

Rei Hotoda

Conductor

Conductor Rei Hotoda has been hailed as an inexhaustible dynamo with a deep commitment to reimagining the 21st century concert experience. Her vision can be seen through her thought-provoking programming, passionate allyship to marginalized artists, advocacy for arts education, and an unwavering commitment to presenting many of today's leading composers alongside masterworks of the classical repertoire.

Rei's critically acclaimed versatility solidifies her standing as one of the most sought-after conductors of her generation. Her interpretations of epic centerpieces of the classical canon such as Mahler's Symphony No. 5, Shostakovich's Symphony No. 8, Beethoven's Symphony No. 9, and Damien Geter's A Justice Symphony, showcase her artistic range. She has guest conducted several prestigious ensembles, including the symphony orchestras of Chicago, St. Louis, Dallas, Detroit, Toronto, Louisville, Winnipeg, and Utah as well as the Civic Orchestra of Chicago, among others. A tireless advocate for the music of our time, Rei most recently led the premieres of works by Derek Bermel, Juan Pablo Contreras, Kevin Day, Dinuk Wijeratne, John Wineglass, and Cynthia Lee Wong.

As a champion of today's living composers and an artist that is dedicated to amplifying marginalized voices, Rei's innovative programming and interdisciplinary collaborations continue to position her as a leader in the industry. Across nearly every concert in 2023/24, Rei has made it her mission to program works by black, indigenous, or women composers, including her upcoming debuts with the American Composers Orchestra at Carnegie Hall, Greensboro Symphony Orchestra, the London Symphonia in Canada, and the Kansas City Symphony.

For her long-awaited Carnegie Hall debut, Rei will lead the American Composer's Orchestra in an exciting program that is an important centerpiece of Carnegie's "Fall of the Weimar Republic: Dancing on the Precipice" theme. She will lead the orchestra in two world premieres, a new work for Mezzo-Soprano and Orchestra by John Glover featuring Chrystal E. Williams as soloist and a new work and Carnegie Hall co-commission by Tonia Ko. She will also conduct the ensemble in the New York premiere of Jerod Impichchaahaah' Tate's Lowak Shoppala that will feature the composer as narrator as well as a group of indigenous dancers.

Rei makes her debut with the Kansas City Symphony leading a performance of Gabriela Lena Frank's Escaramuza and Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto No. 1 with Joyce Yang. Shostakovich's Symphony No. 9 is also on the program. She returns to Canada for her debut appearance with the London Symphonia pairing Louise Farrenc's Symphony No. 2 in D Major, Op. 35 with Chopin's Piano Concerto No. 1 in E Minor, Op. 11. A program that highlights two women compositional powerhouses, Jessie Montgomery (Starburst) and Joan Tower (Fanfare for the Uncommon Woman No 1) alongside Poulenc's Gloria and Gershwin's American in Paris will punctuate her debut with the Greensboro Symphony Orchestra.

As the current music director of the Fresno Philharmonic, in 2023/24 Rei continues to lead programs and design a season that reflect the rich diversity of the community while highlighting the stellar artistry of the musicians in the ensemble. This season, Rei and the FPO explore and celebrate the remarkable two-way street between Jazz and western classical music, entitled “Jazzing it Up”.

In September they kick off the season with a program featuring Rei playing/conducting Poulenc’s Concerto for Two Pianos, with fellow pianist William Eddins, paired with Mozart’s Symphony No. 35 and Valerie Colemans 2019 composition, UMOJA Anthem of Unity for Orchestra. The evocative theme continues with a performance of Vijay Iyer’s Human Archipelago, a Fresno Philharmonic co-commission, and Antheil’s Jazz Symphony juxtaposed with Beethoven’s Symphony No. 7. This special program is also featured in the inaugural California Festival—a two-week statewide celebration of new music. Guillaume Connesson’s A Kind of Trane Concerto with saxophonist Timothy McAllister paired with Brahms’ Symphony No. 3 continues the season exploration. 2023/24 ends with a blockbuster program featuring Gershwin’s American and Paris and Ravel’s Bolero offset by a performance of Barber’s Piano Concerto with the incomparable Joyce Yang at the keyboard.

Additionally, Rei continues her ever-popular series “Mahler Here and Now” with the Fresno Philharmonic. This season Rei and the ensemble will perform Mahler’s epic Symphony No. 4 with Jasmine Habersham as soprano soloist coupled with Gabriela Lena Frank’s Contested Eden.

As an active and critically acclaimed keyboardist, Rei embraces her time conducting from the piano and harpsichord. In 2023/24, in addition to her season-opening performance leading the Fresno Philharmonic from the keyboard in Poulenc’s Concerto for Two Pianos, she will also perform Jessie Montgomery’s Rounds for Piano and String Orchestra as soloist with the Kamuela Philharmonic.

Rei’s deep knowledge and remarkable versatility on and off the podium have led to several collaborations and special projects. She has worked with such ensembles and artists as tabla master Sandeep Das; pipa player Wu Man; violinists Jennifer Koh and Chee Yun; pianists Laura Downes, Awadagin Pratt, Orion Weiss, and Joyce Yang; guitarist Pablo Villegas; ensembles such as Time for Three, Indigo Girls, Steep Canyon Rangers and Pink Martini; singers Damien Geter, Jessica Rivera, Idina Menzel, Michael Feinstein and Ben Folds, among many others.

As a recording artist, Rei’s credits are wide-ranging and feature her as both conductor and piano soloist. She recorded the music of Nicole Lizée with members of the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra on an album released in 2008 on the Centrediscs label entitled, This Will Not be Televised. Also, in 2008, Apparitions, her first recording as a solo pianist, was released by Signpost Records and featured works by Noriko Hisada, Vincent Ho, and Toru Takemitsu. Symphony Sessions was released in 2007 (Signpost Records), and featured Rei conducting the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra in works by Juno award winner, Steve Bell.

Rei is the proud recipient of several prestigious awards, including the 2006 Taki-Alsop Conducting Fellowship, created by Marin Alsop to mentor women conductors. Additionally, she has received a Peabody Career Development Grant, the Women's Philharmonic Scholarship, and an Illinois Arts Council International Arts Exchange Grant. In 2023, she will receive the Fresno Arts Council Horizon Award in celebration of her contributions to the arts in the Fresno community. Her teachers and mentors include Gustav Meier, Marin Alsop, Jaap van Zweden and Thierry Fischer.

****Rei's bio was most recently updated in August of 2023 and must be used in its entirety unless express permission is received from her representatives.****