



JAMES CONLON  
Music Director

## NEWS

**LAUREN HESS,**  
Marketing & Communications Mgr.  
lhess@mayfestival.com

1241 Elm Street  
Cincinnati, OH 45202  
TEL 513.744.3250  
FAX 513.744.3535  
mayfestival.com

**FOR RELEASE:** September 25, 2011  
**PR CONTACT:** Lauren Hess, 513.744.3250

### **JAMES CONLON ANNOUNCES PROGRAMS FOR THE 2012 CINCINNATI MAY FESTIVAL, MAY 11–19, 2012**

*America's Premier Choral Festival presents  
popular masterworks and May Festival Premieres*

**CINCINNATI**—James Conlon, Music Director of the Cincinnati May Festival, today announced programs for the 2012 Festival, scheduled for May 11 – 19, 2012.

The May Festival is the oldest continuous choral festival in the Western Hemisphere; it is the pride of Cincinnati, one of a very few cities in the world today with an ongoing commitment to choral music. For two weekends each May the music world turns to Cincinnati for an unsurpassed experience in choral music performance.



**James Conlon**

Maestro Conlon, entering his 33rd year as Music Director, has provided the artistic leadership for more May Festivals than any other Music Director in the Festival's 139-year history, and holds a place among the longest-tenured Music Directors of any major classical music institution in the country. The prestigious roster of past Festival Music Directors has included, among others, Theodore Thomas, Max Rudolf and James Levine.

Maestro Conlon says, "Our status as the oldest continuous choral music festival in the Western Hemisphere lies in our concentrated presentation of the great choral repertoire. For 139 years May Festival has preserved a forum for an excellent volunteer chorus to thrive and perform a range of masterpieces and unique musical gems. Music Hall, the home of the May Festival, provides the perfect venue to showcase the May Festival Chorus, the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra and world-renowned guest artists in a variety of performances, from robust, explosions of sound to exquisite reflective moments.

## **PROGRAM OVERVIEW**

The 2012 May Festival, the 91st in the history of this monumental event, includes works that represent some highly popular choral masterpieces, along with an evening of May Festival premieres, performed by vast choral and orchestral forces and an outstanding roster of soloists.

Opening night, set for May 11 at Cincinnati's Music Hall, opens with an audience favorite that is an immense tour de force, **Orff's *Carmina Burana***. The May 12 concert features the work of two iconic French composers, **Poulenc's *Gloria* and Duruflé's *Requiem***. The first weekend concludes on May 13 with sacred music in a sacred setting—the exquisite Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption in Covington, Kentucky. On May 18, one of the most celebrated works in the choral repertoire will be performed, **Brahms' *A German Requiem***. The 2012 May Festival concludes with an all **Tchaikovsky** evening consisting of works that are all May Festival premieres.

Highlights also include performances by some of today's established and rising stars, including John Aler, Nicole Cabell\*, Rodrick Dixon, William McGraw, Ronnita Nicole Miller\*, Heidi Grant Murphy, Hana Park, Tatiana Pavlovskaya, Stephen Powell, John Relyea\*, Ekaterina Semenchuk, and Yohan Yi. (\*artist making May Festival debut)

## **PROGRAM DETAILS**

The Cincinnati May Festival, founded in 1873 and led by Music Director James Conlon since 1979, will comprise five different concerts spanning two consecutive weekends May 11 - 19, including four concerts in Cincinnati's historic Music Hall and a Sunday evening program at the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption in Covington, Kentucky, on May 13.

The 2012 Festival opens on **Friday, May 11**, with the "**Stabat Mater**", a stirring portrait of Mary as she grieves for her son, Jesus, and "**Te Deum**", a hymn of thanksgiving and praise, from **Verdi's *Four Sacred Pieces***. The mood shifts from sacred to profane with **Orff's *Carmina Burana*** as the May Festival Chorus is joined by the May Festival Youth Chorus and the Cincinnati Boychoir. Though this remarkable work was written seventy-five years ago it still resonates with contemporary audiences with its primal rhythms and sensual melodies. The opening "O Fortuna" continues to be featured in television commercials and movies and has become a part of popular culture.

Two French works are performed on **Saturday, May 12**, starting with the celebrated ***Gloria* by Poulenc**. When critics suggested that his *Gloria* bordered on the sacrilegious, Poulenc replied, "When I wrote this piece, I had in mind those frescoes by Gozzoli where the angels stick out their tongues; and also some serious Benedictine monks I had once seen reveling in a game of football." It is that very same mixture of solemnity and mischief, expressed through dancing rhythms, colorful and intricate choral textures, inventive orchestration, that makes Poulenc's *Gloria* a favorite of audiences everywhere.

