

# Will Kesling, Ph.D., Professor & Conductor

University of Florida College of Fine Arts, School of Music



## Professional Bio Highlights

### Selected Reviews~

A **Washington Post** review sums his abilities in two words: *clear professionalism*.

### L'ARENA, Verona, Italy –

*Kesling baton perfect for Brahms. You rarely have the opportunity to perceive in a maestro a clear vision of the work that is evident by the gestures, at the same time expressive with great precision.*

**New York Daily News** – *Definitively Dvořák ... Will Kesling's conducting was truly inspired and impeccably paced; the orchestra played superbly; the massed choruses from Florida, Texas, Georgia, Idaho, Indiana, New Jersey, and Utah produced stirring sounds.*

**American Record Guide July/August 2020** – *Kesling conducts a lyrical, dramatic performance.... Antonin Dvořák REQUIEM MASS, Op. 89 Centaur Records*

### International Award~

**Gold Medal – 2021 Audio Visual Arts Digital International Competition.** AVA Digital Awards is an international competition that recognizes excellence by creative professionals responsible for the planning, concept, direction, design, and production of digital communication. *Sounds of the Season: Conquering COVID with a Carol* produced and conducted by Dr. Will Kesling.

### Book~

Kesling, Will. ***The Voices I Hear: A Philosophical and Practical Approach to the Choral Art***. Chicago: GIA Publications, 2022. (439 pages)

### Selected Activities~

Dr. Will Kesling has conducted hundreds of choral ensembles and 46 professional symphony orchestras throughout the world. His talents for weaving together text and music, chorus and orchestra have garnered him international respect.

Dr. Kesling has conducted a number of engagements in **Carnegie Hall and the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts**, as well as in major concert halls internationally. He served as the Associate Conductor of the Manhattan Philharmonic Orchestra, New York City, as the Principal Guest Conductor of the St. Petersburg State Symphony Orchestra, Russia, for ten years, and was the Music Director and Conductor of the Mountain West Symphony Orchestra & Choral Society, Utah for 18 years. He now begins his 45<sup>th</sup> year as a Professor of Choral and Orchestral Conducting.

### **Romania~**

Released October 1, 2019 on the **Centaur Records** label, America's largest independent record producer is a beautiful recording of the rarely performed **REQUIEM MASS, Op. 89** by **Antonin Dvořák** and conducted by Dr. Kesling. The performing forces are the Coru Academic „G. Musicescu” al Philharmonicii „Moldava” and Orchestra Filarmonicii „Mihail Jora” Bacau of Romania with four soloists from the Rouse State Opera in Sophia, Bulgaria.

### **People's Republic of China~**

*The Beijing Administration of Foreign Experts Affairs of the Peoples Republic of China has certified Dr. Kesling to be a **High-Level Talent** and selected him to join the **Program for the Introduction of Renowned Overseas Professors** by awarding him a ten-year High Talents R Visa. (Conformation Letter for High Level Foreign Talents Issue No: 051110019480102012)*

In June 2019, Kesling appointed **Distinguished Professor** at the School of Music, **Sichuan International Studies University (SISU)** in Chongqing, where he lectured on choral rehearsal techniques, coached graduate, and undergraduate conducting students, select high school, and professional conductors. Kesling worked with the Chongqing Philharmonic Choir and the SISU's Professors Chorus. The capstone event of the two weeks was concert performing an American composer's work with a choir of 225 SISU undergraduate Vocal Music Education students and the 60 student SISU Orchestra.

Appointed **Distinguished Expert** by the **Beijing Foreign Studies University (BFSU)**, Kesling taught humanities courses for their Summer Term in both July 2018 & 2019. Called the “Harvard of China,” BFSU is renowned for its language and cross-cultural studies programs.

As **Honorary Distinguished Professor**, Dr. Kesling coached and lectured to graduate conducting students in the **College of Music, Gannan Normal University** in Ganzhou in June 2018. Kesling worked with the Lao Biao Song Choir (Professional), an elementary school choir, and a large church choir.

**China International Choir Festival** presented **Sounds of the Season** (video due to COVID) on their virtual version of the festival, July 2020 and 2021.

### **Kenya~**

In March of 2022 Prof. Kesling taught at Kenyatta University working with the Mighty KU Choir, Almasi Chorale, coached conductors, taught classes, and was interviewed on KUTV. In Nairobi he worked with the Star Men's Choir and the Safaricom Youth Orchestra. In 2006 he conducted a performance with the Nairobi Music Society Chorus and Orchestra.

