
JEANNETTE SORRELL

CONDUCTOR & HARPSICHORDIST

“Jeannette Sorrell... exudes stylish energy – a blend of scholarship and visceral intensity.”
– Gramophone Magazine

Biography: Long, Medium, and Short Versions
January 2018

Long (668 words)

Jeannette Sorrell is recognized internationally as one of today’s most creative early-music conductors. She has been credited by the U.K.’s **BBC MUSIC MAGAZINE** for forging *“a vibrant, life-affirming approach to the re-making of early music... a seductive vision of musical authenticity.”*

Hailed as *“one of the world’s finest Baroque specialists”* (ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH), Sorrell was one of the youngest students ever accepted to the prestigious conducting courses of the Aspen and the Tanglewood music festivals. She studied conducting under Robert Spano, Roger Norrington and Leonard Bernstein, and harpsichord with Gustav Leonhardt in Amsterdam. She won both First Prize and the Audience Choice Award in the 1991 Spivey International Harpsichord Competition, competing against over 70 harpsichordists from Europe, Israel, the U.S., and the Soviet Union.

Sorrell founded Apollo’s Fire in 1992. Since then, she and the ensemble have built one of the largest audiences of any baroque orchestra in North America. She has led AF in sold-out concerts at **London’s BBC Proms** and London’s **Wigmore Hall**, **Madrid’s Royal Theatre** (Teatro Real), the Grand Théâtre de l’Opéra in Bordeaux, the Aldeburgh Festival (UK), the **Tanglewood Festival**, Boston’s Early Music Festival, the **Aspen Music Festival**, the Library of Congress, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York), among others.

As a guest conductor, Sorrell has worked with many of the leading American symphony orchestras and is represented by Columbia Artists Management. Recent engagements include the **National Symphony** at the **Kennedy Center** (Handel’s *Messiah*). Her 2013 debut with the **Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra** as conductor and soloist in the complete Brandenburg Concertos was met with standing ovations every night, and hailed as *“an especially joyous occasion”* (PITTSBURGH TRIBUNE-REVIEW). The same occurred with her recent debut with the **St Paul Chamber Orchestra**, where the TWIN CITIES PIONEER PRESS wrote, *“Other masters of the [baroque] style have been paying visits, but none has summoned up as much energy, enthusiasm and excitement from the orchestra as Sorrell.”* She has also appeared as conductor or conductor/soloist with the New World Symphony (Miami), the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra, the Seattle Symphony, Utah Symphony, the Opera Theatre of St. Louis with the St. Louis Symphony, Handel & Haydn Society (Boston), the Grand Teton Music Festival, and has appeared with the Cleveland Orchestra as guest keyboard artist. In 2014 Ms. Sorrell filled in for British conductor Richard Egarr on 5 days’ notice, leading the complete Brandenburg Concertos and playing the harpsichord solo in Brandenburg no. 5, for the closing concert of the Houston Early Music Festival.

Sorrell and Apollo's Fire have released **25 commercial CDs, of which seven have been bestsellers on the Billboard classical chart.** Her recordings include the complete Brandenburg Concerti and harpsichord concerti of Bach (with Sorrell as harpsichord soloist and director), which was praised by the London Times as "*a swaggering version... brilliantly played by Sorrell.*" She has also released four discs of Mozart, and was hailed as "a near-perfect Mozartian" by Fanfare Record Magazine. Other recordings include Handel's *Messiah*, the *Monteverdi Vespers* and four creative crossover projects: *Come to the River – An Early American Gathering* (Billboard Classical #9, 2011); *Sacrum Mysterium- A Celtic Christmas Vespers* (Billboard Classical #11, 2012); *Sugarloaf Mountain – An Appalachian Gathering* (Billboard Classical #5, 2015); and *Sephardic Journey – Wanderings of the Spanish Jews* (Billboard World Music Chart #2 and Billboard Classical #5, Feb. 2016).

Sorrell has attracted national attention and awards for creative programming. She holds an Artist Diploma from Oberlin Conservatory, and honorary doctorate from Case Western University, two special awards from the National Endowment for the Arts for her work on early American music, and an award from the American Musicological Society, and two different awards from the Cleveland Arts Prize. Passionate about guiding the next generation of performers, Ms. Sorrell has led many baroque projects for students at Oberlin Conservatory and is a frequent guest coach at the Cleveland Institute of Music. She is the architect of AF's highly successful Young Artist Apprentice Program, which has produced the majority of the leading young baroque professionals in the country today.

