

**Michael Stern, Conductor**Long Biography
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Conductor **Michael Stern** has long been devoted to building and leading highly acclaimed orchestras known not only for their impeccable musicianship and creative programming, but also for collaborative, sustainable cultures that often include a vision of music as service to the community. He also is passionate about working with young musicians not only in music making, but also to incorporate the idea of “service” into their experiences as they become the artists and advocates of the future who will take classical music into the 21st century and beyond.

Stern currently holds three Music Director positions: with the Kansas City Symphony, where he will be concluding his 19-year tenure at the end of the 2023-2024 season; with the National Repertory Orchestra, a summer music festival in Breckenridge, CO which, for over 60 years, has provided an intensive, unique fellowship program for aspiring young musicians, and whose alumni populate every major orchestra across the United States; and with the newly rebranded Orchestra Lumos (formerly the Stamford Symphony). Stern was recently named Artistic Advisor of the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra, one of Canada’s foremost orchestral ensembles. And, following a 22-year tenure as founding Artistic Director of Iris Orchestra in Germantown, Tennessee, he now serves the newly reimagined Iris Collective as Artistic Advisor.

During Stern’s tenure with the Kansas City Symphony, he and the orchestra have been recognized for their remarkable artistic ascent, original programming, organizational development, stability, and extraordinary audience growth. Under Stern’s leadership, the orchestra explored a wide range of repertoire and commissioned a number of new works. Stern and the KC Symphony also partnered with GRAMMY® Award-winning Reference Recordings for a collection of very well-received CDs that includes commissions by American composer Adam Schoenberg and by Jonathan Leshnoff, whose Symphony No. 3, inspired by World War I soldiers’ letters home, was premiered by the KC Symphony at the National WWI Museum and Memorial in Kansas City. The orchestra’s Reference Recordings releases also include Gustav Holst’s “The Planets”; a pairing of music Elgar and Vaughan Williams; “Miraculous Metamorphoses,” with music by Hindemith, Prokofiev and Bartók; and a disc of works by Saint-Saëns. In 2021, Stern and the orchestra put out another widely praised recording, bringing together three one-movement symphonies by Sibelius, Barber, and Scriabin. The orchestra’s next recording will be released in the fall of 2022, featuring three works by Brahms arranged for orchestra by Bright Sheng, Virgil Thomson and Arnold Schoenberg.

Stern co-founded Iris Orchestra in 2000 and was Founding Artistic Director and Principal Conductor until 2021-22, when he had planned to step down from his post. With his departure, staff, community and musicians joined together to reinvent the orchestra as the Iris Collective, devising a new way for a 21st-century organization to offer a spectrum of events, from chamber music and smaller ensemble programs to full orchestral performances, while also prioritizing a variety of community engagement initiatives. This new model of the Iris Collective is built on the strong foundation created during Stern’s 22-year tenure, when the orchestra was widely praised for its musical virtuosity; programming that included acclaimed new commissions by American composers; a flexible, non-hierarchical structure; and the active partnership of its musicians. The Iris Collective will team up with a number of creative partners, including Stern, who will also continue his involvement as Artistic Advisor.

As part of his ongoing activities to engage and mentor young musicians, he was asked by Yo-Yo Ma to be the Music Director of YMCG, Youth Music Culture Guangdong, where he and Ma worked with students and young professionals in partnership with the Guangzhou Symphony Orchestra. He has also been invited to the National Orchestral Institute, Music Academy of the West, and has been a regular guest at the Aspen Music Festival and School, where he also worked with students at the American Academy of Conducting at Aspen.

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Stern’s illustrious American conducting engagements have included the Boston Symphony at Tanglewood; the Chicago Symphony at Ravinia; the Atlanta Symphony; and the Minnesota Orchestra. He debuted with the New York Philharmonic in 1986 in a program titled, “Leonard Bernstein and Three Young America Conductors.” He conducted the New York Philharmonic again in 2001, at several NY Philharmonic Concerts in the Parks and at PNC Bank Performing Arts Center with Audra McDonald; in 2018, he conducted the film score to *The Red Violin* at David Geffen Hall with soloist Joshua Bell. Stern has served as guest conductor with the Philadelphia Orchestra for performances at the Saratoga Performing Arts Center, the National Arts Centre in Ottawa, Ravinia, the Napa Valley Festival del Sole and at the Shanghai Isaac Stern International Violin Competition in China.

Internationally, he has led major orchestras in London, Stockholm, Paris, Helsinki, Budapest, Israel, and Moscow, Taiwan, and Tokyo. Stern has been Chief Conductor of Germany’s Saarbrücken Radio Symphony Orchestra (the first American chief conductor in the orchestra’s history), Principal\* Guest Conductor of the Orchestre National de Lyon in France, and Principal Guest Conductor of the Orchestre National de Lille, France.

Stern received his music degree from the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia, where his primary teacher was the noted conductor and scholar Max Rudolf. Stern co-edited the third edition of Rudolf’s famous textbook, *The Grammar of Conducting*, and a collection of Rudolf’s writing, *A Musical Life: Writings and Letters (Dimension & Diversity).*  Stern is a 1981 graduate of Harvard University, where he earned a degree in American history. In addition to Rudolf, he counts Leonard Bernstein, David Zinman and Charles Bruck among those who have been a major influence on his musical life.

Michael Stern lives in Connecticut with his two teenage daughters.