FRANK RETZEL, composer & conductor

has had an accomplished career as a composer, conductor, performer and educator. He began musical studies at an early age and holds several degrees from Wayne State University and the University of Chicago where he received his Ph. D. in 1978. Frank Retzel has been awarded numerous prizes, grants and commissions for his work. They include a prize from the League of Composers/International Society for Contemporary Music, fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts, Fulbright Commission and Mellon Foundation. He was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize in 1988. Frank Retzel’s compositions have been commissioned by numerous ensembles and solo artists and performed to acclaim all over the world. In 1995, he was commissioned to compose the main opening and closing for the Mass with Pope John Paul II in New York City. Additionally, Frank Retzel has composed more than 40 full-scale compositions for all mediums, many of which have been performed and recorded by major artists around the world

His compositions are highly original with a wide range of expression; a range that spans the highly innovative and dramatic, and lyrical simplicity and charm. Recent compositions include TAMARIND and NIGHT NEON: IMAGES for orchestra; song cycles DAUGHTER OF DAWN, SUMMER SONGS, REFLECTIONS and DUETS; ensemble works BLUE-LINE STROPHES, PORTRAIT IN FANTASY, MOSAIC and LYRIC SET; and LANDSCAPES for piano solo.

Dr. Retzel has taught on several university faculties. Presently, he is Professor of Music at Fordham University and St. John's University in New York, and Director of Music and Organist at the Church of Mary’s Nativity in Queens. He has published numerous articles and book reviews on a wide range of musical subjects.

Frank Retzel enjoys an accomplished career as a composer, conductor, performer and educator. He has received numerous prizes, grants and commissions for his work. They include a prize from the League of Composers/International Society for Contemporary Music (ISCM), fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts, Fulbright Commission and Mellon Foundation. He has won numerous prizes including a first prize from New Music for Young Ensembles, Inc. In 1988, one of his works was nominated for the Pulitzer Prize in Music. Retzel’s work has been commissioned by numerous ensembles and solo performers and performed to acclaim all over the world. In 1995, he was commissioned to compose the main opening and closing for the Mass with Pope John Paul II in New York City. On June 19, 2000, the music was used again at the Installation of the Archbishop Egan of New York at St. Patrick’s Cathedral, New York City.

Additionally, Frank Retzel has composed more than 40 full-scale compositions for all mediums, many of which have been performed by major artists around the world. Several works have been commercially recorded -- by the National Polish Radio Symphony Orchestra, Slovak Radio Orchestra, Tremont String Quartet, David Shuler and pianist Barry David Salwen. A sampling of other artists and ensembles that have performed Retzel’s works include sopranos Elizabeth Farnum and Pamela Myers, pianists David Holzman, Justin Kolb and Christopher Oldfather, Ralph Shapey’s Contemporary Chamber Players, the North/South Consonance, and the League/ISCM.

His compositions are highly original with a wide range of expression; a range that spans those that are highly innovative and dramatic, and works of lyrical simplicity and charm. Recent compositions include TAMARIND and NIGHT NEON: IMAGES for orchestra, song cycles DAUGHTER OF DAWN, REFLECTIONS, DUETS and SUMMER SONGS, MOSIACS, LYRIC SET, BLUE-LINE STROPHES and PORTRAIT IN FANTASY for ensemble, and LANDSCAPES for piano solo. His compositions are published by APNM (Association for the Promotion of New Music) and Seesaw Music, with BMI Affiliation.

Frank Retzel’s musical activity has included work as an educator, scholar, performer and conductor. He has taught on several faculties and presently is Professor of Music at Fordham University and St. John’s University, and is Organist, Music and Choral Director at the Church of Mary's Nativity in Flushing, New York. He has published numerous articles and book reviews on a wide range of musical subjects.

Born in Detroit, Michigan in 1948, Frank Retzel began his musical career at the age of six when he started to play piano, and soon after began composing. In a few years, he extended his studies to organ and, by the age of 11, was a professional musician, serving as assistant organist at several churches. He studied piano and organ for several years with Noel Goemanne and Lode Van Dessal, with extensive musical studies at the prestigious Palestrina Institute. At 16, he was principal organist and music director at a large parish in Michigan. Retzel, who studied privately and attended various musical institutes throughout his early years, received his bachelor’s and master’s degree at Wayne State University (where he studied composition with Ruth Shaw Wylie). On a full scholarship grant, he pursued further graduate studies at The University of Chicago, receiving a Ph.D. in music in 1978. While at Chicago, he studied composition and conducting with Ralph Shapey. Retzel's wide variety of interests have guided him in study of numerous areas of music history and theory (as well as composition and performance), with teaching at institutions such as the Catholic University of America (Washington, D.C.) Brooklyn College of CUNY and New York University.