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RAFFAELE PONTI

CONDUCTOR



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**Repertoire & Schedule available upon request

Raffaele Ponti - Conductor

BIOGRAPHY

Winning admirers and exciting audiences with Classics-Pops-Opera throughout the United States, Canada and Europe, Italian-American conductor RAFFAELE PONTI is known as an artist of Dynamic Personality, Charismatic Performances, and Superb Musicianship.

Maestro Ponti has won numerous awards including prize winner of the Mario Gusella International Conductors Competition in Pescara, Italy; Italian Man of the Year 2005, Sons of Italy in America; and recipient of the Bernard Adelstein Prize from CIM. His professional associations include, Festival di Musica da Camera, Italia Konzert Opera, Genesee Symphony Orchestra, Genesee Valley Orchestra and Chorus, and the Austin Symphony Orchestra.

Ponti was educated at the Cleveland Institute of Music, where he was awarded an Artist Diploma, and earned a Bachelors of Music degree. He then studied conducting at the Eastman School of Music with David Effron and later with Jorge Mester of Juilliard. He then worked with Paul Vermel at the Conductor's Institute of South Carolina. Abroad he spent three summers studying conducting in Siena, Italy.

Recent guest appearances include the Sofia Symphony Orchestra, Orchestra Sinfonica di Pescara, Italia Konzert Opera, Orchestra Sinfonica di Siena, Musica da Camera di Pescara, Sofia Opera Orchestra, Teatro Lirico di Europe, Varna State Opera Orchestra, Elgin Symphony Orchestra, Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra, Austin Symphony Orchestra, Billings Symphony Orchestra, and the Eastman School of Music.

In addition, Maestro Ponti has conducted orchestras throughout Italy including: Roma, Siena, Arezzo, Pistoia, Lucca, Pisa, Firenze, Grosseto, Venezia, Padova, Treviso, Milano, Perugia, Massa, Terni, Bologna, Ferrara, and Pesaro.

Festival di Musica da Camera, is a music festival in Italy for instrumentalists, vocalists, pianists, and conductors, created by Maestro Ponti and his wife, Canadian pianist, Isabelle Aubin. This summer accademia is a realization of his desire and ability to inspire and communicate the very powerful essence, passion and performance practice of the world's greatest music to others.

He has triumphed with the Italian public with performances of: Tosca, Il Trovatore, Nabucco, Madama Butterfly, L'Elisir d'amore, Carmen, Aida, La Boheme and Rigoletto.

Maestro Ponti has worked with opera stars Paola Romano, Vittorio Grigolo, Maurizio Graziani, Stefano Algieri, Mariana Paunova, Silvia dalla Benetta, Ettore Nova, George Petean, Claudia Marchi, Salvador Carbo', Tatiana Lisnic, Carlos Almaguer, Patrizia Cigna, Michela Sburlati, Galina Kalinina, Mina Tasca, Stanislas Arraez, Alessandro Busi, Mauro Augustini, Rubens Pelizzari, Davide Paltretti, and Ambra Vespasiani.

Raffaele is an inspiring musician and speaker who enjoys turning on musicians and audiences of all ages. He is a popular conducting teacher, who leads conducting seminars in Italy, Canada and the Unites States.

Ponti attributes his effective technique, and passionate conducting style to his professional performing experiences with the Cleveland Orchestra, Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra,

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Mantovani Orchestra, Eastern Brass Quintet, Metropolitan Brass Quintet, and the Casals Music Festival.

Artistic Vision:

My greatest strength as a Music Director is the ability to inspire the musicians and instill in them a sense of creative enthusiasm. My main goal with any orchestra, no matter what the organizational budget, is to successfully redefine a higher artistic potential and to lead its musicians toward achieving passionate performances at the very highest artistic level.

I am a successful orchestra builder who is a strong advocate of connecting people to the symphony. Whether the concert is in Classics, Pops or Opera, I believe it to be of utmost importance to present, at the very highest standard, the world's greatest orchestral repertoire, using interesting and exciting program formats that create Concert Events. The result is full houses, attracting new and diverse audiences, while continuing to satisfy current friends and supporters of the symphony.

