



May 2026 Biography

Passion and innovation are the hallmarks of American conductor Roberta Carpenter. Co-founder and Music Director of the Oconomowoc Chamber Orchestra (OCO) since 2009, Ms. Carpenter's musical expertise both on and off the podium, as well as her talent for community building, has helped her to forge a rich and varied career.

Nationally, she has guested with such orchestras as the Beloit/Janesville, Harper, Menomonee Falls and Whitewater symphonies, the Wisconsin Philharmonic (cameo), the Concord and Appleton chamber orchestras and the Waukesha Choral Union & Orchestra. International guesting includes the Martinu, Hradec Kralove and Janacek Philharmonics in the Czech Republic; the Sudecka Philharmonic in Poland; and the Vidin State Philharmonic Orchestra in Bulgaria, in addition to leading the orchestras of the Moscow Symphony, National Symphony Orchestra of Ukraine and Germany's Thuringen Philharmonic.

Ms. Carpenter has worked with the OCO to secure six orchestral commissions about the beautiful Lake Country Area. She has premiered works by composers Crawford Gates, Sigmund Snopek, Jacob Beranek, Jeffrey Pierce, Brian Grundstrom, Jeff Wussow and David Bohn.

An advocate of new music, Ms. Carpenter has also worked closely with Dr. Michael Karasis in performances of his works for orchestra & choir (American Civil War Oratorio) and a full chamber music concert of his works. She has worked with American Composer/Conductor Diane Wittry and performed her work entitled 'After the Rain'. Her performances have been broadcast on local radio and television, many now are on YouTube and other digital platforms.

On the recording front, as a conductor, Ms. Carpenter has recorded with the Janacek Philharmonic, the Hradec Kralove Philharmonic, Martinu Philharmonic and the Oconomowoc Chamber Orchestra (OCO). Her OCO recordings are now prolific, featuring movements of the orchestra's last 17 seasons. The OCO's debut recording in 2012, which featured the world premiere recording of the 2010 OCO commission of Crawford Gates' *Fanfare for Lake Country* and Beethoven's 5th Symphony, was awarded 3rd place in the 2012 American Prize Awards. A 2018 recording with the Hradec Kralove Philharmonic, and a 2017 Janacek Philharmonic recording were finalists for the American Prize Awards in Conducting. Among the recordings pending release are the Janacek Idyll for String Orchestra, the Vivaldi 'Spring' Concerto, a rendition of the Gaelic 'Morning Has Broken', Brian Grundstrom's 'Variation' on Fanfare for Lake Country, and other classic favorites.

Her video recording 'ZMI – Metric Balance in Music' speaks to the dynamic nature of weight and motion in music and features her recordings with the OCO, Hradec Kralove & Janacek Philharmonics, and her recording of the JS Bach Sonata in g minor performed on the Thunis Stradivarius. A recent release 'ZMI – The Life & Works of Crawford Gates: American Conductor & Composer' includes many of Ms. Carpenter's orchestral and solo violin recordings of, and information about, Crawford Gates' works, which she was invited to present at the International Conductors Guild Conference that was held in Dallas, TX, in January 2026. Both recordings are available on YouTube.

Ms. Carpenter has also enjoyed visioning and producing performance videos with artistic images. She has collaborated with videographers Sean Kafer, Kyra Arendt, Josh Wolf and Max Anisimov.

In May 2026, the OCO and Music Director/Conductor Roberta Carpenter were awarded a 2026 WAMI (Wisconsin Area Music Industry) Award for Classical Music Performance. The recipient of numerous foundation grants and awards for her work as a conductor, Ms. Carpenter was awarded a 2018 Women's Philharmonic Advocacy Grant, an OCO 2021 Chatfield Award, which recognizes 'Bright Spirit, Vision & a Lifetime of Community Service', and was named a 'Lake Michigan Scholar' for her outreach to orchestral audiences.

A Wisconsin native, Ms. Carpenter currently runs Zenith Studio and is a member of the faculty of the Lake Country Conservatory of Music. Her former posts include serving as Music Director of the Whitewater Symphony and the Carroll College Orchestra, and as Assistant Conductor for Wisconsin's Fox Valley Symphony, the Beloit/Janesville Symphony, and the Concord Chamber Orchestra, as well as assisting in Audition work with the former Green Bay Symphony.

Ms. Carpenter completed coursework for a Doctoral Degree in Violin Performance and Orchestral Conducting at the University of Wisconsin-Madison (ABD) and holds both Master of Music and Bachelor of the Fine Arts degrees from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, graduating with honors. She has participated in conducting workshops of the League of American Orchestras, Monteux School & Music Festival, and the Conductors Guild. Conducting teachers and mentors include: Frantisek Vajnar, Ottakar Trhlik, Harold Farberman, Diane Wittry, Kirk Trevor, Kenneth Kiesler, Gustav Meier, Charles Bruck, and Gunther Schuller.