a volunteer in the community.

and teach simultaneously.

For the Symphony, each season is more than giving people in our region an opportunity to fall in love with the unique experience of sharing and hour and a half in the music hall with an orchestra of this caliber, although it is that.

It is more than teaching audiences what the composer might have been expressing. Or helping them recognize their own reaction, be it emotional or visceral, to any particular composition. Although it is indeed that also.

First and foremost, the Fort Collins Symphony wants to touch you as they perform, to communicate a complete range of human emotions. They reach out through their instruments, using sensuously phrased stanzas and astonishingly synchronized movements to woo and beguile you.

Music, Fort Collins Symphony style, is all about living more vibrantly through their music.

## HAS IT BEEN A WHILE OR EVEN NEVER?

Maestro Kenney says if you have not heard the Fort Collins Symphony in the last five years, you owe it to yourself to come and spend 90 minutes with them.

"If you have never gone to hear your Fort Collins' symphonic orchestra, you owe it to yourself to give it a try. Experience what people have been experiencing for over 300 years. See why others have been interested enough to keep this tradi-

tion alive, how it is an audible museum."

Kenney finds it a pleasure to point out what is available right here in Fort Collins.

Anyone can feel comfortable

He understands that people sometimes feel uncomfortable with the formal attire so intrinsic to the symphonic concert hall setting. But he assures there is no need to be intimidated.

"Why concert black? We are no different from any other uniformed organization. The uniform is meant to take away the individual, to enter into the collective, [to help you] enter into the music, not the individuals."

He goes on to give a mini-tutorial about compositional technique relating directly to life, a how-to for the audience. You can see how a composer orders events in a large scale piece to make it understandable, more graspable by the listener.

"The whole principle - the sonata allegro principle - is a microcosm of life." Kenney simplifies the formula as a typical "day in the life" with just three components:

- ~ Start at home
- ~ Travel somewhere else
- ~ Arrive back home

That could be enlarged upon to encompass a person's whole life. But it boils down to move-

ments. The movements of going to work or school and staying a while. The movements of running errands on the way home. The movements of finally coming back home again, thinking about the day/life you've just lived.

"Many large scale compositions that operate just like that."

**SUPPORT BEHIND THE MUSIC**

Executive Director Marta Farrell gives one more plus to allowing yourself the luxury of attending the symphony, one that certainly has its own reward in this harried millennium.

"Pure relaxation – 90 minutes of freedom! Your cell phone can't ring. Your blackberry can't go off. The kids can't bug you, and you don't have to look at your watch. A chance to let the music take you away, to sit there and dream."

Farrell underscores the symphony's vision to be more approachable. Last year they stepped out to do the Sunday Series, which was highly successful. This year the symphony's goal is to be the best orchestra they possibly can be. Not in competition with any other, but inviting regional residents to enjoy what is right here in Fort Collins.

"We know, from the American Symphony Orchestra League, that 1-2% of the population attends symphony concerts."

In a city of 100,000 that percentage easily sells out Lincoln Center. But the symphony is hoping not only classical music lovers, who have been the backbone of their community support, will continue to fill the concert hall. But also newcomers and first-timers of all ages.

The symphony's logo was updated this past year. Their vigorous 2007-2008 program tackles works such as Stravinsky's Rite of Spring, which was considered so experimental, so avant garde in Paris at the time it was first introduced, a riot ensued. The symphony hopes to entice family audiences with tunes from Disney's Fantasia and popular cartoons.

According to Farrell, much of the credit for the financial health of this organization goes to the Fort Collins Symphony Association Board of Directors, staff, and many faithful sponsors.

"We have phenomenal board members and staff who have a lot of passion ... together we are a strong team ... success brings success." Furthermore, she promises the community that the symphony will continue to be good stewards of the donations they receive.

She approaches managing the symphony as any CEO would a Fortune 500 company. Farrell is vigilant about minimizing expenses and looking for ways to expand an ever-diversifying revenue stream.

From programming choices to educational opportunities the Fort Collins Symphony has come by their stellar reputation through their determination to be the best, to reach the most, and to continually give. They issue an open invitation to you to come and experience their performance this season. Let their music carry you away.

For more information visit: [www.fcsymphony.org](http://www.fcsymphony.org) or call: 970-482-4823

A local freelance writer, Maryjo Faith Morgan is an active member of Colorado Authors' League ([www.coloradoauthors.org](http://www.coloradoauthors.org)) and is personally grateful for the cultural opportunities available here in northern Colorado.

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