



Cincinnati Chamber Orchestra violinist Darla Bertolone, left, Maestro Paul Nadler and Concertmaster Anna Reidler review music to be performed by the CCO at an event in 2009. FILE

**THE CCO'S FOUR MUSIC DIRECTORS IN ITS 40-YEAR HISTORY:**

- » Paul Nadler (1974-84)
- » Gerhard Samuel (1984-91)
- » Keith Lockhart (1992-2000)
- » Mischa Santora (2000-14)

**IF YOU GO**

**What:** Fuego: Cincinnati Chamber Orchestra 40th anniversary concert and gala; with the Cincinnati Contemporary Jazz Orchestra (Scott Belck, director); Mischa Santora, conductor; soprano Abigail Santos Villalobos  
**The program:** Darius Milhaud's "Le boeuf sur le toit," Heitor Villa-Lobos' "Bachianas Brasileiras" No. 5: Aria; music by Antônio Carlos Jobim and Quincy Jones  
**Honoring:** Rosemary and Mark Schlachter will receive the CCO's Pinnacle Award for Arts Advocacy – honoring a lifetime of arts support. Melanie Chavez will be recognized as the CCO's Rising Star.  
**When:** 7 p.m. Saturday  
**Where:** Cincinnati Masonic Center, 317 E. Fifth St., Downtown  
**Tickets:** \$25; \$10 children and students. Concert and gala packages begin at \$150.  
**Contact:** 513-723-1182, www.ccoincincinnati.org.

# CCO MARKS 40 YEARS

Seeds of Cincinnati Chamber Orchestra were planted in 1974, and since then, group has blossomed

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For four decades, loyal supporters and audience members have followed the 32-member Cincinnati Chamber Orchestra from stage to stage, helped it weather economic downturns and cheered on its successes.

Over 40 years, the orchestra has established a reputation for innovative programming, fresh artists and groundbreaking collaborations with other local arts groups.

Its roster of guests includes superstars and local talent, such as cellists Peter Wiley and Lynn Harrell; pianists Claude Frank, Emanuel Ax, Gary Graffman, Vladimir Feltsman and Awadagin Pratt; soprano Benita Valente; tenor Stanford Olsen; conductor Robert Spano; saxophonist Rick VanMatre; and violinists Jaime Laredo and Chee Yun.

The music it has played has been wide-ranging, but the most performed composers have been tried and true: Mozart, followed by J.S. Bach, Haydn, Beethoven, and Igor Stravinsky. The CCO has also presented large-scale choral works such as Bach's St. John Passion, Haydn's Creation and Verdi's Requiem, and mounted 11 operas.

It has led a nomadic existence. The CCO has performed in at least 31 different venues over the years, including Playhouse in the Park (Monday evenings in the mid-'70s), Emery Theater, the old Palace Thea-

ter Downtown, the old and new School for Creative and Performing Arts, Greaves Auditorium at Northern Kentucky University and the Anderson Center.

Here are some milestones of the past 40 years.

**In the beginning:** The seeds of the CCO were planted in early 1974 at the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music by Paul Nadler, a conducting student, and violinist Jorja Fleezanis, who would be the first concertmaster; then studying violin with Walter Levin of the LaSalle Quartet. The orchestra made its debut at the College of Mount St. Joseph. Two years later, it became professional, with a subscription season and paid musicians. Nadler remained music director until 1983.

**The eighties:** By the '80s, the fledgling orchestra had subscriptions of more than 1,000 and played in the Palace Theater on Sixth Street, a "glorious place with ideal acoustics," but it fell victim to the wrecking ball in 1982. In 1984, Gerhard Samuel, then head of orchestral studies at CCM, became music



Samuel

director.

**World premieres:** The Chamber Orchestra has premiered numerous compositions. In 1991, classical radio WGUC-FM (90.9) commissioned a work by Jennifer Stasack in honor of the station's 30th anniversary.

The CCO commissioned and premiered a number of works by local composers, including Joel Hoffman, Philip Koplow, Allen Sapp and Frank Proto.

**The Lockhart era:** In 1992, the CCO went through an international search of three continents and in the end, selected a music director from its own backyard: Keith Lockhart – then assistant conductor of the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra and Cincinnati Pops and conductor of the Cincinnati Symphony Youth Orchestra. During Lockhart's five-year tenure, sell-outs were the norm.

Lockhart was named Boston Pops conductor in 1995, and left the CCO in 1999.

**The nineties:** An audience of 500 stood and cheered when Kay George Roberts was the first woman to conduct the CCO in 1995. In 1996, Metropolitan Opera star Benita Valente made her debut.

**New York debut:** In February 1997, the Cincinnati Chamber Orchestra made its New York City debut in Town Hall, under the direction of Lockhart.

**The 25th anniversary:** Nadler, the founder, returned in 1999 and led a premiere by Northern Kentucky University composer-in-residence Koplow, which featured founding Concertmaster Jorja Fleezanis and then-Concertmaster James Braid as soloists.

**A new maestro for the millennium:** In 2000, Mischa Santora, a 28-year-old Swiss native, was named music director, a mere three years out of Curtis Institute of Music.



CCO music director Mischa Santora conducts a rehearsal in 2005. FILE

**The 30th:** The CCO opened its 30th anniversary season with violinist Lara St. John. She told The Enquirer she was surprised at the "hubbub" she created with the album cover of her 1996 debut disc, wearing nothing but her violin.

**Oct. 2011:** A stunning new venue, a virtuoso soloist (violinist Philippe Quint) and a fun program launched the 38th season. People had to be turned away from the Mayerson Theater (seating 350) at SCPA.

**The 40th:** The Chamber Orchestra announces that this will be Santora's final season, and a search for a new music director begins. ■



St. John