

## Eric Townell, Artistic Director, Conductor

A versatile and dynamic musician, conductor Eric Townell became the third Music Director in the 79-year history of the Rochester Oratorio Society in 2006. He has led the ROS in subscription concerts, regional outreach performances, live radio broadcasts, televised concerts, commissions of new work, collaborative concerts with the region's leading arts organizations and with the University of Rochester Humanities Center, award-winning tours to Beijing and Shanghai for the 2008 Olympic Cultural Festival and to European capitals. He has prepared the ROS for numerous appearances with the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra and the Chautauqua Symphony Orchestra, including several broadcast nationally, and for the New York State Ballet. His choral and orchestral performances with the Oratorio Society have been heard nationally via WXXI's "Performance Rochester" series.



Eric has appeared to critical acclaim as guest conductor of the Silesian State Opera Orchestra in the Czech Republic and with the Milwaukee, Lincoln, Madison and Symphoria (Syracuse) symphony orchestras, among numerous others. He has conducted holiday, special event and regional outreach concerts as a frequent guest conductor for the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra, including their 2012 Messiah, selected for national broadcast, and the 2013 Ninetieth Anniversary Concert of the RPO, sponsored by the City of Rochester. He substituted at short notice to conduct the Hellas Soloists Orchestra of Patras, Greece, for their Italian tour. Twice winner of the International Opera Conducting Course/Competition, he made his European debut conducting Eugene Onegin at the Silesian State Opera Company of the Czech Republic. He conducted an acclaimed production of Rigoletto with L'Opera Piccola of Chicago in 2002. He has led performances for the national touring company of Amahl and the Night Visitors and concerts of opera scenes and arias with the Beethoven Chamber Orchestra of the Czech Republic. With the Empire State Lyric Theatre in Rochester, Eric led Rossini's La Cambiale di Matrimonio in March of 2012. As Artistic Director for Rochester Lyric Opera (2013-2017), he led fully professional productions of Donizetti's rarely performed gem Rita, Haydn's Lo Speciale and numerous concert and outreach performances. He developed innovative programming for its Chamber Opera Festival and for staged, professional performances for community outreach at the Strong Museum of Play (Giannini: Beauty and the Beast) and at Rochester's Family Court (Gilbert & Sullivan: Trial by Jury).

As Music Director of the Central Wisconsin Symphony Orchestra (1991-2001), Eric conducted its first concert broadcast recordings for Wisconsin Public Radio. He led an energetic series of commissions of works by American women and collaborated with soloists Mischa Dichter, Edgar Meyer, flutist Jim Walker and baritone Kurt Ollmann, among many others. As Music Director of the Master Singers of Milwaukee (2003-2010), Eric led the choir in a concert of Nordic music in New York City in May 2005 at the invitation of the Finnish government. During Eric's tenure, the Master Singers offered an annual series of subscription concerts featuring innovative, collaborative performances with Wisconsin's leading ensembles,

a summer opera series and numerous outreach appearances throughout Wisconsin. In 2009, Eric prepared the Master Singers for their debut with the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra in performances of Mahler's Symphony No. 8 under Andreas Delfs. As Music Director of the Festival Choir of Madison (1993-2006), Eric directed four live-broadcast concerts from the Elvehjem Museum of Art for Wisconsin Public Radio. He led the Festival Choir in its inaugural CD, *Wisconsin Sings!*, selections from which were broadcast nationwide by National Public Radio. During his tenure, Eric and the choir completed a series of commissions, premiering and recording works by Brent Michael Davids, Jean Belmont Ford, Daron Hagen, and Stephen Paulus, and were regular collaborators with the Wisconsin Chamber Orchestra and the Wisconsin Brass Quintet. Eric frequently prepared the Festival Choir for Wisconsin Chamber Orchestra performances, including Concerts on the Square for audiences numbering in the tens of thousands at the Wisconsin State Capitol; the second of these was telecast over Wisconsin Public Television in 2003. Eric Townell's festival appearances include the Ost-West Musikfest (Austria) and Festival da Bach á Bartók (Italy) and the 2012 Finger Lakes Choral Festival. Following a successful guest appearance leading the Berlioz Requiem in 2018, Eric was appointed Artistic Director for the Finger Lakes Choral Festival in 2019, a position he retains.

In support of his artistic endeavors and his ensembles, Eric has developed strong organizational and non-profit expertise, resulting in markedly increased grant support, endowment funding and individual campaign growth. As a grant writer, he has won unprecedented, statewide support for the Rochester Oratorio Society and greatly enhanced contributions from private foundations. Eric served as Vice Chair of the Arts & Cultural Council for Greater Rochester. As a board member of the William Warfield Scholarship Fund, Eric initiated the William Warfield Vocal Competition for African American High School Students, to be held annually beginning in October 2019. An experienced and effective communicator on music and arts topics, Eric has offered pre-concert chats, creative consultation and program annotation for the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, the Rochester Philharmonic and several other ensembles and chamber music series. He is a frequent commentator on arts topics on WXXI radio and producer and host of "In the Spotlight," an arts magazine program distributed via cable access television stations throughout New York. His orchestral and choral conducting were the subject of the 1994 Wisconsin Public Radio broadcast "Music from Wisconsin: A Wisconsin Conductor."