

MEI-ANN CHEN

Conductor

Biography 2024
Long version

Praised for her dynamic, passionate conducting style, Taiwanese American conductor Mei-Ann Chen is acclaimed for infusing orchestras with energy, enthusiasm and high-level music-making, galvanizing audiences, and communities alike. Music Director of the MacArthur Award-winning Chicago Sinfonietta since 2011, her contract has been extended through the end of the 2028-2029 season. Chen has been Chief Conductor of Austria's Recreation - Grosses Orchester Graz at Styriarte since fall 2021, following two seasons as the orchestra's first-ever Principal Guest Conductor, making her the first female Asian conductor to hold this position with an Austrian orchestra. She has served as the first-ever Artistic Partner of Houston's ROCO since 2019, and since 2022, as an Artistic Partner with Northwest Sinfonietta (WA). Highly regarded as a compelling communicator and an innovative leader both on and off the podium, and a sought-after guest conductor, she has appeared with distinguished orchestras throughout the Americas, Europe, Taiwan, The United Kingdom, and Scandinavia, and continues to expand her relationships with orchestras worldwide (over 150 orchestras to date).

Following her debut with Chicago Symphony Orchestra at the 2023 Ravinia Festival, Chen made debuts at Indiana University, Springfield Symphony Orchestra (MA), Colorado Springs Philharmonic, and Denmark's Odense Symphony, as well as a return to the Tucson Symphony, and performances with Chicago Sinfonietta, ROCO, and Austria's Recreation - Grosses Orchester Graz. Chen's second half of the 2023-24 season kicks off on January 1 with her debut with Taiwan's One Song Orchestra 's televised New Year Concert. Of note is Chicago Sinfonietta's March tour to Atlanta, the first under Chen. Winter/spring guesting includes Northwest Sinfonietta her seventh return to San Francisco Symphony and debuts with the Orlando Philharmonic Orchestra, The Orchestre National de France (Paris debut), Norway's Stavanger Symphony, and Sweden's Uppsala Chamber Orchestra and San Francisco Conservatory. She will serve as a Jury Member for the 2024 MALKO Competition hosted by the Danish National Symphony (and also served on the 2021 MALKO Competition jury). Summer 2024 performances include ROCO's EarShot showcase with the American Composers Orchestra during the League Of American Orchestra's National Conference in Houston, Texas, and her debut at The University of Maryland's National Orchestral Institute (where she will also serve as a faculty member for the Conducting Academy alongside Music Director Marin Alsop).

Recent performances include a return to Vienna's Tonkünstler Orchestra at the Grafenegg Festival, conducting Beethoven's *Eroica* in a theatrical project in Graz at the STYRIARTE Summer Festival (received both TV & Radio broadcast on Austrian's well-known ORF "Klangwolke Werk" program), serving as the Alumni Speaker for the 152nd Commencement ceremony at her alma mater, New England Conservatory, and her Spoleto Festival USA debut. Other highlights include an impressive Minnesota Orchestra debut, stepping in last minute for Maestra Marin Alsop to conduct the popular New Year's Eve concerts, international debuts with Germany's Staatsorchester Darmstadt, Orchestra National du Capitole de Toulouse (France debut), Basque National Orchestra (Spain debut), Liechtenstein Symphony Orchestra, and Helsinki Philharmonic in Finland. In North America, she debuted with American Composers orchestra at Carnegie Hall, Rochester and Buffalo philharmonics, and returned to Cincinnati and Pacific Symphonies, Santa Fe Pro Musica, Canada's Calgary Philharmonic, Norwegian Radio and Sweden's Norrlandsoperan.

Other international guest credits include symphony orchestras of England's BBC in London, Brazil's São Paulo (OESP), Denmark's National, Aalborg, Aarhus, Odense and Copenhagen Philharmonic, Finland's Tampere Philharmonic, Germany's Badische Staatskapelle Karlsruhe, Musikalische Akademie des Nationaltheater-Orchesters Mannheim, and NDR Radiophilharmonie Hanover, Mexico's National, Norway's Oslo Philharmonic and Trondheim, Netherlands Philharmonic at the Concertgebouw and Residentie in The Hague, Sweden's Malmö, Gothenburg, Norrköping, Gävle, and Helsingborg, Switzerland's Basel and Lucerne, Taiwan Philharmonic, National Taiwan, and Kaohsiung City at WeiWuYing (the world's largest performing arts center since 2018 in Ms. Chen's hometown), Scotland's BBC Scottish, and Turkey's Bilkent in Ankara. Other North American guesting credits include

appearances with major symphonies of Atlanta, Baltimore, Detroit, Fort Worth, Houston, Indianapolis, National, Oregon, San Diego, Seattle, Toronto, and Vancouver, to name a few.

As Music Director of Chicago Sinfonietta, Ms. Chen has made two recordings for Cedille Records: "Delights and Dances" (June 2013) and "*Project W - Works by Diverse Women Composers*" (released March 2019 by GRAMMY® nominated producer, Jim Ginsburg), featuring world premiere recordings for works by Florence Price, Clarice Assad, Jessie Montgomery, and Reena Esmail. In 2018, Innova Records released ROCO's debut album "*ROCO: Visions Take Flight*" (produced by GRAMMY® Award producer, Blanton Alspaugh) featuring five commissioned contemporary works by Karim Al-Zand, Reena Esmail, Derek Bermel, Anthony DiLorenzo, and Marcus Karl Maroney. Invited by Marin Alsop, Ms. Chen recorded Miachel Daugherty's *Time Machine* for Three Conductors with UK's Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra on Naxos Records label in 2011.

A passionate advocate for music education, Ms. Chen dedicates significant time in mentoring young conductors through Chicago Sinfonietta Freeman Conducting Fellowship program since 2014 (helping to launch professional careers for more than a dozen young conductors), has been a mentor for the Taki Alsop Fellowship since 2022, and conducts ensembles at important educational institutions, such as Carnegie's esteemed NYO2 for young musicians (age 14-17), New England Conservatory (her alma mater), The Juilliard School, Manhattan School of Music, Peabody Institute of the Johns Hopkins University, University of Southern California. She also serves at various training programs, including the New World Symphony in Miami, Texas Music Festival, Boston University Tanglewood Institute, Ung Filharmoni in Norway, Austria's STYRIARTE Festival Youth Orchestra and SoundFlix Youth Orchestra project in Graz, and the newly created National Youth Symphony Orchestra hosted by the Taiwan Philharmonic in 2024 after leading Youth Orchestra Camp as Artistic Director of National Taiwan Symphony Orchestra Summer Festival (2016-2021). She also served as Music Director of the renowned Portland Youth Philharmonic in Oregon (2002-2007).

Past honors include being named one of 2015 Top 30 Influencers by Musical America, the 2012 Helen M. Thompson Award from the League of American Orchestras, the 2007 Taki Concordia Fellowship founded by Marin Alsop, and 2005 First Prize Winner of the Malko Competition (she remains as the only woman in the competition history since 1965 to have won First Prize). Ms. Chen is Conductor Laureate of the Memphis Symphony after serving as Music Director (2010-2016). Born in Taiwan, Ms. Chen came to the United States to study violin in 1989 at Walnut Hill High School for the Arts, received a violin performance undergraduate degree from New England Conservatory before becoming the first student in New England Conservatory's history to be awarded double master's degrees simultaneously in both violin and conducting, and earned a Doctor of Musical Arts degree in conducting from University of Michigan.

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