



# Beethoven BABIES & BATONS

by Sara Gunn

Conductor Sarah Ioannides' life transformed by music and twins

Photo credits: Tom Conzonella

"Twins ~ well that will certainly bring your career to an end."

This was one of the first comments Sarah Ioannides heard when she shared the exciting news of her pregnancy with twins. Recognized by the *New York Times* as part of "a new wave of female conductors in their late 20's through early 40's," Sarah Ioannides maintains an international performing schedule requiring endless travel, numerous concerts, hours of preparation and administrative organization. This and juggling infant twins & a toddler might beg the question how or even why?

In this age of professional equality women are frequently employed in traditional male dominated professions, yet women account for only 12.4% of the country's conductors, according to the latest data from the League of American Orchestras.

"It is important that an orchestra look like its community. Fortunately, we have men and women in our communities with both genders filling leadership roles," states Jesse Rosen, League of American Orchestra President and CEO.

Though female conductors are now more regularly ascending to music director positions at small and midsize orchestras, only two women in the United States run big-league institutions.

"I recognized early on in my training the extreme demands of this non-traditionally female profession. I enthusiastically embraced each of the challenges I faced and still face, though now the goals and challenges are multi-fold with my family and the twins. My life is more complex than ever but so are many worthwhile pursuits. In

fact, I have noticed how the complexities of life often parallel the complexities of great symphonic literature!" comments Sarah.

Marin Alsop, Music Director of the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra and mother to a seven-year-old son notes, "Raising children is THE most demanding job on earth. Nurturing a conducting career isn't far behind! Put them together and it may seem a Herculean task..." She assures Sarah, "it gets better everyday."

Sarah Ioannides gave birth to twins in April 2010. The arrival of Elsa and Karl has earned her the distinction as the only Music Director of two American orchestras who is mother to six-month-old twins. She and her husband Scott Hartman, Professor of Trombone at Yale University are also parents to two-year old daughter Audrey.

In 2009 Sarah was featured in the *Los Angeles Times* as one of six female conductors breaking the glass podium. Hired as the first female Assistant Conductor of the Cincinnati Orchestra, a job she held prior to her current positions she still forges new paths for women conductors.

"I've known Sarah for a number of years, initially through her involvement in various League conducting programs. She is a passionate music maker with a commanding technique. It's been a pleasure to see her professional advancement and accomplishments," comments Rosen.

Currently Sarah is the Music Director of two American orchestras, the El Paso Symphony Orchestra TX and the Spartanburg Philharmonic Orchestra, SC since 2005. In addition to her duties as Music Director, Sarah is scheduled to conduct numerous guest engagements in the United States and Europe during the 2010 - 2011 concert season.

34 TWINS™ Magazine [www.TwinsMagazine.com](http://www.TwinsMagazine.com)

TWINS™ Magazine

"I've always felt the importance of living life to its fullest potential. My pursuit of personal and professional passions has led me to a wonderful place in life! I know managing both career and family will be difficult at times but fortunately my husband's and my careers are in music, and music is a force that bonds and unites people. I strongly believe in its power."

Indeed it was the power of music that rescued Sarah through the struggles in her youth. Music provided a source of inspiration and offered a safe haven from the trials of her life challenged by the painfulness of divorced parents living in separate countries. Sarah saw her father, a scientist turned conductor only once a year.

"My father and I had a great musical bond. I was fascinated with the musical atmosphere of his world; the sounds of the instruments, the interaction of the musicians and his presence on the podium."

Sarah credits her mother with putting her musical passions into productivity through great support and hard work enabling her to study several instruments, including the French horn, violin and piano. However it was not until a teacher at Cranleigh School in Surrey England helped Sarah set future goals through musical accomplishments, that her world was transformed from one of confusing emotions to a life of purpose and focus. Sarah consequently received an instrumental scholarship to Oxford University and went on to earn five degrees from the world's leading institutions including Oxford University, the Curtis Institute of Music where she attended as a Fulbright Scholar and the Juilliard School of Music.



Sarah is quick to mention that musical fulfillment reaches far beyond the satisfaction of mastering a musical instrument and achieving career goals.

"Music provides a great opportunity to build discipline starting with a few minutes of practice each day. I've met many audience members who credit their success as accomplished professionals in various fields to the discipline they developed while taking music lessons as a child, but the essence of music nurtures the human soul through life's journey, and that gift is priceless."

Ioannides believes music has a role in strengthening communication signals bringing common understanding between people despite language barriers. She hopes to eventually study the brain's reaction to music and its potential benefits of healing stress, trauma and neurological diseases through dedicated scientific research.

"Everyone recognizes that music sends messages to the body but I find its capacity to rewire our thinking fascinating. Music helps us become balanced by developing our ability to rationalize and serving as an outlet for expressing emotions."

Ioannides acknowledges the logistics of coordinating demanding schedules presents challenges for her family but states this concern is a challenge for all families.

"Scott and I are committed to addressing each issue together. We trust each other's judgment and have a solid foundation from which to grow. In the end each family seems to find its own unique lifestyle. As I was nursing my twins while studying a score late one evening, it occurred to me that my life is completely contrapuntal!"

In music the term counterpoint refers to the relationship between two or more voices that are independent in contour and rhythm but sound harmonious when played simultaneously.

"Were my current life the inspiration of a piece of music, each family member would have its own unique theme transforming and interlacing, gradually shifting in harmony, sometimes melodious and sometimes chaotic but rooted in its stable environment. My new family life brings me fresh musical inspiration from ordinary everyday experiences. A loving family and a fulfilling career work hand in hand."

As Sarah spoke she cuddled both babies in her arms. The distant tones of the trombone from Scott's practice room filled the air while Audrey danced and waved her arms with precision. This "chaotic intimacy" was charming, rowdy, peaceful and stimulating all at once. I believe I was starting to get it as I realized we can each draw inspiration from Maestra Sarah Ioannides by seeing our own lives as **contrapuntal** no matter which side of the stage we're on. ♥

