



Laureate Gala  
Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall



Monday July 1, 2024 @ 7:00pm



James Welch  
Progressive Musicians



Anna Ouspenskaya  
Sound Espresso & Virtual  
Concert Halls



Jack Price  
Price Attractions

Welcome to our 4th Laureate Gala hosted by Progressive Musicians, Sound Espresso, Virtual Concert Halls, & Price Attractions. Today's program will feature musicians from numerous countries who have won our 2023-2024 Laureate's Auditions. Our mission is to help musicians of all ages achieve their goals by advancing artistically through innovative formats of online competitions. Since 2020, we have been hosting online and Internet TV events that provide musicians with a live virtual platform to reach out to world-wide audiences, receive expert feedback from professional musicians, share their artistic views, new albums, and to compete for prizes ranging from our Internet TV showcases, to the most prestigious performance venues around the world. We believe that it is important to recognize all the instruction and support that goes into the development of a musician. We also recognize the value of experience and progress. Progress does not always happen at a consistent rate, it may be quicker at one stage, and slower at another. Aspirations also vary at different stages of life, and from person to person. As one steps out of their comfort zone, it takes courage to share one's art for humanity. Music is an artistic vehicle that brings together storytelling, math, history, art, imagery. Most significantly, it provides an environment and a language for deeply emotional connections. Although music is appreciated by many, art can never be perfected, providing an opportunity for eternal evolution and enjoyment. Music illuminates the gifts of many cultures, our world's biggest historical events, and continues to inspire stories, movies, dance, and enhance social gatherings. Some key ingredients to strong musical training include engaging highly qualified instructors, supportive family and community of friends and fans. It also demands a disciplined practice routine, collaborations with other artists, and many opportunities to perform on various stages and venues. There are endless musical possibilities and unique artistic voices being discovered. We are thrilled to be working with an amazing team of professionals that continue educating, encouraging, and rewarding musicians of all ages and stages of their careers. Today we are honored to have pianist James Adler to offer the James Adler Audience Favorite Award, as well as to present additional awards from iClassical Academy.

It would be impossible for us to continue these types of events without the dedication and support of all our families and everyone who contributed! THANK YOU FOR EVERYTHING! Enjoy the Gala!

Progressive Musicians  
Sound Espressivo  
Virtual Concert Halls &  
Price Attractions  
proudly presents its

*6th*

LAUREATE GALA

*Weill Recital Hall at*

*Carnegie Hall*

July 1, 2024

with the Lehner Quartet

the Bayberry Quartet

the New Jersey Guitar Ensemble

the Castanets of Madrid

Program July 1, 2024; 7:00pm. Weill Recital Hall at  
Carnegie Hall

String Quartet No. 2 'In floribus' (in two movements) \*Livia Teodorescu-Ciocănea  
The Bayberry Quartet  
Nurit Pachet & Steffani Kitayama, violins;  
Gabe Bolkosky, viola; Laura Usiskin, cello

Andromache \*Ahmed Karam  
II. Do You Know?  
The Lehner Quartet  
Vladimir Dyo & Yevgeniy Dyo, violins;  
Joseph Kauffman, viola; Igor Zubkovsky, cello  
Jessica Thompson, soprano

Australian Images \*Jana Skarecky  
I. Kata Tjuta (In memoriam Peter Sculthorpe)  
II. Uluru  
III. Ubirr  
IV. Karrimurra Waterfall  
The Lehner Quartet

Prelude from the Suite No. 1 in G Major J.S. Bach  
Elizabeth Haydon, cello

Nocturne in E-flat Major Chopin  
Lucia Tang, piano

Just Shortly Before Midnight Helmut Lipsky (Bach/Thelonious Monk)  
Christina Ebersohl-Van Scyoc, viola

Villanelle Eva dell'Acqua  
Giovanna Yaqi Yang, soprano  
Mădălina-Claudia Dănilă, piano

The Neon Pterodactyl \*Francis Schwartz  
Sophie Dunér, mezzo-soprano  
Vladimir Dyo, violin  
Jennifer Savage, piano

Mosaic in Two Panels \*Joel Feigin  
The Lehner Quartet

String Quartet "In Modo Lidico" (in three movements) \*Tatiana Mikova  
The Lehner Quartet

# New Jersey Guitar Orchestra

*Jayson Martinez, director*

Juan Carlos Rodriguez Argaez, John Asmuth, Martin Brounstein, Patrick Callahan,  
David Chidsey, Michele Fiorindo, Rick Florio, Jordyn Gallagher, Diego Gallardo,  
Crystal Gaynor, Lucy Gomez, Sandy Meltzer, Omar Reyes, Steve Sabet,  
Gioconda Simmonds Zanetti, & Jeffrey Wilt

Mbira  
Autumnal  
Catwalk  
Spin

William Kanengiser  
Matthew Halper  
Andrew York  
Andrew York

## Castanets of Madrid

*Teresa Laiz, Music Director*

*Manuel Casares (Pianist)*

Marta Casas (Soprano & Castanets soloist), Jenaro Sosa (First prize winner in the II International Castanet Competition), Nora Muñoz (Castanets soloist), Florencia Fourcade (Castanets soloist), Roxana Prast (Castanets soloist), Paloma Aguado, Reema Ayache, Yara Ayache, Carmen Benayas, Lola Bernabeu, Ana Cristina Dias, Carmen Fernández, Carmen Gracián, Bárbara Martín, Karolina Pek, Christina Penney, Luz Ruiz, Irene Valcárcel, Lourdes Vita, & Pilar Vita

Piano Sonata No. 11 in A Major, K. 331  
III. Rondo alla turca: Allegretto

W. A. Mozart

Castanets Choir

‘Non si dà follia maggiore’, from ‘Il Turco in Italia’  
Marta Casas & Teresa Laiz

G. A. Rossini

Olê de la Curra

Anónimo

Castanets Choir

Zorongo gitano, from Canciones Españolas Antiguas  
Castanets Choir

F. G<sup>a</sup>. Lorca

III. Gracia (El Vito), from Danses Andalouses  
Jenaro Sosa (1st prize in the II International Castanets Competition “Teresa Laiz”)

M. Infante

Intermedio, from ‘La Boda de Luis Alonso’  
Teresa Laiz

G. Giménez

Gran Jota, from ‘La Dolores’

