

Rachel Waddell Long Bio

With energy, imagination, and a passion for people, American conductor Rachel Waddell proves an unabashed advocate for the 21st century orchestra. Her leadership across the country demonstrates her innate ability to transform vision into action. Rachel believes by uplifting, celebrating, and reflecting the artistry of our neighbors, orchestras become the creative heartbeat of our communities. Whether tackling *Also sprach Zarathustra*, reimagining Mendelssohn's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* as a live-action *Dungeons and Dragons* quest, or commissioning a new work, Rachel curates programs that highlight symphonic music's vitality and relevance. Through breathtaking collaborations and an untiring dedication to education, mentorship, and community, Rachel inspires transformative experiences and ensembles.

Rachel looks forward to diving into her role as the newly-appointed Director of Orchestras at Colorado State University. Previously she served as Director of Orchestral Activities and Assistant Professor with the Arthur Satz Department of Music at the University of Rochester in New York. Her work with the UR Orchestras gained recognition as a two-time national winner for the American Prize's Vytautas Marijosius Memorial Award in Orchestral Programming in 2019 and 2020. As a highlight of Rachel's interdisciplinary and multimedia concerts, the UR Orchestras achieved international acclaim in collaboration with conducting colleague Tiffany Chang and Oberlin Conservatory through a digital performance of Beethoven's *Choral Fantasy*, named Best Instrumental Performance of 2021 by the LIT Talent Awards.

To challenge herself as an artist, Rachel maintains 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, Rachel conducted over 80 performances of classical, pops, and education concerts. 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. She recently made her Vienna debut conducting *Così fan tutte* as part of the Vienna Opera Academy. This summer she will attend the Conducting Program at *Le Domaine Forget Charlevoix* to study with Yannick Nézet-Séguin and Kensho Watanabe.

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 501(c)(3) for anyone reimagining the future of the American orchestra. In 2023, Conductors for Change received a grant from the Puffin Foundation to launch the organization's *IdeaLab*. Her research centers on the role of the 21st century orchestra, especially within liberal arts education.

Originally from Connecticut, Rachel 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 Orchestra Conducting from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas.

Rachel also earned a certificate in Music Industry Essentials from the prestigious Clive Davis Institute of Recorded Music at NYU's Tisch School of the Arts in collaboration with Yellowbrick.

When Rachel is not on the podium, she enjoys traveling, experimenting with vegetarian and vegan cuisine, hiking, dancing, and boxing. She lives in Rochester, New York with her husband, Graham, their dog Pierogi, and Ferdi (short for Ferdinand) – a cat who shares Rachel's adventurous spirit.

Rachel Waddell **Short Bio**

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