

ARTS

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Krzysztof Urbanski will join the Jacobs School of Music as an adjunct professor of music in orchestral conducting next fall. The 28-year-old will also become the music director of the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra, making him the nation's youngest music director of a major U.S. orchestra.



COURTESY PHOTO

BRINGING PASSION

Nation's youngest major orchestra director to join Jacobs School of Music staff

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Starting next fall, 28-year-old Krzysztof Urbanski will join the Jacobs School of Music as an adjunct professor of music in orchestral conducting. The Polish conductor will also become the music director of the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra, making him the first to attain both positions, and the nation's youngest music director of a major U.S. orchestra.

"The position that he is taking on as an adjunct professor for IU and the ISO is unbelievable at his age — it would be an accomplishment at the age of 65 let alone 28," said Gwyn Richards, dean of the Jacobs School of Music. "The fact that he is going to be the director of a major U.S. orchestra before his 30th birthday is just incredible."

Critics have called him a genius, and he seems to be a rock star of sorts in the professional music world, but Urbanski's start in music education started by accident.

"My friend from primary school was not able to spend much time playing soccer with

me after joining the music school, and since we were really best pals, I followed him," Urbanski said in an e-mail from Europe. "I started to dream about being a composer."

When Urbanski was just 15 years old he wrote his first piece for orchestra.

"I asked my colleagues from my music school in Pabianice, Poland to perform the piece for a concert I organized, but they needed a conductor," Urbanski said. "The piece was pretty bad, but I found conducting great fun."

Urbanski soon realized that if he wanted to take his newfound passion seriously, he would need to study conducting professionally, so he went to Antoni Wit's conducting class at Fryderyk Chopin University of Music in Warsaw, Poland.

Upon graduating in 2007, Urbanski unanimously won the first prize for the Prague Spring International Conducting Competition. After just one appearance in September 2009, he was named chief conductor of the Trondheim Symphony Orchestra in Norway for the 2010-11 season.

Last April, Urbanski made his U.S. debut with the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra.

"From that first visit in Indianapolis, I found that the musicians there are very open-minded, responsive and want to create something really special, so I'm looking forward to working with them again and again," Urbanski said. "After signing a contract with the ISO, I got an invitation to become an adjunct professor at IU. I feel privileged to join such great institutions."

The young maestro's presence on the IU campus could also potentially open some doors for the students.

"If he hears someone who he really likes, perhaps it means some part-time work with the ISO or somewhere else he may be affiliated," said Tom Wieligman, Jacobs executive administrator of instrumental ensembles. "This is both good for the student because of the professional experience and good for the reputation of the school."

Urbanski said he doesn't let his young age hinder his professionalism in the music world.

"Maybe some 30 years ago, it would be unacceptable if a 28-year-old conductor led an orchestra, but that has started to change," Urbanski said. "I always focus the orchestra's

attention on what I have to offer; my interpretation, my style of work, and my ideas. My age is no longer an obstacle."

Richards said from where IU stands culturally, Urbanski's young age is an asset.

"The general trend is to turn toward younger music directors because it's a means by which to remain relevant. They have more potential to connect to younger audiences," Richards said. "Also, Urbanski's repertoire will be different, and he will be very effective in developing the music to give it more personality."

Even though Urbanski is still young, he says he's in it for the long haul.

"If you want to be a conductor, you have to devote your whole life to music — there are no half-measures or short cuts," Urbanski said. "Since I found that music is my biggest passion, I know I have to commit to it."

And although he has already received an overwhelming amount of critical acclaim in the music world, Urbanski doesn't let it get to his head.

"I don't think of myself as a genius," Urbanski said. "I'm just an ordinary man with a huge passion."