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OJAI MUSIC FESTIVAL

THOMAS W. MORRIS CONTINUES TO SHAPE OJAI MUSIC FESTIVAL ARTISTIC DIRECTION THROUGH FESTIVAL'S 75TH ANNIVERSARY IN 2021

"My artistic job in building a festival comes down to two overriding goals: To build on the Ojai aesthetic of discovery, adventure, and involvement, and to provide each music director a forum to explore and experiment melding his/her musical personality with the rich heritage of this glorious festival and sublimely beautiful place. It is irresistible, exhilarating, and enormous fun."

- Thomas W. Morris, Artistic Director

OJAI, CA -- Ojai Music Festival Board President David Nygren announced that artistic director Thomas W. Morris will extend his contract through July 2021, the Festival's 75th anniversary season. Mr. Morris was named artistic director in 2004.

Under Mr. Morris' leadership the Festival has remained a touchstone of artistic innovation and groundbreaking exploration for leading artists and curious music enthusiasts from around the world. During his tenure, he has expanded the festival into a vibrant four-day immersive experience with more concerts performed at the Libbey Bowl and throughout the Ojai Valley, free community events, symposia, and films. Artists selected by Mr. Morris as music directors are all deeply committed to musical discovery. In 2014, he announced future music directors percussionist Steven Schick (2015), director Peter Sellars (2016) and composer/conductor Esa-Pekka Salonen (2017). Also tapped by Mr. Morris as past music directors have been eighth blackbird, Pierre-Laurent Aimard, Leif Ove Andsnes, George Benjamin, Oliver Knussen, Mark Morris, Kent Nagano, David Robertson, Robert Spano, Dawn Upshaw, and most recently, Jeremy Denk. With this contract extension, Mr. Morris will continue long-term visionary artistic planning for the organization.

Prior to Mr. Morris, previous artistic directors included John Bauer (as managing director, 1957-1954), Lawrence Morton (1954–1970, 1981–1987), Ara Guzelimian (1992-1997), and Ernest Fleischmann (1998 to 2003).

"We are thrilled that Tom has committed to the Festival through 2021. With Tom's artistic brilliance in continuing to create a new and imaginative experience year after year, he has an innate ability to create an environment of inclusiveness for both the experienced music festival attendee and the first time attendee. Tom nurtures the creativity of each music director, blending their artistic sensibilities with the unique and beautiful setting of the Ojai Music Festival," said Board President David Nygren. "Under Tom's strong leadership and innovative approach, the Festival has gained international recognition and reach. He has been successful in creating community engagement events during the Festival that showcase musical artists from all over the world, creating opportunities for music lovers of all ages to participate in the festival."

Mr. Morris said, "Working in Ojai continues to be a rich and rewarding creative experience, in not only working with artists who perform here but in building off of the incredibly active role the audience plays. They do not just sit and receive; they provide much of the artistic energy and vitality. In fact all the artists speak of the attentiveness and energy of the audience. And the possibilities of what you can do are far broader than I could have imagined. I learned that the further afield you go from the traditional concert experience (not just in repertoire, but in the concert structures and the total experience itself) the better it works."

Artists who have served or will serve as music directors are quick to recognize the immense value and fun they experience throughout the process of imagining their Festival with Mr. Morris.

Robert Spano (2006): "There is no better time to be had than coming up with programs with Tom Morris. His encyclopedic knowledge, remarkable inventiveness, and creativity are matched only by his fantastic sense of humor. Ojai has been made an even richer place with his tenure."

eighth blackbird (2009): "Tom was always willing to step outside the Festival's comfort zone....He knew his audience at Ojai in minute detail, and could assess exactly how much to push their buttons, to provoke them, to give them candy as well as greens."

Steven Schick (2015): "Tom Morris is the absolute gold standard when it comes to being an artistic partner. And the process this year in anticipation of 2015 has lived up to every expectation. It's all about the conversations. Our conversations about music have been far-ranging and provocative. And they are always flavored with a keen awareness of the environment and traditions of the Ojai Music Festival. The result is a set of concerts that neither of us would have programmed individually but which, taken together, represent a communal view of how great music can find a home in a great festival."

