

## Clear Lake Symphony May 8, 2026 Guest Artists



### Dr. Milton Pullen, guest conductor

In 1978-1979, Pullen was named Conductor of the University of Houston at Clear Lake City Community Orchestra, later to be named the Clear Lake Symphony. He has served on the faculty of Abilene Christian University, Pepperdine University and Oklahoma Christian University and spent 21 aggregate years in the Clear Creek ISD, teaching at Clear Creek and Clear Lake High Schools. In all Pullen spent 60+ years in music education.

In 1980-1981 Pullen served as President of the Texas Music Educators Association. In 2005, he was awarded the Howard A. White Excellence in Teaching Award, Pepperdine University. In the summer of 2010, he was presented with the Texas Choirmaster Award by the Texas Choral Directors Association. In 2023 the Bay Area Chorus created the Milton Pullen Choral Excellence Award to recognize the outstanding work of a choral music educator in the Bay Area school districts.



### Dr. Charles Johnson, guest conductor

Charles Anthony Johnson received his M.A. in composition and his Ph.D. in musicology from the University of California at Los Angeles. As a student he played violin and viola in the Stockton Symphony, University of Pacific and UCLA orchestras, and was Assistant Conductor of the UCLA Orchestra.

From 1967 until 1978, Dr. Johnson was on the faculty of Sam Houston State University in Huntsville, Texas, where he taught music history and theory and conducted the orchestra. While there, he also established and was a member of the faculty string quartet, and from 1974 to 1978 was conductor of the Bryan-College Station Chamber Orchestra.

Dr. Johnson was violist with the Houston Ballet Orchestra from 1973 to 2013 and has also performed with such groups and artists as the American Ballet Theater, Joffrey Ballet, Ballet Nationale de Cuba, Royal Ballet, Royal Canadian Ballet, Eva Marton, Jose Carreras, and others. Dr. Johnson was the conductor and Music Director of the Houston Civic Symphony for 6 years, and Conductor and Music Director of the Clear Lake Symphony for 45 years until his retirement in 2024.

## Program Notes

### “Rienzi” - Richard Wagner (1813 - 1883)

The opera, “Rienzi”, premiered in 1842, Dresden, Germany. The theatrical work is set in 14th century Rome and is based on the life of the last Italian tribune, Cola di Rienzi (1313 - 1354) who was elected to improve the dismal life of the common people. Rienzi and his adherents topple the government by defeating the repressive nobility in battle, raising Rienzi’s popularity among the people to new heights. However, in time the people Rienzi championed, turn on him.

The “**Overture to Rienzi**”, begins with a trumpet call for prayer and enlists Rienzi’s “Prayer for the People: uttered just before his tragic ending by incineration. After the prayer you will hear the trumpet call for battle, the victory thereafter and celebration.

**My Vlast** is a set of symphonic poems composed between 1872 and 1874 by Bedrich Smetana (1824 - 1884). Each poem depicts an aspect of Bohemia’s countryside, history, or legends. The best known of the poems is **The Moldau**. In this piece Smetana uses tone painting to evoke the sounds of one of bohemia’s great rivers.

**Symphony No. 40 in G minor, K. 550**, was written by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756 - 1791) in 1788. It is one of his most celebrated and widely performed works.