T. Bretón

Castanets Choir

# The Host



## Steve Robinson

Steve Robinson is an American radio manager, producer and executive producer. He has held senior management positions with numerous American radio stations, including WFMT and the WFMT Radio Network/Chicago, WBUR/Boston, WGBH/Boston, WCRB/Boston, KPFA/ Berkeley, WBGO/Newark, Vermont Public Radio and Nebraska Public Radio Network. Robinson served as general manager of the statewide Nebraska Public Radio Network (1990-2000) and WFMT and the WFMT Radio Network from 2000 until October 2016. A 50-year radio veteran, he has produced programs ranging from classical music documentaries to public affairs programs and has directed over 100 on-air pledge drives. In 1984, he co-founded AIR, the Association of Independents in Radio, a service organization to assist independent radio producers in the United States. Robinson wrote AIR's first two successful grants from the New York State Council on the Arts and the National Endowment for the Arts. Throughout his career, Robinson has produced dozens of radio programs that have been heard throughout the world, including live broadcasts from Salzburg, Austria (on the occasion of Mozart's 250th birthday); Durbin, South Africa (for the world premiere for the opera, "Princess Magogo"); Quebec City, Canada (for a live broadcast of Mahler's Symphony of a Thousand with 1000 performers); Jerusalem, Israel (for a broadcast from the Jerusalem International Chamber Music Festival); and has produced numerous live broadcasts from Chicago and throughout the U.S. He has worked with William Schuman, Elliott Carter, Charles Dodge, Roger Reynolds, Alan Hovhaness and other composers on programs about their music. In 2003, he created the daily classical music appreciation radio program, Exploring Music with Bill McGlaughlin. The series is carried by state networks throughout the world including Australia and China. At the WFMT Radio Network he created the first classical music radio exchange between the United States and China. In 2000, Robinson became the general manager of WFMT and the WFMT Radio Network. Founded in 1951, WFMT is considered as one of the most admired classical music stations in the U.S. and under his leadership many new programs were added to the local schedule, including Intro- ductions, Impromptu and others. Robinson worked on diversifying the programs of WFMT by expanding the amount of live broadcasting from the station. One of his most important initiatives at the WFMT Radio Network was the creation of Exploring Music with Bill McGlaughlin, in 2003. This daily, one-hour music appreciation program is heard on over 60 U.S. stations and has a weekly audience of over 400,000 unique listeners. The pro- gram is also heard in Australia, Guam, the Philippines and in Beijing. Initial funding for Exploring Music was provided by the National Endowment for the Arts with additional funding from individuals and foundations. The station under his leadership focused on live music by broadcasting a wide array of local Chicago groups and ensembles. In 2007, the Chicago Tribune named him "Chicagoan of the Year" in the arts. In 2015, he executed a cross-cultural broadcast relationship between America and China by exporting to China for the first time broadcasting concerts by the NY Philharmonic, LA Philharmonic, San Francisco Symphony, Dallas Symphony, Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center and Carnegie Hall. He also arranged for concerts from the Shanghai Spring International Music Festival and the Shanghai Symphony Orchestra to be exported to the West with broadcasts in the U.S., Canada and Europe. In 2004 and again in 2010, Robinson created and produced two, live, 17-hour fundraising campaigns involving all Chicago radio and TV stations to aid victims of the tsunami in the southeast and the earthquake in Haiti. Each campaign raised over \$3 million. Robinson received two Wesbury Award from the American Red Cross of Greater Chicago for the fundraising campaigns. In 2008, Robinson and Bill McGlaughlin received the Dushkin Award for Exploring Music with Bill McGlaughlin from the Music Institute of Chicago. He has received local and national awards for his work in Chicago, including the Champion Award from the Merit School of Music, the ASCAP/Deems Taylor Award for creative programming and others.

# The Bayberry Quartet



Nurit  
Pacht

Violin

Violinist NURIT PACT was a top prize winner in international competitions including the Irving Klein International Music Competition in California and the Tibor Varga International Violin Competition in Switzerland. As a soloist she was featured in major world events such as the European conference for the inauguration of the Euro in Brussels and under the auspices of the European Commission and United Nations she toured the former Yugoslavia, during the cease-fire in 1996. In 2015, she performed for Pope Francis on his visit to New York and gave a State Department funded recital tour of Ukraine. She has collaborated with stage director Robert Wilson, choreographers such as Bill T. Jones and has worked closely with many of today's celebrated composers. She has toured as soloist with orchestras around the world including the Houston Symphony, the Pacific Symphony, the Rhode Island Philharmonic and the Israel Chamber Orchestra. The Israeli Composer Noam Sheriff dedicated the violin concerto "Dibrot" to her and she performed it in several prestigious venues of Israel. As a baroque violinist, she has a master's degree from Juilliard's Historical Performance program. Ms. Pacht has recorded for Nimbus Records and Toccata Classics.



Steffani  
Kitayama

Violin

Violinist STEFFANI KITAYAMA splits her time performing, teaching, and dancing with a small ballet company in Michigan. She holds performance degrees from the University of Cincinnati College Conservatory Music and Northwestern University where she studied with Won Bin Yim and Blair Milton. While residing in District of Columbia the past few years, she performed with the Grammy nominated Inscape Chamber Orchestra, the New Orchestra of Washington and various chamber music collaborations throughout the States. A passionate chamber musician, she has studied with some of the great quartet players, notably Mathias Tacke of the Vermeer Quartet and has performed in collaboration with Yo-Yo Ma, Simon Fischer, Peter Salaff, and members of the Cavani Quartet, Lincoln Trio and Artemis Quartet. As a teacher, she has taught in a variety of settings from public school outreach to group classes and private lessons. She currently maintains a private studio with her husband, Gabe Bolkosky in Ann Arbor, Michigan and teaches at institutes across the States and abroad.



# Gabe Bolkosky

Viola

Violist GABE BOLKOSKY has performed and taught across the United States and abroad. Primarily a violinist, he performs a diverse repertory of classical and contemporary works with different collaborative artists from many genres of music making. Gabe released seven CDs that show his breadth as a musician focused in the areas of contemporary music, jazz and tango as well as traditional classical music. Over the last two decades, Gabe spent six years as Guest Artist at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor teaching violin and chamber music and as the Executive Director of The Phoenix Ensemble, a nonprofit organization dedicated to being a musical resource for artists and educational institutions. Gabe also directs PhoenixPhest! and PhoenixPhest! Grande, two amateur chamber music festivals held each May and August intent on creating an environment open to all levels and ages of musicians. Recently, he founded the organization, Musicians Take a Stand, encouraging musicians to hold concerts for humanitarian causes and raise money through social media platforms.