**Duruflé's *Requiem*** is magnificent and established the composer as a significant French



From top: Cabell, Dixon, Murphy, Relyea

composer, joining the ranks of Fauré, Frank and Saint-Saëns. The piece was commissioned in 1947 by the French music publisher Durand and is written in memory of the composer's father. In it, the composer blends original chant melodies of the traditional Mass for the Dead with lush, Romantic lyricism in a way that allows the text to emerge from an almost organ-like sonority. As Duruflé intended, the result is a profound, and very human, statement of faith, forgiveness, comfort and tranquility.

Nearly every year since 1980, the May Festival has given a Sunday evening performance in this treasured Covington landmark, the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption. The annual sojourn by the May Festival, on **Sunday, May 13**, to one of the country's most beautiful churches celebrates a centuries-long tradition of presenting cathedral music in a sacred setting, the way it was meant to be heard. The May Festival Youth Chorus, in their 26th season, the 16th under the direction of James Bagwell, begins the evening with works that span the centuries and superbly express their religious and spiritual texts. James Conlon opens the May Festival Chorus portion of the evening with the remaining two a cappella works from **Verdi's *Four Sacred Pieces***. In his "**Ave Maria**", Verdi melds the traditional Ave Maria text with his beautifully nuanced rendering of a rather "enigmatic" musical scale. The poetic "**Laudi alla vergine Maria**" takes its text from Dante's "Paradiso," the final section of his *Divine Comedy*, which speaks of the Virgin's "meridian torch of love" and her generosity and tenderness. **Carissimi's *Jephte*** oratorio is his most famous and compelling work that imparts the Old Testament story in which Jephthe promises God, in return for victory over his enemies to sacrifice "whatsoever cometh forth of the doors of my house to meet me". Tragedy strikes when Jephthe's only daughter is the first to greet him following his victory.

The second May Festival weekend opens on **Friday, May 18** with a May Festival premiere of **Bach's Cantata No. 192 (Now Thank We All Our God)**. From the chorus' first declarations of "Now thank we all our God" to the final affirmation "Glory, honor and praise be to God... now and evermore" this is music of extraordinary vitality and pure joy. **Beethoven's *Calm Sea and Prosperous Voyage*** was, like so many of his greatest works, based on poems by Goethe. The music richly captures the mood and emotion of sailors stranded on a windless sea. **Brahms' *A German Requiem***, last performed at the 1997 Festival, is a remarkable choral masterpiece that offers comfort, warmth and solace to the Requiem setting. Brahms once said he would gladly have left out "German" and substituted "Human." After the first performance of the Requiem on Good Friday in 1868, a listener said the work's effect was "simply overpowering," concluding that it "ranked among the loftiest music ever given to the world."

The Festival closes on **Saturday, May 19** with an evening of May Festival premieres that celebrate the **Charms of Tchaikovsky**. Known for his ability to write beautiful, lush melodies, Tchaikovsky wrote some of the most popular concert and theatrical music in the classical repertoire. From the pomp and circumstance of a Tsar's coronation to the high drama of opera to the contemplative nature of church liturgy his rich harmonies have charmed listeners for more than a century. Tchaikovsky's celebratory ***Moscow Cantata*** was written for the coronation of Tsar Alexander III in Moscow in May 1883, ten years after the first May Festival. The ***Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom*** is the primary worship service of the Eastern Orthodox Church. Excerpts from this Liturgy will be performed. With over 11 operas to his credit, Tchaikovsky understood and excelled in his ability for dramatic story telling. Selected choruses and arias will be performed from four of his best known works – ***Eugene Onegin, Iolanta, The Queen of Spades***

*and The Maid of Orleans*. His famous love theme from *Romeo and Juliet* is so iconic that it has been used in many popular TV shows – from *Sesame Street* to *Scrubs*. The **Love Duet** with soloists is not often performed.

### **PRE-CONCERT RECITALS**

Hear some of the world's outstanding singers perform gems of the vocal literature before each of the four Music Hall concerts. Pianist Michael Chertock will accompany this year's guest soloists in recital performances held on the Music Hall stage at 7 p.m. These pre-concert recitals are free to ticketholders for the evening's performance.

MAY 11: Ronnita Nicole Miller, mezzo-soprano

MAY 12: Yohan Yi, bass-baritone

MAY 18: Ekaterina Semenchuk, mezzo-soprano

MAY 19: John Aler, tenor

### **SUPERTITLES**

Supertitles will be provided for each of the four Music Hall performances (May 11, 12, 18 and 19), enabling concertgoers to more easily follow the stories and enhancing their Festival experience. Supertitles are made possible by a grant from **The Corbett Foundation**.