### **Israel~**

Dr. Kesling was an **Israeli Faculty Fellow** (December 26, 2018 – January 8, 2019). This is a competitive academic program where the central goal is to link scholars from diverse disciplines with their Israeli counterparts for the purpose of initiating cross-cultural and international exchanges and fostering relationships and collaborations. Sponsored by the Jewish National Fund.

### **Colombia~**

On July 7, 2019, Dr. Kesling appointed **Honorary President of Festival Coral Internacional de Medellín** (an international choral festival). Prior to COVID, he conducted the combined special invited choirs for the final portion of the festival's closing concerts in Teatro Metropolitano on Colombian national television six consecutive years. These choirs are a mixture university and professional choirs from many countries.

Kesling's debut conducting appearance with Orquesta Filarmónica De Medellín took place December 18, 2017. Dr. Kesling made his debut with the Orquesta Camerata Jaibaná in the Teatro Metropolitano in Medellín in that same year.

#### **Ecuador~**

Dr. Kesling conducted a concert with the Universidad de las Artes Orchestra in Guayaquil in May of 2019 and 2021. Also in May of 2021, he conducted the Orquesta Sinfónica Juvenil del Guayas in Guayaquil and Coro Juvenil del Conservatorio Superior José María Rodríguez in Cuenca.

#### **Argentina~**

During the second week of July 2017 Dr. Kesling conducted a concert with del **Coro del Ministerio de Educación y Deportes de la Nación** in Buenos Aires, Argentina. With that choir, he led twelve hours of master classes for the **Asociación de Directores de Coro de la República Argentina**.

#### **Soviet Union/Russia~**

Since his debut in 1991, Dr. Kesling has become one of the Soviet Union's (now Russia) most popular American guest conductors. He has returned to conduct nine of the country's top orchestras: Moscow State Academic Symphony Orchestra, Moscow Philharmonic, Moscow State Symphony Orchestra, Moscow State Chamber Orchestra, St. Petersburg State Symphony Orchestra, Orchestra of St. Petersburg Radio & Television, St. Petersburg State Symphony Orchestra Classika, St. Petersburg State Symphony Orchestra Congress, and St. Petersburg Mozarteum Chamber Orchestra and Chorus. One of the highlights of his career came in 1992 when he conducted the Moscow State Chamber Orchestra and Bolshoi Opera Chorus in the first professionally produced performance of Handel's *Messiah* since the institution of Communism.

#### **Czech Republic~**

Dr. Kesling was a **featured conductor for the Mezinárodní Hudební Musica Ecumenica in Prague**. In June 2002, Maestro Kesling opened this international festival with a performance of the Verdi's *Requiem* and closed the festival with Dvořák's *Te Deum* and Orff's *Carmina Burana*, both concerts in Smetana Hall with the National Theater Orchestra of Prague and Czech Philharmonic Chorus. On this same series in June of 2005, Dr. Kesling conducted the Czech National Orchestra performing Respighi's *Pines of Rome* and *Carmina Burana*, joined by the Prague Chamber Choir. During the summer of 2004, Kesling honored the centennial of Dvořák's death leading a rare performance of the composer's *Requiem* in Prague and more. In 2003, he conducted the Verdi *Hymn of Nations* and Beethoven's *Symphony No. 9* with the Czech National Orchestra and the Czech Philharmonic Chorus.

#### **Austria~**

Maestro Kesling's served as a conducting coach at **The International Music Academy**, offered by the **Gustav Mahler Conservatory of Music in Vienna**, Austria (May 20 – June 2, 2013). As a part of the Academy, he conducted a public performance of *Spectacular Moments in Opera: Most Loved Choruses, Overtures & Arias* with the Vienna Radio Orchestra and the choir from the University of Zagreb, Croatia, and the Gustav Mahler Conservatory Chorus.

#### **Italy~**

In June 2013, Dr. Kesling conducted two performances of the Brahms *Tragic Overture* and *Ein Deutsches Requiem* in Verona and Vicenza, Italy with the Croatian Chamber Orchestra and choirs from Hungary, Italy, and the United States.

#### **Bulgaria~**

Artist/Faculty & Conducting Coach for the **Varna International Conductor's Academy of The Varna Free University** in consortium with the Varna State Chamber Orchestra and the Varna

Municipal Chorus "Morski Zvutsi" (professional) during May 31 to June 12, 2010. Conducted an all-Mozart concert with the Varna State Chamber Orchestra & Varna Municipal Chorus "Morski Zvutsi" while there.