Connecting People to the Symphony and the Symphony to the People is the key to developing our future musicians, future audiences and future communities. I have had great success with these four programs, Symphonize, Musical Chairs, Young Artists Competition, and Symphony Master Class Series.

All of this, along with a strong and supportive administrative team, an able and willing orchestra, there is no limit to how great an arts organization can become.

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CURRICULUM VITAE

Awards:

- Prize-winner Mario Gusella International Conductors Competition Pescara, Italy.
- Italian Man of the Year 2005 – Sons of Italy in America.
- Recipient of the Bernard Adelstein Prize in Trumpet Performance from CIM.

Professional Associations:

- Festival Director: Festival di Musica da Camera, Italy
- Principal Conductor: Italia Konzert Opera, Italy
- Music Director: Genesee Symphony Orchestra, USA
- Music Director: Genesee Valley Orchestra and Chorus, USA
- Guest Conductor: Austin Symphony Orchestra

Education:

- Cleveland Institute of Music - Artist Diploma
- Cleveland Institute of Music - Bachelor of Music
- Eastman School of Music - Advanced Conducting
- Conducting Teachers - Klaus Tennstedt, Jorge Mester, David Efron, Paul Vermel
- Studies in Conducting: Siena, Italy

Recent Guest Appearances:

The Sofia Symphony Orchestra, Orchestra Sinfonica di Pescara, Italia Konzert Opera, Orchestra Sinfonica di Siena, Musica da Camera di Pescara, Sofia Opera Orchestra, Teatro Lirico di Europe, Varna State Opera Orchestra, Elgin Symphony Orchestra, Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra, Austin Symphony Orchestra, Billings Symphony Orchestra, and the Eastman School of Music.

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Master Teacher:

Maestro Ponti is an inspiring musician and speaker who enjoys turning on musicians and audiences of all ages. Raffaele is a popular conducting teacher, who leads conducting seminars in Italy, Canada and the United States.

Professional Performance Experience:

Cleveland Orchestra, Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra, Mantovani Orchestra, Eastern Brass Quintet, Metropolitan Brass Quintet, and the Casals Music Festival.

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CRITICAL ACCLAIM

“Ponti brings an exhilarating energy level to center stage. It’s an electrifying swagger - empowering and enabling him to pull music from light to darkness and back again.” The Courier News (Chicago)

“A bold yet sensitive conductor, Ponti highlights Brahms’ interplay between the instruments, expertly balancing the sections - emphasizing the delightful winds and fine trombones while holding in check ESO’s formidable string section - to illustrate the multiple layers that make this work so sublime.” Daily Herald (Chicago)

“Ponti is regarded as a rising star, someone gaining international acclaim and attention.” The Courier News (Chicago)

“The music was exciting and the performance was flawless. Ponti showed us how passionate he is about the music, and the orchestra demonstrated how committed they are to excellence.” Billings Gazette

“...it’s clear he has a tremendous zest for music, an exuberance recalling both the roar and rush of a roller coaster ride.” The Courier News (Chicago)

“Fans worldwide say that his passion shows.” The Courier News (Chicago)

“Eyes hold an entire ensemble. A moment passes. Then, through a series of wordless impulses, an exceptional conductor (Ponti) changes the human chemistry in an orchestra and audience.” The Courier News (Chicago)

“...guest conductor Raffaele Ponti, whose passionate approach to music has captured international attention.” The Courier News (Chicago)

“Heads bobbed and smiles broke out both on and off the stage Saturday night as the Billings Symphony Orchestra performed under the baton of Raffaele Ponti.” Billings Gazette

“The sound was big, and the orchestra played with great heart. By its end, musicians’ brows were wet and some members of the audience were teetering on the edge of their seats.” Billings Gazette

“...they were impressed with the music and the conductor...he's great!” Billings Gazette

Recommendations:

David Kim, (Concertmaster of the Philadelphia Orchestra) “Maestro Ponti is first and foremost, a wonderful and natural musician. His conducting technique is simple, clear, and uncluttered with mannerisms. He is extremely generous of spirit and is a sympathetic accompanist. I also find Maestro Ponti to be efficient in his use of rehearsal time.”

