



CHICAGO SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA ASSOCIATION

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News

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CSO PRINCIPAL FLUTE MATHIEU DUFOUR NAMED OFFICER OF FRANCE'S ORDER OF ARTS AND LETTERS

CHICAGO – In a ceremony held today at Chicago's Alliance Française, Mr. Graham Paul, Consul General of France, honored CSO Principal Flute Mathieu Dufour with the prestigious distinction of "Officier dans l'Ordre national des Arts et Lettres." The honor is particularly notable because Dufour has achieved the grade of Officier before being named Chevalier (Knight)—a rare occurrence—in recognition of his exceptional talent.

The Ordre des Arts et Lettres (Order of Arts and Letters) was established in 1957 and is awarded by the French Minister of Culture to recognize eminent artists, writers and scholars for their efforts in promoting the awareness and enrichment of France's cultural heritage throughout the world.

Mathieu Dufour, a native of Paris, was appointed principal flute of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra at the age of 25 by then-music director Daniel Barenboim, making him one of the youngest players ever to hold such a position. Since then, he has performed numerous times as soloist with the Orchestra, most recently in September 2011 in the first week of 2011/12 subscription concerts. A critic wrote of a performance, "the ornate solo lines unfurled like yard upon yard of fine embroidered silk."

Dufour performs concertos and recitals every year in Japan, and is an avid chamber musician, as well, performing as a member of the Chicago Chamber Musicians. He is in demand around the world as a recitalist and has dazzled audiences in Japan, the United States, Canada, Europe, Israel and South America. His recitals have been televised on the Mezzo French channel and on Japanese television.

Mathieu Dufour began his flute studies with Madeleine Chassang. He then studied with Maxence Larrieu at the Lyon Conservatory, where he was unanimously awarded first prize. He won second prize at the Jean-Pierre Rampal International Flute Competition in 1990, third prize at the International Flute Competition in Budapest in 1991, and second prize at the International Flute Competition in Kobe, Japan, in 1997. At the age of 20, he was appointed principal flutist of the Orchestre National du Capitole de Toulouse, and three years later he became the principal flutist of the Paris National Opera. He was also a member of the Juventus Foundation.

Dufour is also in demand as a teacher, although his concertizing permits him time for very few students each year. He is passionate about teaching the young generation of musicians, frequently giving master classes wherever he performs. He has taught many times at the Domaine Forget Festival in Canada. He is currently on faculty at DePaul University in Chicago.

About the Order: The Order of Arts and Letters consists of three ranks: Chevalier (Knight), Officier and Commandeur. One must be at least 30 years of age to become a Chevalier. Five years have to elapse between promotions to a higher grade within the Order. However, Commandeurs and Officiers of the Legion of Honor can be appointed to the corresponding rank in the Order of Arts and Letters without having to wait for five years.

Foreigners residing outside of France can be admitted to all the ranks of the Order of Arts and Letters regardless of age. Foreigners residing in France are subject to the same regulations as Frenchmen.

Recipients of this distinction receive a certificate from the French Minister of Culture and Communication and are entitled to wear the insignia of this order, a medal suspended from a colored ribbon of white stripes against a green background. For informal occasions, a discreet lapel pin may be worn in lieu of the medal.

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