

# Chamber Orchestra: Meet the candidates



**Janelle Gelfand**, [jgelfand@enquirer.com](mailto:jgelfand@enquirer.com) 1:29 p.m. EDT August 4, 2016



*(Photo: Provided/Kristi Hedberg Photography)*

The Enquirer asked three questions of each of the five candidates who will be auditioning for the job of music director of the Cincinnati Chamber Orchestra.

The candidates are **Daniel Meyer** (music director, Asheville Symphony Orchestra and Erie Philharmonic); **Christopher Zimmerman** (music director, Fargo-Moorhead Symphony and Fairfax Symphony Orchestra; artistic director, American Youth Philharmonic Orchestras); **Sarah Ioannides** (music director, Tacoma Symphony Orchestra and Spartanburg Philharmonic Orchestra); **Eckart Preu** (music director, Spokane Symphony and Stamford Symphony); and **Kelly Kuo** (artistic director, Oregon Mozart Players; music director and conductor, Butler Opera Center/University of Texas at Austin).

Here are their answers.

## **What do you see about this job that appeals to you?**

**Daniel Meyer:** I have a special fondness for Cincinnati. My father's side of the family is based here, my sister has lived here now since graduate school, and I am an alumnus of CCM's conducting program under Earl Rivers, Elmer Thomas, and John Leman. Incidentally, everyone in my family (mother, father, two sisters and one brother) holds a degree from one of Cincinnati's institutions of higher learning. As a student at CCM, I became quite active in Cincinnati's rich

<http://www.cincinnati.com/story/entertainment/2016/08/04/chamber-orchestra-meet-candidates/88040460/>

musical life, and the chance to work with and potentially lead the Cincinnati Chamber Orchestra was simply too good to pass up.

**Christopher Zimmerman:** This job appeals to me primarily because I know the level of artistic excellence of the CCO and I have a sense of its potential for growth. I don't mean growth as in necessarily "more" but as in an expansion of ideas, and a willingness to be imaginative and explore different musical projects and artistic collaborations. Here is an organization that is remodeling itself in a way designed to have the most positive and stimulating musical impact on its community. To be part of the team leading this way forward is most appealing.



**Sarah Ioannides:** It is quite personal really! I have always dreamed and wished I'd be the artistic director of a music festival that enabled great creativity to thrive and new synergy to happen in a city that I care for and love. My dream enables me to bring together all people from all walks of life, giving inspiration through artistic connections, beautiful art – especially one that would thrive upon the diverse creative flair of all types of artists – centering around the finest of music and music-making. Summermusik is the beginning of something new in Cincinnati and this in itself is appealing to my creative interests, to be building something with a

multitude of possibilities ahead!

**Eckart Preu:** I'm not so much interested in "building my resume" but in making music with the best musicians for an appreciative audience. And that everyone has fun doing it – playing and listening. From what I've heard about the CCO – by reputation and recordings – the musicianship is outstanding and I can't wait to start working with the orchestra. I am also intrigued by organizations that are interested in exploring new avenues to reach out to new audiences, include new repertoire, making new community connections by collaborating with artistic organizations, as well as partnering with unusual venues and vendors. In all, I am interested in finding partners to search for what it means to be a chamber orchestra in the 21st century.



**Kelly Kuo:** As a conductor who leads a significant number of operas every season, I believe it's important to have a diet that also includes healthy portions of symphonic and chamber music. Summermusik's festival format affords CCO's Music Director the opportunity to do both, and there's nothing better at strengthening musical bonds between colleagues than playing chamber music together.



Kelly Kuo (Photo: Provided)

**How did you select your program? Is there a specific piece that you cannot wait to conduct?**

**Daniel Meyer:** The program is inspired by France, with Ravel a native son, Haydn writing a symphony beloved by Marie Antoinette herself, and Aaron Copland traveling to Fontainebleau to be told by Nadia Boulanger that he should essentially follow his own, distinctive American voice. I am particularly looking forward to conducting the world premiere of a new ballet created by CCM's Andre Megerdichian just for this concert, based on Copland's "Music for Movies." I also love Joyce Yang's piano playing, and I fully expect her Ravel G Major Concerto to be thrilling.



