

Wes Kenney, 2026 All-State Orchestra Conductor



Wes Kenney is in his 24th season as Music Director of the Fort Collins (Colorado) Symphony. In May 2023 he retired after 20 years as Director of Orchestras and chair of conducting studies at Colorado State University. Maestro Kenney completed his tenure at CSU with two critically acclaimed performances of the Mahler Symphony No. 3. In 2022 he was named a University Distinguished Professor, the highest honor the university can award and has also been given the title of Professor Emeritus. He is the 2007 Grand Prize Winner of the Varna (Bulgaria) International Conducting Competition, a 2020 Honored Artist from the American Prize, a winner of the American Prize for programming in 2020, a winner of the Ernst Bacon Memorial Prize

for excellence in performance of American Music, and the 2020 American Prize Winner for best orchestral performance in the Professional Orchestra Division. In June 2023 Mr. Kenney completed his 10th and final season with Denver Young Artist Orchestra—the premier youth orchestra in the state of Colorado. DYAO has been recognized by the city of Denver for outreach and as an ambassador for Colorado. He has led that orchestra on two European tours and anchored two festivals at Carnegie Hall. In June of 2023 he led that orchestra on tour to Southern California where the audience responded with a standing ovation at Disney Concert Hall in Los Angeles.

Mr. Kenney's guest conducting activities include the Acadiana Symphony (LA), Alabama Symphony, Buffalo Philharmonic, Colorado Symphony, Dubuque Symphony, Lafayette (IN) Symphony, Long Beach Symphony, New Mexico Symphony, Richmond Symphony, Riverside Symphonia, Savannah Symphony, and the Virginia Symphony. International guest conducting includes performances with the Liev (Ukraine) Philharmonic, Changwon (South Korea) Philharmonic, Vietnam National Symphony (Hanoi), Vidin State Philharmonic (Bulgaria), Stara Zagora Opera Company in Bulgaria as well as the Edinburgh (Scotland) Music Festival.

Mr. Kenney has also enjoyed success directing opera, ballet, and musical theater. Previous positions include Music Director of Opera Fort Collins, Music Director of the Virginia Ballet Theater, Co-Principal Conductor of the Oakland Lyric Opera, and Guest Conductor with Universal Ballet Korea. Since 2004 he has conducted productions of *Carmen*, *Amahl and the Night Visitors*, *Sweeney Todd*,

Turn of the Screw, Barber of Seville, Madama Butterfly, Cenerentola, Rigoletto, Tosca, Otello, Die Zauberflote, Die Fledermaus, La Traviata, Il Trovatore, Street Scene, La Boheme, Orfeo, Pagliacci, Cavalleria Rusticana, Falstaff, Turandot, Marriage of Figaro, Serse, The Merry Widow, Aida, Don Giovanni, and Tenderland. In addition, he has conducted over two hundred performances of *The Nutcracker, Swan Lake, The Firebird*, and many other dance works.

In six seasons as the Virginia Symphony's Associate Conductor, Mr. Kenney appeared more than 350 times with that orchestra where he was responsible for programming and conducting Pops, Family and Young People's Concerts. During his tenure with the Virginia Symphony, he was also invited to guest conduct the Williamsburg Symphonia, Virginia Chorale, Norfolk Chamber Consort and Virginia Waterfront International Arts Festival.

Named Educator of the Year by the Colorado Chapter of the American String Teachers Association in 2008, Mr. Kenney enjoyed working with talented young people in his position as Director of Orchestras at Colorado State University and has served as Guest Conductor with the Alabama, Minnesota, New Hampshire, New Mexico, and Virginia All-State Orchestras. This fall he will conduct the Iowa All-State Orchestra. Awarded the prestigious Carmen Dragon Conducting Prize in 1992, Wes Kenney is a founder of the CSU Summer Master of Music Education with an emphasis in conducting program, now in its 14th year.

He was recently a guest lecturer at the Conductor's Institute held at Bard College in upstate New York, teaching alongside the late Harold Farberman and American Symphony Orchestra Music Director Leon Botstein.

Mr. Kenney is a past president of the Conductors Guild, a 2000-member service organization to the conducting profession. He currently is on the Guild's advisory board. He is a graduate of the University of Southern California and San Francisco State University. Additional studies include three years as a fellow at the Conductors Institute, several American Symphony Orchestra League and Conductors Guild Workshops, and the Sandpoint Festival. His teachers include Harold Farberman, Hans Beer, Gunther Schuller, Hans Swarovsky and Miltiades Carides.