

Michael Zaugg | Biography

Conductor and Choral Pedagogue | Artistic & Managing Director Pro Coro Canada

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Swiss-native Michael Zaugg has distinguished himself as an innovative and versatile conductor, pedagogue and clinician, active across Canada - from Vancouver to St John's - and in Europe. Currently in his 9th season as Managing and Artistic Director & Principal Conductor of the professional chamber choir Pro Coro Canada in Edmonton, Michael previously led other prominent Canadian choirs including, in Montreal, the St. Lawrence Choir (2008-2013), and voces boreales (2006-2015), and the Cantata Singers of Ottawa (2005-2014).

Active as a Guest Conductor and Visiting Artist, Michael Zaugg has worked with notable groups including the Vancouver Chamber Choir, National Youth Choir of Canada, the BBC Singers, Vancouver's musica intima, the Nova Scotia, Alberta, New Brunswick and Ontario Youth Choirs, Thirteen Strings, as well as the Longueuil Symphony Orchestra. Michael's US debut was with the Grammy-nominated Choir of Trinity Wall Street in New York. Since 2016, he has led a 60-voice male choir, with singers selected from across Canada, the US and the Ukraine, to perform Ukrainian Sacred Music in tours that have taken the ensemble from Edmonton, Saskatoon, Regina, and Winnipeg to Toronto, Philadelphia, Rochester and New York City.

As Chorus Master of the Orchestre Symphonique de Montréal (2006-2011), Michael successfully prepared groups of up to 1500 singers for OSM Artistic Director Kent Nagano, including the award-winning production Saint François d'Assise by Messiaen. Michael also prepared the Cantata Singers of Ottawa for their appearances with the National Arts Centre Orchestra under conductors such as Franz-Paul Decker, David Lockington, Trevor Pinnock, Helmuth Rilling and Paul Goodwin. In Switzerland, Michael Zaugg was Chorus Master of the Symphonic Chorus Regiochor Basel, and he continues to appear regularly as a guest conductor in his home country.

A passionate pedagogue, Michael Zaugg is strongly committed to his work not only with choirs but also with emerging artists. He has taught on the faculty of the Halifax Conducting Institute (Nova Scotia), at the Kodaly Summer Course (University of Alberta, Edmonton) and since 2018 has been the Program Director of CHORAL ART at the Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity. Maestro Zaugg created the educational component—#connect—with Pro Coro Canada, which provides young composers, singers and conductors the opportunity to work with Michael and Pro Coro Canada several times over the season. Between 2008 and 2020 choral ensembles under Michael's direction have commissioned and premiered 40 Canadian choral works. Michael's work with and support of emerging Canadian composers is presented through Pro Coro Canada's Choral Series, formerly distributed by the Leading Note in Ottawa.

In 2020 Michael Zaugg received the Choral Canada national Award for Outstanding Innovation for the CHORAL ART at the Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity. He was also a 2020 recipient of the Edmonton Artists Trust Fund Award, which annually honors ten local artists for their creative work and contributions to the community.

During the global pandemic, Maestro Zaugg successfully moved Pro Coro Canada's 2020-2021 performance season and offerings into a hybrid model, providing live-stream performances, educational video and audio materials, and leadership resources for the choral art discipline. The new subscription-based TV platform for the professional choir has within less than a year published over 100 videos and received several thousand views.

Originally an accomplished tenor, Michael became the first Swiss conductor to be accepted into the prestigious post-graduate program for Professional Choir Conducting at the Royal Academy of Music in Stockholm, Sweden. Through this program, Michael worked weekly with singers of the world-renowned Swedish Radio Choir and had the opportunity to guest-conduct two of Sweden's choral gems - the Adolf Fredrik's Girls Choir and the Mikaeli Chamber Choir. Mr. Zaugg also holds degrees in voice and music education from the University in Basel. In 2018 he was awarded an Honorary Doctor of Music Degree (Hon DMus) from King's College, University of Aberdeen, Scotland.