Peter Sellars (2016): "Tom Morris figured out a long time ago that the first step in being adventurous is being astute....Tom has held major establishment posts, but has always operated within them with a certain flair, a certain knack, a certain curiosity, and a certain predilection for innovation, for surprise, for change, and for a better idea....He loves to make things happen — the thrill and subtle and far-reaching shifts in organizations, programming, and new encounters with audiences is irresistible to him."

2015 Ojai Music Festival

Ojai enthusiastically welcomes percussionist, conductor, teacher, and author Steven Schick as Music Director for the 69th Ojai Music Festival, June 11 to 14, 2015. With Mr. Morris, Mr. Schick has created an involving festival focused on 20th and 21st century composers with an abundance of music from early morning to late night. Joining him will be long-time colleagues including the International Contemporary Ensemble (“ICE”), the San Diego string ensemble Renga, pipa artist Wu Man, flutist Claire Chase, and virtuoso cellist Maya Beiser.

The Festival program will highlight music by 30 composers, half of whom are new to Ojai; the West Coast premiere of Pulitzer-prize winner John Luther Adam’s *Sila: The Breath of the World*; and a pre-festival celebration of the 90th birthday of Pierre Boulez on Wednesday June 10 with the west coast premiere of *A Pierre Dream: A Portrait of Pierre Boulez*, a multi-media kaleidoscope production with narration, archive films clips, live music, and stage sets by Frank Gehry, a part of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra’s *Beyond the Score* series.

Thomas W. Morris, Artistic Director

Thomas W. Morris was appointed artistic director of the Ojai Music Festival starting with the 2004 Festival. Recognized as one of the most innovative leaders in the orchestra industry, he has served as the long-time chief executive of both The Cleveland Orchestra and the Boston Symphony Orchestra. Mr. Morris is currently active nationally and internationally as a consultant, lecturer, teacher, and writer.

As artistic director of the 69-year-old Festival, Mr. Morris is responsible for artistic planning, and each year appoints a music director with whom he collaborates on shaping the Festival’s programming. During his decade-long tenure, audiences have increased and the scope of the Festival has expanded, including Ojai at Berkeley, a collaborative partnership with Cal Performances.

Mr. Morris was a founding director of Spring for Music, and served as the project’s artistic director. He currently serves as a member of the Board of Trustees of the Curtis Institute of Music and as chair of its Board of Overseers, and is a member of the Board of Directors of the Interlochen Center for the Arts. He is also an accomplished percussionist.

About the Ojai Music Festival

From its founding in 1947, the Ojai Music Festival has created a place for groundbreaking musical experiences, bringing together innovative artists and curious audiences in an intimate, idyllic setting 80 miles northwest of Los Angeles. The Festival presents broad-ranging programs in unusual ways, giving patrons a fresh perspective on the works they hear. The four-day festival is a complete immersion experience with main concerts, free community events, symposia, film screenings, and gatherings. Considered a highlight of the summer season, Ojai has remained a leader in the classical music landscape.

The Ojai Music Festival attracts the world’s greatest musical artists. Through its unique structure of the Artistic Director appointing an annual Music Director, Ojai has presented a “who’s who” of music including: Aaron Copland, Igor Stravinsky, Olivier Messiaen, Michael Tilson Thomas, Kent Nagano, Pierre Boulez, John Adams, Esa-Pekka Salonen, Robert Spano, Pierre-Laurent Aimard, David

Robertson, eighth blackbird, George Benjamin, Dawn Upshaw, Leif Ove Andsnes, Mark Morris, and Jeremy Denk.

The Festival has also recently announced music directors for 2015–2017: Percussionist Steven Schick for 2015, director Peter Sellars for 2016, and composer/conductor Esa-Pekka Salonen for 2017.

Series passes for the 69th Ojai Music Festival – June 11 to 14, 2015 – are on sale now. Series passes range from \$730 to \$120 reserved section and \$90 to \$55 lawn area. Tickets for the pre-festival special event celebrating the 90th birthday of Pierre Boulez are \$90 for reserved section and \$40 for general admission. For more information visit OjaiFestival.org or call 805 646 2094.

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Online Resources:

[Thomas W. Morris A Decade of Innovative Programming >>](#)

[Ojai Music Festival Roster of Music Directors >>](#)