

Meet the maestro

Symphony selects Martin Fischer-Dieskau as new conductor

BY HARRY CURRIE
Record staff

After an exhaustive search lasting two years, the Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony has a new principal conductor: Martin Fischer-Dieskau.

He was introduced last night to a full house at Centre in the Square by the orchestra's general manager, Michael Duschenes.

Duschenes noted that Fischer-Dieskau, a native of Berlin, Germany, was chosen from 125 applicants for the position in a process which saw 15 candidates short-listed, each of whom guest-conducted during the past two years.

"When I first heard this orchestra, it was love at first measure," Fischer-Dieskau told last night's audience.

He said in an interview he is both excited and humbled by being chosen.

"Let's hope that everything works out the way everyone expects," he said.

"This is a huge challenge for all of us, but I'm quite positive it will all be great. When I received the call from Michael (Duschenes) I was so happy, and so very, very grateful. It was really quite unexpected. When I heard now there had been 15 on the short list and 125 applicants in all, I realize how very lucky I am."

Fischer-Dieskau was quick to point out that the world is full of excellent conductors.

"There are so many talented people around, I feel very humbled to have been selected," he said. "That's why I think I was very lucky. I'm sure any one of the 15 guest conductors could have been chosen and done a good job."

But conducting excellence was only part of the criteria.

"We needed someone who was a fit to the orchestra and the community," said Duschenes.

"The job posting described the successful candidate as an

innovative and dynamic visionary, a modern conductor of the new millennium who was looking to break the traditional boundaries of the symphony orchestra. We needed a superior musician combined with a motivator and team player who would lead by empowerment."

Fischer-Dieskau's predecessor, from 1993-1999, was Chosei Komatsu, who still lives in Kitchener but is now the perma-

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nent conductor of the Tokyo Philharmonic Orchestra.

The K-W Symphony search committee consisted of three musicians selected by the orchestra, two members of the symphony's management, two board members, one prominent member of the local arts committee, and three members of the community who are long-time subscribers to the orchestra.

"We went through an extensive process of studying resumes and performance videos," said concertmaster Stephen Sitarski, "and several of us traveled to other cities to hear live performances by various conductors, and we conducted telephone interviews. All of this was before we selected the 15 on the short list."

"The musicians and the search committee agreed that there were a number of candidates who were excellent for the position," said Duschenes, "but in the end everyone agreed that

Martin stood out above the rest for this orchestra and this community."

All orchestra members were asked to fill out an evaluation form following the appearance of a candidate. Only those candidates receiving the approval of the majority of the players were considered, and this reduced the short list to six.

"In the end it was the chemistry between Martin and the orchestra which was the deciding factor," said Duschenes.

"This was immediate throughout the entire organization. He shares our vision, and he wants to work within the team. We look forward to great music making under his leadership."

