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The Cleveland Orchestra presents 2023 Martin Luther King, Jr. Community Service Awards



*(The 2023 Martin Luther King Jr. Celebration Concert. © Roger Mastroianni)
Additional photos of the concert [available here](#).*

CLEVELAND – The **Cleveland Orchestra** presented its 19th annual Martin Luther King, Jr. Community Service Awards to **LaJean Ray**, **Dr. William Henry Caldwell**, and the **MLK Community Chorus** on Sunday, January 15. The awards ceremony kicked off The Cleveland Orchestra’s 43rd annual Martin Luther King, Jr. Celebration Concert at Severance Music Center.

The Martin Luther King, Jr. Community Service Awards recognize individuals and organizations for their extraordinary service to the Greater Cleveland area, reflecting the spirit of Dr. King’s work and teachings. These three recipients showed a commitment to social justice, diversity, and inclusion, and demonstrated leadership in community building.

About the Award Winners

Lajeen Ray is the director of the Fatima Family Center, which provides a broad, integrated system of services to more than 6,000 families in Cleveland's revitalized Hough neighborhood, covering emergency and transitional services, services to children and their families, and services to older adults. As director, Ray is the life force behind the Center's programs. She was appointed to the post in 1996 and has significantly expanded its services and working partnerships with area businesses, schools, and civic organizations, making the Fatima Family Center an invaluable anchor institution in the Hough community. Ray has received numerous awards and honors acknowledging her commitment to urban community service, among them: The Cleveland Foundation's Homer C. Wadsworth Award, The Legal Aid Society's Community Impact Award, and the FBI Director's Community Leadership Award.

Dr. William Henry Caldwell has been resident conductor of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Celebration Chorus since 2003. He has been an integral member of The Cleveland Orchestra family, assembling and preparing the chorus for performances with at Severance Music Center. During his 34-year tenure as professor of music at Central State University, Caldwell served as conductor of the 1994 Grammy-nominated Central State University Chorus, and under his chairmanship, the Ohio Board of Regents recognized the Department of Fine and Performing Arts as a Center of Excellence. Caldwell is currently artistic director of the Vocal Arts Mastery Program at Tri-C, a special afterschool vocal music program for students in grades 5 through 12 in the city of Cleveland.

For more than 30 years, the **Martin Luther King, Jr. Celebration Chorus** has performed with The Cleveland Orchestra in celebration of the unifying message and memory of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Assembled from members of more than 20 church gospel choirs across Northeast Ohio, the chorus made its first appearance at the 1989 MLK Celebration Concert, held at Cory United Methodist Church. Each year, the volunteer chorus attracts between 150 and 220 singers, drawing across generations — members range in age from 16 to 90 — and welcomes singers with all levels of musical training. In February 2022, the Cleveland Cavaliers invited the chorus to perform at halftime in honor of Black History Month. In July 2022, it performed the National Anthem at a Cleveland Guardians to mark the 75th anniversary of Larry Doby breaking the American League color barrier.

For information on the January 15 Martin Luther King, Jr. Celebration Concert, see this [link](#).

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