Ilya Kaler, (Former Concertmaster of the Rochester Philharmonic) “Mr. Ponti’s conducting gestures are very precise and clear. His performance was utterly professional. I particularly liked his attention to articulation, while maintaining a sense of flow and phrasing. I find Maestro Ponti

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to be an excellent conductor, displaying a precise technique, and with a superb musical sensitivity. He has the ability to inspire the musicians and to connect with his audiences.”

Lilya Lorrin, (Concertmaster, Pittsburgh Savoyards Opera, PA) “One can quickly see that he has a great deal of talent and understanding for the music. Mr. Ponti know the score inside and out, knows what he wants from the orchestra and singers, and knows how to lead it clearly and with emotion. What especially distinguishes him from many other conductors is that he has a way of inspiring people to do their best for him, to try harder for him. Many people have talent, but not all of them know how to LEAD in all senses of the word.”

Joel Beckett, (Former Principal Cello of the Austin Symphony Orchestra) “This excellent young conductor provided expert leadership and strong musical guidance. I found his demeanor on the podium to be both commanding and warm, with the result that the orchestra enjoyed working with him and attended closely to what he required of us. His technique is strong and he is easy to follow. He executed tempo changes logically and in a manner the orchestra could understand easily. Mr. Ponti’s knowledge of the score was thorough, and he paid close attention to its musical requirements. The result was performances both the audience and the orchestra enjoyed.”

Anthony Corroa, (Director of Operations, Austin Symphony Orchestra) “Maestro Ponti’s sensitivity to the score, musicians and stage resulted in one of our finest productions. His clarity with the baton allowed the musicians a certain performance comfort that is rarely enjoyed under young conductors. His attention to musical detail and flexibility with respect to tempi solidified his rapport with the dancers. Musicians need the security of an expert conductor for inspiration and to insure performance excellence. Mr. Ponti is abundantly gifted in every aspect of his art and I look forward to having him back to conduct other concerts with the Austin Symphony.”

Less Huff, (Operations, Austin Symphony Orchestra) “I observed his conducting to be quite detailed and effortless to follow. His meticulous attention to entrances, dynamics, articulation, tempo and style were very impressive. He embraces the music with passion and fervor. He was very kind, polite and respectful to the players. His overall demeanor to ASO and Ballet Austin was that of the utmost cooperation and professionalism.”

Stefano Algieri, (Opera Tenor, Siena, Italy) “I find Maestro Ponti to be an outstanding conductor in both the operatic and symphonic repertoire, displaying an excellent technique, overall command of the orchestra and sensitive understanding in working with the singers. He earned deserved respect from musicians and singers alike as was evident in the excellent music making which he produced, as well as the thoroughly professional manner with which he conducted himself.”

Giorgio Leardini, (Direzione Musicale, Accademia Pianistica Italia) “As a musician, he displays a great deal of excellence and sensitivity to his music. His conducting technique shows elegance and confidence. He has all the qualifications to achieve a brilliant career.”

Manuela Corsi, (Artistic Coordinator, Italia Konzert Opera, Florence, Italy) “Maestro Raffaele Ponti, an orchestral conductor endowed with excellent and expressive musical skills.”

Karl Kraber, (Principal Flute, Austin Symphony Orchestra) “His manner with the orchestra was thoroughly professional, but also friendly: He got our respect and our good will. His rehearsal

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technique was most efficient. His enthusiasm was palpable. He always communicated the emotional content of each phrase and section very well; he was very clear in his gestures and manner, showing just what kind of response, tempo and inflection he wanted from the orchestra.”

Joseph Werner, (Personnel Manager, Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra) “I believe Mr. Ponti made the most of his opportunity and conducted with musicality and style. I found the performance to be extremely sensitive and moving. Raffaele addressed his audiences with polished ease and worked with the orchestra with professionalism and respect.”

