

CONDUCTOR

Dominican conductor and composer, Darwin Aquino appears internationally and is regarded as among the most accomplished Caribbean artists of his generation, in both symphonic and operatic fields.

Having recently conducted Vincenzo Bellini's monumental opera *Norma*, the St. Louis Post-Dispatch remarked: "*Darwin had the orchestra sounding great from the first measures of the overture and maintained a good balance between stage and pit. He has a fine feel for the nuances of the bel canto style, and knows to breathe with the singers*".

A sought-after guest conductor known for his "*moving, absorbing and robust performances*", Darwin enjoys regular engagements around the world, including the Philharmonisches Staatsorchester Mainz in Germany, Saarländisches Staatsorchester in Germany, National Symphony Orchestra of Costa Rica, ADCA Symphony Orchestra in New York, Filarmónica Boca del Rio in Mexico, Palm Beach Symphony Orchestra, Alfredo Saint Malo Festival Orchestra in Panama, FIU Symphony Orchestra in Miami, and the Youth Orchestra of the Americas, among others. Aquino was also selected as Music Director by the world acclaimed Italian tenors *Il Volo*, for concert tours in Mexico and the Dominican Republic.

Recent performances in his current hometown of St. Louis include Beethoven's *Triple Concerto* with Celeste Boyer (Violin, Second Associate Concertmaster of the St. Louis Symphony), Melissa Brooks (Violoncello, Associate Principal St. Louis Symphony Orchestra) and Nina Ferrigno (Piano); Orff's *Carmina Burana* with the Washington University Symphony Orchestra and Choirs; Walton's *Viola Concerto* with Joanna Mendoza (Arianna String Quartet) and Robert Wykes's *Monument to the Dream*, written to commemorate the building of the symbolic Gateway Arch.

An opera conductor regarded for his "*passionate and precise baton*", Darwin has received outstanding reviews and public praise for his interpretations of Verdi's *Il Trovatore*, Bizet's *Carmen*, Rossini's *L'Italiana in Algeri*, Donizetti's *Elisir D'Amore* and Bizet's *Pearl Fishers*. Early in his career, he was appointed Cover Conductor at the Florida Grand Opera (*Don Pasquale*, *Carmen*, *Norma*, *Barber of Seville*), Opera Naples (*La Boheme*), the Palm Beach Symphony Orchestra and the Florida International University Symphony Orchestra. He conducted the Dominican premiere of Anton Bruckner's *Symphony No. 7* with the Música Sacra Philharmonic to great acclaim and received the prestigious *Premio Soberano* as Successful Dominican Artist Abroad.

As a passionate advocate of social change through classical music, Darwin worked closely for many years with Gustavo Dudamel in Venezuela and previously held posts as Artistic Director of *El Sistema*, Director of the National Conservatory of Music and Music Director of the National Youth Symphony Orchestra, in his homeland the Dominican Republic. Maestro Jose Antonio Abreu, founder of the world-known Venezuelan *Sistema*, referred to Darwin as “a great conductor, excellent composer and eminent violinist. A pioneer for classical music”. Darwin was awarded for his service to the youth with the *Hildegard Behrens Young Artist Prize* and the *Arts Advocacy Award*, both in the United States.

For the 2018-2019 season he served as Music Director of Winter Opera St. Louis, Music Director for the *Música Sacra* concert series in Santo Domingo, Conductor-in-Residence for the Washington University Symphony Orchestra, Director of Orchestral Studies at the University of Missouri St. Louis, Cover Conductor for the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra and St. Louis Youth Symphony Orchestra. Aquino has also been recently selected as Music Director for the Gateway Festival Orchestra, starting in July 2019.

Darwin’s principal teachers were Grzegorz Nowak and Ramon Tebar, with additional studies and masterclasses from Benjamin Zander, Colin Metters, Jose Serebrier, Carlos Miguel Prieto and James Judd. He holds a Master’s in Music in Orchestral Conducting from the Florida International University, where he received the Graduate Performer Award for his conducting of E. Chabrier opera *L’Etoile*.

COMPOSER

“My music emerges from the heart of Caribbean rhythms and chants. We are a creative mixture of cultures – an explosion of sounds, colors, and imagination. It has always been my universe, my poetic vision of the world. ”

For the 2018-2019 season Dominican composer Darwin Aquino is celebrating four new commissions and world premieres by the Florida International University Orchestra (Violin Concerto), Chamber Project St. Louis (Chamber piece for 6 instruments), Women Hope Chorale (Chorus, Piano, Violoncello and Percussion) and University of Missouri Brass Department (Chamber piece for Trumpet Ensemble).

Aquino’s most celebrated orchestral composition, *Espacio Ritual*, had its European premiere by the Orchestre Philharmonique de Radio France during the Festival Presences, resulting in glowing praise from *La Musique au Jour le Jour*: “Aquino has very well listened to the French composers, Boulez or Varese, developing in this piece a deeply personal language and an

inventive mastery for writing to the orchestra". Other orchestral works have been performed by international ensembles such as Simón Bolívar Symphony Orchestra of Venezuela, Mainz Philharmonic Orchestra, Saarländisches Staatsorchester, Youth Orchestra of the Americas, Santo Domingo Music Festival Orchestra, Filarmónica Boca del Rio in Mexico, Washington University Symphony Orchestra, Dominican National Symphony Orchestra and the National Symphony of El Salvador.

The Latin American Collegium of Composers invited Aquino as their youngest member for his outstanding achievements in composition. He was invited to Cuba as one of the judges for the top Composition Prize Casa de las Americas. A frequently performed composer worldwide, his chamber music has been selected for the New Music ISCM in Miami, Latin American Music Festival in Venezuela, SMASH Salamanca in Spain, Las Americas in Concert at the Mannes College of Music in New York, International Forum of New Music in Mexico, Universidad de Costa Rica and North South Consonance in New York, among others.

Aquino studied composition at the Conservatoire National du Strasbourg in France with Italian maestro Ivan Fedele and served as composer in residence for the National Symphony Orchestra of the Dominican Republic. During his career he has received the *Musici Mojanesi* Composition Prize in Italy, three *National Composition* Prizes and two *Academic Composition* Prizes in the Dominican Republic.