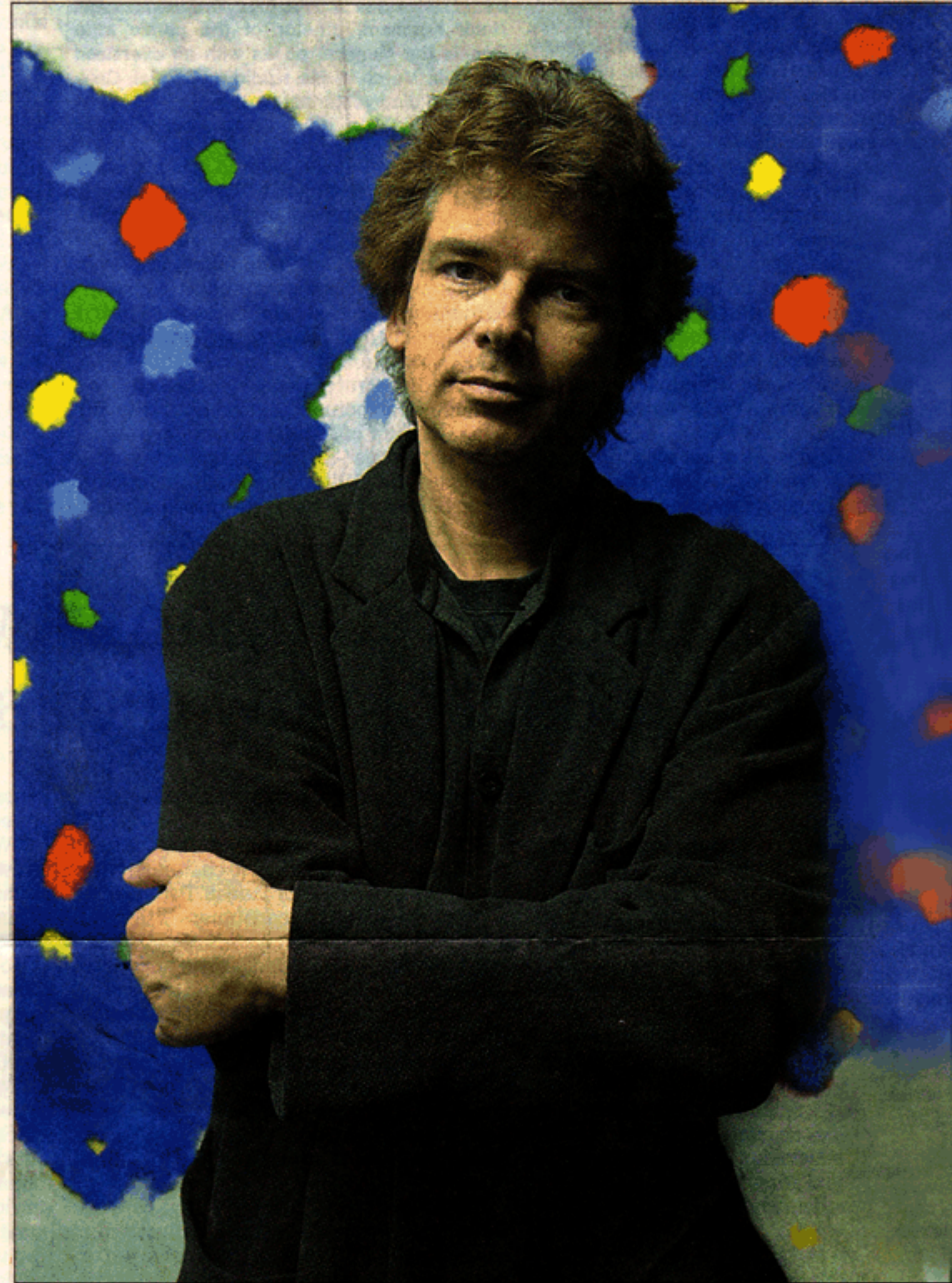
Fischer-Dieskau has conducted over 50 major orchestras worldwide and is considered among the most versatile conductors of his generation.

He studied conducting, violin and piano at conservatories in Berlin, Vienna and Sienna, and participated in master classes with Franco Ferrara, Seiji Ozawa and Leonard Bernstein, winning the Leonard Bernstein Fellowship Program Scholarship at Tanglewood. He was formerly the assistant conductor to Antal Dorati at the Detroit Symphony Orchestra.

"All these years I've been conducting I think so much about what the musician thinks while playing," said Fischer-Dieskau.

"I came to realize that most of the time the conductor disturbs that process. I hope I have learned to stay out of the way, and by doing this enhance the creative process for the individual, which, in turn, creates a dynamic within the whole orchestra that takes us to a higher plane.

"This is my goal for the Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony: I am so fortunate to be a part of this wonderful orchestra and to conduct in such a fine concert hall - one of the best in the world."



Martin Fischer-Dieskau was introduced at the Centre in the Square last night as the new principal conductor of the Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony.

MATHEW MCCARTHY, RECORD

Following last night's formal introduction, Fischer-Dieskau conducted a short program with the orchestra including the fast-paced Shostakovith

Festive Overture, the slow movement of Dvorak's New World Symphony and the Strauss waltz Morning Papers, "fitting because that's where

this announcement will appear," all to a thunderous st ingovation.

Herzlichst willkommen Martin Fischer-Dieskau.