

# MARIN ALSOP

b. October 16, 1956

## TRAILBLAZING CONDUCTOR

*“Success means pursuing a career that inspires you — brings passion to your life and totally absorbs your energy.”*

Marin Alsop is the first woman to conduct a major orchestra in the United States, Britain, Austria, and South America. She serves as the chief conductor of the Vienna Radio Symphony Orchestra.

Alsop was born in the Upper West Side of Manhattan. Her parents were professional string players. Alsop began playing the violin at age 5 and was accepted into the Julliard Pre-College Program at age 7. When she was 9, her father took her to see the renowned conductor Leonard Bernstein. The experience so inspired her, she told her violin teacher she wanted to conduct. The teacher cautioned her that “girls can’t do that.”

**She is the first female conductor to lead a major orchestra in the United States, Britain, Austria, and South America.**

At age 16, Alsop entered Yale University as a math major. She transferred to Julliard to pursue a bachelor’s and master’s degree in violin, graduating in 1978. During college, she performed with the New York Philharmonic and the New York Ballet.

Alsop auditioned three times for Julliard’s conducting program but was rejected. Over the next four years, she founded an all-female jazz string ensemble, conducted the opera “The Photographer” by Philip Glass, and established Concordia, a 50-piece orchestra specializing in contemporary American music. In 1989 she became the first woman to win the Koussevitzky Prize for student conducting at Tanglewood Music Center

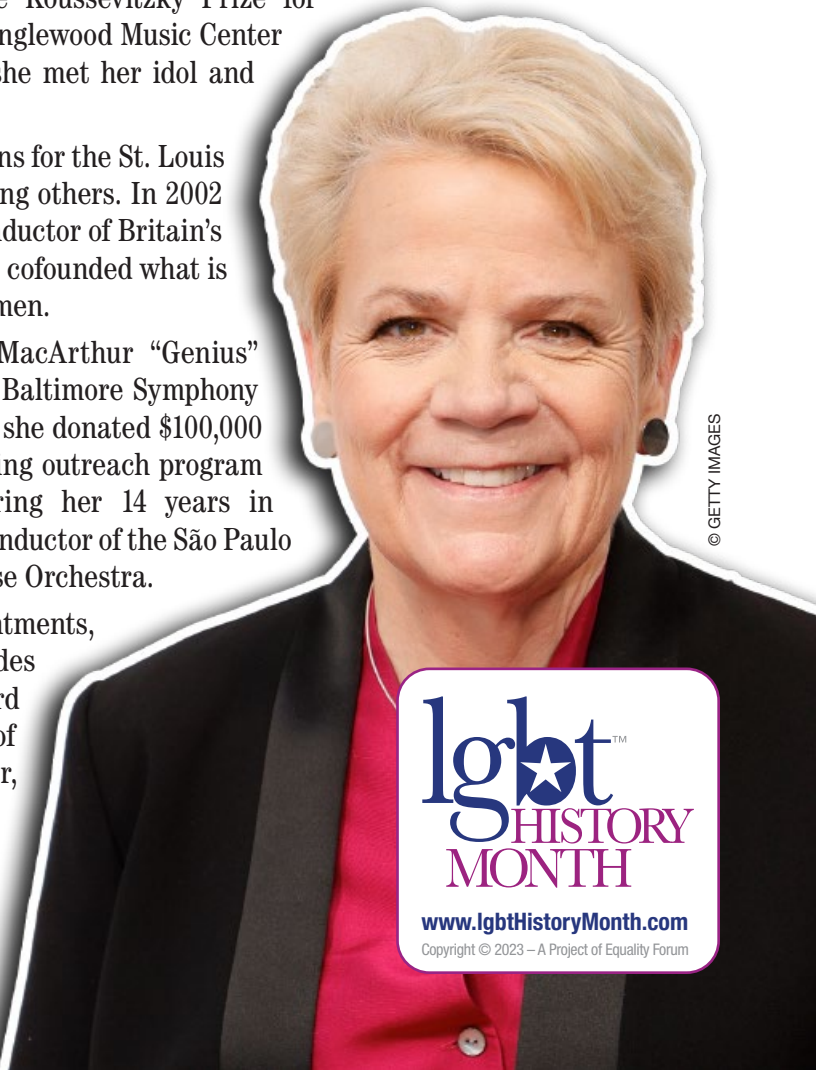
in Massachusetts, where, during her continued studies, she met her idol and eventual mentor, Leonard Bernstein.

Throughout the next decade, Alsop held conducting positions for the St. Louis Orchestra and the Royal Scottish National Orchestra, among others. In 2002 she shattered the glass ceiling, becoming the principal conductor of Britain’s Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra. During her tenure, she cofounded what is today the Taki Alsop Conducting Fellowship to support women.

In 2005 Alsop became the first conductor to win a MacArthur “Genius” Fellowship. When she was named musical director of the Baltimore Symphony in another barrier-shattering appointment two years later, she donated \$100,000 of her MacArthur grant to start OrchKids, a groundbreaking outreach program serving under-resourced Baltimore schoolchildren. During her 14 years in Baltimore, Alsop also served as the first female principal conductor of the São Paulo Symphony Orchestra and the first woman to lead a Viennese Orchestra.

Alsop’s artistic success has included innumerable appointments, tours, and recordings. Her many professional accolades include the Royal Philharmonic Society’s Conductor Award and the Ditson Conductor’s Award for the Advancement of American Music. “The Conductor,” a documentary about her, premiered at the Tribeca Film Festival in 2021.

Alsop and Kristin Jurkscheit, a horn player, married in 1990. They are the parents of a son.



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