

Marshunda Smith

Conductor | Music Director | Educator

Headline Bio (short, donor-ready)

Marshunda Smith is a conductor and music director known for pairing musical rigor with an unusually direct and human connection to audiences. Her performances consistently generate high post-concert engagement, with audience members and musicians waiting to speak with her—often sharing personal stories, memories, and emotional responses sparked by the music.

Smith's work demonstrates that classical excellence does not require distance. Instead, she leads with clarity, warmth, and intentional audience inclusion, creating concert experiences that feel complete only because the audience is present.

Narrative Bio (long)

Marshunda Smith currently serves as Music Director and Conductor of the Lowell Philharmonic Orchestra and Founder and Music Director of the Cherry Hill Chamber Orchestra. She is also Co-Founder and Director of the NoName Orchestra in the Boston area. Her work spans orchestral, operatic, and educational leadership, including guest conducting with the North Shore Philharmonic Orchestra and music direction/ stage director for *PostPardon: The Opera* at Colby College.

What distinguishes Smith within the field is the social and emotional accessibility she builds around performances. Before concerts and during intermissions, she moves through the hall greeting audience members, welcoming first-time attendees, and thanking community partners and vendors by name. At the start of each program, she addresses the audience directly: *"Our program today is complete because you are here."* The statement is not rhetorical—audiences respond accordingly.

After performances, listeners routinely wait in line to speak with her. Some share moments of joy; others share memories unlocked by the music. Following one guest conducting appearance, audience members told Smith that seeing her physically engage and dance on the podium gave them permission to move themselves—several left their seats and danced in the aisles. In the same line, a veteran orchestral musician known for never offering compliments waited specifically to congratulate her.

At another concert, an audience member in his nineties approached Smith in tears, grateful that a piece she programmed had returned him to his twenties—driving through France with his newlywed wife, a memory he had not revisited in decades.

Smith's audience engagement is intentional and repeatable. With the Lowell Philharmonic Orchestra, she integrates community institutions directly into the narrative fabric of concerts. In one program, *The Ten Gates of Winter*, a partnership with the local library transformed the concert's central metaphor—keys opening new worlds—into a lived experience. Musicians raised their library cards onstage as Smith narrated each "gate," reinforcing the idea that books are worlds and a library card is the key. Audience laughter gave way to action: more patrons signed up for library cards that evening than at any prior concert, and the librarian volunteered to return for future performances, crediting the concert's storytelling for making the partnership feel essential.

Smith holds a Bachelor of Arts from the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, and a Master's degree in Orchestral Conducting with a focus on Music Education from the University of Southern Maine. She has conducted a wide range of repertoire, from canonical works to contemporary and newly imagined programs.

Her work is sustained through philanthropy, which she acknowledges openly. Smith frames donor support as a direct investment in keeping classical music socially legible, emotionally accessible, and genuinely public.

Artistic & Leadership Values

- **Human access without dilution:** emotional openness paired with musical discipline
 - **Audience trust as infrastructure:** people return when they feel welcome and respected
 - **Story as structure:** programs are shaped so listeners can follow, not guess
 - **Shared ownership:** concerts exist because communities and donors choose to make them possible
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Audience Engagement & Community Impact

- Consistent post-concert audience interaction, with listeners waiting to speak directly with the conductor
 - Increased repeat attendance and first-time concertgoers driven by word-of-mouth recommendations
 - Integrated partnerships with local institutions (libraries, educators) that meaningfully expand impact beyond the stage
 - Youth and student ensembles reporting reduced performance anxiety, increased engagement, and renewed joy in music-making
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Why This Matters to Donors

Supporting an orchestra or concert series led by Marshunda Smith is not a contribution to exclusivity. It is an investment in a human-centered approach to classical music—one that transforms attendance into participation and performances into shared experiences.

Donor support enables:

- Audience growth built on trust, not intimidation
- Community partnerships that extend cultural impact

- Concerts people talk about, recommend, and return to
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Media Assets & Contact

High-resolution photos, video links, and booking or development contact information available upon request.