

## Erich Kunzel, conductor

Erich Kunzel's distinguished career is personified by his 2006 National Medal of Arts, presented by President and Mrs. Bush in a ceremony in the Oval Office at The White House. The National Medal of Arts, the highest honor given to artists and arts patrons by the United States Government, is awarded to those who have made outstanding contributions to the excellence, growth, support and availability of the arts in the United States.

Hailed by the *Chicago Tribune* as "The Prince of Pops," Maestro Kunzel celebrated the 50th Anniversary of his professional conducting debut in the 2007-2008 Season. His international conducting appearances and the sales of over 10 million recordings have brought him fame over the far reaches of the world.

Since 1977 Maestro has recorded over 85 albums on the Telarc label with the Cincinnati Pops Orchestra. More than 55 of these albums have appeared on the Top 10 Billboard Charts. In fact, he was named *Billboard Magazine's* Classical Crossover Artist of the Year for an unprecedented four consecutive years. Several Grammy Awards, the distinguished Grand Prix Du Disque, and the Sony Tiffany Walkman Award for "visionary recording activities" highlight his fantastic recording career of over 125 albums. In May 2009 he was inducted into the American Classical Music Hall of Fame.

His remarkable career with the Cincinnati Pops Orchestra began in 1965. National tours have included many concerts in Carnegie Hall, Radio City Music Hall, the Grand Ol' Opry in Nashville, and at the Blossom Music Festival. The numerous international tours included a celebrated tour to China in 2005 (the first appearance of a pops orchestra in that country), highlighted by concerts in the Great Hall of the People in Beijing. Maestro Kunzel actually conducted the first ever pops concert in China in 1998 in Beijing with the China National Symphony Orchestra. In August 2008, Erich Kunzel and the Cincinnati Pops made an historic return to China to participate in the Opening Festivities of the Summer Olympics. On several occasions he has conducted the World Super Orchestra in concerts at the Tokyo International Music Festival. In January 2008 he led the Vienna Volksoper Symphony Orchestra in a Gala New Year's Eve Tour in eight concerts in Japan.

Maestro Kunzel has appeared in more than 100 performances with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra at the Ravinia Festival, where he holds the record for attendance – 22,000. Since 1991 Maestro Kunzel has led the National Symphony on the lawn of the U.S. Capitol in PBS-TV's nationally televised Memorial Day and Fourth of July concerts. In 1996, the Fourth of July concert drew a record crowd of nearly a million people to the Capitol, as well as the largest viewing audience for a musical event in PBS history.

In 2005 Mr. Kunzel made his Viennese debut as part of the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary season of the Vienna Volksoper, conducting the Viennese premiere of *The Sound of Music*. In 2004 he made his debut with the San Francisco Opera conducting 12 performances of *The Merry Widow*. This production was telecast on BBC Worldwide and PBS as part of the *Great Performances* series.

Mr. Kunzel also was honored with the 2006 Irma Lazarus Award from the Ohio Arts Council. He received the 1994 Presidential Medal for Outstanding Leadership and Achievement from Dartmouth College, his alma mater, and in 2006 he was elected into Phi Beta Kappa, America's oldest honor society. Dartmouth College honored him again, in June 2007, with the Honorary Doctor of Arts degree. He has also received honorary degrees from University of Cincinnati, Xavier University, College of Mount St. Joseph, Wilmington College and Northern Kentucky University. He was named by the Ohio Arts Council as a special recipient of the 1991 Governor's Awards for the Arts in Ohio. In 1995, Mr. Kunzel received the 1995 Salvation Army "Others" award in recognition of his contributions to the city of Cincinnati, the same year that the Cincinnati MacDowell Society honored his contributions to the arts community by awarding him the MacDowell Medal. In 1996 the Phi Delta Theta International Fraternity presented him with its Distinguished Alumnus Award in recognition of his outstanding achievements in the performing arts.

Educated at Dartmouth, Harvard and Brown Universities, Mr. Kunzel studied with, and was personal assistant to, the great French conductor Pierre Monteux. July 2007 marked the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his professional debut, which took place in 1957 conducting Pergolesi's *La Serva Padrona* with the Santa Fe Opera Company. By 1970, when Arthur Fiedler invited him to conduct the Boston Pops for the first time, Mr. Kunzel's commitment to "pops" was assured. Since then he has led the Boston Pops in more than 100 performances in Boston's Symphony Hall and on tour in the U.S. and England.

Maestro Kunzel is Chairman of the Greater Cincinnati Arts and Education Center, an organization whose plan to build a new School for the Creative and Performing Arts adjacent to Music Hall will be complete in 2010.

He and his wife, Brunhilde, live on Swans Island, Maine and Naples, Florida. They frequently take to the water in their 44-foot Hinckley jet cruiser, "Pops."

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