

Glen Williams resident Russell Braun receives Order of Canada

EAMONN MAHER
emahe@theifp.ca

While on a family vacation in Curacao early in January 2017, one of Russell Braun's sons approached him about some information he'd found on Facebook.

Since when was dad a member of the distinguished fraternity of the Order of Canada?

Russell, the renowned classical baritone singer who has performed in opera houses around the world, admitted he felt a little embarrassed by the award and isn't one to toot his own horn, so to speak.

"Honestly, I just hadn't gotten around to telling them," he laughed in a weekend telephone interview.

"I'd found out about (the award, one of 48 to be bestowed upon a select group of Canadians in 2017) a couple of weeks beforehand and just forgot about it while we were enjoying the

sun."

Last Wednesday - a year later - the Braun family was at Rideau Hall in Ottawa for the ceremony as the 52-year-old was invested as one of eight Officers of the Order of Canada (O.C.) by Governor General Julie Payette.

"It kind of made it official and puts it into context as well," said the Glen Williams resident, who was born in Frankfurt, Germany before returning to Canada as a teen. Late father Victor was also a baritone singer.

"As a musician and performer for the past last 25 years, I've been wondering what I have done to deserve this award. I haven't gone to a war zone and distributed first aid or anything like that.

"Then I spoke with some of the other recipients and they all said the same thing! It's wonderful and definitely the most unique recognition I've ever received and I am really

honestly still trying to process it."

A multiple-time Juno Award recipient, Braun said the highlight of the ceremony for him was watching 20-year-old son Ben, a freshman pitcher at St. Bonaventure University in Buffalo, and 17-year-old son Gabriel, also a competitive baseball player, interact with Canadian Women's Soccer Team captain Christine Sinclair and comedian Mike Myers, who were appointed as O.C. Officers as well.

Braun noted that several of the Order of Canada recipients were University of Toronto graduates like himself and wife Carolyn Maule, who are both currently instructors at the school.

"Carolyn is a pianist who has performed with me regularly for many years and it's in moments like we enjoyed during the (O.C.) ceremony that you realize you wouldn't be where you are without the

love and support of your family," he said.

During his travels around the world, Braun remarked that he's always been welcomed in foreign countries after his nationality is mentioned, although he doesn't quite see himself as the "cultural ambassador" as he's been described, even though his support of the next generation of singers and commitment to performing the work of Canadian composers is part of the reason he received the award.

"I think it's interesting to see how (the award) is celebrated as a community within the fabric of a country," he added.

"I've lived in Glen Williams since 1994 and community is very important to me. I think this validates who I am as a reflection of the people in that community. It's nice to be singled out, but there are so many other deserving people out there who deserve this tremendous honour."



Sgt. Johanie Maheu/Photo

Local resident Russell Braun was presented with the Officer insignia of the Order of Canada by the Right Honourable Julie Payette, Governor General of Canada, on Wednesday at Rideau Hall in Ottawa. Also in the photo (from left) are Braun's sons Benjamin and Gabriel and wife Carolyn Maule.

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