# Laura Usiskin

Cello

Cellist LAURA USISKIN has performed throughout North America and Europe in such venues as the Kennedy Center, Alice Tully Hall, Palazzo Chigi Saracini (Italy), Weill Hall, and Barge Music. With a penchant for music both old and new, she worked as a Baroque cellist and has also premiered dozens of works as well as commissioned works in her name. In 2011, Usiskin founded the Montgomery Music Project, an El Sistema strings program for students in Montgomery, Alabama. The program has given intensive string instruction to hundreds of low-income children across three counties. Usiskin has held orchestral positions with the New Haven Symphony, Jacksonville Symphony, and Orchestra Iowa. In addition to the Bayberry String Quartet, Usiskin is a core member of the Atlanta-based new music group ensemble vim. She has served on the faculty at the University of Alabama at Birmingham, through which she founded the series “Chamber Music @ AEIVA,” as well as Birmingham-Southern College. Usiskin graduated cum laude with a Bachelor of Arts in Neuroscience and Behavior from Columbia University, Master of Music from The Juilliard School, and Doctor of Musical Arts from the Yale School of Music, where she was awarded the Aldo Parisot Prize. She currently lives in Atlanta.

# The Lehner Quartet



Vladimir  
Dyo  
Violin

Since his debut with the Kazakh State Symphony Orchestra at age 12, Vladimir Dyo has toured and performed at prestigious venues of the former USSR, Europe, Asia, and the United States, including Carnegie Hall, Walt Disney Hall, Seoul Arts Center, Rachmaninoff Hall, Tchaikovsky Hall, Column Hall, Queen Elizabeth Hall, KBS Hall, UNESCO, United Nations General Headquarters etc. His individual tone and personal approach to phrasing set him apart from his peers. Critics write: “His mystic contour merged with the instrument and hypnotized the audience. Subtlety and flawlessness of Rachmaninoff’s endlessly versatile music created such an emotional reaction with the audience that many had tears in their eyes...” (N. Zemlyakova, musicologist). “Dyo’s Sarasate was dazzling.” (Michael Church, BBC World Service). “Vladimir Dyo is a violinist who plays with incredible energy and electricity. His rendition of my LEX was spectacular. He is a major talent who has a very bright future ahead!” (Michael Daugherty, Grammy winner composer).



Yevgeniy  
Dyo  
Violin

“Elegant violinist” — Luis Biava, Principal and Conductor-in-Residence Emeritus Philadelphia Orchestra “Control, solidity and beauty — who could ask for more?” — Jeffrey Solow American String Teachers Association President “His is fine, sylvan sound, a combination of secure intonation and lithe bow arm. Throughout, Mr. Dyo’s playing was elegant, subtle at times, imperious at others, dramatic, and remarkable.” — Dr. David Cannata Since his debut with the Kazakh State Orchestra at the age of nine, Yevgeniy Dyo has performed at prestigious venues in the former Soviet Union, Europe, Asia, Canada, and the United States, including Carnegie Hall, Alice Tully Hall, Kimmel Center, Tchaikovsky Hall, Mozarteum Wiener Saal, Meyerson Hall, Astana Philharmonic Society Presidential Hall, Embassies of the Vatican and South Korea, and the United Nations General Headquarters. He has won numerous awards from foundations and national and international competitions, including the grand prize at the Shabyt International Chamber Music Competition, Astana, Kazakhstan, and the International Organization “New Names” Award, Moscow, Russia.



# Joseph Kauffman

Viola

Violinist/Violist Joseph Kauffman has studied with Yayoi Numazawa of the Philadelphia Orchestra, James Lyon and Max Zorin of The Pennsylvania State University, and Dr. Eduard Schmieder of Temple University. Kauffman holds violin performance degrees from Penn State (BM) University and Temple University (MM). He is currently a DMA candidate at Temple University. Kauffman has performed in many of the most prestigious concert halls throughout the world including Tchaikovsky Hall, Disney Hall, Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, the Kimmel Center, the Mariinsky Theatre, and the Kennedy Center amongst others. Kauffman received 1st Prize in the MTNA chamber music competition, and was the winner of the Beene, Kroulik, and Brewster solo competitions. He was awarded the Albert Tashjian and Max Aronoff Prizes by Temple University for excellence in performance and teaching, and the creative achievement award by Penn State University for his memorable performances. He has performed as a soloist with the PSU Philharmonic, Williamsport Chamber Orchestra, Temple Symphony Orchestra, and others.



# Igor Zubkovsky

Cello

Igor Zubkovsky started playing cello in his native Russia. He first appeared as a soloist with the Minsk State Philharmonic Orchestra at the age of twelve, performing the Haydn C Major Cello Concerto. Later, he studied at the Moscow Conservatory with Natalia Shakhovskaya, the Gold Medalist of the 1962 Tchaikovsky Competition. Mr. Zubkovsky won top prizes at international competitions, including the International Cello Competition in Minsk, Belarus (II prize), and the Tansman Competition in Lodz, Poland (Grand Prix). As a member of “The Brahms Trio” in Moscow, he won 2nd Prize at the Trapani, Italy and 1st Prize at the Weimar, Germany International Chamber Music Competitions. With a remarkable record of performances, awards and academic distinctions, Mr. Zubkovsky was awarded a full scholarship to the Peabody Conservatory of Music where he earned a Graduate Performance Diploma. Since 2003, Mr. Zubkovsky has been a member of the Kennedy Center Opera House Orchestra, and continues to perform extensively as a soloist and chamber musician. He has appeared at Merkin Concert Hall in New York, at the prestigious Newport Music Festival, and has performed recitals in Massachusetts and at the Kennedy Center in Washington, DC. Live recordings of those concerts are frequently broadcast on TV and over the Internet. A founding member of The Lehner String Quartet, he was also a cellist of the critically-acclaimed Veronika String Quartet in 2021-2022.

