



35 YEARS
James Conlon
MUSIC DIRECTOR

NEWS

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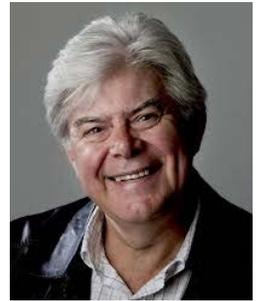
MAY FESTIVAL FEATURES CHORAL MASTERWORKS IN CLOSING WEEKEND OF 2014 SEASON

CINCINNATI - 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 celebrates his 35th Anniversary as Music Director this season. He has provided the artistic leadership for more May Festivals than any other music director in the Festival's 141-year old history and holds a prominent place among the longest-tenured music directors of any major classical music institution in the country.

The second weekend of May Festival opens on **Friday, May 16** with **Beethoven's** masterful **Symphony No. 9, the Choral Symphony**, a celebration of universal brotherhood, whose remarkable finale of "Ode to Joy" is perhaps the most familiar and beloved tune ever written. Due to the enormous power of this work, it has been performed to mark momentous historic occasions—from the opening of the United Nations and the fall of Berlin Wall to the beginning of the May Festival's season in 1873. **Tchaikovsky** used the same "Ode to Joy" text in his cantata which he composed for his graduation examination. Upon hearing the work, Herman Laroche, the great Russian music critic proclaimed to Tchaikovsky that "the standard you have set so far simply towers above the most promising of your contemporaries" and predicted that Tchaikovsky would become the greatest Russian composer. The May Festival Youth Chorus will join the May Festival Chorus on the opening ***Ode to Joy Cantata***.

Saturday, May 17 is the grand finale of the 2014 season, with a performance of the glorious **Symphony No. 8** by **Mahler**. Massive in scale and unparalleled in scope, popularly known as the "**Symphony of a Thousand**", this masterpiece is



From top:
Sigmundsson, Dixon,
Wall

one of the most celebrated works in the history of choral music and the crowning achievement of the composer's career – Mahler described it as the “the greatest work I have ever made.” The Nashville Symphony Chorus and the Cincinnati Children's Choir will join the May Festival forces for this special occasion. With the spectacle of **over 500 performers on the Music Hall stage**, this is a fitting work to celebrate James Conlon's historic 35-year history as Music Director.

For the first time in May Festival's recent history there will be an encore matinee performance on **Sunday, May 18** of the May 16 concert, featuring **Tchaikovsky's *Ode to Joy Cantata*** and **Beethoven's *Symphony No. 9***. These powerful works will be the encore to a spectacular celebratory season honoring James Conlon's 35 magnificent years as Music Director. His tenure represents a significant milestone in the world of contemporary music directors.

“Cincinnati has played a special role in my professional life. I am deeply proud of my association with the May Festival, May Festival Chorus and the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra. The organization has maintained a tradition and a commitment to choral music and its repertoire, which is remarkable in our time,” reflected James Conlon.

Longevity is a strength that pervades the entire May Festival organization. The three members of the artistic leadership for the organization hold a collective 77 years of experience in their work with singers in Cincinnati. This year in addition to James Conlon celebrating his 35th season, Robert Porco, Director of Choruses, will complete his 24th season, and James Bagwell, will complete his 17th season as Director of the May Festival Youth Chorus. At the end of last season, James Bagwell extended his contract with the Youth Chorus through 2015. This longevity extends to members of the May Festival Chorus as well. This year the May Festival Chorus has 148 singers, the largest chorus since 1994, and thirty of those singers have sung with the chorus for more than 20 years.

Three-concert subscriptions range from \$62 to \$338. “Festival Pass” subscriptions (four flexible-use vouchers for May 7, 16, 17 and/or 18) are available for \$198 (Gallery) and \$253 (Orchestra/Balcony). Tickets to individual concerts start at \$25. For more information, please call **513.381.3300** or visit **www.mayfestival.com**.

The May Festival gratefully acknowledges support from the following:

