


In Travel

LBJ's Texas White House served as his refuge.
PAGE 4E

STYLE

Arkansas Democrat  Gazette

Copyright © 2010, Arkansas Democrat-Gazette, Inc.

E

ON THE WEB: www.arkansasonline.com

SUNDAY, MAY 16, 2010

SPIN CYCLE



JENNIFER CHRISTMAN

For, like, learning and stuff, *Race* rules

I've said before that all I really need to know I learned on *Temptation Island*. And then *Love Cruise*. And then *The Bachelor*. And then *The Anna Nicole Show*. And then *The Bachelorette*. And then *Newlyweds: Nick and Jessica*.

And then *The Simple Life*. And then *America's Next Top Model 2*. And then *Sports Illustrated: Swimsuit Model Search*. And then *PoweR Girls*. And then *Britney and Kevin: Chaotic*. And then the second installment of *Dancing With the Stars*.

And then the fifth season of *American Idol*. And then *Victoria Beckham: Coming to America*. And then *Pageant Place*. And then the fourth installment of *Project Runway*. And then *Rock of Love 2*. And then the fourth season of *Top Chef*. And the Duggar family's *19 Kids and Counting*. And *The Real Housewives of Atlanta*. And the second season of *Celebrity Apprentice*. And *Kourtney and Khloe Take Miami*. And *Jersey Shore*.

But all I really need to know I learned from the recently concluded 16th season of the *Amazing Race*.

■ Just because you were in a pageant and flubbed an interview question — like former Miss South Carolina Teen and *Amazing Race* contestant Caite Upton (“I believe that our education like such as South Africa and, uh, the Iraq, everywhere like, such as and...”) — doesn't mean that you are dimwitted. You are dimwitted because you keep like such as getting lost and uh, missing clues and are surprised that people speak Chinese in the China, everywhere like, such as ...

■ Open communication is always key to conflict resolution. Except when it's not. An exchange between Caite and boyfriend Brent: “I'm gonna punch you in the face.” “Don't even talk right now! Cause all you're gonna do is cry!” “You're not helping.” “You're not helping.” “I want to punch you in the face.”

■ Never give up. Hang in there until the cows come home. Or until one kicks you in the face (poor Grandma Jody who couldn't moo-ve out of the way quickly enough).

■ When in France, speak, well,

See SPIN on Page 2E

Music Mann

Eager new ASO music director plans to 'hit the ground running'

ERIC E. HARRISON
ARKANSAS DEMOCRAT-GAZETTE

We'll probably be seeing quite a bit of Philip Mann in his first year as music director and conductor of the Arkansas Symphony Orchestra.

“I'll be able to be in Little Rock most of the year,” he says. “We'll hit the ground running, and I think people will see me and my wife [professional pianist Tatiana Roitman] around town right from the beginning. “I'm looking forward to jumping in with both feet.”

Mann has already jumped in with at least one foot, even before he moves to Arkansas from California, where he has been the San Diego Symphony's assistant conductor.

The Arkansas Symphony, which announced Mann as its choice for the job April 1, won't start paying him until he officially takes it over July 1.

It took him less than a month to fill in the missing parts of the orchestra's 2010-11 Stella Boyle Smith Masterworks season. And he's working on the programs for the River Rhapsodies chamber series.

He will conduct the concerts that kick off the orchestra's 2010-11 season Oct. 2-3, a little less than a year after the “audition” concerts that separated him from the other four finalists for the job.

During his first season, he'll conduct six pairs of Masterworks and five pairs of pops concerts, plus children's concerts and “run-out” performances throughout the state.

See MANN on Page 6E



Arkansas Democrat-Gazette/KIRK MONTGOMERY

Mann

• Continued from Page 1E

His five-year contract at low six figures annually includes a clause requiring that he make his home in central Arkansas. That's fine with him.

"When we left back in October, we felt like we had more friends there than in any other city where we've lived and worked," he says. "That generosity, that warmth, that hospitality, that truly made this an easy decision for us."

Mann has family connections in Arkansas, and Roitman has professional ties: She was a collaborative pianist at the Hot Springs Music Festival in 2005 and 2006 and soloed with the Music Festival Orchestra in George Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue* in 2008. (A recording of that collaboration recently came out on the Naxos label.) Mann, too, was in Hot Springs in 2006 as a conducting intern.

UNIVERSAL CHOICE

After an almost year-long audition process, the 32-year-old Mann succeeds David Itkin, who spent 17 years on the orchestra's podium after taking over at age 35.

Mann was the runaway choice of orchestra players, audiences and patrons.

"The musicians and the audience enjoyed a lot of the other candidates, but Philip was the top choice," says orchestra Executive Director Christina Littlejohn. "Audience members raved about Philip for months afterward. He was the unanimous choice of the search committee, of the board, of the musicians and of the staff."

"At the heart of music making is collaboration, bringing together the voices of many different groups," said cellist Daniel Cline, president of the Orchestra Committee, in the news release announcing Mann's accession. "During our week together, I felt challenged to bring new sounds and ideas to the stage."

The feeling is mutual, Mann says.

"I don't want to say it was a surprise, but it was just a

wonderful thing to see happen," he says. "We struck an immediate rapport. It seemed to generate solely from the shared goal of making music together."

"Everything I try to do as a conductor, whether it's programming or rehearsal technique or anything that's happening in a performance, it's starting from and finishing with the music. That's something that the musicians picked up on quickly."

"I was also really pleasantly surprised to see that they seemed hungry, they really did not balk at being asked to work really hard."

Mann says the amount of work he and the musicians accomplished "during the week was just tremendous. To see the progress that we made, from the first rehearsal to the last performance, energizes me and gives me a huge sense of optimism for the potential that is there."

"For a collection of musicians who have that kind of hunger and willingness to work, the sky's the limit."

He sees a true dovetailing of his strengths and those of the orchestra, and that should be reflected in his programming choices.

"I've spent a lot of time most recently in American repertoire, including some new things, such as world premieres of new works," he says. Those include the September 2009 premiere in Sydney of John Corigliano's new small chamber version (for voice and sextet) of *Mr. Tambourine Man*, a collection of seven Bob Dylan song texts.

"But I would say that my core repertoire stems from the Viennese tradition and those composers who are most closely associated with the voice — Schubert, Mozart, Haydn, going up through Brahms and extending up through Mahler and [Richard] Strauss."

"My repertoire preferences are very closely matched with what I think will be the important repertoire that will continue the [orchestra's] improvement and growth. It's



Philip Mann officially takes over July 1 as the new music director of the Arkansas Symphony Orchestra.

one of the reasons I was so interested in the position."

What makes ensembles like the Cleveland Orchestra and the Vienna Philharmonic sound the way they do, he says, is "because they are the best at playing that classical repertoire, like Mozart and Haydn. If you are interested in growing an orchestra artistically, typically that is the type of repertoire that gives you the biggest shot of vitamins," he says.

(His first season programming will include Mozart in late October and mid-April but no Haydn yet.)

OPERA AND CHAMBER

Mann is also open to continuing Itkin's practice of putting on operas in concert versions.

"I have a background in opera," he says. "It's actually what brought me into conducting in the first place. I can't actually say for certain it's something we will do, but it's certainly something I have a great interest in."

Mann also sees the orchestra's chamber series as a source of strength.

"It's fantastic, in terms of continuing to build the artistic quality, and the relationships among the players individually, and pushing them," he says. "I think it's really great for them to have a 'step-out' and be showcased with the support of their colleagues. And it's a way for the community to see the really fantastic talent that already exists within that orchestra."

Playing chamber music will also strengthen the overall quality of the whole ensemble, he adds.



Pianist Tatiana Roitman, who has been at the Hot Springs Music Festival three out of the last five seasons, will be moving to Arkansas with her husband, conductor Philip Mann.

"The more your musicians play chamber music together, the more they can bring those skills and communication skills to the stage. That's how you get 120 people sounding like they're playing chamber music: They've done it before."

'CARRYING THE BANNER'

Based on his work in San Diego and elsewhere, Britain's BBC named Mann as a "talent to watch out for, who conveys a mature command of his forces."

He is an American Conducting Fellow and a winner of the Vienna Philharmonic's Karajan Fellowship at the Salzburg Festival. He has also served as "cover conductor" for the Cleveland Orchestra and as the Schmidt Conducting Fellow of the Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra.

As a Rhodes Scholar in England, he studied and taught at Oxford, where he won an annual competition to become principal conductor of the Oxford University Philharmonia. He also served as music director of the Oxford City Opera and Oxford Pro Musica Chamber Orchestra/Oxford Pops.

