

DR. PAUL T. KWAMI

Musical Director and Curb-Beaman Chair of The Fisk University Jubilee Singers®

Paul T. Kwami was born in Ghana, West Africa, where his musical training started under his late father, T. W. Kwami. He is a graduate of Mawuli Secondary School, Ho, Akropong Presbyterian Teacher's Training College and the National Academy of Music, Winneba. Kwami taught music in Ghana before migrating to the United States in 1983.

He enrolled as a student at Fisk University in the same year and promptly joined the Fisk Jubilee Singers®. Kwami graduated from Fisk in 1985, and continued his music studies at Western Michigan University in Kalamazoo, Michigan graduating with a Master of Music degree in 1987. Kwami earned the Doctor of Musical Arts degree in conducting from the American Conservatory of Music in Chicago, Illinois in 2009.

In 1994, he was named Musical Director of the Fisk Jubilee Singers, becoming the first African to hold this position. He also served as the Chairman of the Fisk Music Department from 1996 to 2003. Under his directorship, the Singers have received numerous awards including the induction into the Gospel Music Hall of Fame in 2000, a Grammy Nomination and a Dove Award received for *Poor Man Lazarus* on the 2002 CD, *In Bright Mansions*. Other awards include induction into the Music City Walk of Fame, the Governor's Folklife Heritage Award and the Recording Academy Honors. Kwami is also Executive Producer of the recording entitled *Rise, Shine! Fisk Jubilee Singers Live In Concert* and Co-Executive Producer of *In Bright Mansions*. The recording of the latter led to William Morris Endeavor Entertainment, LLC becoming the booking agents for the Fisk Jubilee Singers.

As a composer and arranger, Kwami's music has been performed by the Fisk Jubilee Singers and vocal music students at Fisk University. His arrangements have also been featured in the documentary, *The Fisk Jubilee Singers: Sacrifice and Glory*. He has been interviewed for the following documentaries: *The Story of Gospel Music*, a BBC production, *Ain't That Good News: The Fisk Jubilee Singers* which was produced by Louisiana Public Broadcasting, *A Spiritual Journey with the Fisk Jubilee Singers* produced by WKRN-TV, Nashville, TN and *A Sacred Journey* produced by Sunrise Music Group, Nashville, TN. He has worked with the Tennessee Arts Commission in presenting the ensemble in Tennessee's major performing venues, including Laura Turner Hall in the Schermerhorn Symphony Center, Nashville TN. This collaboration resulted in the production of a first-class educational curriculum, which has been distributed throughout schools in the state of Tennessee. This also resulted in the Fisk Jubilee Singers being awarded the National Medal of Arts in 2008. He has also collaborated with the Weill Music Institute at Carnegie Hall to produce an educational program.

Under Kwami's directorship the Fisk Jubilee Singers have performed in many renowned venues including Apollo Theatre, the historic Plymouth Congregational Church in New York, Kennedy Center, Smithsonian Institute, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Museum, The White House and several Spanish and Italian halls. The Fisk Jubilee Singers also have performed with Faith Hill, Hank Williams Jr., Shania Twain and Natalie Cole. Other such performances include appearances of the Fisk Jubilee Singers with Neil Young in the Live 8 concert in Canada, Farm Aid 2005 and the taping of his movie "Prairie Wind" at the Ryman Auditorium. In July 2007, Kwami led the Fisk Jubilee Singers to Ghana on a sacred journey for the first time in the history of the ensemble. The ensemble performed in the National Theatre located in Accra and the historic Elmina Castle.

Kwami is the first recipient of the Curb-Beaman Chair for the directorship of the Fisk Jubilee Singers®. He serves as a board member for the following organizations: W.O Smith Community Music School, Nashville, TN; Artistic Policy Committee of Nashville Symphony Orchestra; Nashville Advisory Council, Gospel Music Association Foundation and the Schermerhorn Symphony Committee in Nashville, TN.

Professional membership: American Choral Directors' Association

Chorus America, National Association of Negro Musicians and Gospel Music Association, Leadership Music and Association of Choral Directors of America.