

NATIONAL MEMORIAL DAY CHORAL FESTIVAL

JASON MAX FERDINAND ARTISTIC DIRECTOR



Photograph by Giana Snell

Jason Max Ferdinand, Professor – Conductor – Composer – Speaker, is an inspirational musician, leader and teaching mentor whose gifts are sought after by choirs and orchestras in the USA and internationally.

Since 2022 he has served as the Director of Choral Activities at the University of Maryland, College Park, having spent the preceding 14 years as professor at Oakwood University, where he conducted the renowned Aeolians of Oakwood University.

He is the founding artistic director of The Jason Max Ferdinand Singers which since its inception in 2021 has performed to enraptured sell-out audiences. He led its debut at the BBC Proms at the Royal Albert Hall in 2024.

He is a published author and composer with GIA Publications, featuring the book *Teaching with Heart: Tools for Addressing Societal Challenges Through Music*, and *The Jason Max Ferdinand Choral Series* (Walton Music).

Ferdinand began his tenure at Oakwood University in 2008. Performing a repertoire from the baroque to the 21st century he led the Aeolians of Oakwood University in performances throughout the United States and in Canada, Bermuda, the Bahamas, the Virgin Islands, Trinidad & Tobago, the UK, Europe and Russia. In 2012 the Aeolians visited Moscow as part of the Russia-US Bilateral Presidential Commission on development of cooperation between Dmitry Medvedev and Barack Obama. The same year their performance at the 7th World Choir Games earned them three gold medals and the overall championship for the Spiritual category. In 2015 Ferdinand made his debut at Carnegie Hall conducting the Aeolians, the Altino Brothers Concert Chorale, and the Beyond Boundaries Symphony Orchestra. He directed the Aeolians as they accompanied soprano Kathleen Battle at the Alys Stephens Performing Arts Center in Birmingham, Alabama, as part of her “Underground Railroad: A Spiritual Journey” Concert Series. He returned to the Alys Stephens Performing Arts Center in 2016 to direct the Alabama Symphony Orchestra as they accompanied the Aeolians in a collaborated annual Martin Luther King, Jr. tribute. The 2017 Aeolians won the coveted “Choir of the World Award” with Ferdinand being awarded the “Most Outstanding Director”. In 2018 his choir won three gold medals in the 10th World Choir Games and were overall champions in both the University Choir and Spiritual categories. In 2019 the Aeolians gave a landmark performance at the American Choral Directors Association (ACDA) National Convention with popular consent agreeing that “They broke the ACDA”. Their album *The Aeolians* was also released in 2019.

The unique circumstances of 2021 opened the opportunity to birth The Jason Max Ferdinand Singers in an online concert filmed for the VOCES8 Foundation’s LIVE from London festival. The ensemble began its unifying journey to breathe life into choral works of underrepresented composers and positively affect the cultural health of our world. The Jason Max Ferdinand Singers album *Solace* was

released in 2021. In 2023 the Jason Max Ferdinand Singers performed at the ACDA National Conference in Cincinnati which included a surprise appearance from Jacob Collier. This followed their appearance on Saturday Night Live with Coldplay and Jacob Collier. He led its debut at the BBC Proms at the Royal Albert Hall in 2024. In 2025 they gave the Presidents Concert at the TMEA Convention.

Cultural maladies presented during the Covid pandemic inspired the compilation of Teaching with Heart: Tools for Addressing Societal Challenges Through Music to provide support and encouragement for music educators. He continues to actively compose and curates The Jason Max Ferdinand Choral Series for Walton Music. His greatest passion is watching the young composers and conductors he has mentored to become conductors and composers in their own right. He loves to teach and was honored to be the 2017-18 “Teacher of the Year” at Oakwood University.

Ferdinand maintains a busy schedule as guest conductor and lecturer at schools, universities, churches, and choral festivals and conferences, in both the USA and internationally. In 2025 he directed, amongst others, the Los Angeles Master Chorale at Walt Disney Hall, the Cleveland Orchestra Youth Chorus at Severance Music Center and the Savannah Philharmonic Orchestra. He is honoured in 2026 to guest conduct Seraphic Fire, the Houston Chamber Singers, appear at 2 ACDA Regional conferences as well as lead choirs at Carnegie Hall. He has enjoyed collaborations with Jacob Collier, Donald Lawrence, Take 6 and others in recent years.

A native of Trinidad & Tobago, Ferdinand received his Bachelor of Arts in Piano Performance from Oakwood College (now Oakwood University), his Master of Arts in Choral Conducting from Morgan State University, and his Doctor of Musical Arts in Choral Conducting from the University of Maryland. He is thankful for his parents, Dr. T. Leslie, and Mary Ferdinand, who are both retired educators. He is married to Meka, a registered nurse, and they are the parents of Caleb, Ava, and baby Jamē.

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