



35 YEARS
James Conlon
MUSIC DIRECTOR

NEWS

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2014 MAY FESTIVAL OPENS ON WEDNESDAY, MAY 7

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 2014 May Festival opens on **Wednesday, May 7** with a preview of the concert which will be performed at the *Spring for Music* Festival at Carnegie Hall in New York City. The centerpiece of the concert is ***The Ordering of Moses***, a work by **Robert Nathaniel Dett** which received its world premiere at the 1937 May Festival. The performance created quite a stir in the musical world causing critics to rave and audience members to jump from their seats with standing ovations wanting more. The work also caused controversy across the country. The world premiere was broadcast live nationwide via NBC radio, but only about three-quarters of the work was heard over the network. Near the end of the broadcast, the announcer is heard to say, "We are sorry indeed, ladies and gentlemen, but due to previous commitments, we are unable to remain for the closing moments of this excellent performance." It has been suggested that these "previous commitments" were in fact a concession to objections voiced by callers to the network. The May Festival's performance of *The Ordering of Moses* was possibly the first network classical music broadcast of a major work by a black composer. The 20th Century American choral masterwork ***Harmonium*** by Pulitzer Prize winning composer **John Adams** completes the program. This iconic minimalist work provides a visionary look at love, death, and the intensity of sexual longing and ecstasy, based on the poetry of John Donne and Emily Dickinson.



From top: Dixon,
Moore, Albert

On **Friday, May 9**, this same program will be performed in **Carnegie Hall**, as part of the prestigious *Spring for Music* Festival, by the May Festival Chorus and the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra. Carnegie Hall performance sponsors include **The Corbett Foundation, Carl Jacobs Foundation, H.B., E.W. and F.R. Luther Charitable Foundation** and the **National Endowment for the Arts**.

A **live listening event** will take place on **Friday, May 9**, in **Washington Park** in Over-the-Rhine for fans back home. **WGUC** will broadcast the program locally with an HD Radio digital signal. The feed will also be available in the Washington Park sound system, courtesy of Cincinnati Center City Development Corporation (3CDC). From 5-7 p.m. **WGUC** will play music by the CSO and May Festival. A pre-show will air from 7-7:30 p.m.

Nearly every year since 1980, the May Festival has given a Sunday evening performance in the treasured Covington landmark, the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption. The annual sojourn by the May Festival, on **Sunday, May 11**, to one of the country's most beautiful churches offers the opportunity to present cathedral music in a sacred setting, the way it was meant to be heard. The **May Festival Youth Chorus**, led by **James Bagwell**, and the **May Festival Chamber Choir**, led by **Robert Porco**, will again delight audiences in this extraordinary setting. This year works by R. Nathaniel Dett will be featured, along with selections by contemporary American composers including Aaron Copland, William Dawson, R. Nathaniel Dett, Moses Hogan, Undine Smith Moore, Jake Runestad, Virgil Thomson and Eric Whitacre.

“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:

