

MA 30

december 2014

PROFESSIONALS OF THE YEAR

PROFILES IN COURAGE



musical
america
SPECIAL REPORTS

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and Aspen Music Festival and School



Introduction



Among Musical America's Special Reports, the "MA 30" is a favorite. This is the time of the year when we recognize folks in our industry who are making a difference, be they up and coming ([Rising Stars](#), in 2012), already arrived ([Movers and Shakers](#), in 2013), or, this year, courageous colleagues who have been risk-takers and/or innovators.

For our Profiles in Courage issue, we sent out a questionnaire to the international performing arts community. Nominees, we wrote, should be people who have "taken a risk, stepped up for the cause, spoken out where others were silent—all to the measurable benefit of their respective organizations and/or the field."

We received hundreds of responses. We based our 30 final choices on a number of factors including measurable results, uniqueness, persistence in the face of resistance or hardened tradition, and/or inventiveness.

Using our own research, the information provided on the ballots, and in some cases personal interviews, our all-star crew of journalists [[see p. 29](#)] set about writing up the profiles. For this editor, it felt a little like match making!

I'm particularly proud of this issue, because it has been an opportunity to honor our colleagues who go the extra mile, often with little or no recognition. One left a solid career path to launch a music festival; another broke through a bureaucracy to launch a pioneering arts journalism program; another saved an opera company from its board-approved death; still another puts instruments in the hands of inner-city children and created an orchestra that conductors from Simon Rattle to Bobby McFerrin have come to conduct.

The best part about the MA 30 is that it comes solely from your suggestions. For that, we and your nominees send our heartfelt thanks.

Regards,

Susan Elliott
Editor, Special Reports

Stephanie Challener

Publisher and Managing Editor

Susan Elliott

Editor, MusicalAmerica.com News and Special Reports
editor@musicalamerica.com

Joyce Wasserman

Senior Account Manager
732-851-6988 ■ jwasserman@musicalamerica.com

Frances Wan

Design Director | Database Publishing Specialist

Howard Roth

Business Consultant

Sedgwick Clark

Features Editor, Musical America Directory

Robert E. Hudoba

Manager of Listing Services
listings@musicalamerica.com

Carolyn Eychenne (Europe)

Advertising Sales Representative
33.1.39.58.14.01 ■ carolyn@eychenne.me

Andrea Rancati (Italy)

Advertising Sales Representative
39.02.703.00088 ■ arancati@rancatinet.it

Debra Kraft

Account Coordinator
dkraft@musicalamerica.com

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PO Box 1330, Hightstown, NJ 08520
609-448-3346 ■ info@musicalamerica.com



MICHAEL MORGAN

Music Director

Oakland East Bay Symphony

No one ever accused Michael Morgan of playing it safe. Now in his 25th year as music director of the [Oakland East Bay Symphony](#), the conductor has charted a singular path—one that reflects the unique spirit of the diverse community he serves.

Throughout his tenure, Morgan's eclectic approach to programming has prompted him to mix appearances by rock stars, gospel singers, and funk masters with concerts featuring works by Beethoven and Brahms. He has shared the orchestra's programs with artists such as Carlos Santana, Isaac Hayes, local choirs,

and klezmer bands, and conducted large-scale performances of works such as Bernstein's *Mass*. Last year, he introduced a sitar concerto by Ravi Shankar; the current season has already featured an appearance by a jazz quintet. This month, he'll lead a holiday tribute concert to the late folksinger and activist Pete Seeger.

An outside observer might think these mix-and-match programs are simply the result of marketing strategies. But Morgan has a keen sense of the Bay Area's musical pulse. The D.C.-born, Oberlin-trained conductor has made his home in Oakland for years,

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What can a courageous leap yield?

