

FULL BIO (2024-25)

Edited versions available upon request.

Matthew Sheppard

With passionate artistry and innovation, Chicago-based conductor and educator Matthew Sheppard leads orchestras, students, and audiences to transformative experiences across the Midwest. He is the Artistic Director of the award-winning Elgin Youth Symphony Orchestra and the Hyde Park Youth Symphony, Music Director of the Danville Symphony Orchestra, and Director of the University of Chicago Chamber Orchestra and the Gilbert and Sullivan Opera Company of Chicago.

Sheppard has guest conducted orchestras in North and South America, including the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra, the Elgin Symphony Orchestra, the Orquesta Sinfónica Nacional del Paraguay, the Chicago Philharmonic, the Champaign Urbana Symphony Orchestra, the Danville Symphony Orchestra, the Lake Geneva Symphony Orchestra, and the Blue Lake International Youth Symphony. In 2022-23, he was visiting faculty at Northwestern's Bienen School of Music, serving as Guest Resident Conductor of the Northwestern University Symphony Orchestra and teaching conducting.

As the Artistic Director of the Elgin Youth Symphony Orchestra, Sheppard leads a team of dedicated educators in providing a comprehensive music education to nearly 400 students and families each year. The professional repertoire and thematic curriculum explored each year is designed not only to help student musicians develop artistically and technically, but also to prepare them for a future of complex ideas, creative risk-taking, and leadership as global citizens. This approach led to EYSO being named 2021 Youth Orchestra of the Year by the Illinois Council of Orchestras (ICO) and to Sheppard being awarded ICO Conductor of the Year in 2022.

As a teacher, Sheppard inspires students to nurture a deep love and understanding of music and performing. His courses on conducting, musicianship, and active listening have been highly received at Northwestern, the University of Chicago, and the University of Illinois, and he is sought after as a clinician and coach to young musicians across the Midwest. Sheppard serves as past-president of the IL Comprehensive Musicianship through Performance (IL CMP) Committee as it encourages *teaching with intention, and performing with understanding*.

Sheppard studied with Donald Schleicher as a doctoral candidate in orchestral conducting at the University of Illinois, and before that he earned his master's degree in orchestral conducting under Gerardo Edelstein at Penn State University. Past positions include Music Director of the Sangamon Valley Civic Orchestra and Youth Symphony, Orchestra Director at Juniata College, and Assistant Conductor of the Central Pennsylvania Youth Orchestra. He holds bachelor's degrees in Liberal Arts, Music Education, and Violin Performance from Penn State where he studied with Max Zorin.