### **CONCERT SCHEDULE, May Festival 2012**

Following is a list of programs and artists for the 2012 Cincinnati May Festival.

#### **WEEKEND 1**

- **FRIDAY, May 11, 2012, 8 pm at Music Hall**

**James Conlon conducting**

May Festival Chorus, Robert Porco, Director

May Festival Youth Chorus, James Bagwell, Director

Cincinnati Boychoir, Christopher Eanes, Director

Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra

Heidi Grant Murphy, soprano

Rodrick Dixon, tenor

Stephen Powell, baritone

**VERDI** "Stabat Mater" and "Te Deum" from *Four Sacred Pieces*

**ORFF** *Carmina Burana*

*Pre-Concert Recital (7 pm): Ronnita Nicole Miller, mezzo-soprano*

- **SATURDAY, May 12, 2012, 8 pm at Music Hall**

**Robert Porco conducting**

May Festival Chorus, Robert Porco, Director

Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra

Heidi Grant Murphy, soprano

Ronnita Nicole Miller, mezzo soprano  
Yohan Yi, baritone

**POULENC** *Gloria*  
**DURUFLÉ** Requiem, Opus 9

*Pre-Concert Recital (7 pm): Yohan Yi, bass-baritone*

• **SUNDAY, May 13, 2012, 8 pm at Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption**

**James Conlon conducting**

**James Bagwell conducting**

May Festival Chamber Choir, Robert Porco, Director

May Festival Youth Chorus, James Bagwell, Director

Members of the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra

Heidi Grant Murphy, soprano

Hana Park, soprano

John Aler, tenor (Jephte)

Yohan Yi, bass (Historicus)

May Festival Youth Chorus:

**TALLIS** Loquebantur  
**SCHUTZ** Unser Wandel  
**PART** Cantate Domino  
**DURUFLÉ** Ubi Caritas

May Festival Chorus:

**VERDI** "Ave Maria" & "Laudi alla vergine Maria" from *Four Sacred Pieces*  
**CARISSIMI** *Jephte*

**WEEKEND 2**

• **FRIDAY, May 18, 2012, 8 pm at Music Hall**

**James Conlon conducting**

May Festival Chorus, Robert Porco, Director

Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra

Nicole Cabell, soprano

John Relyea, baritone

William McGraw, bass

**BACH** Cantata No. 192, (Now Thank We All Our God)  
**BEETHOVEN** *Calm Sea and Prosperous Voyage*  
**BRAHMS** *A German Requiem*

*Pre-Concert Recital (7 pm): Ekaterina Semenchuk, mezzo-soprano*

• **SATURDAY, May 19, 2012, 8 pm at Music Hall**

**James Conlon conducting**

May Festival Chorus, Robert Porco, Director

May Festival Youth Chorus, James Bagwell, Director

Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra

Tatiana Pavlovskaya, soprano

Ekaterina Semenchuk, mezzo soprano

John Relyea, baritone

**TCHAIKOVSKY**                      *Moscow Cantata*

**Selections from**

**TCHAIKOVSKY**                      *Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom*

**TCHAIKOVSKY**                      *Romeo and Juliet (Love Duet)*

**Choruses and arias from**

**TCHAIKOVSKY**                      *Eugene Onegin*

**TCHAIKOVSKY**                      *Iolanta*

**TCHAIKOVSKY**                      *The Queen of Spades (Pique Dame)*

**TCHAIKOVSKY**                      *The Maid of Orleans*

*Pre-Concert Recital (7 pm): John Aler, tenor*

**ARTISTS AND ENSEMBLES**

**JAMES CONLON, Music Director**

One of today's preeminent conductors, James Conlon has cultivated a vast symphonic, operatic and choral repertoire. Through worldwide touring to North and South America, Asia, and Europe, an extensive discography, and frequent television appearances, Mr. Conlon has become one of today's most recognized conductors.

Mr. Conlon is Music Director of Los Angeles Opera; Music Director of the Ravinia Festival, summer home of the Chicago Symphony; and Music Director of the Cincinnati May Festival, where he has provided the artistic leadership for more May Festivals than any other Music Director in the Festival's 139-year history. Mr. Conlon served as Principal Conductor of the Paris National Opera (1995-2004); General Music Director of the City of Cologne, Germany (1989-2002); and Music Director of the Rotterdam Philharmonic (1983-1991).

Mr. Conlon has conducted more than 250 performances at the Metropolitan Opera since his debut in 1976. He is also known for his work with young musicians, and for his efforts to raise public consciousness to the significance of works of composers whose lives and compositions

were suppressed by the Nazi regime. For his efforts in championing these works he received the Crystal Globe Award from the Anti-Defamation League.

