

Thomas Baldner

Professor of Instrumental Conducting

When devoted servant of music Thomas Baldner begins his retirement from the Indiana University Jacobs School of Music in May 2008 after more than 30 years of teaching and performing, it will be the end of an important era in the history of the conducting department of this illustrious school. Born into a musical family, he began the study of music with his father, the famous German cellist Max Baldner, in his hometown of Berlin and later as a student at the Berlin Academy of Music. As the first student from Germany in the postwar period, Thomas attended Indiana University between 1949 and 1952, subsequently receiving bachelor's and master's degrees in music. He was a master student of Pierre Monteux and founder and conductor of the Greenwich Philharmonia in Greenwich, Connecticut. Returning to Europe, this gifted musician had an extremely successful and much lauded public career for the next quarter century, conducting orchestras from Berlin to Buenos Aires and from London to Tehran. This included an important position as artistic director and principal conductor of the famous Rheinisches Kammerorchester in Cologne, Germany, at a historic time in the development of a New Music movement under the direction of Karlheinz Stockhausen, Luigi Nono, and Pierre Boulez.

In 1976 Thomas was invited by Dean Charles Webb to join the faculty of the Indiana University School of Music. Thomas has expressed his feelings at the time: "I was fascinated by the possibility of fulfilling my artistic dreams surrounded by a major university with its incredible intellectual and artistic stimulation." And now: "Having achieved this goal over the past 32 years (96 semesters including summer sessions), I cannot imagine a musical life more satisfying. It is a dream come true."

Those who have had the honor of being part of Thomas's concert performances, either as performing students or grateful audience members, have been witness to a brilliant interpreter, especially of the works of the German masters. His interpretations have mirrored the wishes of the composers of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and could have been achieved only by a musician who has the intellectual capacity and the musical and life experiences to bring these traits to the podium—a musician who represents an important era of conductors and a conducting philosophy that is quickly disappearing.

It could well be that it is behind the scenes that Thomas has made his most lasting contribution. He has been a pedagogue, master teacher, and father figure to hundreds of aspiring conducting students, and his hand in the development of young maestri can be felt throughout the world, wherever his former students occupy major positions as music directors and successful professors in their own right.

As Thomas leaves our "musical family," he will celebrate his eightieth birthday with his own family who are gathering on the Isle of Sylt, where he as a child spent many a

memorable summer. His continual enjoyment as a voracious reader will be part of his daily schedule, especially the works of Bellow and Updike and Thomas Mann, three authors whom he adores.

And hopefully, Thomas Baldner, who has experienced many history-making musical and life experiences in the twentieth century, will put down some of his thoughts in the form of a book that would be an important contribution to the history of a bygone era.

Thomas, you will be missed. We wish you well.

David Effron