# 2024-2025 Season

## Concerts

November 24, 2024 - Laureate Gala in Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall  
Featuring The New York Chamber Players

November 26, 2024 - The Price Gala in Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall  
Featuring Orchestra Manhattan

December 5, 2024 - Orquesta Filarmónica Municipal de Guayaquil in Ecuador  
February 17, 2025 - Laureate Gala in Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall  
Featuring The Lehner Quartet

February 20, 2025 - Laureate Gala in Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall  
Featuring The New York Chamber Players

March 29 & 30, 2025 - Boulder Symphony Orchestra in Colorado

April 30, 2025 - The Price Gala in Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall Featuring  
Orchestra Manhattan

June 28, 2025 - Laureate Gala in Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall Featuring  
The New York Chamber Players

June 30, 2025 - Laureate Gala in Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall Featuring  
The Lehner Quartet

September 13 & 15, 2025 - Paducah Symphony Orchestra in Kentucky

# Upcoming 2025-2026 Season Concerts

Royal Philharmonic Orchestra London  
Orchestra da Camera Fiorentina, Florence  
Lviv National Philharmonic Orchestra, Ukraine  
Paducah Symphony Orchestra, USA  
Philippine Philharmonic Orchestra, Philippines  
Orchestra of the Kolarac Foundation, Serbia  
Cairo Opera Orchestra, Egypt  
Slovak Sinfonietta Zilina, Slovakia  
Georgian Sinfonietta, Georgia  
Butler Philharmonic Orchestra, USA

## Season Auditions

ALL INSTRUMENTS AND VOICE NO AGE RESTRICTIONS

**AUDITIONS TO PERFORM ON OUR EVENTS  
AT WEILL RECITAL HALL AT CARNEGIE HALL  
AND WITH ORCHESTRAS WORLDWIDE**

Logos included in the banner:  
- butler philharmonic  
- BOULDER SYMPHONY & MUSIC ACADEMY  
- Lviv National Philharmonic  
- Cairo Opera Orchestra  
- Royal Philharmonic Orchestra  
- PADUCAH SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA  
- Philippine Philharmonic Orchestra  
- Cairo Opera House  
- SLOVAK SINFONIETTA Zilina  
- New York Orchestra  
- Orquesta Filarmonica Municipal de Guayaquil  
- ORCHESTRA DA CAMERA FIORENTINA

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*We thank you for your efforts and applaud you on your student success!*

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## Special Thanks

*Jack Price*

*Ann Lathan Kerzner*

*The Staff of PianoPiano Studios*

*James Greening-Valenzuela*

# Special Thanks



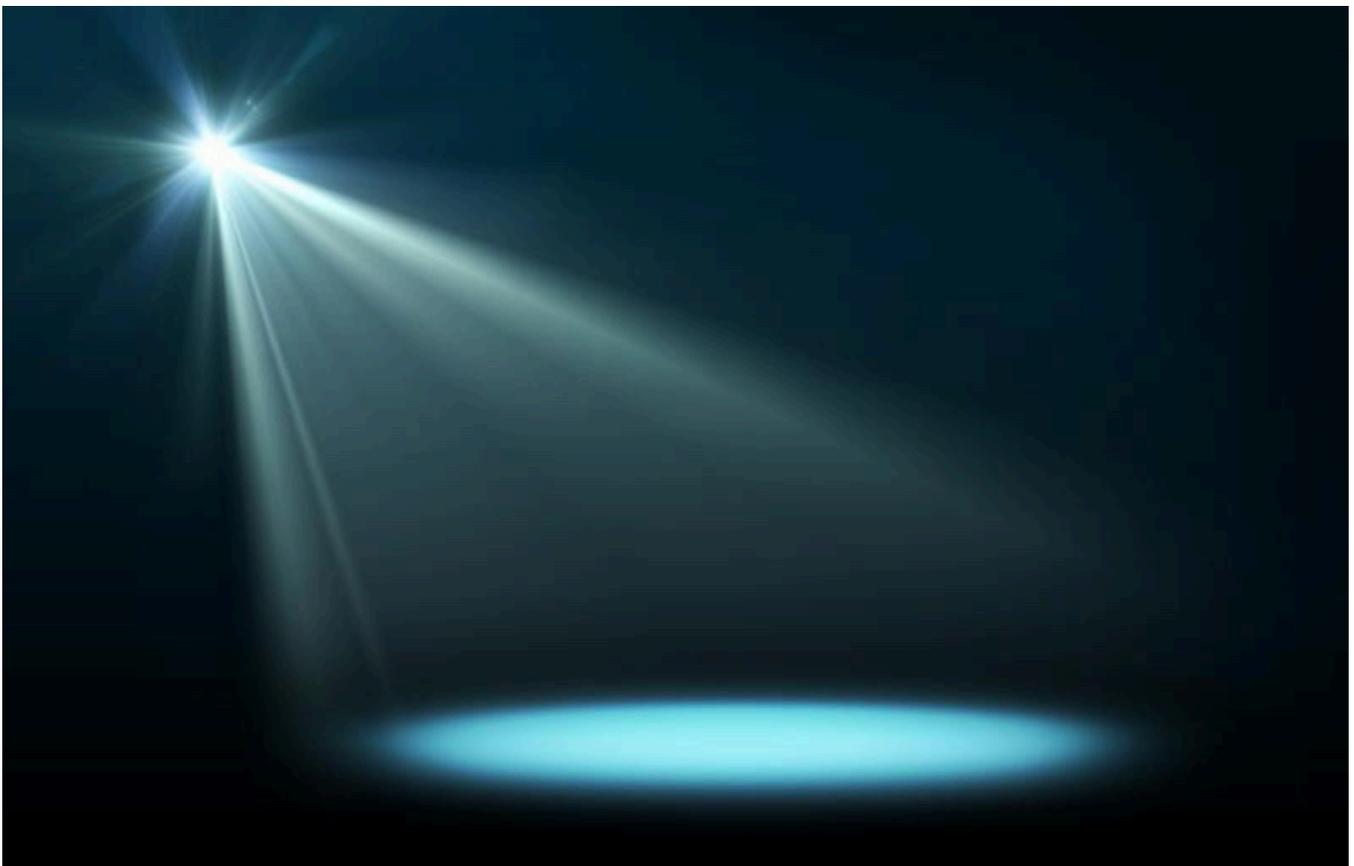
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**Materials required:** Headshot, resume and no less than two (2) VIDEO links--performed during the past 12 months--featuring your LIVE singing. Singers will be evaluated via video submissions of live performance. There is no application fee.

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# Collaborative Pianist



Jennifer  
Savage

Jennifer Savage received her Master from the Manhattan School of Music, New York, studying piano performance with Arkady Aronov and Efrem Briskin under the Elva van Gelder Memorial and Constance Keene piano scholarship. She studied at the MSM Precollege with Efrem Briskin and at the Levine School of Music with Dr. Anna Ouspenskaya. An avid performer, Jennifer has appeared as a soloist with the Virtuosi Brunensis Orchestra and at prestigious venues such as the Kennedy Center in Washington, DC, Carnegie Weill Recital Hall, Kauffman Center's Merkin Hall, historical Palazzo dei Priori in Perugia Italy, the DiCapo Opera Theater in New York, and the Kimmel Center in Philadelphia. Jennifer has won numerous competitions, both in solo and chamber music, performing at Embassy of Italy, Mexican Cultural Institute, Lyceum in Alexandria, featured on Cable TV: A Holiday Recital, the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, Netherlands Embassy, Alden Theater Music Friends Concert, as well as giving a lecture-concert in Wuhan, China.