Roger Daily, (Director of Education & Outreach Houston Symphony) “Your selection of music and performance captured our audience’s hearts. I saw more than a few tears as the Mahler was performed.”

Giorgio Lalov, (Executive Director, Teatro lirico d’Europa) “Maestro Ponti is a man of extremely high intelligence and capabilities. The Orchestra; Sofia Symphony Orchestra, which has made many professional recordings of different Operas since 1988 all over Western Europe, took to Maestro Ponti immediately. His gestures are very precise and clear. The Concerts of Italian Opera Highlights and performances of TOSCA that he conducted were all highly successful and greatly applauded by the Italian public who knows these works so well.”

Andrew Adams, (Manager, Pittsburgh Savoyards Opera, PA) “It is a rare thing to play for a conductor that is talented, professional and personable. Maestro Ponti seems to have it all. Any organization that has the chance to work with him is extremely lucky.”

Richard Pearlman, (Director, Lyric Opera of Chicago) “He is clearly an excellent musician, a good organizer and possesses the “people skills“ so necessary to bring together the many forces it takes to musically prepare and perform an opera.”

Russell Peck, (Composer) “You have excellent conducting skills, a firm command of the podium, real musical ideas and the capacity to impart them in a way that instils confidence.”

Peter Bay, (Conductor) “Raffaele is a leader who guides rather than dictates, who commands respect through encouragement, and gets musicians to perform past their current capabilities.”
Samuel Jones, (Composer and Conductor) “Mr. Ponti is warm, likable, and strikes me as a person of character and integrity.”

John Beck, (Retired RPO Timpanist) “ Raffaele Ponti is a conductor whose insight into the music, regardless of the medium, results in excellent performances. He moves smoothly from orchestra to chamber groups to percussion ensemble. Having worked as a soloist under his leadership, I always felt that he was in command, which made my performance comfortable, resulting in a first class musical experience. He works well with people and makes a good appearance on the podium.”

Glenn A. West, (Opera Theatre of Rochester) “His is a wonderful talent enhanced by enthusiasm, creativity, willingness to work, and an engaging personality. He consistently high standards and efficient and effective style always drew the best from the performers.”

Joanna Giesek, (Retired Orchestra Manager) “He was among the final candidates for Music

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Director of the Billings Symphony Orchestra last season. Of all the candidates, I believe he demonstrated the greatest music depth of talent and public popularity. He brought excitement wherever he went during his fully booked 10 days of rehearsals, public appearances and the culminating concert. I highly recommend him for any conducting or music director post.”

Dave Mancini, (Musician & Composer) “I have had the opportunity to work with Raffaele a number of times and it has always been a very enjoyable and musically gratifying experience. He is a very talented conductor. I have worked with about 75% of the orchestra in this country (US) and Canada, and numerous conductors. I truly believe that Raffaele will someday be one of the great conductors in the world. I am very impressed with the rapport Raffaele has with both the musicians and the audience. With the musicians he is very professional but at the same time, his rehearsals and performances are very enjoyable experiences. He respects the musicians and is very encouraging with them. Raffaele communicates with the audience very well and I also want to add that he really understands how to communicate with young people.”

Gap Mangione, (Musician & Composer) “Raffaele Ponti is a wonderful conductor. He has all the creative qualities one could hope for in terms of musical ideas and insights, and the ability to convey them to and bring them forth from an orchestra. He is warm, personable, enthusiastic, and inspiring. The particular quality I appreciate most is his understanding of, and capability with, jazz oriented compositions in an orchestral setting. He excels in the “translation“ and the realization of the unique rhythmic and phrasing idioms of jazz with orchestral players, most of whom are not well versed in such expressions. This is a very unusual ability and is crucial to the successful performance of a jazz artist in an orchestral context. This special skill, added to his substantial operatic and symphonic conducting accomplishments, distinguishes Maestro Ponti as truly exceptional in his field.”

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REFERENCES

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