

Rachel Waddell Long Bio

American conductor Rachel Waddell is in the business of shared experiences. She loves the process of music creation and collaboration and wants to enable others to share their own stories through music. She believes 21st century orchestras have an opportunity to mirror the rich diversity of the world through their programs, orchestra personnel, and audiences. She prides herself in her ability to grow orchestras and their resources, innovative programming, and building meaningful connections with community.

Rachel serves as the Director of Orchestral Activities and Assistant Professor, with the Arthur Satz Department of Music at the University of Rochester in New York. Lauded as, “a conductor of creativity and courage,” she won both second place (2019) and third place (2020) in the American Prize’s Vytautas Marijosius Memorial Award in Orchestral Programming for her work with the UR Orchestras. Her seasons balance traditional masterworks with new and underplayed music, and interdisciplinary and multimedia presentations. Rachel marries her commitment to conducting and education by maintaining a busy profile in the professional and academic worlds. She has conducted orchestras across the country including the Rochester, Las Vegas, and Fort Wayne Philharmonics, the Southwest Michigan Symphony Orchestra (where she was a Music Director Finalist) and Cleveland’s Suburban Symphony. While serving as the Associate Conductor of the Canton Symphony Orchestra in Ohio, Waddell conducted over 80 performances of classical, pops, and education concerts.

In addition to Waddell’s active professional career, she places immense value on continuing to develop her own craft. She is a student of Ennio Nicotra, Italian conductor and famed Musin Technique pedagogue. She has attended numerous conducting workshops, seminars, and institutes including the Dallas Opera’s prestigious Hart Institute for Women Conductors, and Mark Shapiro’s Conducting Intensive at Juilliard.

Rachel’s interest in the constantly evolving role and responsibility of orchestras within their communities led her to co-found Conductors for Change, Inc., a New York-based non-profit. From 2020-21, she led new initiatives with her orchestras at the University of Rochester in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. This included a Virtual Postcard Series in partnership with Eastman Performing Arts Medicine and the University of Rochester Medical Center, a Composer Spotlight Series, and over five hours of virtual concert productions. Her 2021 digital collaboration with Oberlin Conservatory and conductor Tiffany Chang won Best Instrumental Performance of 2021 in the LIT Talent Awards. During this time Rachel also earned a certificate in Music Industry Essentials from the prestigious Clive Davis of Record Music at NYU’s Tisch School of the Arts.

Originally from Connecticut Waddell has lived throughout the country including the Southwest, Midwest, and east coast. She pulls inspiration from all facets of her life and travels. Originally trained as a vocalist, she turned to instrumental music after her time in her local Fife and Drum Corps. She holds a Bachelor of Music in Composition from the Hartt School of Music and a Doctor of Musical Arts in Orchestral Conducting from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas.

When Waddell is not on the podium, she enjoys traveling, experimenting with vegetarian and vegan cuisine, hiking, dancing, and kickboxing. She lives in Rochester, New York with her husband, Graham, and their dog, Pierogi.

Rachel Waddell Short Bio

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