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The Cleveland Orchestra presents 2024 Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Service in the Arts Awards



(From left to right: Orchestra Trustee Jeffery Weaver; awardees Darelle Hill, Terri Pontremoli and Christopher Jenkins; Cuyahoga County Councilwoman Yvonne Conwell; Cleveland Orchestra President & CEO Andre Gremillet; and Cleveland City Councilman Kevin Conwell. © Roger Mastroianni)

CLEVELAND — The Cleveland Orchestra presented its 2024 Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Service in the Arts Awards on Sunday to Darelle Hill, community programs manager at the Center for Arts-Inspired Learning; Christopher Jenkins of the Oberlin College and Conservatory and The Music Settlement; and the Tri-C JazzFest Cleveland. The awards presentation was part of the Orchestra’s 44th annual Martin Luther King, Jr. Celebration Concert at Severance Music Center.

For 20 years, The Cleveland Orchestra has honored individuals and organizations for their extraordinary service to Greater Cleveland. Now under a new name, the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Service in the Arts Awards recognizes those whose work has a positive impact on music and the arts in our community, reflecting the spirit, example, and teachings of Dr. King.

Images of the honorees at the 2024 Martin Luther King, Jr. Celebration Concert are available for [download here](#).

[About the Award Winners](#)

Darrelle Hill

Darrelle Hill is the community programs manager at the Center for Arts-Inspired Learning, where he heads both the Inspiration Through Music and ArtWorks programs. Run in conjunction with the Cleveland Mayor's Office of Prevention, Intervention and Opportunity for Youth and Young Adults, Inspiration Through Music provides Cleveland students in 3rd through 12th grades with free musical instruments and music instruction. ArtWorks is a workforce development program for teens in 10th through 12th grades, that offers paid apprenticeships with local master teaching artists.

"At the heart of [Inspiration Through Music] is Darrelle," wrote one of the nominators. "The success of this program can be traced back to Darrelle's tireless efforts to provide each music site with everything it needs to be successful. It is not an uncommon sight to see Darrelle driving instruments across the city to make sure that students have access to guitars, violins, keyboards, or drums ... instruments that speak to [the students] and inspire them to soar."

A talented film and stage actor, as well as singer, Hill has been seen on many stages around the region. He is particularly known by Cleveland audiences for his performances in Karamu House's *Black Nativity* by Langston Hughes, Juneteenth Celebration, and virtual productions throughout the pandemic. He graduated from Notre Dame College of Ohio with a performing arts degree.

Hill's passion for the arts is evident in his unflagging pursuit to lower barriers to participation in arts programs. As his nomination explains, he is "driven by the belief that music instruction is for everyone — all youth should have access. He manifests this every day. Just as MLK was nonstop in his actions for equality, Darrelle demonstrates the same drive and fierce belief in love and respect — through music!"

Christopher Jenkins

Christopher Jenkins's impressive resume speaks for itself. A graduate of Harvard University, he received a master's of music at New England Conservatory, as well as degrees at Manhattan School of Music and Columbia University. An accomplished violist, he won third place in the 2004 Sphinx Competition, and has received numerous awards for his scholarship, community service, and musicianship along the way.

This past fall, Jenkins published the monograph *Assimilation v. Integration in Music Education: Leading Change Toward Greater Equity* (Routledge Press & the College Music Society), in which he argues: "We actually have to change our institutions — to change not just the repertoire, but also how we think about making music, to include other traditions, harmonic and melodic languages, and ways of approaching music."

This desire to use music as a conduit for meaningful change has been a constant throughout Jenkins's career. He taught viola at the Barenboim-Said Foundation in Ramallah, which seeks to foster understanding through music education, and he spent seven years as dean of the Sphinx Performance Academy, a summer program for minority youth.

In Cleveland, he oversees musical community engagement at The Music Settlement, "[fostering] deep relationships with local churches and other neighborhood gathering spaces, engaging communities of color in free music concerts across the Greater Cleveland area," said one nomination.

Jenkins has received The Music Settlement's Ida Mercer Community Service Award, Karamu House's "Room in the House" Fellowship, Case Western Reserve University's Adel Heinrich Award for Excellence

in Musicological Research, the American Society for Aesthetics' Irene Chayes "New Voices" Award, and American Viola Society's David Dalton Research Competition. He is currently completing a Doctor of Musical Arts degree at Cleveland Institute of Music and a PhD in musicology from Case Western.

Tri-C JazzFest Cleveland

Founded in 1980 by Dr. Thom Horning and Reginald Buckner, Tri-C JazzFest has steadfastly supported its mission of honoring the history of jazz while fostering its future, providing educational opportunities for students year-round, and bringing world-class jazz to Cleveland.

This June, the annual three-day festival celebrates its 45th anniversary, with performances by nearly 500 artists, playing on indoor and outdoor stages, in historic Playhouse Square. *DownBeat* magazine calls the festival "the type of diverse, top-tier talent typically found at a much larger festival, along with some adventurous programming that was spiced with compelling international flavors."

However, the heart of the festival is its educational component, which connects students of all ages with local and international jazz artists, trying to instill a love of the art form among future generations in Northeast Ohio. At the same time, outreach programs provide free cultural access to Cleveland's underserved population, and its culturally significant programming has brought important music works and figures to Cleveland audiences.

One nominator wrote: "Tri-C JazzFest has a long-standing commitment to providing community access to music education, advocacy for music and the arts, and creating platforms for minorities to perform. Tri-C JazzFest led the charge in honoring the legacy of Carl Stokes, an important champion of social justice and Civil Rights, in its 'Mayor and the People' commemorative concert. Tri-C JazzFest has commissioned work from American composers such as Terence Blanchard, Gerald Clayton, and Christian McBride." Accepting the award was Tri-C Jazz Fest Director Terri Pontremoli.

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Media Contact:

Jen Steer, jsteer@clevelandorchestra.com, 216-231-7637