Having started out as a violinist, he also worked with Leonard Slatkin and the National Symphony Orchestra at the Kennedy Center's National Conducting Institute and with Michael Tilson Thomas at the New World Symphony.

Mann's new job won't stop him from guest-conducting elsewhere.

"It's good for everybody," he says. "It makes sure that the [orchestra] is well-represented, in other communities and abroad, where the

NEW SEASON, 'NEW WORLD'

Philip Mann will be going with a "New World" theme for the orchestra's 2010-11 Stella Boyle Smith Masterworks season opener.

The program for the Oct. 2-3 concerts will include the overture to *Candide* by Leonard Bernstein; George Gershwin's *Piano Concerto* in F major with soloist Kevin Cole; and the *Symphony No. 9*, "From the New World," by Antonin Dvorak.

The rest of the lineup:

■ **Oct. 30-31:** Overture to *The Magic Flute* by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart; *Horn Concerto No. 2* by Richard Strauss, with David Renfro, the orchestra's principal horn, as soloist; *Symphony No. 1* by Gustav Mahler

■ **Nov. 20-21:** "Beethoven & Blue Jeans." Sharon Isbin will be the soloist in the *Guitar Concerto* by Manuel Ponce; *Symphony No. 7* by Ludwig van Beethoven; *Suite No. 2* for small orchestra by Igor Stravinsky

■ **Jan. 29-30:** Overture to *The School for Scandal* by Samuel Barber; *Cello Concerto* by Edward Elgar, with soloist Julie Albers; *Symphony No. 5*, "Reformation," by Felix Mendelssohn

■ **Feb. 26-27:** *Symphony No. 3* by Johannes Brahms; Beethoven's *Violin Concerto*, with Augustin Hadelich as soloist

■ **April 16-17:** *Menuet Antique* by Maurice Ravel; Mozart's *Symphony No. 36*, "Linz"; *Pictures at an Exhibition* by Modest Mussorgsky

All concerts will start at 8 p.m. on Saturdays, and 3 p.m. Sundays in Little Rock's Robinson Center Music Hall. Season tickets for new subscribers are \$42 to \$144; for renewals, \$72 to \$246. Call (501) 666-1761 or visit the website, ArkansasSymphony.org.

— Eric E. Harrison

conductor is carrying the banner of the Arkansas Symphony along with him, and it allows me to bring that experience and the learning process of doing other repertoire back and applying it in Little Rock."

That was part of the conversations he had during interviews with the orchestra's board, which would like to bring in at least one guest conductor each season, starting in 2011-12.

"I made it really clear that guest conductors are an incredibly important component of a healthy orchestra," Mann says. "It's important for musicians to be introduced to a diversity of interpretations and musical backgrounds."

"I look forward to bringing guest conductors to Arkansas [who] will complement my strengths and bring their own perspective, [and] where their specialties of repertoire lie outside my specialty."

"A really savvy engagement of guest conductors can be a really important complement to the music director, and it's good for the orchestra — keeps everybody on their game, tip-top shape."

STATEWIDE CHALLENGE

Mann sees his biggest challenge as taking the or-

chestra to a new level as a statewide organization.

"I've been wrangling with the concept, and this was a big topic of conversation when I was there [in October], of what it is to be the Arkansas Symphony — not just the symphony of Little Rock, but a representative and a musical force and presence out into the state."

"That's a tremendous challenge, particularly in the light of the economic challenges that all orchestras are facing right now, but it's also the place where the greatest amount and potential for growth can happen."

"You're always trying to reach new audiences and familiar audiences in new ways. Budget-wise, things are very difficult for everybody right now, but we're very lucky in that we have an absolutely incredible product — Mozart, Beethoven, Bach. They're unimpeachable."

"We have to find ways to get people exposed to that music, and they will sell themselves. It's just a matter of getting them there."

"The ultimate goal is not to be just a copy of some other organization somewhere else, but to be the best possible symphony orchestra for Arkansas."

Arkansas Democrat-Gazette

Style

Deputy Managing Editor/Features
Jack Schnedler (501) 399-3677
jschnedler@arkansasonline.com

Mail Arkansas Democrat-Gazette
P.O. Box 2221
Little Rock, Ark. 72203

Fax (501) 372-4765

LET'S TALK



HELAINE WILLIAMS

Helaine Williams' column does not appear today.