Medium (500 words)

Jeannette Sorrell is recognized internationally as a leading creative voice among early-music conductors. The daughter of a European immigrant father and an American mother, she grew up as a musician and dancer, and was one of the youngest students ever accepted to the prestigious conducting courses of the Aspen and the Tanglewood music festivals. She studied conducting under Robert Spano, Roger Norrington and Leonard Bernstein, and harpsichord with Gustav Leonhardt in Amsterdam. She won both First Prize and the Audience Choice Award in the 1991 Spivey International Harpsichord Competition, competing against over 70 harpsichordists from Europe, Israel, the U.S., and the Soviet Union.

Sorrell is the founder and conductor of the renowned period ensemble Apollo's Fire in Cleveland. She has led the world-class baroque orchestra in sold-out concerts at London's BBC Proms and London's Wigmore Hall, Madrid's Royal Theatre (Teatro Real), the Grand Théâtre de l'Opéra in Bordeaux, the Aldeburgh Festival (UK), the Tanglewood Festival, Boston's Early Music Festival, the Aspen Music Festival, the Library of Congress, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York), among others. At home in Cleveland, she and Apollo's Fire have built one of the largest audiences of any baroque orchestra in North America. Upcoming engagements include the ensemble's Carnegie Hall debut in March.

As a guest conductor, Sorrell made her debut with the Pittsburgh Symphony in 2013 and was met with standing ovations every night. Recent engagements include the National Symphony at the Kennedy Center (Handel's *Messiah*), the St Paul Chamber Orchestra, the Utah Symphony, New World Symphony (Miami), the Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra, Seattle Symphony, the Opera Theatre of St. Louis with the St. Louis Symphony, and the Handel & Haydn Society (Boston), among others.

Sorrell and Apollo's Fire have released 25 commercial CDs, of which 7 have been bestsellers on the Billboard classical chart. Her recordings include the complete Brandenburg Concerti and harpsichord concerti of Bach (with Sorrell as harpsichord soloist and director), which debuted in the Billboard Classical Top 10 in 2012. She has also released four discs of Mozart. Other recordings include Handel's *Messiah*, the *Monteverdi Vespers* (Billboard Classical Top 10) and four creative crossover projects: *Come to the River - An Early American Gathering* (Billboard Classical Top 10); *Sacrum Mysterium - A Celtic Christmas Vespers* (Billboard Classical #11); *Sugarloaf Mountain - An Appalachian Gathering* (Billboard Classical Crossover #5); *Sephardic Journey - Wanderings of the Spanish Jews* (Billboard World Music #2, Classical #7); and Bach's *St John Passion* (CD with accompanying videos), just released this year.

Sorrell has attracted national attention and awards for her creative programming, which has brought many new listeners to early music. Her contextual and thematic programs often make use of dramatic elements.

She holds an honorary doctorate from Case Western University, two special awards from the National Endowment for the Arts for her work on early American music, and an award from the American Musicological Society. Passionate about guiding the next generation of performers, Ms. Sorrell has led many baroque projects for students at Oberlin Conservatory.

Short (300 words)

Jeannette Sorrell is recognized internationally as a leading creative voice among early-music conductors.

Recent conducting engagements include Handel's *Messiah* in her Kennedy Center debut with the National Symphony, as well as a return to the New World and Utah symphonies and debuts with the St. Paul Chamber Orchestra and the Grand Teton Festival. She has previously conducted the Pittsburgh Symphony, New World Symphony, Los Angeles Chamber Orchestra, Utah Symphony, Seattle Symphony, Opera Theatre of St. Louis with the St. Louis Symphony, and the Handel & Haydn Society (Boston).

Founder and conductor of Apollo's Fire, she has built one of the largest audiences of any North American baroque orchestra. She has led the world-class period ensemble at BBC Proms, Wigmore Hall, Madrid's Royal Theatre (Teatro Real), Grand Théâtre de l'Opéra in Bordeaux, Aldeburgh Festival (UK), Tanglewood Festival, Boston's Early Music Festival, Aspen Music Festival, the Library of Congress, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York).

Sorrell has received national attention for bringing new audiences to classical music through her innovative concept-programs, which often incorporate theatrical elements, folk traditions, and dramatic use of architectural spaces.

Sorrell and Apollo's Fire have released 25 commercial CDs, of which 7 have been top-10 bestsellers on the Billboard classical chart. Recordings include Bach's *Brandenburg Concerti*, Monteverdi's *Vespers*, Handel's *Messiah*, four discs of Mozart, Bach's *St. John Passion* (2017) with extensive video, and 4 creative crossover-folk programs (Celtic, Appalachian and Sephardic).

She holds an honorary doctorate from Case Western University; an award from the American Musicological Society; and an “American Masterpieces” grant from the National Endowment for the Arts for her work on reconstructions of early American music with Apollo’s Fire. Passionate about guiding the next generation, Ms. Sorrell is the architect of Apollo’s Fire’s highly successful Young Artist Apprentice program, producing leading baroque performers.