

## Award Winning Michigan Philharmonic Conductor Begins 15th Season

Nan Washburn was recently named the winner of the American Prize in Conducting for 2013.

Posted by [Nicole Krawcke](#) (Editor) , September 17, 2013 at 04:18 AM



Nan Washburn enters into her 15th season as the conductor of the Michigan Philharmonic. Photo Credit: Nan Washburn

Though Nan Washburn has lived in Southeastern Michigan the past 15 years, the California-raised music director and conductor of the Michigan Philharmonic still can't get used to snow.

Washburn, who took the job with the then named Plymouth Symphony because she saw a potential because of the close proximity to both Detroit and Ann Arbor, said snow is definitely not her favorite thing.

"People constantly ask, 'don't you get used to it,' and I tell them no," Washburn said.

In spite of the cold winters, Washburn is entering her 15th season with the Michigan Philharmonic.

"One of the most wonderful things is that I've been really supported here to be as creative as I want to be," she said. "And the audiences here have just been amazing."

### **Emphasis on music education**

Washburn said one of the things she loves most about her position has been expanding the educational music program for students in Plymouth-Canton, Wayne-Westland and Van Buren School Districts.

The program was a year old when Washburn took over as conductor.

"It's (music education) something that effected me as a kid," she said. "I'm a product of having education in schools and being a part of a youth orchestra and that stuff was very important to me.... I totally believe that it's not just about producing musicians of the future. It really is about helping to shape whole people and that any music education is good for everybody. Whether it's helping your math scores or your social skills, it really is an amazing thing."

Washburn said she got a very late start in conducting, since most people in the profession decide what they want to do at a young age. Washburn began as a flutist.

"I was just too busy playing my flute, I didn't even think about it until the ripe old age of 30 and I've been doing it... a lot of years." she said laughing.

### **A different sound**

Washburn has a lot to be proud of in her time with the Michigan Philharmonic, like her adventurous programming, for which she has won numerous awards.

Under Washburn, the Michigan Philharmonic has brought in the work of women composers as well as a multicultural element to its programs.

Washburn said it's fully integrated, not something that is just tacked onto the program.

"Orchestras are in general, kind of a traditional art form, and they tend to want to do just the old masters," she said. "We do it all. From brand new pieces to (Johannes) Brahms. But we like to think we mix it up. I think even Beethoven sounds different when you put it next to something that you haven't heard before."

"As a woman in a 'man's world,' Nan brings so much to our program as acknowledged by the League of American Orchestras with receipt of her 18th ASCAP award for Adventurous Programming," said Beth Stewart, Michigan Philharmonic Executive Director.

American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers (ASCAP) honors its top members in a series of annual awards shows in seven different music categories, including concert music.

In addition, Washburn was just announced the winner of the [2013 American Prize in Conducting, Profession Division](#).

"I am thrilled... it is very exciting since the Michigan Philharmonic also placed second in the ensembles competition," Washburn said.

The American Prize is a series of new, non-profit, national competitions designed to recognize and reward the very best in the performing arts in the United States—in schools and churches, and at community and professional levels. The American Prize was founded in 2009 and is awarded annually.

For more information on Washburn and the Michigan Philharmonic, visit [www.michiganphil.org](http://www.michiganphil.org).

<http://plymouth-mi.patch.com/groups/local-connections/p/award-winning-michigan-philharmonic-conductor-begins-15th-season>