



ORCHESTRA SIMFONICĂ
BUCUREȘTI



BUCHAREST
CONDUCTING ACADEMY



UNIVERSITATEA
NAȚIONALĂ DE
MUZICĂ
BUCUREȘTI

FORCES OF DESTINY

CONDUCTING MASTERCLASS WITH JOHN AXELROD
BUCHAREST INTERNATIONAL CONDUCTING COMPETITION
WITH THE BUCHAREST SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

EDITION VIII / MMXXVI

July 2-10, 2026 Bucharest Romania



Fate is inevitable.

Destiny has a purpose. Both themes have attracted the majority of composers to portray the human condition in music either as a tragic fate or a date with destiny. From Mozart's Don Giovanni to Beethoven's 5th Symphony, from Verdi's La Forza del Destino to Wagner's Siegfried Idyll, to Brahms' epic Symphony No. 1, to Tchaikovsky's Symphony No. 4, these works are only a few among the many in the repertoire, but are all significant to a conductor's technique, canon and craft.

These masterpieces represent fate through musical motifs, dramatic narrative, and specific thematic symbolism.

With just 4 famous notes, da-da-da-dum, Beethoven turned his c minor symphony into a dramatic image of "Fate knocking at the door".

It took Brahms 14-21 years to complete his first Symphony. Those same 4 rhythmic notes of Beethoven haunted Brahms, resulting in his own c minor harmony as the timpani acting as fate no longer knocks but instead pounds on the door.

Mozart composed Don Giovanni's debauchery as a destiny with the devil. In contrast, while Wagner uses musical themes from the opera Siegfried (which is about destiny), the Siegfried Idyll removes the operatic struggle, transforming Wagner and his family into a private, serene idyll on Lake Lucerne.

Tchaikovsky used a recurring "fate motif" in his symphonies, heard in the opening brass fanfare, perhaps taken from Verdi's three note brass fate motif in La Forza del Destino. Tchaikovsky described the theme as a fatal force that hinders the pursuit of happiness.

And Rachmaninov, who overcame personal depression, reflects on the struggle of humanity in his monumentally difficult Piano Concerto no. 3, considered the Mt. Everest of concerti. While the concerto doesn't have a stated theme of "fate," its intense emotional weight, dark themes, and heroic struggles often lead to it being interpreted as a battle with and victory over destiny.

All these composers, and so many more from Berlioz to Mahler to Orff to Shostakovich, often used these themes of fate and destiny to grapple with personal tragedy, philosophical questions, or the emotional conflicts of their respective lives and epochs.

Today is no different. We are witnessing a change to the world order and with that will emerge new voices and interpretations about fate and destiny.

The great American poet Walt Whitman summed it up eloquently in his poem: O Me! O Life!, with the question asking "what good among these?"

And his response is ours as musicians and conductor.

Answer: "That life exists and Identity. That the powerful okay goes on, And you may contribute a verse."

That is what all these composers have done with the forces of destiny, and what we do as interpreters and performers. We contribute our verse. Come to Bucharest to contribute yours and discover your destiny.

John Axelrod
Bucharest, 2026

John Axelrod



John Axelrod

Music Director, Swiss National Orchestra
Principal Conductor, Bucharest Symphony Orchestra, Romania

“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*

With over a quarter century of experience conducting nearly 200 orchestras worldwide, John Axelrod has established a visible profile as one of today's leading international conductors. His 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.

Season 2023-2024 begins with two important events in his career trajectory: As a newly naturalised citizen of Switzerland, Maestro Axelrod has been named in August 2023 the Music Director of the Swiss National Orchestra, with a government sanctioned mission statement committed to promoting the excellence of Swiss musicians and composers with tours, recordings and special projects. And in September 2023 comes an exceptionally special recording with the Bucharest Symphony Orchestra, released 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.

