

Preview

The Cleveland Institute of Music presents “A Celebration of Community”

by Carlyn Kessler, *special contributor*



The Cleveland Institute of Music will present its second “Celebration of Community” on Friday, March 28 at 8:00 pm in Severance Hall, when CIM president Joel Smirnoff will lead the CIM Orchestra and vocalists, the Cleveland School of the Arts (CSA) Chorus and Instrumentalists, the Singers’ Club of Cleveland, and the Antioch Baptist Church Sanctuary Choir in Beethoven’s monumental *Symphony No. 9*.

The concert features soloists Catheryne Shuman, soprano, Samantha Gosard, mezzo-soprano, CIM faculty member Vinson Cole, tenor, and Brian Johnson, baritone.

The concert is a public manifestation of CIM’s commitment to the Cleveland community. “Culture is the spontaneous emanation of community interaction,” Joel Smirnoff said in a recent conversation. “There is no culture without community.”

Smirnoff spearheaded the project, which is now a biannual event that began with a performance of Mahler’s *Second Symphony* in 2012 (pictured above). He elaborated that this event “celebrates our relationship with CSA and the school district”. He stressed the importance of CIM serving to provide an education that creates 21st century artists who will not only be able to make a successful living, but also “make a difference” in their communities.

Smirnoff referenced the UNESCO Mission, which is to promote a “cultural dialogue” as well as “preserve culture in the face of modernization and globalization.” By substituting such dialogue for conflict, Smirnoff explained, we can use great art to connect people regardless of their backgrounds.

He sees the artist as “a member of the community who serves the community”. The dialogue created by music has the potential to prevent discord and inspire change. In a fractured world, musicians have the capacity, and even the responsibility, to be artistic diplomats on both a local and global scale.

Beethoven's Ninth Symphony perfectly represents this concept of unity. This is most powerfully displayed in its richly dense choral finale based on Friedrich Schiller's poem *Ode to Joy*, which proclaims, "all men shall become brothers." *Freude*, the German word for joy, resounds in this movement, Smirnoff explained, as "our motivation, just as our nation seeks the pursuit of happiness". He continued, "We all have that moment, some variation of joy that gets us up in the morning."

Smirnoff further noted that the beauty of the famous *Ode to Joy* theme is that "it's so simple. It is a theme that anyone can identify with on the most basic level, appealing to the child in us."

The work truly "speaks to everyone," Smirnoff affirmed. The "Celebration of Community" will unite performers, from youngsters to advanced students to professionals and audience members, in the home of our beloved Cleveland Orchestra, to experience a collective "Ode to Joy."

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