# Jayson Martinez



## Founder and Conductor of the New Jersey Guitar Orchestra

Guitarist and educator Mr. Jayson Martínez is recognized as the first guitar major in the history of the prestigious Arts High School in Newark, NJ, the nation's first high school of the visual and performing arts. Now, as Director of Guitar Studies at his Alma Mater, Mr. Martínez has garnered several awards, including the 2018 Teacher of the Year Award and a nominee for the GRAMMY Music Educator's Award. His students have also won several awards, and have been featured in a multitude of venues across the country. These include performing for the United States Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona in Washington DC, NAFME All-National Festivals, and opening for the Grammy Award duo Rodrigo y Gabriela.

Jayson attended New Jersey City University, where he studied under the tutelage of Dr. Ana María Rosado, and earned degrees in Music Education (B.A.), Music Performance (M.Mus.), and Educational Supervision and Administration (M.EdLd.). He was a featured soloist who performed for many renowned classical guitarists, including Jason Vieaux, Ben Verdery, Roland Dyens, and William Kanengiser. As a doctoral candidate at Liberty University, he is conducting extensive research projects in the music education field.

Mr. Martínez serves as the New Jersey Music Educators Association (NJMEA) Chairman for Guitar Education, Director of the NJMEA Honors Guitar Ensemble, and National Association for Music Education (NAfME) Eastern Division Representative for the Council of Guitar Education. He is also an adjunct Professor of Guitar Studies at Kean University.

An established classical guitarist, Mr. Martínez served as the concertmaster for the renowned New York City Classical Guitar Orchestra, whom performed at Carnegie Hall in 2019 as part of the Aaron Shearer Centennial Celebration. In addition, he is featured in podcasts for Bill Swick's "Guitarists in the Classroom" series and for TopMusic.co.

In 2021, Mr. Martinez founded the New Jersey Guitar Orchestra, where he also serves as conductor. In 2022, the NJGO was featured in NYC Merkin Hall, performing with the United States Guitar Orchestra.

Staying true to his roots, he is also the owner of Tremolo Music Studio LLC in Clifton, NJ, where he provides music education to aspiring musicians of all ages.

# Teresa Laiz



Dancer  
Teacher  
Composer  
and  
Castanets  
Soloist

Member of the International Dance Council CID - UNESCO.  
Director/Founder of the Teresa Laiz International Castanets Online School.  
Director/Founder of the International Castanets Festival.  
Director/Founder of the “Teresa Laiz” International Castanets Competition.  
Director of the Madrid Castanet Choir.  
Orchestra and Band Conducting Studies.  
Degree in English Philology. Doctoral Courses in Linguistics.  
Master in Personnel Management.  
After teaching and performing as a Flamenco dancer, she began her career as a castanets soloist in 2006 composing her own Castanets scores, offering concerts, teaching and writing her own Castanets Method.

She has been awarded three times in international music competitions.

Discography “Repicando el Alma” (2007).

Participation in the Soundtrack of the film The Man Who Killed Don Quixote by Roque Baños, directed by Terry Gilliam 2018.

She has performed in prestigious venues such as: the Liria Palace in Madrid, the Spanish National Auditorium, the Golden Hall of the Musikverein in Vienna or Carnegie Hall in New York.

# Composers



*Jana Skarecky*  
*Composer*

Jana Skarecky is a Canadian contemporary classical composer of vocal and instrumental music – for solo instruments, chamber groups, solo voice, choir, and orchestra. Jana was born in Prague, in the Czech Republic, on November 11, 1957. She came to Canada with her family in 1968. In 1980 she received a Bachelor of Music degree in Honors Composition from Wilfrid Laurier University in Waterloo, Ontario, where her primary composition teacher was Barrie Cabena. She also studied piano with Erhard Schlenker, French horn with Felix Acevedo, and organ with Nixon Mc-Millan and Jan Overduin. She is an Associate of the Royal Conservatory of Music, Toronto, in piano performance. In 1987 she received a Master of Music degree in composition from the University of Sydney, Australia, where she studied with Peter Sculthorpe. Jana's compositions cover a wide spectrum of instrumental and vocal resources. Her music has an expressive lyricism, and integrates a variety of influences from Gregorian chant to Czech folk song. Her compositions have been performed in North America, Europe, Australia, New Zealand, and Japan. The Lehner String Quartet of Washington DC previously performed her "Australian Images" in 2021. The piece, composed in homage to her former composition teacher Australian composer Peter Sculthorpe, evokes Jana's responses to several iconic landmarks of the Australian landscape. Mezzo-soprano Maria Soulis premiered Jana's composition Presences in Toronto in 2022 and New Year Carol in 2024. In 2020 soprano Clarisse Tonigussi premiered the monodrama *The Path before Me* (with text and music by Jana Skarecky) in Waterloo and online. In celebration of Jana's 60th birthday in 2017 a concert of her compositions and an exhibition of her art took place in Toronto – *Time Tributaries, Music and Art* by Jana Skarecky. The premiere of *The Land Sings* for two bass clarinets, percussion & organ, commissioned by NUMUS, premiered in 2017 in Waterloo, Ontario. Her orchestral work *Streams* opened Hammerson Hall of the Living Arts Centre in Mississauga, Ontario. She loves writing for the voice, both solo and choral works, and setting poetry to music – for example, *Green and Gold* for soprano and piano (settings of poetry by P.K. Page, toured across Canada in 2017 by Clarisse Tonigussi), commissioned for the *Wider Boundaries of Daring* poetry conference (Windsor), and the choral work *Song of Life*, commissioned for *Then, Now, & Beyond... a Festival of Music by Women* (Ottawa). Jana's choral setting of the poem *Back to Babylon* by Viggo Mortensen was premiered in New Zealand in 2012. Her one-woman opera *Emily, the Way You Are* was well received by audiences. Some of her choral music is published by Alliance Publications (Wisconsin) and available from Hal Leonard. Jana Skarecky is an Associate Composer of the Canadian Music Centre. She has been Chair of the Association of Canadian Women Composers, and has served on the National Council of the Canadian League of Composers. Jana is also active as a visual artist primarily painting with acrylics, and as a photographer. She often composes and paints in parallel, finding that the two media interact and lead in new directions. She teaches piano and music theory and examines for the Royal Conservatory of Music. She has sung with the Contemporary Singers in Sydney (Australia) and the St. Mary Magdalene's Gallery Choir in Toronto. She is the translator of *The Foundations of Modern Harmony* by Karel Janeček from Czech into English (WLU Press 2024). Many of Jana's compositions are available from the Canadian Music Centre. [www.JanaSkarecky.com](http://www.JanaSkarecky.com), [www.YouTube.com/JanaSkarecky](http://www.YouTube.com/JanaSkarecky).



