

# David W. Spiro

## Conductor

Critics have called the conducting of **David W. Spiro** thrilling, vibrant, extraordinary, dramatic, noble, incisive, and energetic. Maestro Spiro recently led performances of *La Traviata* and *Tosca* during his enthusiastically received return to Bulgaria. He also made a significant departure from his core repertoire with his first Wagner opera, *Der Fliegende Holländer*. This season also saw several other firsts. He conducted his first French opera, Bizet's *Carmen*, in Saint Petersburg, Russia. Prior to that, Ruse saw Spiro lead Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin*, as well as a return to Mozart with *Don Giovanni*.

Previously, his *Aida* and *Rigoletto* at the *Ruse State Opera* were hugely successful. He celebrated the *Verdi Bicentennial* with *Un Ballo in Maschera* and *La Traviata* at the *Teatro Mancinelli* in Orvieto. *Opera di Verona* hosted Spiro leading the Mozart/da Ponte operas *Don Giovanni*, *Così fan Tutte* and *Le Nozze di Figaro* in three consecutive seasons. Earlier in the decade saw his *La Bohème* at the *North Czech Opera* and also his Romanian debut in Bucharest with his signature piece, *La Traviata*.



The Albanian-American conductor made his mark by leading members of the *Boston Symphony Orchestra* in a tribute to his mentor, **Leonard Bernstein**. Rossini's *Stabat Mater* featured **Edda Moser**, **D'anna Fortunato**, **Gregory Kunde** and **Jerome Hines** and was hailed as "a tribute worthy of Bernstein". Specifically, Maestro Spiro's interpretation was hailed as "the closest thing to heaven." (*The Boston Globe*)

An electric performance of Cherubini's *Medea* for the *Boston Festival Opera* featured **Sylvia Sass**, **Rita Gorr**, **Franco Bonanome** and **John Macurdy**. Calling Spiro "a talent which seems to be seasoned well beyond his years", critics noted that "it would also appear that the era of great interpreters of Italian opera did not die with **Serafin** or **de Sabata** - it simply skipped a generation." (*Review/Preview*)

A native of Boston, Spiro began piano studies at age four. His prodigious skills led him to the famed *Longy School of Music* where he refined his technique and strengthened his musical background. His piano skills were acclaimed in performances around New England, including winning first prize in the *Northeastern Concerto Competition*.

He studied at the *New England Conservatory of Music* with **Piero Bellugi**, who instilled in the young conductor a love of the authentic Italian style. At the same time, Spiro entered into an apprenticeship with **Sarah Caldwell** and the *Opera Company of Boston* becoming versed in the responsibilities of an operatic conductor and artistic director. He was called upon to do a variety of tasks - from rehearsal pianist and vocal coach, to onstage participant.

He continued in a similar capacity for two seasons with the legendary **Nicola Rescigno** at the *Dallas Opera*. Maestro Rescigno, who was the preferred conductor of great operatic singers for most of the 20th century, stressed the importance of a conductor providing a framework in which the soloist and the composer's intent would shine.

Early in his career, Maestro Spiro founded the *Albanian Choral Society of Boston*. After several noteworthy concerts, the chorus gave a historic performance at the *United Nations*. This elicited an unprecedented invitation from the Albanian government for Spiro to serve as United States representative to the *National Congress* and to interact with the musicians and singers of the *Teatri Kombetar i Operas dhe Baletit* and the *Orkestra Simfonike e RTSH*. This was the first time the Albanian government had officially reached out to the United States in any capacity since 1939 - over 50 years earlier. Spiro's visit was a landmark in normalizing relations between the two nations.

Media coverage from this event led to an invitation for Spiro to work with Leonard Bernstein, who said that Spiro was a "unique talent and will be a great conductor" (*The Boston Herald*). Their fellowship included performances and recordings with the *New York Philharmonic*, the *St. Luke's Chamber Orchestra*, the *Accademia di Santa Cecilia*, and the *Boston Symphony Orchestra*. *Opera Monthly* noted the parallel between the two: "Spiro, an athletic young maestro in the Bernstein mold, led the orchestra with care and great vitality". Their relationship lasted until Bernstein's death, at which point Maestro Spiro's professional career began.

In addition to the standard operatic repertoire, Maestro Spiro is a specialist in the 19<sup>th</sup>-century Italian opera tradition spanning the *bel canto* and *verismo* periods and encompassing the Verdi *oeuvre*. He has been fortunate to prepare most of these works under the guidance of acknowledged experts in these styles – specifically **Magda Olivero**, **Francesco Siciliani**, and **Virginia Zeani** – all of whom can trace their lineage back to the composers.

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