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# PAN PIPES

SIGMA ALPHA IOTA PHILANTHROPIES, INC.



## ***PERFORMING MUSICAL SERVICE***

Annual Music Conference Update  
SAI Welcomes Gloria Estefan

# First International Women's Conducting Workshop held in New York City



Douglas Bain

Participant Elle Sunmin Lee leads the orchestra at the Women's Conducting Workshop.

This spring female conductors from across the country gathered for the first International Women's Conducting Workshop. New York Conducting Institute (NYCI) held the four day workshop at the National Opera Center from March 17th-20th. Maestro Diane Wittry, Music Director of the Allentown Symphony, served as mentor for the weekend and presented sessions based on her books - "Beyond the Baton: What Every Conductor Needs to Know" and "Baton Basics: Communicating Music through Gestures" (both published by Oxford University Press). Each participant was mentored by Maestra Wittry during sessions with a professional sextet and orchestra. Attendees also participated in a panel discussion by pioneering women conductors such as Victoria Bond, Teresa Cheung, Janna Hymes, and Gisele Ben-Dor (the live-stream of this event can be seen on the NYCI website).

The variety of topics covered was a major draw for participants, including 2016 SAI Conducting Scholarship for Graduate Students recipient Haley Rudolph. "I chose to participate because this workshop covered more relevant topics for rising conductors than any other workshop I have read about, including how to work with a board of directors, the role of an assistant conductor, and how to program concerts. My favorite part of the weekend was getting the opportunity to talk one-on-one with the panel of esteemed women conductors and discuss their unique paths leading to a career on the podium. This program would certainly be beneficial for other SAIs, as it welcomes all schools of training in a supportive environment and is a great networking

opportunity. The level of the orchestra was also absolutely incredible."

Other praise for the program came from participant Britney Alcine, "Spending the day in a room of women conductors was so uplifting and refreshing" and auditor Rose Francis, "This truly was a life changing experience and instilled such an encouraging confidence in myself and others in attendance."

The founders of the program, Mun-Tzung Wong and Alicia Lieu, discuss their motivation for developing the program on their website:

"In our time as conductors, we, along with many other women we have worked with, have personally encountered blatant statements and acts of sexism, along with countless (less obvious but still telling) micro-aggressions. The numbers perhaps tell the story best. The League of American Orchestras reported that in 2016, the percentage of music directors were 91% male and 9% female. For conducting positions that are not music directorships it was 79% male and 21% female. It still seems to be newsworthy when a woman conducts the New York Philharmonic. The recent appearance of Maestro Susanna Mälkki at The Metropolitan Opera marks the fourth woman to take the podium during its history. There are a good number of women working in opera houses as prompters and coaches, yet for some reason(s) they are not able to make the transition to the podium.

NYCI's Women's Conducting Workshop follows in the footsteps of Dallas Opera's Women's Conducting Institute and The Royal Philharmonic Society's Women Conductors Programme. In

establishing a women's conducting workshop in New York City, NYCI strives to provide an experience that encourages women to pursue the art of conducting. We wish to serve women that are considering conducting as well as experienced conductors who would like to have more women in their peer network. NYCI produces workshops that are open to both men and women multiple times a year since we know that being/becoming a conductor is not an easy path, regardless of gender. A single institution or individual cannot remove the roadblocks that women face in a male dominated field but what NYCI can provide is podium time for women...

It would be wonderful if it were no longer a novelty or newsworthy to have a woman on the podium but until that era arrives, NYCI will present an annual women's workshop. We want to make sure that women have access to excellent training. At the very least, we want to tell women conductors, 'Keep going. Don't give up!'"



*Karen Blundell is a member of the New York Alumnae Chapter. She plays English horn for the Northeastern Pennsylvania Philharmonic and is a faculty member at the Eastern Music Festival.*



**FOR MORE INFORMATION**  
on NYCI programs, visit  
[newyorkconductinginstitute.org](http://newyorkconductinginstitute.org)  
on Diane Wittry, please visit  
[DianeWittry.com](http://DianeWittry.com)



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International Women's Conducting Workshop  
participant Britney Alcine, left, with Diane Wittry,  
Music Director of the Allentown Symphony.



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48th Triennial National Convention  
in Scottsdale, Arizona, July 26-30, 2018!