*Joel Feigin  
Composer*

Joel Feigin is an internationally performed composer, whose operas, chamber, orchestral, and piano works have been widely praised for their “very strong impact, as logical in musical design as they are charged with emotion and drama.” (Opera Magazine). Feigin’s first opera, *Mysteries of Eleusis*, written on a Guggenheim Fellowship, commissioned and premiered by Theatre Cornell, was later featured at the Moscow Conservatory (Russia), and a year later repeated at the Russian American Operatic Festival. A second opera, *Twelfth Night*, commissioned by Long Leaf Opera, has been seen in three productions, in North Carolina, Chicago, and southern California. It has been praised for “many striking passages, hushed and shimmering for lovers, sparkling and cheeky for the comic figures.” The recent California production “brought the audience spontaneously to their feet. Feigin’s magical score is key to that exuberant response.... It’s a sleeper that deserves to be in the repertory of major opera houses.” (Bravo California). Excerpts from *Twelfth Night* have also been presented in the New Works Sampler at the Opera America Conference, 2006, and on New York City Opera’s VOX 2003 Showcase. Feigin’s current opera-in-progress, *Outcast at the Gate*, has had two highly successful workshops, at the Colburn School in Los Angeles, featuring the Brightwork Ensemble and the vocal ensemble HEX, and in New York by The Center for Contemporary Opera. After seeing the New York workshop, critic James Grant termed it a “wonderful new opera... contemporary, but with echoes of the distant past...a closely observed mirror of our time”. Instrumental commissions include orchestral, chamber and piano works such as *Aviv: Concerto for Piano and Chamber Orchestra*, written for Yael Weiss on a Fromm Commission, and heard on Feigin’s widely praised, latest CD, *Music for Chamber Orchestra* (Toccata Classics). David DeBoor Canfield writes that “regardless of the style in which he is writing, Feigin retains his unique compositional voice. This music demands to be heard”, and Ken Meltzer finds it “an immensely gratifying experience.... It’s wonderful to hear a contemporary composer who embraces varying styles and modes of expression without a hint of pastiche, and in a totally convincing and communicative fashion.” (Fanfare Magazine) The CD *Lament Amid Silence* (MSR) presents a large-scale work for solo viola, a consort of six violas, and solo piano, written for violist Helen Callus and her studio at the University of California, and which Ms. Callus has termed “one of the most beautiful and dramatic pieces in the literature for the viola”. The recording contains two piano pieces played by Feigin, one of which, *Meditation I*, has been termed “an as yet unrecognized masterpiece of contemporary piano literature...Feigin is an excellent and most sensitive pianist” (Mark Greenfest, SoundWord Sight). Feigin’s work is also heard on the two-CD set, *Transience* (Albany), which has been termed as a “comprehensive survey of Feigin’s sincere, communicative, and deeply felt music” by critic Hubert Culot. Pianist Margaret Mills commissioned Feigin’s *Variations on Empty Space*, and included it, in addition to Feigin’s *Four Meditations from Dogen*, on her *Cambria* CD, *Meditations and Overtones*. Concerts devoted solely to Feigin’s music have been given in Russia and Armenia, and in New York at Merkin Hall and Lincoln Center’s Bruno Walter Auditorium. Two all-Feigin concerts were presented in Moscow during Feigin’s year on a Senior Fulbright Fellowship at Moscow Conservatory, at the Conservatory, and at the Scriabin Museum. Dr. Feigin studied with Nadia Boulanger at Fontainebleau and with Roger Sessions at The Juilliard School. His many honors include a Mellon Fellowship, a Guggenheim Fellowship, Senior Fulbright Fellowship, and the Edward A. Dickson Emeriti Professorship of the University of California, Santa Barbara. The Joel Feigin Collection at the New York Public Library of the Performing Arts at Lincoln Center opened in 2011. Feigin is Professor Emeritus of Composition at the University of California, Santa Barbara. A long-time student of Zen Buddhist, Feigin studied for many years with the late Sojun Mel Weitsman Roshi. His website is <http://www.joelfeigin.com>



