



Press Kit

LONG BIO

Perhaps best known for his innovative interpretation of seasonal carols found in his popular 5-CD boxed set *“The Complete Kurt Bestor Christmas,”* and his haunting musical prayer for peace *“Prayer of the Children,”* the Utah based composer and performer launched his career writing music for television and movies. His credits include more than 40 feature film scores, more than 40 themes for national TV programs, and numerous commercial underscores. It is Bestor’s music that has introduced *NFL Monday Night Football*, and *National Geographic Explorer*; he scored TBS’s *Wild! Life Adventures* and the IMAX film *“The Great American West.”* He also was given the Outstanding Film Score Award at the New York Film and Television Festival for his music for PBS’s *“A More Perfect Union.”* Bestor was awarded an Emmy® for his collaboration with Sam Cardon on the original music for ABC’s coverage of the 1988 Winter Olympics. In 2012, his arranging and producing of Jenny Oaks Baker’s CD *“Wish Upon a Star”* earned the two of them a Grammy nomination.

Born in Waukesha, Wisconsin, Bestor benefited from his family's musical inclinations. His grandfather played trumpet in many popular mid-western big bands and a great uncle played trombone in Jack Benny’s band and was also a prodigious composer (having penned *“Who’s Afraid of the Big Bad Wolf”* and the memorable commercial jingle *J..E..L..L..O!*). When he took up piano as a child, Bestor was encouraged by his mother to improvise with his imagination. “I’d get restless practicing and my mom would sit down at the piano with me and say *“Play something that sounds like a sunrise.”*” Thus was born his fascination with the relationship between music and visual imagery.

As Bestor took up trumpet in his early teens while continuing his piano studies, he set his sights on composing for film. *“I knew that’s what I wanted to do when I saw “Jaws” during high school. I made it a goal to score films from that moment.”*

While enrolled in college, Bestor began writing music for student films, gradually moving onto documentaries and eventually into the feature film score arena. In 1987, he was one of only six recipients of a fellowship at the prestigious Sundance Film Institutes Film Composer Lab. There, he studied with master film composers Dave Grusin, Alan Silvestri and David Raksin. Even while Bestor’s scoring career flourished, leading to such projects as music for the National Geographic documentary on the sinking of the Andrea Doria, second large screen film *“Sedona,”* the feature film *“The Ghosts of Dickens’ Past,”* Warner Brothers animated film *“Scarecrow,”* and even several Playstation video games, he expanded his career to include original recordings and increasingly popular concerts.

In 1988, he recorded his first best-selling Christmas album *“An Airus Christmas.”* At the time, everybody I talked to said it was a bad idea,” he recalls. *“There was only one other album out there of contemporary instrumental Christmas music, by Mannheim Steamroller, and I was told that the three-month period from October through Christmas was too short to market a new record.”* But after staging a sold-out, 2,500 seat concert to support the album, Bestor found himself at the genesis of a holiday tradition, inspiring further recordings and annual concerts across the country. This year marks the 27th Anniversary of that first concert and to date, over half a million people have enjoyed his unique holiday concerts.

Featuring as many as 45 other musicians on stage, Bestor’s concerts are major productions, but his warm storytelling and humor create an intimate rapport with his audience. *“It’s a bit like Garrison Keillor-meets-John Williams,”* he laughs *“with all 2500 audience members*

crammed into my front room.” The popular concerts also feature special guests and Bestor has been joined by such musical luminaries as Oscar and Grammy-award winners Jennifer Warnes & Melissa Manchester, solists Richard Elliot & Charlie Bisharat, teen pop idol Donny Osmond and Debbie Gibson, and classical crossover star Jenny Oaks Baker, among many others.

In spring of 2000, Bestor’s easy-going manner and rapport with audiences were showcased in the PBS concert filming of his “*Innovators*” album, with Sam Cardon. The nationwide special was so successful that a follow-up “*Innovators II: Keepers of the Flame*” was produced for release in conjunction with the 2002 Olympic celebrations.

In August 2001, Bestor’s composing and conducting talents were highlighted when his powerful “*Saints on the Seas*” oratorio was performed in major European cities against the backdrop of some of the world’s most beautiful concert halls. Bestor conducted the Estonian National Symphony Orchestra and the Royal Liverpool Orchestra and Choir in this momentous orchestral work.

In 2002, Bestor had the distinctive opportunity to conduct his music (co-written with fellow collaborator Sam Cardon) during the Closing Ceremonies of the 2002 Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City. He was also honored to have carried the Olympic torch through Salt Lake City.

