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## A BLUESMAN & A CLASSICAL CONDUCTOR WALK INTO A BAR...

you won't believe what happened next!

It was 1966, Seiji Ozawa, the guest conductor of the Chicago Symphony for the Ravinia Summer Series, walks into the renowned blues bar, Big Johns, and asks Corky Siegel of the Siegel-Schwall Blues Band; "*Would your band jam with my band?*"

*1968: "When Corky Siegel cupped his harmonica and the pavilion microphone together and began a half saxophone half blues trumpet wail, even the least conservative Chicago Symphony Orchestra member might have shivered at the hand-writing on the crumbling walls."* **Chicago Tribune**

*2017: "Corky Siegel is an underappreciated national treasure... For more than 50 years, Siegel has been melding his masterful blues harmonica playing with accessible classical music, and at age 73, he has just released an album [Different Voices] containing some of the best work of his career."* **Downbeat Magazine**  
- Editor's Pick

*Different Voices: "The breadth and layers of this project are so stunning that I can't recall hearing anything like this."* **Elmore Magazine**

Few can claim to have forged an entirely original genre of music. In 1966, Corky Siegel did just that. But not without the inspiration of his personal mentors, Howlin' Wolf, Muddy Waters and the other great Chicago blues masters, and not without the help of world-renowned classical maestro Seiji Ozawa, who came into a famed Chicago Blues club, discovered the blues harmonica virtuoso, and suggested a collaboration.

Guiding the blues out of the smoky caverns of Big John's and Pepper's Lounge and onto the stages of the Chicago Symphony, New York Philharmonic and beyond, Corky reaches across the globe from different sides of the musical landscape, dissolving the walls between genre and people to take us to places we have never been before.

*"Chamber Blues has the possibility to tear down the walls that keep music fans apart."* **Living Blues Magazine**

Corky Siegel is both a Chicago **Blues Hall of Fame** inductee and the recipient of a Meet The Composer/Reader's Digest Commissioning Program for New American Music grant for **chamber music composition** along with the likes of John Cage, Steve Reich, Philip Glass, and Meredith Monk. Corky has two albums as guest blues soloist on the exclusively **classical label Deutsche Grammophon** as well as two albums with classical chamber group on the exclusively **blues label Alligator Records**. This May, the Lancaster Symphony Orchestra premiered his 5th "**Symphonic Blues**" where there was a most unusual happening near the beginning of his 45 minute composition. Previous "Symphonic Blues" commissions were from the San Francisco Symphony, National Symphony, two from the Grant Park Symphony in Chicago and two from Lancaster Symphony Orchestra.

I look forward to speaking with you soon.

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## CORKY SIEGEL BIO

Corky Siegel is internationally regarded as one of the world's great blues harmonica players, and is a celebrated composer, blues pianist, singer, songwriter, bandleader and author. He has been honored with a grant from Meet The Composer/Reader's Digest Commissioning Program for New American Music, the Illinois Arts Council Fellowship Award for Music Composition, the Chicago Music Awards' Lifetime Achievement Award, and induction into the Chicago Blues Hall of Fame.

Born Mark Paul Siegel in Chicago in 1943, Corky's professional music career began when he founded the now legendary Siegel-Schwall Band in Chicago in 1965 with guitarist Jim Schwall. The group was a major component of the young generation of white blues artists -- including Paul Butterfield, Charlie Musselwhite, Michael Bloomfield -- who learned the historic Chicago blues style at the feet and hands of such towering figures as Muddy Waters, Howlin' Wolf, Little Walter, Willie Dixon, Buddy Guy and Sam Lay. Corky played with all these greats at Siegel-Schwall's first steady engagement, in 1965 at Peppers, Chicago's renowned blues club. They were soon signed to Vanguard Records. Their first album, *The Siegel-Schwall Band*, was released in 1966, (at that time they also produced Joni Mitchell's demo tape with *Circle Game*). The group made San Francisco a virtual second home and were managed for a while by Family Dog Productions and Chet Helms. The band would record three more classic albums for Vanguard up through 1970, then five for *Wooden Nickel/RCA* through 1974, before going on hiatus and then eventually recording two more albums in 1987 and 2005 for *Alligator Records*.

In 1973, the Siegel-Schwall Band released *Three Pieces for Blues Band and Symphony Orchestra* on the prestigious classical music label *Deutsche Grammophon*. The title track was a groundbreaking piece composed by jazz trombonist/composer William Russo combining classical music played by an orchestra (the *San Francisco Symphony*) with blues music played by a four-piece band (Siegel-Schwall) conducted by maestro Seiji Ozawa. Ozawa had been a huge fan of Siegel-Schwall since 1966, when he was the first music director of the *Ravinia Festival* -- the summer home of the *Chicago Symphony Orchestra*. He used to see the band perform frequently at Chicago blues clubs, and suggested a blues-classical collaboration. Corky worked closely with Russo, and in 1968 they premiered "Three Pieces for Blues Band and Symphony Orchestra" with Ozawa and the *Chicago Symphony Orchestra*. Its success -- including a high-charting *Billboard* pop and classical single culled from the program -- led to Siegel-Schwall's presentation of "Three Pieces ..." for *PBS-TV Great Performances*, and in 1979, *Deutsche Grammophon's* release of *Russo: Street Music, Op.65 - A Blues Concerto*, featuring Corky on harmonica and piano, received the *French Government's Grand Prix du Disque* award as well as the *Recording of Special Merit in Stereo Review*.

After releasing two popular solo singer-songwriter albums, Corky founded *Corky Siegel's Chamber Blues*, featuring himself on harmonica, piano and vocals, the *West End String Quartet* of top-flight Chicago classical string players, and *Frank Donaldson* on world percussion instruments. Corky was inspired to begin writing *Chamber Blues* in 1983 while working on a symphonic commission for the *Grant Park Symphony* and *National Symphony Orchestras*. The novel ensemble began performing Siegel's pioneering blues/classical music compositions in 1987 and released its self-titled debut album, *Corky Siegel's Chamber Blues* on Chicago's *Alligator Records* in 1994. *Chamber Blues* had two subsequent releases, 1998's *Complementary Colors* (*Gadfly Records*) and 2005's *Corky Siegel's Traveling Chamber Blues Show – Live* (*Alligator Records*) and now the 2017 release of *Different Voices*.

Additionally, Corky has written and performed works for the *San Francisco Symphony*, *Grant Park Symphony* in Chicago and the *National Symphony Orchestra* at the *Kennedy Center*. He composed "Continuum" with renowned choreographers *Alwin Nikolais* and *Murray Louis*, and his music has also been choreographed and performed by five international ballet companies and has been used for numerous motion pictures and national TV specials, as well as the *Olympic men's figure skating competition* and the *World Championship skating competition* featuring U.S. Olympic gold medalists *Torvill and Dean*. His first commission from the *Lancaster Symphony Orchestra*, "*Symphonic Blues #6*", has

been performed many times around the world. His second commission - a 45 minute concerto for blues piano and harmonica was just premiered in May of 2017 prompting an invitation to perform the work with the Arpeggione Symphony Orchestra in Switzerland in May of 2019.

Corky continues to appear internationally as guest soloist on subscription series with symphony orchestras including the New York Philharmonic, L'Orchestre de la Suisse Romande, the Boston Symphony Orchestra and the NHK Symphony in Japan. He has performed many symphonic collaborations with Doc Severinsen and also tours frequently with L. Subramaniam, India's Eastern classical violin virtuoso. He is prominently featured in the documentary Born in Chicago which recounts the history of the '60s rock-blues explosion and also stars Bob Dylan, Jack White, Keith Richards of the Rolling Stones, Eric Burdon and Steve Miller, as well as Barry Goldberg, Harvey Mandel and Nick Gravenites. Corky Siegel has recorded and toured with Goldberg, Mandel, Gravenites and Lay as the Chicago Blues Reunion. In 2007, Corky published the music guide book Let Your Music Soar: The Emotional Connection, co-written with Peter Krammer.

*"Corky Siegel is a phenomenon". - Washington Post*

*"They Love Corky Siegel in Lincoln Center" - New York Times*

*"A remarkable virtuoso, a refined musician with imagination ... I would go as far as to call him a poet ... The music he makes is like witnessing a miracle." - La Presse - Montréal - Orchestre Symphonique De Montreal.*

## **ALBUM REVIEWS 2017: Corky Siegel's Chamber Blues DIFFERENT VOICES**

*"...one of the most unique and satisfying fusion CDs of the new millennium...the guests are splendiferous...The sky's the limit on this free-form craziness that works in spades." - The Aquarian Weekly*

*"Artistic intricacy and beauty ... This is definitely the most interesting, intricate, and daring recording to come to this reviewer's attention" - No Depression - The Journal of Roots Music*

*"To call this brilliant is to state the obvious." - Big City Blues*

*"Corky Siegel is either a musical genius, or crazier than the proverbial 'outhouse rat.' I guess I'll choose the former." - Reflections in Blue*

*"Smoking out of the ordinary ... totally killer stuff throughout" - Midwest Record*

*"Some of the most original and innovative music" - Ear to Ground*

*"Music of this caliber can keep both sky and earth intact." - World Music Center*

*"a truly unique musical journey!" - Nashville Blues Society*

*"It all works magically ... a triumphant musical journey." - Living Blues Magazine*

*"...a true pioneer who won't dream of slowing down." - TMR - Bentley's Bandstand*

*"The breadth and layers of this project are so stunning that I can't recall hearing anything like this." Elmore Magazine*

*"Delightful masterpiece ... a must." - Moors Magazine (The Netherlands)*