

# **M** Manhattan School of Music

## **MARKETING, COMMUNICATIONS, AND ALUMNI AFFAIRS**

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*For Immediate Release*

### **Manhattan School of Music Appoints Acclaimed Conductor Mei-Ann Chen as incoming Director of Orchestral Activities and Chair of Conducting**

The Taiwanese American conductor – renowned as a versatile, compelling, and dynamic presence on the podium – assumes this important role beginning in the 2026–27 academic year.



Mei-Ann Chen

NEW YORK, April 2, 2026 – Renowned international music conservatory [Manhattan School of Music](#) (MSM) today announced that acclaimed conductor and educator **Mei-Ann Chen** will become **Director of Orchestral Activities and Chair of the Conducting Program**. In her new role, which takes effect on July 1, 2026, Ms. Chen will provide strategic and artistic leadership for the MSM orchestra program, teach and mentor conducting students, and regularly conduct the MSM Symphony

Orchestra as part of the School's annual performance season. Ms. Chen succeeds George Manahan, whose intention to retire from the institution after an association of more than 55 years, was announced in December.

“We are delighted to announce this appointment and are looking forward to welcoming Mei-Ann on campus in a few short months,” says **MSM Executive Vice President and Provost Joyce Griggs**. “Mei-Ann has led the MSM Symphony Orchestra on multiple occasions – as recently as last October – so she has already proven herself a strong fit with the School and its tradition of providing both a forum for artistic excellence and a nurturing, supportive learning environment. Her leadership will contribute to shaping a cohesive, pedagogically grounded vision for MSM's orchestral experiences.”

“Mei-Ann is a consummate and passionate artist and educator,” says MSM **President James Gandre**. “One need look no further than her lengthy and impressive list of past engagements with the world's top orchestras for a sense of just how uniquely qualified she is for assuming this leadership role on MSM's esteemed faculty.”

Among those orchestras are: San Francisco Symphony, Chicago Symphony Orchestra, National Symphony Orchestra, Minnesota Orchestra, and St. Paul Chamber Orchestra, as well as the symphony orchestras of Atlanta, Baltimore Detroit, Houston, and Seattle in the US; and abroad the BBC Symphony, Copenhagen Philharmonic, Danish National Symphony Orchestra, Norwegian Radio Orchestra, Oslo Philharmonic, Orchestre National de France, Orchestre National du Capitole de Toulouse, Vienna's Tonkünstler and ORF Radio-Symphonieorchester Wien, NDR Radiophilharmonie, Staatsorchester Darmstadt, Symphonieorchester Liechtenstein, Sweden's Gothenburg and Malmo symphonies, the Netherland's Residentie Orkest Den Haag and Netherlands' Philharmonic at the Concertgebouw, Helsinki Philharmonic, Spain's Basque National Orchestra and Madrid Orchestra, Brazil's Orquestra Sinfônica Municipal, Seoul Philharmonic Orchestra, and the National Taiwan Symphony Orchestra, to name but a few.

Ms. Chen's impressive international schedule includes her ongoing tenure, since 2011, as Music Director of the MacArthur Award-winning Chicago Sinfonietta. Chief Conductor of Austria's Recreation – Grosses Orchester Graz at Styriarte since fall 2021, she is also Artistic Advisor of Springfield Symphony Orchestra (MA), Artistic Partner of Houston's ROCO, and of Northwest Sinfonietta (WA). She has made recordings for Cedille Records, Innova Records, and Naxos, and with Chicago Sinfonietta, she released *Black Being* with composers/flutists Flutronix for Cedille earlier this season.

A passionate advocate for music education, Ms. Chen dedicates significant time in mentoring young conductors through various programs, including the Chicago Sinfonietta Freeman Conducting Fellowship program and the Taki Alsop Fellowship, and conducts ensembles at important educational institutions, both nationally and abroad. 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, and her native Taiwan (over 160 to date), and continues to expand her relationships with orchestras worldwide. [*For more information, please see “About Mei-Ann Chen” below.*]

“We are thrilled to welcome Mei-Ann to MSM in this important role,” says MSM **Dean of Instrumental Studies and Orchestral Performance JT Kane**. “I’ve had the privilege of working with Mei-Ann over many years, and she is an extraordinary artist whose musicianship, leadership, and commitment to mentorship have inspired musicians and audiences around the world. She has a well-earned reputation for dynamic artistry and imaginative programming, and she brings to MSM a wealth of experience working with both professional orchestras and young artists alike. At MSM, we are dedicated to preparing the next generation of musicians for meaningful and impactful careers, and Mei-Ann’s passion for education and artistic excellence aligns perfectly with that mission. Our students will benefit tremendously from her insight, energy, and the experience she brings both to the podium and the classroom.”

"It is such an honor to join Manhattan School of Music, a globally renowned conservatory, and its esteemed faculty," says **Mei-Ann Chen**. "The MSM Community creates the ideal balance between world-class prestige and kindest incubator. It is a dream combination and a rarity among top music schools. Since the beginning of my professional career, I have been an advocate for tomorrow’s artists and the importance of quality education because I would not be where I am today if it weren’t for the phenomenal mentors who saw the possibilities I couldn’t see for myself. I am thrilled to have the chance to pay it forward by adding to MSM’s tremendous impact in our evolving industry and contributing to the artistic growth of the next generation as they refine their unique creative voices!"

