



# James Meena

## Conductor

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James Meena consistently earns critical acclaim for his artistic vision and dynamic presence on the podium in concert, opera and ballet. Mo. Meena serves as Artistic Director for Opera Carolina (Charlotte) and Artistic Director for Opera Grand Rapids.

Recent engagements include acclaimed performances of *Turandot* in the Teatro Antiche Taormina and Teatro Greco Siracusa, *Tosca* at the Luglio Festival Trapani in Sicilia, a double-bill of Rachmaninoff's rarely-performed *Aleko* paired with *Pagliacci* as well as *La fanciulla del West*, both with New York City Opera; *Le nozze di Figaro* for Teatro Sociale Rovigo Italy, *La Fanciulla del West* for five prestigious Italian theaters: Teatro del Giglio, Lucca Italy, Teatro Verdi in Pisa, Teatro Alighieri di Ravenna, Teatro Pavarotti di Modena and Teatro Goldoni di Livorno, plus *Rigoletto*, *The Magic Flute*, *Carmen* and *Yvgeny Onegin* with Opera Carolina and Opera Grand Rapids, a Gala concert with Renee Fleming and the Toledo Symphony Orchestra; *Porgy & Bess* with Margaret Island Open-Air Theatre in Budapest for their Summer Festival, and *La bohème* with the prestigious Puccini Festival in Torre del Lago, *La bohème* with Opéra de Montréal, and Masterworks Concerts with Memphis Symphony Orchestra. Next season, Mo. Meena makes his debut with the Shanghai Opera.

A guest conductor, Maestro Meena has lead performances in opera houses throughout North America, including *Madama Butterfly*, *Pagliacci/Gianni Schicchi*, *Le nozze di Figaro*, and *La traviata* for L'Opera de Montreal; Michigan Opera Theatre for *Die Zauberflöte*; Edmonton Opera for *Falstaff*, *Otello*, *Macbeth* and *Eugene Onegin*; an exciting new co-production of *Roméo et Juliette* with Virginia Opera and Toledo Opera; and Manitoba Opera, where he conducted the première of *Transit of Venus* by the Canadian team of composer Victor Davies and librettist Maureen Hunter, recorded for national broadcast on the CBC. His Opera Carolina performances of *Faust*, *Eugene Onegin*, and *Il trovatore* are captured on recording for *NPR World of Opera*.

With extensive experience in opera, ballet, and symphonic music, Maestro Meena held principal and resident conducting posts with the Cleveland Ballet, Toledo Symphony, and Toledo Opera in addition to guest conducting appearances that include a nationally televised Thanksgiving concert for the Korean Broadcasting System Symphony; performances of Stravinsky's tour de force *La Sacre du printemps* with the National Symphony Orchestra, Taiwan; concerts with the Cairo Symphony Orchestra in the new Cairo Opera House; and symphony concerts with the orchestra of the Teatro Massimo Bellini in Catania, the Orchestra della Toscana in Italy.

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244 Fifth Avenue, Suite C215 | New York, N.Y. 10001 | T. 917-385-0471 | info@royalinternationalart.com | www.royalinternationalart.com



Mo. Meena has been engaged as guest conductor with orchestras and opera companies in the United States, Italy, Taipei, Korea, Canada and Mexico including the Mexico City Philharmonic, the Washington Opera, Opera Pacific, Portland Opera and the Utah Opera. On opera stages, he has conducted legendary singers including Renée Fleming, Denyce Graves, James McCracken, Mignon Dunn, Marilyn Horne, Jerome Hines, Diana Soviero, Jerry Hadley, Mark Delavan and Marcello Giordani.

From Voix des Arts of Mo. Meena's most recent performances of *Turandot*: "Under the baton of James Meena the Charlotte Symphony Orchestral delivered an awe-inspiring performance of the score. Maestro Meena's conducting was notable for the manner in which, like the great past interpreters of the operas of Richard Strauss, he coaxed sounds from the orchestra that compellingly fulfilled the lush late-Romantic promise of the melodic lines while also always sounding like an opera composed in 1924. The influence of Debussy has almost never been more discernible than in Maestro Meena's handling of the score. His work in Charlotte has been consistently perceptive, but he found in *Turandot*—a score by which many conductors have been defeated—an ideal outlet for the controlled ecstasy of which he is a master."

Since 2001, Mo. Meena has presented six regional premières in Charlotte, including *Cold Sassy Tree* and *Susannah* by Carlisle Floyd, the company's first productions of *Der Rosenkavalier*, *Nabucco*, *Macbeth*, and *Les pêcheurs des perles*, and the regional premiere of Richard Danielpour's new American opera, *Margaret Garner*, starring Denyce Graves in April 2006. Mo. Meena is the lead producer for Douglas Tappin's new work *I Dream*, created for the 50<sup>th</sup> commemoration of the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

James Meena is a graduate of Carnegie Mellon University and Baldwin Wallace College Conservatory of Music. His principal conducting teachers include Thomas Mihalak (New Jersey Symphony), Robert Page (Cleveland Orchestra), Rudolph Fellner (Pittsburgh Opera), and Boris Halip (Bolshoi Ballet), with whom he also studied violin.

Mr. Meena has served as Assistant Conductor to Andre Previn, Gunther Schuller, Michael Tilson Thomas, Anton Guadagno, and Anton Coppola. For several seasons, he was Associate Conductor of the Pittsburgh Opera, where he made his operatic debut conducting *Die Zauberflöte*. He made his professional debut with the Pittsburgh Symphony conducting Haydn's monumental oratorio *The Creation*. Mo. Meena was awarded the Distinguished Alumni Award by his undergraduate alma mater in 1997 for his commitment to visionary excellence and growth of cultural institutions.

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