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Thomas Folan

CONDUCTOR



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BIOGRAPHY

Described by critics as an artist who “plays from the heart,” Thomas Folan is a master conductor of works for orchestra and choir. There are few American conductors that possess Mr. Folan’s imagination. His musical interpretations are bold, his gestures are graceful, and, he has the ability to connect with fellow musicians to create concerts of extraordinary beauty and fire. Informed by a command of rhetorical musical gesture and a love of language, Folan adds his unique and powerful voice to a wide range of choral and orchestral repertoire ranging from the 16th to the 21st centuries. He combines informed interpretation and command of to create performances with unapologetic passion and intellect. American musicologist Alfred Mann predicts that Folan is a conductor “headed for an auspicious future.”

As Artistic Director and Conductor of Publick Musick, Thomas Folan has built the ensemble into a nationally recognized baroque orchestra and choir. The Boston Globe called his work “brilliant” and the Ithaca Journal said, “Folan was successful in pulling from his singers those clues to the composers that countless conductors have tried to pull from their choirs with no avail.” Folan is an expert in the music of J. S. Bach, particularly of the Master’s large-scale choral works, and he is known for his ability to create a vision for the ensembles he leads. Folan’s list of founding directorships and conducting posts include Music’s Recreation, a family-oriented concert series and presenting organization, the ensemble Sine Nomine, a Renaissance choir, and Bach Festivals in Ithaca, Elmira, and Rochester, New York.

Thomas Folan recently signed a contract with the independent recording label Musica Omnia to record choral and orchestral works of J. S. Bach. The first recording in this series is a two-disc set of the Lutheran Masses, due to be released in May 2006. In addition to his Bach recordings, his first Christmas album, *Aural Borealis: Baroque Choral and Instrumental Music for the Christmas Season*, received outstanding reviews. American Record Guide called the recording “marvelous” and Ben Ohmart of the Muse’s Muse said, “[*Aural Borealis* is] filled with ... flawless playing, chamber work that one would expect more from a Naxos catalog than an ... indie release. The tracks shine in the Baroque tradition. Christmas will come every time light hits the grooves. You won’t be disappointed.”

As a scholar and advocate for the arts, Thomas Folan has pursued studies in Music History and has written articles on such topics as parody in the music of J.S. Bach to issues surrounding the performance of Benjamin Britten’s *Cantata Academica*, a seldom performed work composed in commemoration of the 500 year anniversary of the University of Basel (Switzerland).

As an academician, Thomas Folan has held faculty positions at a number of colleges and universities, including Skidmore College, Cornell University, and the University of Rochester (NY) and has served as a music panelist on the New York State Council on the Arts, one of the nation’s largest arts councils. He has received awards for personal artistic merit as well as grants for ensembles that he has founded and directed.

Thomas Folan is committed to the development and enjoyment of the music that he studies and conducts. He is also a frequent speaker on radio about the relevance of art in society and the importance of music as a vehicle for social change.

CRITICAL ACCLAIM

Democrat & Chronicle

John Pitcher, Staff music critic

(November 21, 2005) — Rochester's large and varied early-music scene is in a state of transition.

The Rochester Bach Festival, which was founded 50 years ago and is the city's oldest early-music organization, recently suspended much of its 2005-06 season due to a cash crunch. Meanwhile, the region's premiere presenter of medieval and Renaissance music, the Genesee Early Music Society, is also taking the 2005-06 season off, and it's unclear whether it will ever return.

Those might seem like ominous developments, but early music, like nature itself, abhors a vacuum. The Publick Musick, which gave a worthy account of itself Sunday at St. Michael Church, appears ready to fill Rochester's early-music void.

Rochester's Publick Musick was founded in 1996 by Thomas Folan, an energetic local conductor who until last year was also the artistic director of the Rochester Bach Festival. Folan seemed determined on Sunday to continue where the Bach Festival left off, leading the Publick Musick in an ambitious program consisting of four Bach cantatas.

There was much to admire in Folan's performances. For one thing, his interpretations were informed by a deep knowledge of Baroque-era performance practice: His tempos always zipped along authentically at dance-like speeds, and his dynamics were always beautifully sculpted and terraced.

