

# INSIGNIA

A R T I S T S

## CAROLYN WATSON

*Conductor*

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Carolyn Watson is Music Director of the La Porte County Symphony Orchestra in Indiana and Principal Guest Conductor of the Kansas City Chamber Orchestra. Originally from Australia, Carolyn has been based in the United States since 2013. She has led performances with the Austin Symphony, Cape Symphony, Catskill Symphony, Columbus Indiana Philharmonic, Detroit Symphony Civic Orchestra, Kansas City Ballet, South Bend Symphony, St. Joseph Symphony, Traverse Symphony Orchestra and World Youth Symphony Orchestra. Recruited internationally as Music Director of the Interlochen Arts Academy Orchestra, she won the 2015 American Prize for Orchestral Performance with this ensemble, also collaborating with soloists including Mark

O'Connor and Alexandre Tharaud during her tenure. She won the American Prize a second time in 2025, receiving the Vytautas Marijosius Memorial Award. Carolyn continues to enjoy an ongoing association with Interlochen as conducting faculty at Interlochen Arts Camp.

An experienced conductor of opera, recent engagements have seen Carolyn lead ***Listen, Wilhemina!*** for the Lyric Opera of Kansas City, ***Hansel and Gretel*** for Amarillo Opera and ***Fellow Travelers*** at Des Moines Metro Opera, along with a production of ***As One***. In 2025 she conducted ***The Tragedy of Carmen*** for Tulsa Opera, and joins Opera in the Heights for performances of Sondheim's ***A Little Night Music***. In 2026 Carolyn debuts with the Ft. Worth Symphony conducting the Keller Classical concerts. In 2020 she conducted ***'And Still we Dream'*** for the Lyric Opera of Kansas City, which was featured in the Emmy-Award winning PBS documentary, ***Higher Octaves: Leading Women in the Arts***. In 2019 she was engaged to conduct the world premiere of Gordon Getty's opera ***Goodbye Mr. Chips*** at Festival Napa Valley, and in 2017 Carolyn was one of six conductors selected for the Hart Institute for Women Conductors, where she led the Dallas Opera in two public performances.

A major prizewinner at the 2012 Emmerich Kálmán International Operetta Conducting Competition in Budapest, notable European credits include ***Infektion!***, a festival of modern theatre celebrating the works of John Cage at the Staatsoper Berlin, conducting musicians of the Berlin Philharmonic in ***Interaktion***, a residency at the

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Israeli National Opera, and assisting Sir Charles Mackerras on his final two productions at The Royal Opera, Covent Garden and Glyndebourne. Additional international conducting credits include the Brandenburger Symphoniker, BBC Concert Orchestra, Budapest Operetta Theatre, Bulgarian State Opera Bourgas, Duna Szimfonikus Budapest, North Czech Philharmonic Orchestra, Kammerphilharmonie Graz, Kodály Philharmonia Debrecen, Mihail Jora Philharmonic Romania, Savaria Symphony Orchestra, Scottish Chamber Orchestra, and in Russia, the St. Petersburg Chamber Philharmonic. In Australia she has worked with the Barrier Reef Symphony Orchestra, Darwin Symphony, Sydney Philharmonia Choirs, Melbourne Youth Orchestra, Monash Academy Orchestra, Sydney Symphony, Tasmania Discovery Orchestra and Willoughby Symphony. Carolyn also led the 2008 World Youth Day Orchestra on the occasion of Pope Benedict XVI's arrival in Sydney before a live audience of 100,000 and a worldwide television audience of some five million viewers.

A committed music educator, Carolyn currently serves as Director of Orchestras at the University of Illinois whilst continuing to enjoy an active freelance career internationally. Carolyn was a Fellow of the American Academy of Conducting at the Aspen Music Festival where she studied with David Zinman, and has participated in master classes with Marin Alsop, Peter Eötvös, Yoel Levi, Martyn Brabbins and Alex Polishchuk. Carolyn is the recipient of a number of prestigious national and international awards for young conductors including the Brian Stacey Award for emerging Australian conductors, Sir Charles Mackerras Conducting Prize awarded via the Australian Music Foundation in London, Opera Foundation Australia's Bayreuth Opera Award and Berlin New Music Opera Award and the Nelly Apt Conducting Scholarship. She is the beneficiary of support from the American Australian Association's Dame Joan Sutherland Fund and a Sheila Pryor Study Grant from the Australian Opera Auditions Committee. She is also a Churchill Fellow, and was the recipient of a Creative Fellowship from the State Library of Victoria. In 2021 Carolyn was named a finalist in the Arts category of the Australian government Advance Awards, an international award which recognizes leading global Australians of excellence.

Carolyn is an advocate for social justice with respect to equality and representation in the profession. She is a founding member of the Women and Allies Initiative of the College Orchestra Directors Association (WAICODA) and has been a mentor for the Women's Artistic Leadership Initiative and Girls Who Conduct. Carolyn holds a PhD in Performance (Conducting) from the University of Sydney where she studied under Imre Palló. The subject of her doctoral thesis was *Gesture as Communication: The Art of Carlos Kleiber*.