



chicago **sinfonietta**
MUSIC EXCELLENCE DIVERSITY

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**CHICAGO SINFONIETTA ANNOUNCES NEW MUSIC DIRECTOR:
MEI-ANN CHEN
FOLLOWING TENURE AT BALTIMORE SYMPHONY, ALSO NAMED
MUSIC DIRECTOR OF MEMPHIS SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA**

**Chicago Sinfonietta Founder, Maestro Paul Freeman, to retire at conclusion of
2010-2011 Season; Chen to take helm in 2011-2012**

CHICAGO – August 4, 2010 – Following a two-year international search, the **Chicago Sinfonietta**, the nation's most diverse symphony orchestra, is proud to announce that **Mei-Ann Chen** has been named its new Music Director. Chen will be the first Music Director ever to succeed Maestro **Paul Freeman**, who founded the Chicago Sinfonietta in 1987 and who will retire at the end of the 2010-2011 season. Freeman will remain Music Director Emeritus following his retirement. Chen will officially assume the Music Director position in the Fall of 2011 to launch the Sinfonietta's 25th anniversary season, but will return as a Guest Conductor in May 2011 and will program the 2011-2012 season. Chen made her Sinfonietta podium debut in October 2009 for the Sinfonietta's critically-acclaimed season opener concert titled *West Meets East*.

"I fully support the selection of Mei-Ann Chen to succeed me as the Music Director of the Chicago Sinfonietta," said Founder **Paul Freeman**. "She is an amazing talent and a real presence on the podium. I couldn't ask for a better person to continue our work."

"Maestra Chen's selection is evidence of both the Sinfonietta's 24-year commitment to global diversity and inclusion and our aspiration to see the orchestra attain the highest levels of musical excellence," said Sinfonietta Executive Director **Jim Hirsch**. "This is our commitment to continuing Paul Freeman's vision. Mei-Ann's personal commitment to the Sinfonietta's mission, combined with her stunning conducting talents, convinced all of us that she is the right person for the job."

"I am thrilled to be given the opportunity to embrace diversity through musical excellence and to further Maestro Freeman's incredible work with the Chicago Sinfonietta," said **Maestra Chen**. "I very much look forward to working with Jim Hirsch and the musicians of the Chicago Sinfonietta."

The first woman to win the Malko International Conductors Competition (2005), Mei-Ann Chen, 37, is considered one of America's most exciting and promising young conductors. Concluding a highly successful tenure as Assistant Conductor of the Baltimore Symphony this summer, she has also accepted a three-year appointment as the Music Director of the Memphis Symphony Orchestra beginning in the 2010-2011 season. Chen's guest conducting appearances include all of the principal Danish orchestras, Norwegian Radio Orchestra, Taiwan National Symphony, Rochester Philharmonic, and the symphonies of Alabama, Atlanta, Bournemouth, Fort Worth, National, Oregon, Seattle, Toledo, Toronto, Trondheim, Grand Teton Music Festival, and Chautauqua Institution. Awarded the 2007 Taki Concordia Fellowship, she appeared jointly with Marin Alsop and Stefan Sanderling in highly acclaimed subscription concerts with the Baltimore Symphony, Colorado Symphony and Florida Orchestra.

(more)

Among Chen's upcoming debuts include symphonies of the BBC Scottish, Chicago, Columbus, Edmonton Symphony, Netherlands Philharmonic in Concertgebouw, Pacific, Phoenix, and Graz.

A native of Taiwan, Chen has lived in the United States since 1989. She holds master's degrees in both conducting and violin from the New England Conservatory, and a D.M.A. in conducting from the University of Michigan, where she was a student of Kenneth Kiesler. Chen was a participant in the National Conducting Institute in Washington, D.C. and the American Academy of Conducting in Aspen. During her five-year tenure as Music Director of the Portland (OR) Youth Philharmonic, she led its sold-out debut in Carnegie Hall, received an ASCAP award for innovative programming, and was honored with a Sunburst Award from Young Audiences for her contribution to music education.

"It has been a joy and a pleasure to lead the Chicago Sinfonietta for over two decades, promoting the orchestra's mission of diversity, excellence and innovative programming in classical music," said Maestro Freeman. "We have all worked hard to bring this fine orchestra to the point where it is ready to embrace new artistic leadership and a new era. I have the utmost confidence that Maestra Chen will bring the excellence and talent necessary to continue the orchestra's evolution, and I look forward to working with her on a successful transition over the next year."

"This past season, each of our guest conductors was a candidate for the Music Director position, which made our job of choosing just one quite difficult because they were all talented in their own right," said Sinfonietta Board Chair **Tara Dowd Gurber**. "But Maestra Chen stood out as the right person to lead the Sinfonietta forward and continue Maestro Freeman's invaluable legacy."

The search for Maestro Freeman's successor was led by a Succession Committee comprised of Chicago Sinfonietta Board Members, Executive Director Jim Hirsch and Artistic Consultant Evans Mirageas.

The Chicago Sinfonietta, entering its 24th season in the Fall of 2010, has a proud history of having enriched the cultural, educational, and social quality of life in Chicago, while gaining significant recognition on the national and international stage. Performing at Chicago's Symphony Center and Lund Auditorium of Dominican University, the Sinfonietta presents a full season of symphonic concerts as well as a Chamber Series. The Chicago Sinfonietta has also served as the official orchestra of The Joffrey Ballet since 2003. Under the guidance of founding Music Director Paul Freeman, the orchestra performs at the highest artistic level and has achieved an outstanding reputation for its innovative programs. The Sinfonietta is dedicated to the authentic performance of Classical, Romantic and Contemporary repertoire and excels at presenting imaginative new works by composers and soloists of color. Chicago Sinfonietta musicians truly represent the city's rich cultural landscape and continue to fulfill the orchestra's mission of *Musical Excellence through Diversity*[™]. A 2007 survey of major orchestras revealed that the Chicago Sinfonietta is the most diverse professional orchestra in the United States. Through this distinction, the Chicago Sinfonietta serves as a national model for inclusiveness in classical music.

For more information on the Chicago Sinfonietta, please visit www.chicagosinfonietta.org.

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