

# Biography

## JORGE MESTER, conductor

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Jorge Mester is recognized throughout the world as a preeminent conductor, renowned for the excellence and prominence he brings to every organization he leads. This season marks his 25th year as music director of The Pasadena Symphony (CA) as well as his 6th season as music director of the Naples Philharmonic (FL). In July 2006, Mester was invited to return as music director of The Louisville Orchestra (KY), a position he previously held for twelve years from 1967-1979. Mester is Conductor Laureate of the prestigious Aspen Music Festival, which he led as music director for 21 years from 1970-1991. He previously put his unique stamp on the Puerto Rico Festival Casals during the seven years he served as its music director beginning in the late 1970s.

As the artistic director of the National Orchestral Association's New Orchestra Music Project from 1988 to 1992, he became familiar with an impressive number of American composers and had the opportunity to present many new works at Carnegie Hall. He also served as chief conductor of the West Australia Symphony Orchestra in Perth and principal guest conductor of both the Adelaide Symphony and the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra. From 1998 to 2002, he served as artistic director of the Orquesta Filarmonica de la Ciudad de Mexico in Mexico City. As a guest conductor, Mester has traveled the world to appear with such orchestras as the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra of London, Cape Town Symphony Orchestra and the Lausanne Chamber Orchestra. Last season, he led performances of the Budapest Concert Orchestra MAV in Hungary. In the US, he has conducted the orchestras of Virginia, Boston, Philadelphia, Detroit, Cincinnati, Seattle, Oregon, Milwaukee, Rochester and Buffalo. He commanded worldwide attention when he conducted the opening ceremonies for the Getty Center in Los Angeles in 1997 and subsequently served as artistic director of the Center's first classical music series.

Mester's passion for opera has led him to become a sought-after conductor in opera houses worldwide, including the New York City Opera, the Sydney Opera, the Spoleto Festival and the Washington Opera in *Der Rosenkavalier*, *Cavalleria Rusticana*, *I*

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Pagliacci, *La Boheme*, *Le Nozze di Figaro*, *Madama Butterfly*, *Salome*, and *The Cunning Little Vixen*. He has pushed the boundaries of classical music presentation through a series of original "symphonic theatre" productions incorporating classical music, dance and drama with The Pasadena Symphony. In November 2006, he led a staged operatic production of Mozart's *Don Giovanni* with the Naples Philharmonic Orchestra. The following season, he led a concert performance of *Samson and Delilah* by Camille Saint-Saens in Louisville as a joint-production with Louisville Opera which was so successful that in 2008-09 both organizations collaborate to co-present Tchaikovsky's *Iolanthe*. Long an ardent champion of contemporary music, Mester has worked with dozens of gifted composers and has presented at least 75 world-premieres. In 1985, he received Columbia University's prestigious Ditson Conductor's Award for the advancement of American music. Other Ditson Awards recipients include Leonard Bernstein, Eugene Ormandy and Leopold Stokowski. In Mexico City, Mester programmed a 40-week festival featuring solely 20th Century Music. This unique season, which devoted a month to each decade of the 20th Century, was hailed as a musical "first."

Jorge Mester's recent guest-conducting engagements include Breckenridge's National Repertory Orchestra, Eastern Music Festival, Tucson Symphony and a return to Mexico City's Orquesta Filarmónica de la Universidad Autónoma de Mexico and Orquesta Filarmónica de la Ciudad de México (for its celebratory 30th anniversary concert). He returns to the Buffalo Philharmonic this season for subscription concerts.

During his 12-year tenure as music director of the Louisville Orchestra from 1967 to 1979, Mester made 72 world premiere recordings with the orchestra, a prolific achievement for both conductor and orchestra. Among the composers whose works he recorded are Dmitri Shostakovich, Krzysztof Penderecki, Carlos Chavez, Frank Martin, Henry Cowell, Peter Mennin, Walter Piston, Samuel Barber, George Crumb, Leonardo Balada, and Peter Sculthorpe. Notably, Master's passion for conducting extends from the stage to the classroom. He served as director of the Juilliard School's Conducting Department during the early 1980s, led a series of conducting workshops for the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra and has also been a guest conductor at the USC Thornton

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School of Music. Says Mester, "I love teaching. I hope to pay back the help which Leonard Bernstein, Gregor Piatigorski, William Schuman, and Jean Morel gave me early in my career. I want to help others they way I was helped."

Indeed, he has taught several generations of conductors, including James Conlon, Dennis Russell Davies, Andreas Delfs, JoAnn Falletta, and John Nelson. In addition, he has mentored early in their careers such internationally acclaimed artists as Nadja Salerno-Sonnenberg, Midori, Renee Fleming, Cho-Liang Lin, and Robert McDuffie. During his affiliation with the Aspen Music Festival, Mester helped solidify the organization's reputation for recognizing and nurturing emerging world-class musicians and fostering an exciting synergy among its distinguished faculty, acclaimed guest artists and gifted young musicians. Mester, who is of Hungarian descent, was born and raised in Mexico City and currently resides in Southern California. An accomplished violinist, he performed with the Beaux-Arts Quartet for several years before focusing exclusively on conducting.

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