Violinist Chee-Yun (Photo: Provided)

**Christopher Zimmerman:** I cannot wait for the CCO audience to experience the artistry and charisma of violinist Chee-Yun, with whom I have had the pleasure of collaborating on several occasions. I wanted to select a program of music which I strongly connected with personally, which applies most probably to the Elgar "Introduction and Allegro for Strings" which is an extraordinarily rich and impassioned work, yet vulnerable at the same time. And it is not so well known. I also wanted to present a program where each piece is substantive and evocative in its own right – no “appetizers” here! Rather, strong and accessible music which hopefully will jump off the page straight into the soul of the listener. Finally, I wanted to give the audience and the orchestra a diverse menu with the very familiar (Beethoven’s 7th symphony) and the less familiar (Elgar or Piazzolla, or both?).

**Sarah Ioannides:** It began with a wonderful performance I heard with James Carter and Roberto Sierra's Concerto for Saxophone about 15 months ago before I was selected as a finalist for CCO. The artist and composer seemed to make a perfect match. Though that piece was not suitable (it is for large orchestra) I set about finding a work that would produce the same synergy but for Chamber Orchestra, and thus the World Premiere of "Caribbean Rhapsody" arose in a new setting.



I was eager to share with CCO and its audience a work that is a personal favorite of mine from the Chamber Orchestra repertoire: Poulenc's Sinfonietta. ... The exotic nature of the saxophone was a perfect opportunity to expand James' talents within the orchestra in Milhaud's "La Création du Monde," not to mention the obvious connection of Milhaud and Poulenc as both members of Le Six, and an era of music that is a particular favorite of mine. Since it was originally for ballet, I found this the perfect opportunity to create a new film to pair with it in live performance. With a passion for multimedia and film, I sought out to find the right

partnership and collaboration (Brad Combs from NKU) that would then connect a third partner through artworks held at the Cincinnati Art Museum.



**Eckart Preu:**

I started with our exceptional guest artist, the young cellist Joshua Roman, who is also a composer and TED fellow. I know that he's always looking for new things and collaborations, so I thought of a very novel yet thrilling and accessible piece by the Icelandic composer Daniel Bjarnason. As fiery contrast, I thought we could chose a piece that I hope will indicate that we're not all about being serious and stuffy: Miguel del Aguila's "Conga-Line in Hell." One effort of the CCO was to create a musical arch over the entire summer series by including something French in each program. I

included a short but famous French cello concerto by Camille Saint-Saens, and Mozart's "Paris" Symphony. There's no better way of ending a concert than Mozart.

**For Kelly Kuo (who conducted last year): Was there a specific program or concert that you were especially pleased with?**

**Kuo:** I particularly liked the variety of repertoire we presented in the final concert of last year's Summermusik: Rameau, Mozart, Lutoslawski, and Bottesini (all except for one being CCO premieres). Collaborating with superstars Cho-Liang Lin and DaXun Zhang also made it a special way to end the festival.

**What is one thing that would you like to see in the Chamber Orchestra's future if you are named music director?**

**Daniel Meyer:** I envision that the CCO would carve out its own, distinctive voice in an already rich musical community. I am really looking forward to working with the musicians, who I have already found to be completely engaged and committed to a thriving future for the CCO. I really like the fact that the orchestra is following a festival format, where we can work intensively but also encourage inventive choices in programming and presentation styles. My vision is that the CCO's audiences will want and ultimately demand a creative experience, based of course on fantastic performances of favorites mixed with new music. And with the rich variety of spaces in which the CCO can play, the location of each concert can inspire the creative choices we make as well.



**Christopher Zimmerman:** A great attraction of this job is the artistic exploration inherent in its development. Whether it be an expansion of the current model (i.e. within the Summermusik season, perhaps a "Festival within a Festival") or outside that, I would like to see the CCO present a series of concerts based around a concept – be it artistic, historical, philosophical, humanitarian. It could be very simple: thematically-based, or presenting one composer, or comparing and contrasting different composers/artists/ or even art forms (Stravinsky and Picasso side by side?). Or it could be more expansive and embracing,

a musical illumination of a specific period in history, as an example. It would most likely be artistically collaborative, employing different artists and artistic institutions in the community and perhaps outside of it too.

**Sarah Ioannides:** The greatest of success for the CCO as a result of Artistic Vibrancy! I wish for Cincinnati to come behind and support an organization that has even more potential to thrive through exciting projects, new creations, great synergy in partnerships, new energy and excitement, all of which could lead to new funding, recognition and most of all opportunities for the people of Cincinnati and its summer visitors to experience something world-class, unique, and draw people to the region because of its renown.

**Eckart Preu:** I would like to see young people, smiles, and sweat.

**Kelly Kuo:** I'd like to see the CCO continue to realize its potential as a musical advocate and ambassador in the community especially as the needs of society change. There must be an identity fostered which includes platforms for engaging the audiences of tomorrow at ground zero and giving opportunities to budding local talents.