

Biography

Sarah Ioannides

Conductor

<https://www.sarahioannidesmusic.com/>



As a music director and guest conductor who is committed to collaboration, innovation and education, Sarah Ioannides invigorates programming and inspires audiences. Praised by the New York Times for her “unquestionable strength and authority”, she is Music Director of Washington State’s Symphony Tacoma and Director of Orchestral Activities at Boston University College of Fine Arts. Her conducting career has taken her to six continents. Sarah Ioannides was the first woman to hold a full-time position as a conductor with the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra.

Born in Australia of Cypriot and Scottish descent, Sarah Ioannides trained in the UK (Oxford University, Guildhall School) and USA (Juilliard School and Curtis Institute). Before assuming her role at Symphony Tacoma in 2014, she established a reputation as the dynamic music director of both the El Paso Symphony Orchestra in Texas and the Spartanburg Philharmonic in South Carolina.

Her extensive repertoire, which spans four centuries, has been enriched through her work with living composers, not least as the conductor of over 60 world, North American and European premieres. She has collaborated with such figures as Steve Reich, Aaron J Kernis, Zosha Di Castri, Patrice Rushen and in the earlier years of her career was mentored by Tan Dun, notably taking charge of the Australian and Greek premieres of his *Water Passion after St. Matthew* and acting as his assistant conductor with the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra and BBC Symphony Orchestra. One of her earliest operatic projects was the European premiere of Stephen Paulus’s *The Woodlanders*.

In addition to her Symphony Tacoma season, her North American appearances include orchestras such as Buffalo Philharmonic, Calgary Philharmonic, the Florida Orchestra, Hamilton Philharmonic Orchestra, Hawai’I Symphony, Louisville Orchestra, North Carolina Symphony, Orchestre Symphonique de Québec, Phoenix Symphony, Rochester Philharmonic, Sarasota Orchestra, Seattle Symphony and the Lake Chelan Bach Fest. The programming ranges wide – from Mozart to re-emerging composers like Louise Farrenc, Florence Price, Samuel Coleridge-Taylor and Joseph Boulogne, and contemporary works by Aaron J Kernis, Valerie Coleman, Bernard Roumain, Nick DiBerardino and Jesse Montgomery.

Beyond North America, Sarah Ioannides' past and current engagements include the Bilbao Symphony, Brussels Philharmonic, Daejeon Philharmonic, Gothenburg Symphony, Konzerthaus-orchester Berlin, Malmö Symphony, Nordic Chamber Orchestra, Tonkünstler-Orchester, Orchestre National de Lyon, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra and Simón Bolívar Symphony.

Making creative use of technology to expand musical horizons, she has led numerous multimedia projects in both the concert hall and the digital environment. These include videos to illustrate Holst's *Planets*, Steve Reich's *Desert Music* and Milhaud's *Création du Monde* and, during the COVID-19 pandemic, Symphony Tacoma's Encore Series and the 'digital collage' *Eternal Light*: inspired by Mozart's *Requiem*, it comprises clips of music, dance, poetry and visual art created by students in the Pacific Northwest.

One of Sarah Ioannides' significant achievements in the field of education is Cascade Conducting & Composing; she is Founding Artistic Director of this annual Tacoma-based programme, established in 2017, which offers scholarships to diverse musicians from the US and the rest of the world. Furthermore she was recently appointed Director of Orchestral Activities at Boston University beginning in August 2024. In 2025 she conducted the Massachusetts All-State Festival Orchestra and in 2023 she was the Resident Conductor of the National Youth Orchestra - USA. Among the conservatory orchestras she conducts are those of Yale University, Philadelphia's Curtis Institute of Music and Bloomington's Jacobs School of Music. A sought-after guest speaker, Sarah Ioannides sits on numerous advisory boards and has served as both panelist of the NEA (National Endowment for the Arts) for the US Government and delegate at the World Culture Summit in Abu-Dhabi. In 2022 she spoke at the Dallas Symphony Orchestra's Women in Classical Music Symposium and conference. In June 2023 she was a panelist at 'Bridges to the Future', and at the conference of the League of American Orchestras.

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