Mr. Conlon was chosen to be a member of the American Classical Music Hall of Fame. He is the recipient of two Grammy Awards, and one of five first recipients of the *Opera News* Award given in recognition for distinguished achievement in opera. He was awarded honorary doctoral degrees by The Juilliard School, Chapman University and Brandeis University and he received the Zemlinsky Prize for his efforts in bringing the composer's music to international attention. His other honors include a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Istituto Italiano di Cultura in Los Angeles, the Music Institute of Chicago's Dushkin Award, the Medal of the American Liszt Society, and Italy's Premio Galileo 2000 Award.

Mr. Conlon was named an Officier de L'Ordre des Arts et des Lettres by the French Government in 1996, and in 2004 was promoted to Commander. In 2002, James Conlon received France's highest distinction from the President of the French Republic, Jacques Chirac—the Légion d'Honneur.

### **ROBERT PORCO, Director of Choruses**



Robert Porco has been recognized as one of the leading choral musicians in the United States and for more than 36 years has been an active preparer and conductor of choral and orchestral works, including most of the major choral repertoire, as well as of opera.

Mr. Porco's conducting career has spanned geographic venues across western Europe and the United States, including performances in the Edinburgh Festival; Taipei, Taiwan; Lucerne, Switzerland; and Reykjavik, Iceland; and in the May Festival, Tanglewood Music Festival, Berkshire Music Festival, Blossom Festival and Grant Park Festival. He has been a regular guest conductor in the May Festival since 1991, with the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra since 1996 and The Cleveland Orchestra since 2000.

Mr. Porco was honored in June 2011 by Chorus America with its annual Michael Korn Founders Award for "a lifetime of significant contributions to the professional choral art". This lifetime achievement award, named for the first president of *Chorus America*, honors Mr. Porco's nearly four decades of service to the choral field as an educator and conductor.

Highlights of Mr. Porco's tenure with the May Festival include the May 2010 celebration of his 20 years as Director of Choruses and three highly acclaimed appearances in Carnegie Hall.

During his 13 years as Director of Choruses for The Cleveland Orchestra, Mr. Porco has prepared the Cleveland Orchestra Chorus for appearances with the orchestra in the Edinburgh Festival in 1999, in Carnegie Hall in 2002 and at the Lucerne Festival and London Proms in 2005.

Mr. Porco has gained national recognition for his preparation of choruses for such prominent conductors as John Adams, Pierre Boulez, James Conlon, Andrew Davis, Christoph von

Dohnányi, Paavo Järvi, Erich Kunzel, Raymond Leppard, James Levine, Jahja Ling, Jesús López-Cobos, Zubin Mehta, John Nelson, André Previn, Kurt Sanderling, Leonard Slatkin, Robert Shaw, Franz Welser-Möst, John Williams and David Zinman.

In 2009, Mr. Porco resumed doctoral teaching in the Choral Department of the Indiana University School of Music, where he taught and served as chairman from 1979 to 1998.

### **JAMES BAGWELL, Youth Chorus Director**



James Bagwell has been Music Director of the May Festival Youth Chorus in Cincinnati since 1997, conducting regularly during the May Festival, Carolfest, and outreach concerts throughout the Cincinnati area. He has conducted some 25 productions as Music Director of Light Opera Oklahoma and he frequently appears as guest conductor for orchestras around the country and abroad. He maintains an active schedule throughout the United States as a conductor of choral, operatic and orchestral music.

In 2009 he was appointed Music Director of The Collegiate Chorale and leads them in concerts at Carnegie Hall and Alice Tully Hall. He was also named Principal Guest Conductor of the American Symphony Orchestra in New York. Since 2003 he has been Director of Chorus for the Bard Music Festival, conducting and preparing choral works during the summer festival at the Fisher Center for the Performing Arts at Bard College. He has also prepared The Concert Chorale of New York for performances with the American Symphony Orchestra, the Los Angeles Philharmonic and the Mostly Mozart Festival.

Mr. Bagwell has trained choruses for a number of major American and international orchestras, including the San Francisco Symphony, Los Angeles Philharmonic, NHK Symphony (Japan), St. Petersburg Symphony, Budapest Festival Orchestra, The American Symphony Orchestra, Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, Cincinnati Pops Orchestra and Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra. He has worked with noted conductors such as Lorin Maazel, Esa-Pekka Salonen, Michael Tilson Thomas, Louis Langrée, Leon Botstein, Ivan Fischer, Vladimir Ashkenazy, Raymond Leppard, James Conlon, Jesús López-Cobos, Erich Kunzel, Leon Fleischer and Robert Shaw.