Maestro Axelrod continues his over a decade long love story with Japan, returning this October and November to both the Tokyo Metropolitan Symphony, the Orchestra Ensemble Kanazawa and the Hyogo Performing Arts Center Orchestra, and making his debut with the Sendai Philharmonic to perform “The Samurai of Seville,” a double concerto for flamenco guitar, Japanese koto and narrator in both Japanese and Spanish, composed by José Maria Gallardo del Rey and based on the novel by John J. Healey, about the 1615 historical voyage of 12 Samurai from Sendai to Seville. Maestro Axelrod commissioned the work in 2019 and premiered it in 2021 with the City of Kyoto Symphony Orchestra, with whom he was Principal Guest Conductor. Mr. Axelrod will also teach a conducting masterclass at the Tokyo Conservatory, continuing his absolute commitment to educating and developing the next generation of conductors and young musicians.

In 2020, during the pandemic, Maestro Axelrod created CMO: Conductors Masterclass Online, and will be presenting from September through December 2023 a Great Maestros Masterclass Online Series, featuring such great maestros as Leonard Slatkin and Frédéric Chaslin, with more confirmed for 2024. In July, 2024, Maestro Axelrod will again serve for the 3rd time as President of the Jury of the Bucharest Music Institute International Masterclass and Competition for Conductors.

Maestro Axelrod also returns twice to open the 23-24 season of the Romanian Radio Orchestra with an all Rachmaninov program and again in February with Brahms, and continues his long relationship with the Belgrade Philharmonic, also returning twice this season with Bartok and Korngold. Other upcoming season highlights include his annual returns to the Orchestra Sinfonica di Milano in January 2024, of which he was Principal Guest Conductor, with the full ballet of The Firebird by Stravinsky, and as the conductor of the RAI Pops with the Orchestra Sinfonica Nazionale della RAI in Torino in June. Other important engagements include his debut with the Jerusalem Symphony Orchestra in an October 2023 tour to Hanoi and in Israel in January 2024 and the Wallonian Chamber Orchestra in February, and returns to the orchestras of South Netherlands, Cagliari and Palermo, among others.

Among his many other titles, Maestro Axelrod was unanimously elected in 2022 as the Principal Conductor of the Bucharest Symphony Orchestra, with a unique open-ended contract. 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, Teatro La Fenice Orchestra in Venice, Orchestre de Paris, NHK Symphony Orchestra, Danish Radio Symphony Orchestra, Prague Radio Symphony Orchestra, Camerata Salzburg 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, 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, and Kurt Weill's *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny* at the Rome Opera, and Martinu's *Mirandolina* at Teatro la Fenice. For the Lucerne Festival, he conducted: *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, Ondine, Universal, Naïve and Nimbus, and released a cycle of Brahms Symphonies with the Orchestra Sinfonica di Milano Giuseppe Verdi, entitled *Brahms Beloved* on Telarc, produced by Grammy winner Michael Fine.

Actively committed to working with young professional musicians for over two 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.

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 Parisfal at the Bayreuth Festival.

The Masterclass

“Take the "Forces of Destiny" Masterclass

with John Axelrod & Bucharest Symphony Orchestra, in Bucharest, Romania

Bucharest Conducting Academy (BCA) provides the best experience in Romania with the required resources that helps the aspiring masters of orchestral direction to achieve their goal, to learn how to conduct an orchestra. And much more.

Everything you need in order to start develop, enhance and master your career in conducting, available now, at the Bucharest Conducting Academy Masterclass.

July 2-5, 2026

Application deadline: June 20, 2026, 23:59, EET

Location

Sala Auditorium – National University of Music Bucharest, Stirbei Voda 33, Sector 1. The hall is located near the Cismigiu Park.

Masterclass Repertoire

Giuseppe Verdi – *La forza del destino* Overture, Revised version, 1869, Publisher Info. Milan: G. Ricordi

W.A. Mozart – *Don Giovanni* Overture, K.527 – Publisher Info. Leipzig: [C.F. Peters](#)

Richard Wagner – *Siegfried Idyll*, WWV 103 – Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel, Reprinted New York: E.F. Kalmus

Serghei Rachmaninov – *Piano Concerto No.3*, Op.30 – Reprinted London: Boosey & Hawkes, 1910. Plate B. & H. 16855

J. Brahms - *Symphony No.1*, Op.81 – Publisher Info. Sämtliche Werke, Band 1 Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1926-27
All movements

The participants must provide their own scores, available on IMSLP.

Audio/video recording on phones or other equipments are not allowed in the Masterclass.

An official copy of your Masterclass performance can be provided for €50, payable in Bucharest.

Schedule

Welcome Ceremony, July 02, 09:30am @ Sala Auditorium.

The schedule is subject to modifications and/or future announcements.

Daily schedule available on

<https://conducting.academy/the-masterclass/>

Masterclass: seats limited to **27 active students**. Passive students are welcomed also. All ages, active, beginner, passive students are welcome.

Events registration

The application fee is €50. All applicants will undergo a selection process based on the video they submit, which will be evaluated by the Jury. The Jury's decision is final, and no appeals will be accepted. If you are participating in both the Masterclass and the Competition, only one application fee is required.

Registration and application process flow

- Application Phase
- Video Audition / Jury Selection
- Acceptance
- Proof of payment / Seat confirmation

The final number of participants will be made available via website and email upon the Jury decision. More details about the application process is available on <https://conducting.academy/live-application-status/>

Packages

<https://conducting.academy/packages>

Registration

<https://conducting.academy/application/>

The Competition

Bucharest International Competition with Bucharest Symphony Orchestra, Dress Rehearsal and **Winners Awards Gala Concert at the Romanian Athenaeum**

July 6-10, 2026

Application deadline: June 25, 2026, 23:59, EET

Competitor Admission

The final number of candidates admitted to the rounds may be adjusted—either increased or decreased—based on the number of invited applicants, as determined by the Jury.

Location

Sala Enescu – National University of Music Bucharest, Stirbei Voda 33, Sector 1. The hall is located near the Cismigiu Park.

Award Gala Concert

The Competition features the dress rehearsal and the Awards Gala Concert for the winning conductors that will take place at the prestigious Romanian Athenaeum.

Welcome Ceremony and the draw of lots., July 6, 09:30am @ Sala Enescu.

Competitor timing per round and / or schedule are subject to modifications and future announcements.

Competition Repertoire

The Competition repertoire will be divided by rounds, accordingly:

1st round: All candidates

Overtures

Giuseppe Verdi – *La forza del destino* Overture, Revised version, 1869, Publisher Info. Milan: G. Ricordi

W.A. Mozart – *Don Giovanni* Overture, K.527 – Publisher Info. Leipzig: C.F. Peters

Richard Wagner – *Siegfried Idyll*, WWV 103 – Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel, Reprinted New York: E.F. Kalmus

2nd round Semi-final - up to 15 candidates

Accompaniment

Sergei Rachmaninov - *Piano Concerto No.3*, Op.30, Soloist Eva Garet

Reprinted London: Boosey & Hawkes, 1910 Edition

3rd round The Final – up to 6 candidates

Symphony

J. Brahms - *Symphony No.1*, Op.68 – Breitkopf & Härtel Edition

All movements

The participants must provide their own scores.

Competition Schedule

July 6

11:00-15:00 – First session

17:00-21:00 – Second session

21:30 – Announcement

July 7

The Semi-final – *up to 15 candidates*

10:30-14:30 – Semi-final Round

15:00 announcement

July 8

10:30-13:30 *The Final - up to 6 candidates*

14:00 – Announcement

July 10

11:00-14:00 - Dress Rehearsal

19:30 - Winners Awards Gala Concert

Concert program

Giuseppe Verdi – *La forza del destino* Overture

Awarded to 3rd prize

Sergei Rachmaninov – *Piano Concerto No. 3*, Op.18 – *Soloist: Eva Garet*

Awarded to 2nd prize

Pause

Johannes Brahms – *Symphony No. 1*, Op.68

Awarded to 1st prize

Competition Awards

1st Award

The 1st prize winner will get one performance (full symphony) with the Bucharest Symphony Orchestra in Award Gala Concert plus three concerts with major Romanian orchestras within the 2027 season & European Union route covered flight return trip.

Other perks

€3000 & official certificate and recommendations to other orchestras.

Conductors Masterclass Online /Bucharest Conducting Academy Protégé Prize, sponsored by CMO, offering a selected conductor(s) 1 free personal private online masterclasses and ongoing career counseling. While music is what gives our lives meaning, it is mentorship that is meaningful for a conductor's career development.

