

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 at the White House. The National Medal of Arts, the highest honor given to artists 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 ten *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. 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. 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. Maestro Kunzel actually conducted the first ever pops concert in China in 1998 in Beijing with the China National Symphony Orchestra. On several occasions he has conducted the World Super Orchestra in concerts at the Tokyo International Music Festival. This year he led the Vienna Volksoper Symphony Orchestra in a Gala New Year's Eve Tour in 8 concerts in Japan.

Since 1991 Maestro Kunzel has annually led the National Symphony Orchestra on the lawn of the U.S. Capitol in PBS-TV's internationally televised Memorial Day and Fourth of July Concerts. In addition, he has conducted the Cincinnati Pops Orchestra on many special holiday programs on PBS-TV over the last decade.

A student and Personal Assistant to the great French Maestro, Pierre Monteux, Erich Kunzel made his professional conducting debut with the Santa Fe Opera in 1957 (immediately after his graduation from Dartmouth College). In addition to his many appearances with that company, he has conducted many performances with the San Francisco Opera Company, the Canadian Opera Company, the Cincinnati Opera, and the Vienna Volksoper. He continues a very active guest conducting career in concerts in North America and internationally in Europe and Asia.

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