### **ENSEMBLES**

The world-renowned **May Festival Chorus** has been the core artistic element of the Cincinnati May Festival for over 130 years. The all-volunteer Chorus was established as the Festival's official local body of singers in 1880. Composed of 130 dedicated volunteer singers from the



Ohio, Kentucky and Indiana "Tri-state" region, the Chorus is a year-round ensemble that rehearses on a rigorous weekly schedule. As the official chorus of the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, the Chorus regularly performs and records with both the Cincinnati Symphony and Cincinnati Pops Orchestras.

In 2004, Telarc released the world premiere recording of Liszt's *St. Stanislaus*, featuring James Conlon, the May Festival Chorus and the CSO; the CD was awarded the 30th International Franz Liszt Record Grand Prix by the Franz Liszt Society of Budapest, Hungary. The May Festival Chorus has earned national and international acclaim with appearances at New York's Carnegie Hall and Avery Fisher Hall, a tour of Europe and appearances at the prestigious Dubrovnik Festival. In 1998 the chorus earned special honors from the Ohio Arts Council's annual Governor's Awards for the Arts—the Irma Lazarus Award.

The **Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra** is one of America's finest and most respected ensembles. The fifth oldest symphony orchestra in the United States and the oldest orchestra in Ohio, the internationally acclaimed CSO has performed the American premieres of works by such composers as Debussy, Mahler, Ravel and Bartók, and commissioned works that have since become mainstays of the classical repertoire including Aaron Copland's *Fanfare for the Common Man*. The Orchestra has toured extensively, sold millions of recordings, and continues to commission new works and program an impressive array of music.

The CSO is engaged in an extensive search for the Orchestra's next music director following the hugely successful tenure of Paavo Järvi. For the 2011-12 season, conductor Rafael Frühbeck de Burgos, pianist Lang Lang and composer Philip Glass are each serving as creative directors for the Orchestra's three classical music series, Masterworks, Ascent and Boundless.

The 2012 May Festival also features the **May Festival Youth Chorus**, composed of area high school students under the direction of **James Bagwell**. In 2007, the May Festival Youth Chorus was featured on NPR's *From the Top*, a program that showcases the best of the best of today's young performers. The May Festival Youth Chorus is sponsored by **Scripps Howard Foundation**.

**The Cincinnati Boychoir**, directed by **Christopher Eanes**, each year presents a six-concert subscription series and gives approximately 35 outreach performances for community organizations, churches, nursing homes, weddings, clubs and retirement homes, in addition to numerous appearances with local orchestras and opera companies. Throughout the choir's history, more than 3,000 choir members have presented more than 1,000 concerts in the greater Cincinnati area and throughout 21 states and four foreign countries.

### **CONCERT SOLOISTS**

May Festival 2012 guest soloists, three of whom are making May Festival debuts, are sopranos **Nicole Cabell** (Festival debut), **Heidi Grant Murphy**, **Hana Park** and **Tatiana Pavlovskaya**; mezzo-sopranos **Ronnita Nicole Miller** (Festival debut) and **Ekaterina Semenchuk**; tenors **John Aler** (his 26th May Festival appearance) and **Rodrick Dixon**; and basses **William McGraw**, **Stephen Powell**, **John Relyea** (Festival debut) and **Yohan Yi**.

### **TICKET INFORMATION**

Four-concert subscriptions range from \$70 to \$390. Two-concert subscriptions range from \$30 to \$210. "Festival Pass" subscriptions (four flexible-use vouchers for May 11, 12, 18 and/or 19) are available for \$170 (Gallery) and \$220 (Orchestra/Balcony). **Subscription sales begin September 26, 2011**. For more information, please call **513.381.3300**. Tickets to **individual concerts** will be available in March of 2012.

## **ABOUT THE MAY FESTIVAL**

Established in 1873, the May Festival is directly responsible for the development of Cincinnati's modern music life. Music Hall, the city's primary concert venue, was built specifically to house the Festival's performance. The prestigious roster of Festival Music Directors has included, among others, Theodore Thomas, Max Rudolf, James Levine and, currently, James Conlon.

**PHOTOS and COMPLETE ARTIST and ENSEMBLE BIOS  
ARE AVAILABLE VIA EMAIL OR CD UPON REQUEST**

## **CONTACT INFORMATION**

Lauren Hess, Marketing & Communications Manager  
May Festival  
513.744.3250  
[lhess@mayfestival.com](mailto:lhess@mayfestival.com)

The May Festival gratefully acknowledges support from the following:

