

MEI-ANN CHEN

Conductor

2026-27 Long Biography

Considered one of the most versatile, compelling, and dynamic international conductors today, Taiwanese American conductor Mei-Ann Chen is a multi-hyphenate in the classical music industry: conductor, mentor, and educator. She is Music Director of the MacArthur Award-winning Chicago Sinfonietta since 2011, Chief Conductor of Austria's Recreation - Grosses Orchester Graz at Styriarte since 2021 (making her the first female Asian conductor to serve as the ensemble's chief conductor), the first-ever Artistic Partner of Houston's ROCO since 2019, and an Artistic Partner with Northwest Sinfonietta (WA) since 2022. A sought-after mentor to young conductors worldwide, she is praised for her tremendous impact through Chicago Sinfonietta's Freeman Conducting Fellowship, Taki Alsop Fellowship, and her passionate commitment with educational institutions around the United States and abroad. Announced in April 2026, Chen officially begins her work as Director of Orchestral Activities and Chair of Conducting of the internationally renowned Manhattan School of Music in July 2026. An acclaimed communicator praised for her energy and enthusiasm, Ms. Chen is a sought-after guest conductor and has appeared with distinguished orchestras throughout the Americas, Europe, The United Kingdom, Scandinavia, Africa and Asia (over 166 to date), and continues to expand her relationships with orchestras worldwide.

In addition to programs with STYRIARTE, ROCO, and Northwest Sinfonietta, highlights of Ms. Chen's 2026 summer and 2026-27 season engagements include a return to National Taiwan Symphony Orchestra during its 80th anniversary season and also quick returns to Sinfonieorchester Liechtenstein and St. Paul Chamber Orchestra, performances of Mahler's Symphony No. 2 "*Resurrection*" with Austria's STYRIARTE Festival Youth Orchestra on Austrian televised ORF "Klangwolke Werk" series; a trio of performances with NYO2, including a return to Carnegie Hall, followed by a five-day residency and performances in the Dominican Republic's Santo Domingo and Santiago; serving on the Jury of the renowned Princess Astrid International Music Competition hosted by the Trondheim Symfoniorkester & Opera and also the prestigious Solti International Conducting Competition 2026 in Hungary; opening Manhattan School of Music's orchestral performances in September as the new Director of Orchestral Activities, and returning to National Taiwan Normal University (the oldest Music Department in Taiwan celebrating 80 years of history) as an Honorable Visiting Professor.

Ms. Chen's 2025-2026 season included impressive debuts with Seoul Philharmonic Orchestra, Austria's ORF Radio-Symphonieorchester Wien, France's Orchestre National des Pays de la Loire, Madrid Orchestra and Choir, Brazil's Orquestra Sinfônica Municipal, St. Paul Chamber Orchestra, and highly anticipated returns to Chicago Symphony Orchestra, San Francisco Symphony, Sinfonieorchester Liechtenstein, Sweden's Uppsala Chamber Orchestra, the Netherlands' Residentie Orkest Den Haag, and Taiwan's National Taiwan Symphony Orchestra for multiple programs during its 80th Anniversary Season.

Recent engagements include significant debuts with the Festival Vaduz Classic in Liechtenstein, sold-out programs with South Africa's Johannesburg Philharmonic Orchestra, and the Brevard Music Center, a five-city tour of the Netherlands in her debut with Philharmonie Zuidnederland, debuts with Denmark's Odense Symphony, The Orchestre National de France (Paris debut), Norway's Stavanger Symphony, and Taiwan's One Song Orchestras (televised New Year's concert), and returns to San Francisco Symphony and the National Symphony Orchestra at the Kennedy Center.

Past significant international engagements include a return to Vienna's Tonkünstler Orchestra at the Grafenegg Festival and debuts with Germany's Staatsorchester Darmstadt and Orchestra National du

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Capitole de Toulouse (France debut), Spain's Basque National Orchestra (Spain debut), Finland's Helsinki Philharmonic (Finland debut), and multiple returns to the Netherlands Philharmonic at the Concertgebouw, Norwegian Radio, and Sweden's Norrlandsoperan, and serving as a Jury Member for both the 2021 & 2024 MALKO Competitions hosted by the Danish National Symphony. In the US, Ms. Chen debuted with American Composers orchestra at Carnegie Hall, stepped in last minute for debut with Minnesota Orchestra, and made returns to Cincinnati and the San Francisco Symphony.

Extensive international guest credits include the 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, Sweden's Gävle, Helsingborg, Gothenburg, Malmö and Norrköping, and Switzerland's Basel and Lucerne, Taiwan Philharmonic 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 the major symphonies of Atlanta, Baltimore, Detroit, Houston, Indianapolis, Oregon, San Diego, Seattle, Toronto, and Vancouver, to name a few.

As Music Director of Chicago Sinfonietta, Ms. Chen has made three recordings for Cedille Records: "*Black Being*" with flutists/composers Flutronic (released February 2026 by GRAMMY® Award producer Elaine Martone), "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, Jennifer Higdon, Clarice Assad, Jessie Montgomery, and Reena Esmail, and "Delights and Dances" (June 2013). 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 Michael 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, since 2014, Chen has dedicated significant time in mentoring young conductors through Chicago Sinfonietta's Freeman Conducting Fellowship program (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 14-16), New England Conservatory (her alma mater), The Juilliard School, Indiana University, Peabody Institute of the Johns Hopkins University, University of Southern California, and The Royal Conservatory in Toronto, Canada. She also participated at various training programs, including the New World Symphony in Miami, Texas Music Festival, Boston University Tanglewood Institute, Ung Filharmoni in Norway, and served as Artistic Director of National Taiwan Symphony Orchestra Summer Festival for young musicians (2016-2021). Ms. Chen first Music Directorship was with the extraordinary Portland Youth Philharmonic in Oregon (2002-2007), America's oldest youth orchestra.

In March 2025, Mei-Ann Chen received the Marylou Speaker Churchill Award from her alma mater, New England Conservatory of Music, named for her violin teacher. 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), and recently served as Artistic Advisor to Massachusetts' Springfield Symphony Orchestra (2024-2026). 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

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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.

No part of this bio may be rewritten. For a word-length version that meets specific needs, please contact Laura Grant below. All previous versions are now obsolete; please discard and use only this version. Summer 2026.

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