### **South Korea~**

Lecture/Conducting Classes were presented for Masters and Doctoral students at **Hanil University** in Jeonju (August 16-18, 2011) and **Hansei University** (August 15-16, 2011), South Korea. Dr. Kesling has ongoing projects with South Korean Universities that include **Gangneung Yeongdong University** and **Songho University**. Of note, he presented a demonstration rehearsal with the Korean International Choir on KBS Television (**Korean National Television**) on August 18, 2011. Kesling has conducted the Changwon Philharmonic (2 times), Lydia Enchristus (professional choir), and the Changwon Children's Choir in concert. He is currently on the Board of Directors Saeyoung Music and Art Academy in Seoul.

### **Canada~**

Dr. Kesling has made his mark in Canada as well having led multiple performances with the Vancouver Symphony. He made his debut with the Victoria Symphony in April 2005 and, in May 2011, made his debut in Calgary with the Calgary Chamber Orchestra and Calgary Children's Choir.

### **A few Exotic Places~**

Dr. Kesling has also conducted professional concerts in Brazil (Orquesta Sinfonica Brasileira), Hungary (Budapest Chamber Orchestra), Mexico (Orquesta Sinfonia Nacional), Uruguay (Orquesta Sinfonica del SODRE), Poland, and several sold out performances at the Festival Internacional de Música in Cambrils, Spain.

### **USA~**

Domestic orchestras Dr. Kesling has conducted include the Honolulu and San Diego Symphonies, the Louisiana Philharmonic in New Orleans, the Connecticut and National Chamber Orchestras, to name a few. He has also guest-conducted the world-famous Mormon Tabernacle Choir on a national CBS broadcast. He has several commercial recordings available on both the Integra Classics and Shadow Mountain labels. He has conducted the feature film scores, *The Two Sisters* and *The Silence of Speed* (**GOLD MEDAL - WORLDVEST FILM FESTIVAL**). The University of Florida Concert Choir and the University of Florida Ethno Music Ensemble perform the CD **Ramirez Reimagined** now available on Spotify, released in May 2021 on the JV Music Enterprises label.

For the past nineteen years, Dr. Kesling has served as the Director of Choral Activities at the University of Florida as well as the Director of the Gainesville Civic Chorus Master Chorale and Orchestra. Previously, Dr. Kesling was the Director of the Orchestra and Choral programs at Utah State University for nineteen years. Over the past forty-four years, his college choirs have received international attention and have made multiple appearances at both national and divisional conventions for the American Choral Directors Association. In March 2002, his Utah State University Chamber Choir appeared before the combined Western and Northwestern Division Convention of the College Band Directors Association. That same month, the Utah State University Combined Choirs were featured in the **Opening Ceremonies of the Paralympics on NBC**.

At the University of Florida, his choirs have appeared with the San Diego Symphony, National Philharmonic, Washington, D.C., Czech National Orchestra and the Czech National Theater Orchestra as well as the Kronos String Quartet, the Three Italian Tenors, and the Posaune Voce Trio of Birmingham, England, and made a first-ever American Choral Directors Association convention appearance. All of these performances were under Dr. Kesling's baton.

On September 11, 2004, Maestro Kesling made his debut with the **National Philharmonic in Constitution Hall, Washington, DC** premiering the new Revolutionary War oratorio, *A Prelude to Glory*.

Dr. Kesling has conducted numerous All State choirs and festivals. He has three years of experience conducting military choirs and bands. Prof. Kesling has published scholarly choral editions and compositions with a number of publishers and has penned academic articles for professional journals, and now a new book. Dr. Kesling serves on the International Editorial Board for the *Journal of Culture and Art*.

#### **Selected Awards~**

In recognition of his achievements, Dr. Kesling received **The Congressional Order of Merit** by the Congress of the United States of America in September 2003 and the **Ronald Reagan Gold Medal** in November 2004. In March 2006, Professor Kesling received the **Congressional Medal of Distinction** for his contributions to the cultural life of the citizenry. On October 12, 2013, Dr. Kesling was inducted into Phi Mu Alpha Sinfonia, men's fraternity of musicians, as a National Honorary Member. In November 2017, Dr. Kesling received the **Distinguished Alumni Award** from his undergraduate university. Scholar/Teacher of the year (2021) and International Educator of the Year (2017 & 2019) for the College of the Arts at the University of Florida). Named **2020 Musician of the Year** by the Foundation for the Promotion of Music. The Marquis Who's Who Publication Board presented Dr. Kesling with the Albert Nelson Marquis **Lifetime Achievement Award 2020** and he is named the **2022 Professor of the Year** by the Top 100 Registry.