*Livia Teodorescu-  
Ciocanea  
Composer*

Livia Teodorescu-Ciocanea is a Romanian composer and pianist, Professor PhD for composition, forms, analysis and stylistics at the National University of Music Bucharest. Her music explores spectralism, neo-impressionism and postmodernism to a powerful lyric and dramatic effect. She held the title of Adjunct Associate Professor (Research) at the Sir Zelman Cowen School of Music, at Monash University Australia, between 2017 and 2021, currently being Affiliate Professor. In 2022 she was elected a member of the European Academy of Sciences and Arts based in Salzburg. For a brief period, in 2021, she undertook the position of artistic director of the Bucharest National Opera. Since 2021 she has been a Price artist. Teodorescu studied composition with Myriam Marbe (bachelor degree), Anatol Vieru (doctoral studies) and Margaret Lucy Wilkins (UK, doctoral studies). She is a member of the Union of Composers and Musicologists in Romania, and her music has been performed in the USA, Australia, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Japan and across Europe, and by leading orchestras in Romania, including the George Enescu Philharmonic, National Radio and Chamber Radio Orchestras and the Orchestra of Bucharest National Opera. She has been awarded a variety of prestigious prizes for her work as a composer, including those of the Union of Composers and Musicologists in Romania in 2001 (for the ballet *Le rouge et le noir*), 2003, 2006, 2009 and 2016. In 2008 she was awarded the 'George Enescu' Romanian Academy Award for *Romulus and Remus* (a trio for two violins and piano) and, in the same year, the National Order 'Cultural Merit' (Knight Grade). She has written a large number of works for various ensembles, vocal and symphonic. Her major works include: *The Lady with the dog* (2015 rev. 2021) after Chekhov, opera in 4 acts; *Le Rouge et le Noir* (2000) ballet in 3 acts after Stendhal, *Archimedes Symphony* (2011 rev. 2017), *Rite for enchanting the Air – Flute(s) concerto* (1998, premiered by Pierre-Yves Artaud) and *Mysterium tremendum – cantata for mezzo-soprano and orchestra* (2016). Her scores have been published by Editura muzicală Bucharest, ArsPublica (Italy) and Hoeflich (Germany). Commercial recordings of her music have featured on Toccata Classics: TOCC0448, TOCC0595, TOCC0668 (United Kingdom), Move Records (Australia), and Electrecord (Romania). The Toccata album *Livia Teodorescu Ciocanea – Le Rouge et le Noir* was included in the *Want List* (Top 5 selection *Fanfare Magazine*) for the year 2021 by Colin Clarke. Her *Archimedes Symphony* featured on the Toccata album *Livia Teodorescu Ciocanea – Orchestral works* was ranked first in the top 10 Best classical music of the year 2023 in the American Journal *The Absolute Sound* and in the Top 5 selection for *Fanfare Magazine* 2023 by reviewer Peter Burwasser. In 2008 she won an Australian Federal Government grant – the Endeavour Award Postdoctoral Research Fellowship – which was undertaken at Monash University. She has presented conferences in the UK (1996, 1999), Norway (2005) USA (2003, 2005, 2006) and Australia (2008). She has been a visiting lecturer at the University of Illinois-Champaign, USA, 2006, Oslo Academy of Music (2005) and Monash University Australia (2008). Livia Teodorescu is also a concert pianist and she worked for the Bucharest National Opera as accompanist between 1985-2001. She studied piano with Ana Pitiş and Ioana Minei and attended the piano master-classes given by Zoltán Kocsis and Imre Rohmann in the 'Bartók Seminar' in Szombathely, Hungary. As a concert pianist she has performed many classical and modern works of the solo and duo repertoire and has accompanied numerous vocal and instrumental recitals. She has played solo recitals (with Chopin, Debussy, Beethoven, Liszt and Schubert among the composers featured) in Romania, Italy and France, and concertos with several Romanian orchestras.



*Tatiana  
Mikova  
Composer*

Tatiana Mikova is an eclectic, multi-award-winning Czech classical and film music composer based in London. She has composed concert works for symphony orchestras, chamber ensembles, and solo instruments, alongside numerous film scores. Gaining international acclaim for her “Spanish Serenade” and “Fantasia on Moravian Themes” (performed by the renowned Czech Nonet), Mikova’s music has been featured on Performance Today (American Public Media), Classical California KUSC/ Los Angeles, KDFC/San Francisco, and other stations worldwide. After winning a Gold Medal at the Global Music Awards (USA) in 2019 for two nonets, her orchestral piece “Sinfonietta for Orchestra” won 2nd prize at the IV. Best European Composer competition in Austria. Following its premiere in New York in 2021, her String Quartet “In Modo Lidico” was performed by the Lehner Quartet at Carnegie Hall in 2024. As a highly versatile film music composer and orchestrator, Mikova has written numerous scores for feature films, shorts, and documentaries in a wide variety of styles and instrumentations. Her film scores have received over 30 international awards and nominations, including Best Score at the Los Angeles Film Awards, Best Score at the New York Film Awards, Best Composer at the Toronto Film Magazine Fest, Best Score at the Oniros Film Awards in New York, Masters of Cinema in Italy, Rome International Movie Awards, EdiPlay International Film Festival in France and Singapore, and Best Music at the Horror Film Awards in New York. Her film music has been performed by The City of Prague Philharmonic Orchestra and recorded at the iconic Smecky Music Studios with conductors Mario Klemens, Leos Svarovsky, and Jan Chaluppecky. Mikova’s film music scores were featured in the “100 Women Film Composers” Spotify playlist, and British film critic Mark Kermode included her music in the radio program “Classical Music for Modern Life.” Mikova holds a Master’s degree in Music Composition for Film and Television from the London College of Music, University of West London. She studied instrumental composition at Oxford University (OUDCE) and classical music composition and instrumentation under Professor Milan Jira and Moisés R. Sánchez Miranda. She also received a scholarship for a Film Scoring Workshop with Hollywood composer Christopher Young. Mikova further enriched her education by conducting interdisciplinary research, which included directing and producing a short film about deaf musicians. She also completed courses in opera, musique concrète, and experimental sound through Harvard University and Columbia University in New York.



*Francis Schwarz  
Composer*

Francis Schwarz was born in the United States in 1940 and grew up in Texas where he studied with the eminent pianist Patricio Gutierrez. He received both B.S. and M.S degrees from The Juilliard School in New York City and subsequently was awarded a Ph.D. with highest honors from the University of Paris. Dr. Schwarz was Dean of Humanities of the University of Puerto Rico where he also held major academic and administrative positions during his 33 year career at the prestigious Caribbean institution. He was decorated by the French government and awarded the Chevalier de l'Ordre des Arts et Lettres. His music is regularly performed around the world and he is particularly noted for his innovative music theater works that frequently incorporate the attending public as active participants in the performance. His works have been performed at Lincoln Center, Carnegie Hall, The Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C., Centre Pompidou de Paris, The Reina Sofia Concert Hall among other prestigious venues throughout the world.



*Ahmed Karam  
Composer*

Ahmed Karam is a New York-based composer, conductor and guitarist who seeks to bridge the gap between folk music and contemporary styles. Through years of music making in local ensembles, Ahmed wrote for a wide variety of genres, including electronic dance, rock bands and singer-songwriter. Recently, Ahmed composed the music for a short film, I Love Anna, directed by Alyssa Mullings, and premiered in October, 2021 at the REEL Recovery Film Festival and Symposium in Los Angeles's Laemle NoHo and New York's Village East Cinema. He is currently slated to begin his masters in Oscar Bettison's studio at the Peabody Conservatory on a full scholarship. Ahmed has studied composition at The Juilliard School, receiving his certificate in composition from the Evening Division, while he received his bachelor's degree in Fine Arts from Saint Peter's University. He has studied at the Mostly Modern Festival, EAMA, HighScore, LAFCI, and as a bartender in the NYC nightlife - the greatest education of all!