2nd Award

The 2nd prize winner will get one performance (accompaniment) with the Bucharest Symphony Orchestra in Award Gala Concert plus two concerts with major Romanian orchestras within the 2027 season & European Union route covered flight return trip.

Other perks

€2000 & official certificate and recommendations to other orchestras.

3rd Award

The 3rd prize winner will get one performance (overture) with the Bucharest Symphony Orchestra in Award Gala Concert plus one concert with major Romanian orchestras within the 2027 season & European Unions route covered flight return trip.

Other perks

€1000 & official certificate and recommendations to other orchestras and music agents.

Mentions & four special awards

Finalist Special Mentions

Awarded to 4th place, 5th place, 6th place

Bucharest Symphony Orchestra Award

The prize is decided by the votes of the Bucharest Symphony Orchestra musicians.

Bucharest Conducting Academy Award

The prize is decided by the Bucharest Conducting Academy.

Special Talent Award

The prizes goes to the conductors that demonstrate special talent.

* Bucharest Conducting Academy reserves the right to change the prizes at any time, in any way.

Fees

Masterclass Active Student 1250 € + €50EUR application fee

Includes: seminars access, 4 x **10 minutes** conducting BSO, video analysis sessions
Video recording is not included (optional, payable in Bucharest).

Masterclass Passive Student 550 € + €50EUR application fee

Includes: seminars access, 4 x full day BSO sessions access, video analysis sessions, * **eligible for active questioning**
Video recording is not included (optional, payable in Bucharest).

Competition 500 € + €50EUR application fee

Includes: competition participation once accepted, video recording is not included (optional, payable in Bucharest).

What to send on the application form

- artist CV in editable text format;
- three phrases bios in editable text format;
- one artist photo, landscape format;
- conducting video - a public or unlisted video link on YouTube.com or similar video platform.
- proof of payment, such as wire transfer copy in PDF or official bank transaction statement

Application process flow

- **Application phase** After submitting the application, participants receive an anonymous code and a link to access your application status.
- **Video audition / Jury Selection** The jury will then evaluate the video link sent and decides;
- **Acceptance** The final acceptance decisions will be communicated to applicants after the completion of the jury selection process.
- **Selection status** announcement on <https://osb.one/conducting.academy-livesratus>
- **Seat confirmation** After you receive our confirmation, we wait for your payment confirmation, then we proceed to confirm your seat in a 1-2 working days turnaround. Applicants with "awaiting application proof of payment" or "awaiting proof of payment" status will proceed to pay the desired package fee and send the proof of payment in PDF format via email to info@conducting.academy.



Established in 2007, the Bucharest Symphony Orchestra represents a first class Romanian ensemble.

It was founded by three ambitious musicians, and features the most valuable artists musicians in Romania. Wishing to offer music lovers the opportunity to come into contact with quality music, Bucharest Symphony Orchestra has developed original and innovative musical concepts, joined under the SalutCULTURA! season.

The reputation and recognition came along with the impressive series of concerts and events held both in traditional concert halls, outdoor and in less conventional places. Bucharest Symphony Orchestra tackles a wide range of repertoire, ranging from classical music to film music, pop / rock and crossover. The Bucharest Symphony Orchestra mission is to promote music excellence and to attract young people to the concert halls.

A truly official Romanian Cultural Ambassador, Bucharest Symphony Orchestra performed in 2013 and further, in 2017, as the first Romanian orchestra in seven of the most fabulous concert halls in South America, such as: Teatro Colón and Teatro Coliseo Palazzo Italia in Buenos Aires, Teatro El Circulo in Rosario/Argentina; Sala São Paulo in São Paulo/ Brazilia, Teatro El Occitane in Trancoso/Brazilia, Corpartes 660 in Santiago/Chile, Gran Teatro Nacional din Lima/ Peru and Teatro Solís in Montevideo, Uruguay and Opera House, Hanoi, Vietnam.

Since 2021, Asociatia Orchestra Simfonică București is a public utility institution.

Contact

+40723958111
info@osb.fan

Website

<https://osb.fan>