But what I liked most about Folan was that for all his obvious scholarly knowledge of Baroque music, he was never a slave to his scholarship, never a pedant. Throughout the concert, it was clear that his main objective was to play from the heart and make everything sound beautiful. In that respect, he was a lot like old Bach himself.

Folan is a fine conductor, but these days the absolute most incredible thing about Publick Musick is its star soloist, the bass-baritone Max van Egmond. Walking into a local concert and finding Egmond on the program is kind of like walking into the local community theater and finding Dustin Hoffman in the lead.

That's because in the world of early music, the Dutch-born Egmond is a legend. He's the bass who has recorded all of the Bach cantatas with such notable conductors as Gustav Leonhardt and Nikolaus Harnoncourt. Recently, he became enamored with Publick Musick and now performs with it regularly.

Egmond's voice isn't as powerful as it used to be, but every phrase he sang in the *Cantata No. 140* ("*Wachet auf*") and *Cantata 192* ("*Nun danket alle Gott*") was thoughtful and sweetly affecting.

Of the other singers, tenor Pablo Bustos and bass Jonathan Rohr had trouble filling the cavernous church. Soprano Anne Harley, however, filled it with a lustrous sound.

CURRICULUM VITAE

Appearances

Publick Musick	Rochester, NY	1996 – present
Rochester Bach Festival	Rochester, NY	1992 - 2005
Bloomington Early Music Festival	Bloomington, IN	2003
Eastman Rochester Chorus	Rochester, NY	2000
C.P.E. Bach Festival	Ithaca, NY	1999
Boston Early Music Festival	Boston MA	1997
Brooklyn Museum of Art	Brooklyn, NY	1996
Fingerlakes Bach Festival	Ithaca, NY	1996
Music's Recreation	Ithaca, NY	1993 - 1996
Elmira Symphony & Choral Society	Elmira, NY	1992 - 1993
Boston Chamber Ensemble	Boston, MA	1990 - 1992

Discography

2006 J. S. Bach Missa Brevis: The Four Lutheran Masses
Publick Musick/Musica Omnia Recordings

2004 Gabrieli et al. Aural Borealis - Baroque Choral and Instrumental Music for the Christmas Season Publick Musick/Sonabilis Records

2003 Telemann Six Trios Publick Musick/Centaur Records

Radio Broadcasts

National Public Radio - Performance Today
Public Radio International - Harmonia
WXXI Rochester - Live from Hochstein
WGBH Boston

Education

1996 - 2003 Eastman School of Music Rochester, NY · D.M.A. in Choral Conducting

1987 - 1989 Ithaca College School of Music Ithaca, NY · M.M. in Choral Conducting · Certificate in Dalcroze Education

1981 - 1985 Oberlin College Oberlin, OH · B.A. in German Studies

1983 - 1986 Oberlin Conservatory of Music Oberlin, OH · B.M. in Music History · Instrumental study in piano, organ, harpsichord B.A.

Faculty Appointments

2006 Nazareth College Rochester, NY · Sabbatical replacement for Choral Director

1996 - 2001 University of Rochester Rochester, NY · Music Lecturer: Responsible for directing University Choir · Chamber Singers as well as teach courses in music theory and history · Plan and conduct orchestra in special projects with the choirs

1996 - 1999 Cornell University Ithaca, NY · Music lecturer: Responsible for directing non-sectarian chapel choir and developing liturgical program

1994 - 1996 Skidmore College Saratoga Springs, NY · Music Lecturer: Responsible for

directing all choral ensembles · Develop Artist-in-Residence program for Publick Musick

1990 - 1991 Ithaca College School of Music Ithaca, NY · Sabbatical replacement for Choral Director

Grants & Awards

2005 - Small Gifts Program, Lennox Foundation, \$24,500

2004 - Promising Artists Grant, Arts & Cultural Council of Rochester, NY \$2250.

2002 - Small Gifts Program, Lennox Foundation, \$25,000

2002 - Recording Grant, Promising Artist Program, Sono Luminus Foundation

1999 - Present: General Operating Support, NYSCA

Liturgical Music Experience

2005 - present St. Peter's Episcopal Church Dansville, NY Director of Music and Organist

1996 - 1999 Sage Chapel, Cornell University Ithaca, NY Sage Chapel Choirmaster

1992 - 1995 First United Methodist Church Horseheads, NY Director of Music

REFERENCE

Max van Egmond
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