

Tania León Medium biography (600 words)

Cuban-born American composer, conductor, and educator **Tania León** is one of the most acclaimed and influential musicians of her generation. She was the first Latin American woman to win the Pulitzer Prize in Music in 2021. In 2022, she was awarded a Kennedy Center Honor for lifetime artistic achievements. In 2023, she received the Michael Ludwig Nemmers Prize in Music Composition from Northwestern University and became the first woman to be honored with the highest composition prize conferred by Spain, the XIX Premio SGAE for Iberian American Music Tomás Luis de Victoria. In 2024, she earned the Distinguished Artist Award from the International Society for the Performing Arts. And in 2025, she was the recipient of the Recording Academy's Special Merit Award, the Trustees Award. She was also recognized by Carnegie Corporation of New York as part of their 2025 Class of Great Immigrants, Great Americans, which celebrates the exemplary contributions of immigrants to American life. In addition, Columbia University selected her as the 2025 recipient of the prestigious William Schuman Award, which is given to recognize the lifetime achievement of an American composer whose works have been widely performed and generally acknowledged to be of lasting significance. She held Carnegie Hall's Richard and Barbara Debs Composer's Chair for its 2023-2024 season, and served as Composer-in-Residence with the London Philharmonic Orchestra for its 2023-2024 and 2024-2025 seasons.

As a composer, León has been commissioned by leading orchestras, ensembles, and soloists around the world, including the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Boston Symphony Orchestra, London Philharmonic, Gewandhausorchester, Arkansas Symphony Orchestra, Detroit Symphony, NDR Symphony Orchestra, Grossman Ensemble, International Contemporary Ensemble, Ensemble Modern, violinist Jennifer Koh, The Curtis Institute, The Crossing choir with flutist Claire Chase, soprano Julia Bullock, cellist Alisa Weilerstein, and violinist Jennifer Koh. León studied conducting under Leonard Bernstein and Seiji Ozawa. She has guest conducted the New York Philharmonic, Santa Cecilia Orchestra, the Orchestre Philharmonique de Marseille, the Gewandhausorchester, the Orquesta Sinfónica de Guanajuato, and the Orquesta Sinfónica de Cuba, among others.

Her ground-breaking activities include serving as founding member and first Music Director of the Dance Theatre of Harlem, founder of the Brooklyn Philharmonic's Community Concert Series, co-founder of the American Composers Orchestra's *Sonidos de las Américas* Festivals, New Music Advisor to the New York Philharmonic, and founder/Artistic Director of Composers Now, a presenting, commissioning and advocacy organization for living composers.

Honors include the New York Governor's Lifetime Achievement Award; inductions into the American Academy of Arts and Letters and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences; and fellowship awards from ASCAP (including the Victor Herbert Award), The Koussevitzky Music Foundation, and the Guggenheim Foundation, among others. She also received a proclamation for Composers Now from the Mayor of New York City, and the MadWoman Festival Award in Music in Spain.

As an educator, León has guest-lectured and served as Visiting Professor at Harvard University, Yale University, Chicago University, Musikschule in Hamburg, and others. She has received Honorary Doctorate Degrees from Brooklyn College, Colgate University, Columbia University, The Curtis Institute of Music, Dominican University, The Juilliard School, Oberlin, New Jersey City University, and SUNY Purchase College. She served as U.S. Artistic Ambassador of American Culture in Madrid, Spain in 2008. A CUNY Professor Emerita, she was awarded a 2018 United States Artists Fellowship, Chamber Music America 2022 National Service Award, Harvard University 2022 Luise Vosgerchian Teaching Award, and New York University 2023 Dorothy Height Award. In 2023, Columbia University's Rare Book & Manuscript Library acquired Tania's León's archive. In 2024, Brooklyn College announced the creation of the Tania León Chair of Music, the institution's first-ever endowed chair of music.