



Remembering acclaimed  
conductor Boris Brott

## Description

# OCM Executive Director Taras Kulish shares his memories and thoughts of Montreal's renowned Maestro

By Irwin Rapoport

April 12, 2022

It was on April 5 that many Montrealers learned of the tragic and unexpected death of **Boris Brott**, the acclaimed Montreal-born conductor. People were taken aback by the news, and many still cannot believe that Brott is no longer with us.

Below is the April 5 message issued by the **Orchestre classique de Montréal** concerning the passing of Brott:

*On behalf of the Board of Directors of the Orchestra classique de Montréal, we would like to share the sad news of the death of our beloved Maestro, Boris Brott. Boris died earlier in the day when he was hit by a car in Hamilton, Ontario.*

*The entire OCM family is in a state of shock and disbelief. Boris Brott was the heart and soul of the Orchestra classique de Montreal, an extraordinary ambassador of classical music, recognized beyond our borders, a mentor to countless young musicians and a very dear friend to many among them. His sudden death leaves a deep void in the music community and great sadness in our hearts.*

*The OCM remains dedicated to the highest musical ideals of its founders, Alexander and Lotte Brott, ideals that were followed with passion and determination by our very dear Maestro Brott. We will continue our mission to present concerts of great quality that touch our audience, concerts inspired by the standards of excellence established by Boris, by his indomitable spirit, his dedication to sharing his musical talents and his love for humanity.*

*We would like to extend our deepest condolences to his beloved wife, Ardyth, and his children, Ben, Alexandra and David, his grandchildren and his brother Denis. May the memory of Boris continue to enlighten our lives.*

*Deborah Corber, Chair  
Joel Carrier, Vice-Chair  
Taras Kulish, Executive Director*

\* \* \* \* \*

**Taras Kulish**, the Executive Director of the Orchestre classique de Montréal, knew Brott for ten years and the two were very devoted friends. Kulish, who is mourning the death of his friend, generously took the time to reply to some questions from *Westmount Magazine* about this extraordinary man.

**WM:** *How are people reacting to the loss of Boris Brott? No one expected this tragic news. Is planning ongoing for a series of tribute concerts to honour his memory and contributions to classical music?*



The Maestro conducting

**Kulish:** It has been very heart-warming to see the outpouring of love, affection, and admiration for Boris. He touched so many lives and that is very apparent with the number of comments on all our social media sites. At our next concert on April 28, we will be dedicating a very special aria to him as well as the entire concert. The OCM will also be honouring Boris at the annual gala at the Sofitel Hotel on June 14. This man deserved all the honours he is receiving and more!



**WM:** Boris was a very generous and outgoing man who brought out the best in people, whether they were musicians or patrons of the arts. How would you describe the Boris Brott you and others knew, and what drove him to excel and be an ambassador for classical music?

**Kulish:** What drove Boris was his never-ending energy and passion for music and culture. He was 78 and I am more than 20 years his junior but had a hard time keeping up with all his ideas and projects. He never stopped and wasn't planning on stopping.

**WM:** Boris was the scion of a musical family that had a great impact on classical music in Montreal, Quebec, Canada and internationally. What made him passionate about classical music, and which instruments did he play?

**Kulish:** Boris was a violinist. He made his debut with the **Montreal Symphony Orchestra** at the age of 5 years old. Having grown up in a family of musicians, a mother who was a cellist and a father who was also a violinist and became a composer and conductor, Boris had music around him from the womb. He loved everything about music in all its forms. He wasn't just interested in classical music. He would often put on shows in Hamilton with rock bands and music from movies. He was all about the importance of music in one's life, whether you are a musician or a kid in school.

Boris had music around him from the womb. He loved everything about music in all its forms. He wasn't just interested in classical music. He would often put on shows in Hamilton with rock bands and music from movies.

**WM:** If you were to list Boris's greatest accomplishments, what would they be and how would you describe his legacy?

**Kulish:** The list is far too long to be able to list here, and I would be afraid of missing something. You can simply go to his website to see the list: [borisbrott.com](http://borisbrott.com). His very long and diverse biography speaks loudly for itself. He was also one of the most decorated men one could imagine. He had the orders of every level of government, as well as an honorary doctorate from McGill University. In all those honours and accomplishments, he always kept both feet on the ground and was a very approachable person. That was his biggest accomplishment, in my eyes!

**WM:** In terms of Boris mentoring young musicians, how would you describe his style and methods of bringing out the best in aspiring artists? Would it be possible to mention some of the musicians he mentored?

**Kulish:** This I believe is Boris's biggest legacy. He fostered so many great musicians at a very early age when nobody knew them. Boris had an ear for talent like no other, and he gave first opportunities to many, many accomplished artists today, among them: pianist **Jan Lisiecki**, cellist **Stéphane Tétreault**, soprano **Adrienne Pieczonka**, trumpet player **Karen Donnelly**, conductor **Alain Trudel**, and thousands of orchestral musicians through his **National Academy Orchestra** in Hamilton, which he founded 35 years ago.

**WM:** Who were some of Boris's favourite composers, and were there any particular pieces of music that he loved and inspired him?

**Kulish:** Boris' favourite composer, dare I say, was **Puccini**. He loved opera and singers and discovered this only in the last few decades of his career. He conducted at several opera companies in Italy and often referred to Puccini as being his favourite. I think the reason why he loved it so much is that Puccini's music goes directly to the heart and Boris was a very direct person who always spoke directly from the heart. There was no artifice with Boris, which is what made him so approachable and loveable.



' Boris' favourite composer, dare I say, was Puccini... I think the reason why he loved it so much is that Puccini's music goes directly to the heart and Boris was a very direct person who always spoke directly from the heart.'

*WM: Did Boris ever try his hand at composing?*

**Kulish:** No, that was never part of his calling. He told me himself that it is not something that interested him very much. He was good at arranging music, not creating it.

*WM: How would you describe Boris's conducting style, and who were the conductors that he took his cues from?*

**Kulish:** Boris' conducting style was clear, concise and always collaborative. He followed the music, the orchestra and the soloist and supported them so that the music and the musicians were the stars. He brought out the best in everyone who collaborated with him. He often spoke about his mentor, the great **Leonard Bernstein**. He was his assistant at the **New York Philharmonic** at the age of 18. Boris said he developed his passion for music education through Leonard Bernstein.

*WM: Aside from his passion for music, what were some of his other interests, and how would you describe his family life?*

**Kulish:** Boris's other passions were food – he was a big foodie. He loved a great meal and always appreciated good food with good friends – especially at the **Snowdon Deli**. A good smoked meat sandwich was his favourite. The waitresses knew him by name at that place. At the same time, he loved fine Italian food. On the family side of things, after 46 years of marriage, he was still madly in love with his wife, Ardyth. He was also a very devoted and loving father.

*WM: If Boris had an opportunity to sum up his life, what do you think he would say?*

**Kulish:** I believe he would say that he did his best and lived life to the fullest with passion and dedication. Everyone who came into contact with him felt that passion and drive that was boundless.

\* \* \* \* \*

Brott's last performance as a conductor took place in Montreal on March 9, 2022, at the Salle Pierre-Mercure, in a production of **Bizet's Carmen**. It is however important to mention his love for **Handel's Messiah** which the OCM presented annually for over thirty years. He never tired of it. Here is a clip of his final performance of Messiah at the St-Joseph's Oratory in December 2021:

One can also find many clips and images of Brott on his website [borisbrott.com](http://borisbrott.com)

Here is a video of Brott's funeral service held on April 12:

**For more information on the OCM's upcoming April 28 concert, *Handel Pour Toujours*, visit [orchestre.ca](http://orchestre.ca)**

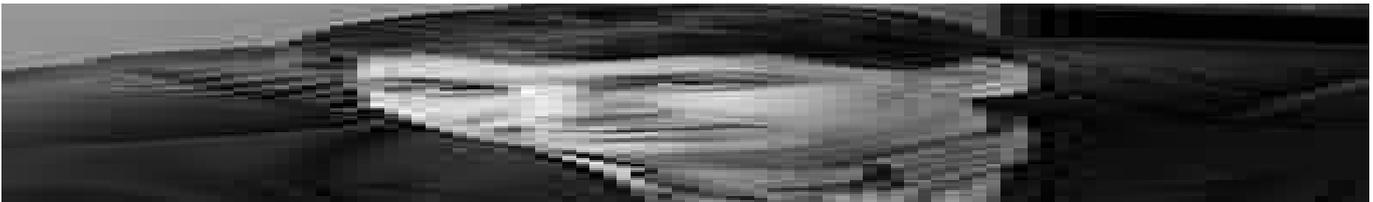
*Images: courtesy of the Orchestre classique de Montréal*



Sign-up to our newsletter  
and get email notification  
of our most recent articles

**Sign up**

Read also: [other articles by Irwin Rapoport](#)



*Irwin Rapoport is a freelance journalist.*

Image not found or type unknown

### Category

1. Music

### Tags

1. Boris Brott
2. Irwin Rapoport
3. National Academy Orchestra
4. Orchestre classique de Montréal
5. Taras Kulish

### Date Created

April 2022