La bohème ♪ L'elisir d'amore ♪ Don Giovanni ♪ The Merry Widow
 ♪ La Traviata ♪ Ariadne auf Naxos ♪ Così fan tutte ♪ The Medium ♪
 A Little Night Music ♪ Gianni Schicchi ♪ Die Fledermaus ♪ Rigoletto
 ♪ Madama Butterfly ♪ Il barbiere di Siviglia ♪ Le nozze di Figaro ♪
 Sweeney Todd ♪ Susannah ♪ Norma ♪ Into the Woods ♪ Carmen
 ♪ Roméo et Juliette ♪ Samson et Dalila ♪ Tosca ♪ West Side Story ♪
 Neapolitan Festival and Pagliacci ♪ Putting it Together ♪ Turandot
 ♪ Seasonal Sparkle 2011, 2012, 2013, and 2014 ♪

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MARK SFORZINI

FOR HIS VISION AND COURAGE

St. Petersburg Opera: Where stars shine and music LIVES!

and he can hold forth as fluently about the local jazz scene as he can about Mozart (another of his favorite composers.)

Morgan's work as music director has been transformative, but his reach extends well beyond the orchestra. Over the years, he's been a prime advocate for restoring music training in Oakland public schools. He has built the Oakland Youth Orchestra with similar success.

Morgan, who studied with Gunther Schuller and Seiji Ozawa at the Berkshire Music Center at Tanglewood, was a protégé of Leonard Bernstein, who invited him to make his New York Philharmonic debut in 1986. The same year, Sir Georg Solti chose

him as assistant conductor of the Chicago Symphony, a position he held for five years. Having made his operatic debut at Vienna State Opera conducting Mozart's *Abduction from the Seraglio*, he maintains his love of opera as music director of another East Bay-based company, Festival Opera.

When Morgan joined the Oakland East Bay Symphony, the downtown area was in desperate need of revitalization. Today, it's thriving—and Morgan's courageous, forward-thinking leadership is a big part of the reason. Morgan hasn't simply rebuilt his orchestra. He's helped chart a new course for the city he calls home. —Georgia Rowe

MATTHIAS NASKE

Intendant

Vienna Konzerthaus



The [Vienna Konzerthaus](#) has been struggling with debt since an expensive renovation in 2001. It receives only 13% in city funding, and it must hold its own against the famed Musikverein, where the ghosts of Mozart and Brahms are said to roam the halls.

But since [Matthias Naske became intendant](#) in July of 2013, the house has been forging a healthy future. The Vienna native, 49, has not only made the [financial challenges transparent](#), but taken an ambitious direction with programming.

Citing the need to avoid the "institutional arrogance" that can quickly put any organization in hot water, he has expanded jazz and world music series and even introduced experimental alternative bands under the premise that such acts are "already part of the heritage." "Local Heroes," one of four new series this season, will feature Vienna-based groups such as [Koenigleopold](#) and "Sofa Surfers."

Naske has expanded the children's music programming as well, offering five different subscription packages, with the new "Cinello" geared toward toddlers. He also created a strong partnership with the Wiener Symphoniker, which, among other appearances, is featured in one-hour concerts during the series Fridays@7.

The spring and summer will bring new mini-festivals "[Gemischter Satz](#)," featuring music, literary readings, theater, and

art side-by-side, and "Bridges," which will focus on contemporary music outside Austria. Meanwhile, the leading contemporary festival Wien Modern is going strong this fall with the chamber ensemble Klangforum Wien, Arditti Quartet, and more.

This season features no less than 13 world premieres and 27 Austrian premieres, with composers ranging from John Adams and Mark Andre to Gyorgy Kurtág and Eno Poppe. With almost 29,000 subscribers, the house will feature up-and-coming artists such as [Patricia Kopatchinskaja](#) and Robin Ticciati while also hosting programs with the coveted baritone Matthias Goerne.

"I like to bring together the right people onstage with the right audience members and the right kind of communication in the right location," Naske said last year. "That for me is the definition of 'presenting.'"

A trained lawyer, Naske returned to Austria after serving as general director of Philharmonie Luxembourg and the Orchestre Philharmonique for over a decade. He also draws upon experience with organizations such as the Jeunesse Musicale Österreich, Gustav Mahler Youth Orchestra, and Camerata Academica Salzburg. —Rebecca Schmid

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