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For further information, please contact **Katharine Burns, Marketing and Public Relations Manager**, at [jbreithaupt@msmnyc.edu](mailto:jbreithaupt@msmnyc.edu) or (917) 493-4132.

**ABOUT MEI-ANN CHEN**

Taiwanese American conductor Mei-Ann Chen is renowned as one of the most versatile, compelling, and dynamic international conductors today. Music Director of the MacArthur Award-winning Chicago Sinfonietta since 2011, her contract has been unanimously extended through the end of the 2028-2029 season. Chief Conductor of Austria's Recreation – Grosses Orchester Graz at Styriarte (the first female Asian conductor to hold this position with an Austrian orchestra), she is also the Artistic Advisor of Springfield Symphony Orchestra (MA), the first-ever Artistic Partner of Houston's ROCO, and Artistic Partner with Northwest Sinfonietta (WA). 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, and her native Taiwan (over 160 to date), and continues to expand her relationships with orchestras worldwide.

Following summer engagements that included debuts with the Festival Vaduz Classic in Liechtenstein, sold-out programs with South Africa's Johannesburg Philharmonic Orchestra, and the Brevard Music Center, Ms. Chen's 2025-2026 season includes debuts with Seoul Philharmonic Orchestra (South Korea debut), Austria's ORF Radio-Symphonieorchester Wien, France's Orchestre National des Pays de la Loire, Madrid Orchestra and Choir (Madrid, Spain debut), Brazil's Orquestra Sinfônica Municipal, St. Paul Chamber Orchestra, and Macon-Mercer Symphony Orchestra. She 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 a five-city tour of the Netherlands in her debut with Philharmonie Zuidnederland, returns to San Francisco Symphony and the National Symphony Orchestra at the Kennedy Center, and debuts with Denmark's Odense Symphony, The Orchestre National de France (Paris debut), Norway's Stavanger Symphony, Taiwan's One Song Orchestras (televised New Year's concert), and the Chicago Symphony Orchestra at Ravinia Festival.

In the recording arena Chen has made three recordings with Chicago Sinfonietta for Cedille Records: *Delights and Dances*, *Project W - Works by Diverse Women Composers*, and *Black Being* with Flutronix (released earlier this season). For Innova Records she released ROCO's debut album *ROCO: Visions Take Flight*. Ms. Chen recorded Michael Daugherty's *Time Machine for Three Conductors* with UK's Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra on Naxos Records.

A passionate advocate for music education, Maestra Chen is a Visiting Scholar at the National Taiwan Normal University. 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). She has been a mentor for the Taki Alsop Fellowship since 2022. Having served as a jury member for the Malko Competition, Maestra Chen will serve as a jury member for the Princess Astrid International Music Competition hosted by the Trondheim Symfoniorkester & Opera in August 2026 and for the Solti International Conducting Competition for young conductors held in Budapest this coming fall 2026.

Former posts include Artistic Director of the National Taiwan Symphony Orchestra Summer Festival (2016-2022) and Music Director Portland Youth Philharmonic (Oregon, 2002-2007). Ms. Chen is Conductor Laureate of the Memphis Symphony after serving as Music Director (2010-2016). Born in Taiwan, Ms. Chen holds a violin performance undergraduate degree from New England Conservatory and is the first student in the Conservatory's history to be awarded double master's degrees simultaneously in violin and conducting. She holds a Doctor of Musical Arts degree in conducting from University of Michigan.

## **ABOUT MANHATTAN SCHOOL OF MUSIC**

Founded as a community music school by Janet Daniels Schenck in 1918, today MSM is recognized for its more than 1,000 superbly talented undergraduate and graduate students who come from more than 50 countries and nearly all 50 states; its innovative curricula and world-renowned artist-teacher faculty that includes musicians from the New York Philharmonic, the Met Orchestra, and the top ranks of the jazz and Broadway communities; and a distinguished community of accomplished, award-winning alumni working at the highest levels of the musical, educational, cultural, and professional worlds.

The School is dedicated to the personal, artistic, and intellectual development of aspiring musicians, from its Precollege students through those pursuing doctoral studies. Offering classical, jazz, and musical theatre training, MSM grants a range of undergraduate and graduate degrees. True to MSM's origins as a music school for children, the Precollege Division is a professionally oriented Saturday music program dedicated to the musical and personal growth of talented young musicians ages 8 to 18. The School also serves some 2,000 New York City schoolchildren through its Arts-in-Education Program, and another 2,000 students through its critically acclaimed Distance Learning Program.

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## **MSM LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

Manhattan School of Music acknowledges that we gather on the traditional land of the Lenape and Wappinger past and present, and honor with gratitude the land itself and the people who have stewarded it throughout the generations. This calls us to commit to continuing to learn how to be better stewards of the land we inhabit as well.