“It was truly a gold-medal experience. Rubbing shoulders with incredible athletes and being joined on stage by Josh Groban, Charlotte Church, Earth Wind and Fire, Moby, KISS, among others was unforgettable.” Several years ago Kurt premiered his “*Night at the Movies*” concert with the Utah Symphony—a journey through the last 85 years of movie music. Using a giant screen, guest vocalists, and his usual concert repartee with the audience, Bestor traced the art of film scoring from its silent piano roots to today’s exciting scores. This entertaining presentation played to three sold out shows and was introduced in January 2005 to English audiences when he performed

with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic. Never one to sit still, Bestor, in 2006, added radio to his long list of accomplishments when he agreed to host a morning talk show on a brand new station for women in Salt Lake City AM820. His show *“Wakin’ Up with Rebecca and Kurt”* was popular with Wasatch Front listeners from Provo to Logan.

Bestor had a very busy year in 2013. He composed a movie score for the docu-drama *“The Grand Rescue”* had his original dance composition *“Fire and Ice”* performed by the winning formation ballroom dance team in Blackpool England, and finished production on a new album entitled *“Outside the Lines.”* (released in 2014) This was Bestor’s first produced nationally-released non-holiday album since his critically-acclaimed *“Sketches”* in 2002. *“In the decade since I released “Sketches,” I have certainly been exercising my composing, arranging, and orchestrating chops by scoring movies, producing albums for other artists, arranging songs for stage, composing and conducting classical music for orchestra. But, putting together one’s own collection of original compositions is supremely satisfying and, after all these years, a big relief,”* said Bestor.

Among his most unique projects is a classical commission by the Mormon Tabernacle Choir and Orchestra—a piece written for choir, orchestra, children’s choirs, and 500 bell ringers commemorating the rededication of the Utah State Capitol and another commissioned piece dedicated to the 50th Anniversary of John F. Kennedy’s Assassination which was premiered in March in Dallas. Bestor also donates a significant amount of time and resources to aid philanthropic causes. He performs as many as two concerts per month to raise money for such causes as Oulessebougou/ Utah Alliance, Ascend, Primary Children’s Hospital, Utah Animal Adoption, among many others. When not composing, Bestor and his Kenyan- born wife, Petrina travel to visit family in Africa and in 2012 climbed Mount Kilimanjaro. While having traveled to many corners of the globe, Bestor is most at home skiing the *“greatest snow on earth.”*

Short Bio

Kurt Bestor, an Emmy-Award-winning and Grammy-nominated composer, is known for the incredible range of musical genres in which he excels. From his full orchestral film scores for IMAX movies like Great American West and Sedona to cutting edge synth compositions for television shows and video games, there's virtually no style he hasn't composed. Bestor's music is played by orchestras, bands, and singers the world over. His popular anthem "Prayer of the Children" is still one of the most sung choir songs in the world and is currently being covered by American Idol finalist David Archuleta and the iconic rock group Three Dog Night. When not composing, Bestor performs his traditional holiday show to sold-out audiences in the Intermountain West and his classical compositions and orchestral pops shows with various orchestras throughout the world.

He and his wife, Petrina, and daughter Ella make their home in the mountains of Utah.







“Creative people take their inspiration where they find it. For Kurt Bestor, it came while stripping wallpaper.”

— Carma Wadley, Deseret News

“Bestor has endured, and so has his Christmas concert, and that's certainly good news during the Christmas season.”

— Doug Robinson, Deseret News

“For months I've been stewing about beginning this column. Armed with visions of William F. Buckley and Pulitzer prizes, I set about trying to write a masterpiece. Needless to say—for me, putting notes and rests on a blank sheet of paper is nothing compared to the task of " putting pen to palm pilot." So with that self-deprecating introduction—I begin my foray into the publishing world.”

— Kurt Bestor, Meridian Magazine

““In the land of the Mormon Tabernacle choir and the Osmonds, there are many great singers that would contribute to the show, "Bestor said. "Giving this person a chance to perform would not only benefit the concert, but also the singer.””

— Alyssa Moses, Daily Universe

“Ever thought about writing your autobiography? Would you begin somewhere with your childhood, or would you start with last week and work backward? Should you skip over the ugly spots, or let it all hang out, exposé style? Sound daunting? Now try putting it to music.”

— Heather Beers

“The Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra led by conductor Kurt Bestor went some way to re-addressing the balance with this extremely entertaining concert of past and present classic movie music.”

— Gail Campbell-Thomson, Liverpool Echo

“In true Kurt Bestor fashion, from the first echoing Glorias of the Millennium Choir to the last haunting strains of "Prayer of the Children," it was an evening filled with good will, magic and the joy of the season.”

— Carma Wadley, Deseret News

“If you look at the headlines and watch the news, there doesn't seem to be a lot of joy in the world these days. And when it came time to start thinking about his annual Christmas concert, that bothered Kurt Bestor a lot.”

— Carma Wadley, Deseret News

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