

**Decade of Building to Continue at Chicago Sinfonietta:
Board Announces Unanimous Three-Year Extension
to Music Director Mei-Ann Chen's Contract**



Chicago, IL - The Board of the Chicago Sinfonietta has unanimously elected to extend Music Director **Mei-Ann Chen's** contract through the 2023-24 season, another three years. Since 2011, Mei-Ann Chen has served the Chicago area as Music Director of the award-winning 33-year old orchestra. During her tenure, she has redefined orchestra programming and strongly positioned the organization at the forefront of bold, innovative initiatives.

Only the second Music Director in the history of the nation's most diverse orchestra, following in the footsteps of its founder, the late Maestro Paul Freeman, under Chen's tenure the Sinfonietta has received an ASCAP Award for Adventurous Programming, was named "The city's hippest orchestra" by the *Chicago Tribune*, expanded the successful and groundbreaking Project Inclusion Fellowship Program, and received the prestigious MacArthur Award for Creative and Effective Institutions and the Spirit of Innovation Award by the Chicago Innovation Awards.

During her time, the orchestra has also released two acclaimed recordings on the Cedille Records label: "Project W - Works by Diverse Women Composers" (March 2019), featuring the world premiere recordings of newly commissioned American works by Jennifer Higdon, Clarice Assad, Reena Esmail, Jessie Montgomery, and William Grant Still's orchestral arrangement of Florence Price's *Dances in the Canebrakes*; and "Delights and Dances" (June 2013) featuring the Harlem Quartet. During Maestra Chen's tenure, such eclectic guest artists as the Marcus Roberts Trio, Chicago-based performance art

marching band Mucca Pazza, NIU Steelband directed by Liam Teague, astronomer/visual artist José Francisco Salgado, tap master Cartier Williams, Cerqua Rivera Dance Theatre, the Mandala Arts Dance Ensemble, Maxwell Street Klezmer Band, renowned painters the Zhou Brothers, NewMoon Chicago, Cuerdas Clasicas, hip-hop dancers FootworKINGz & Kuuba Lynx, to name a few, have graced the Sinfonietta concert stage in enthusiastically received electric collaborations.

Chicago Sinfonietta Board of Directors Chair **Scott Hoesman** stated, "Maestra Chen has been innovating and bringing dynamic new ways to engage audiences since her Sinfonietta arrival in 2011. While today's Covid-19 related challenges are numerous, Mei-Ann's continued leadership as our Music Director will help ensure we harness the power of our richly diverse organization to carve a fresh and meaningful path forward. Our mission of championing diversity, equity and inclusion by creating bold symphonic experiences is needed by Chicago and world now more than ever - music can and does heal - that is why the board of directors is beyond thrilled to continue the partnership with the incomparable Chen."

"I'm thrilled Chicago Sinfonietta will continue to build on the momentum of Maestra Mei-Ann Chen's bold artistic leadership," said newly elected Chief Executive Officer **Blake-Anthony Johnson**. "Her tenure highlights her creative and thoughtful spirit, which continually pushes the organization to be innovative and relevant to the communities in which we serve. She is a true partner in both music and mission, and I'm pleased to begin Chicago Sinfonietta's next exciting chapter together."

"I am deeply honored to have the support of the Board, our staff, and musicians and to continue our musical journey together," stated Ms. Chen. "The Chicago Sinfonietta musicians are an incredibly talented and passionate group, and each year that we have worked together we have strengthened our musical identity. It is a pleasure to stand on the podium and lead the nation's most diverse ensemble, and to continue to not only champion for diversity, equity, and inclusion, but to help mentor the musicians of tomorrow through Project Inclusion Fellowships, and to share exciting, innovative and powerful performances with our audiences while continuing to expand our reach in the community."

"Today, as we face unprecedented challenges not only in our society but throughout the world from COVID-19, I treasure this special musical family and the community to which we belong even more. I am confident that together, we will emerge from this period more creative, closer and stronger than ever. "

About Mei-Ann Chen

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, Ms. Chen is Austria's Recreation Grosses Orchester Graz first-ever



Principal Guest Conductor, and the first-ever Artistic Partner of Houston's River Oaks

Chamber Orchestra (ROCO). She also has served as Artistic Director & Conductor for the National Taiwan Symphony Orchestra Summer Festival since 2016. Highly regarded as a compelling communicator and an innovative leader both on and off the podium, and a sought-after guest conductor, she continues to expand her relationships with orchestras worldwide.

Ms. Chen's recent and upcoming highlights include debuts with the New York Philharmonic, Austria's Tonkünstler in Vienna's Musikverein, the season opening concerts of the Netherlands Philharmonic Orchestra at Amsterdam's Concertgebouw and Residentie Orkest at The Hague, Germany's NDR Radiophilharmonie and Darmstadt Staatsorchester, Norway's Oslo Philharmonic, Spain's Basque National Orchestra, Switzerland's Luzerner Sinfonieorchester, the BBC Symphony Orchestra in London, Kaohsiung Symphony Orchestra at Taiwan's Weiwaying (the world's largest performing arts center since 2018), and serving on the jury for the prestigious Malko Competition in 2021. Return engagements include the symphony orchestras of Detroit, Pacific, San Francisco, and Tucson in the U.S., as well as with Sweden's Helsingborg, Malmö and Norrland's Opera, and Finland's Tampere Filharmonia.

North American guesting credits include appearances with the Symphony Orchestras of Atlanta, Baltimore, Cincinnati, Chicago, Houston, Indianapolis, National, Nashville, Oregon, San Diego, San Francisco, Seattle, Toronto, and Vancouver, to name a few. Among her overseas guesting credits are the symphonies of BBC Scottish, Brazil's São Paulo (OESP), Denmark's National, Aalborg, Aarhus, Odense and Copenhagen Philharmonic, Germany's Badische Staatskapelle Karlsruhe, Mexico's National, Norway's Radio and Trondheim, Sweden's Gothenburg and Norrköping, Switzerland's Basel, Turkey's Bilkent, and Taiwan's Philharmonic. Ms. Chen's U.S. summer music festival credits include Aspen, Grant Park, Grand Teton, Ravinia, Texas, and Wintergreen.

Maestra Chen records for Cedille and Innova record labels.

Her honors and awards include being named one of Musical America's 2015 Top 30 Influencers, the 2012 Helen M. Thompson Award from the League of American Orchestras, and 2005 First Prize Winner of the prestigious Malko Competition. Ms. Chen is also Conductor Laureate of the Memphis Symphony Orchestra.

Born in Taiwan, Mei-Ann Chen came to the United States to study violin in 1989 and became the first student in New England Conservatory's history to receive master's degrees simultaneously in both violin and conducting. She later studied with Kenneth Kiesler at the University of Michigan, where she earned a Doctor of Musical Arts degree in conducting. Ms. Chen participated in the National Conductor Preview, National Conducting Institute, Aspen American Academy of Conducting, and Pierre Monteux School.

Press Contact: Laura Grant, Grant Communications
917.359.7319 | Laura@grant-communications.com