# Performers



*Christina  
Ebersohl-Van  
Scyoc  
Viola*

Violist Christina Ebersohl-Van Scyoc is widely recognized for performances that combine fearless imagination and warm maturity. Joël Belgique, principal violist of the Oregon Symphony, has praised Christina as a new generation of musician: “her talent alone is not enough.... she’s inspiring.” Christina made her solo debut after her Honorable Discharge from the US Army, where she served as an Arabic Linguist. Since her return to the classical world, she has embarked on a multifaceted career, seamlessly transitioning between solo performances, charismatic advocacy, and cultural diplomacy. Her expressive playing and profound understanding of the viola repertoire has garnered critical acclaim, establishing her as a sought-after artist on both national and international stages. Christina’s ability to infuse emotion and depth into her performances has resonated with audiences, creating a lasting impact on the world of classical music. In addition to her solo career, Christina is a passionate advocate, mentoring students and educating institutions on music education for those with disabilities. Inspired by her own experiences as a blind musician, she has spoken at the New Music Gathering, the Music Library Association, the College Music Society National Conference, and the 14th International Vision Conference—to name a few—on accessibility and opening doors for musicians with disabilities. Christina’s commitment to nurturing the next generation of musicians is as notable as her performance career. She has dedicated time to teaching masterclasses and workshops as a Licensed Body Mapping Educator, sharing her expertise and passion with aspiring violists. Working directly with students, she guides musicians towards developing healthy movement practices, preventing injuries, and promoting long, sustainable careers. Throughout her career, Christina has received numerous awards for her contributions to the world of classical music, solidifying her place as a leading concert violist, scholar, and advocate, including the Gilman International Study Scholarship, the National Federation of Music Clubs Scholarship, the National Federation of the Blind Pearson Scholarship, and in 2022, she was named a Pat Tillman Scholar for her continuing service to the music community. Beyond the stage, she remains deeply involved in philanthropic endeavors, supporting initiatives that aim to make classical music accessible to diverse audiences. Christina’s dedication and exceptional skill led her to study under the mentorship of esteemed violists Joel Belgique, Kenji Bunch, and Basil Vendryes. Currently, she is completing her Doctorate in Viola Performance and Literature as an Illinois Distinguished Fellow at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign with Liz Freivogel of the Jupiter Quartet and is the Editor for the Journal of the American Viola Society. She continues to captivate audiences with her soul-stirring performances while contributing to the cultural tapestry of classical music.



*Elizabeth  
Haydon  
Cello*

Renowned for her commanding presence and exquisite tone, Liz has captivated audiences worldwide with her mastery of the cello. A prodigy from a young age, she made her mark on the European stage and even had the honor of performing for royalty. Liz's musical journey began as a child, astonishing listeners on the radio at the tender age of 12, just two years after embarking on her cello lessons. As a solo cellist, Liz has graced the airwaves since her early teens, showcasing her exceptional talent and passion for music. Beyond her musical endeavors, Liz boasts a diverse background in the fine arts industry, demonstrating her expertise in orchestral music, music education, and more. With a Bachelor of Science degree in Physiology from UNSW, Liz is also recognized for her groundbreaking scientific research. She made history as the first scientist to link Hyperinsulinism mutations to Potassium flux and cardiac arrhythmia. Currently residing in Australia following the completion of her Medical Science degree, Liz's dedication to her craft remains unwavering. Her lifelong love affair with the cello continues to inspire and enchant audiences around the globe.

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*Jessica Thompson  
Soprano*

Originally from Voorheesville, NY, Jessica has been performing from a young age. She attended Schenectady County Community College for her Associates degree and completed her Bachelors at the C.W Post Campus of Long Island University. Jessica has performed at the Apollo Theater in Harlem, NY as part of their Amateur Night at the Apollo show which is famous for a brutally honest crowd. Her experience there was one of her favorite performances and was invited back! She was also with the Cecilia Chorus of New York for 10 years as a member and was a Ticket Co-Chair as well. Their yearly season includes two concerts in Carnegie Hall. She currently resides in Brooklyn, NY and is known around the city for being the "Opera Singer of Central Park". Other opportunities that Jessica has had include singing for the American Ballet Theater, the Jackie Gleason Theater, Teatro Grattacielo, the Kingdom Hearts – World of Tres, and being a part of the Dear Evan Hansen Virtual Choir to name a few. She is excited to be here for her Carnegie Debut!

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*Giovanna  
Yaqi Yang  
Soprano*

Soprano Giovanna Yaqi Yang, based in NYC, is an up-and-coming opera singer known for her bell-like expressive voice. As a professional classical singer, she has performed all over the country for opera and concert performances. She has been engaged by several opera companies, including Florida Grand Opera, Music on Site, Inc., Aquilon Music Festival, NJVAC, and others. Recently, she has worked with Florida Grand Opera outreach and had the honor of singing the leading role in the world premiere opera "The Leopard," which was officially released by Naxos Records. Her performances have been reviewed by prestigious critics like OperaWire, The European Conservative, and South Florida Classical Review. OperaWire described her as "exceedingly charming" and "exuberant and soaring." She received praise from South Florida Classical Review, which highlighted her larger-than-life stage persona and gleaming high register. Major opera roles include Lucy in "The Telephone," Zerlina in "Don Giovanni," Pamina in "Die Zauberflöte," Frasquita in "Carmen," Miles in "The Turn of the Screw," the title role in "Lucia di Lammermoor," Norina in "Don Pasquale," Sophie in "Der Rosenkavalier," and Susanna in Mozart's "Le Nozze di Figaro." She is also an active recitalist, having held three voice recitals and an additional lecture recital in the past three years.



*Mădălina-Claudia  
Dănilă  
Piano*

Internationally acclaimed concert pianist Mădălina-Claudia Dănilă has captivated audiences globally with her profound musical artistry and versatility. Mădălina's career is distinguished by her triumphs in prestigious competitions, including the International Piano Competition in Vigo, Spain, and the Charleston 20th Century Music Competition. As part of the renowned 'Mada & Hugh' Piano Duo, she has enchanted listeners worldwide, showcasing her mastery in a diverse repertoire. She was awarded the 2024 Ruhr Klavier Festival scholarship, donated by the legendary violinist Anne Sophie Mutter, together with an invitation to have her solo début in the Festival in May. Mădălina's deep understanding and appreciation of historical instruments and performance techniques have not only enhanced her concert experiences but also fed into her other passion: teaching. As a dedicated piano teacher at Cunningham Music School, she imparts her extensive knowledge and skills to budding pianists, nurturing the next generation of musical talent. Her artistic pursuits extend beyond music, embracing traveling, painting, and literature, which add unique dimensions to her creative output. Mădălina's journey, from her roots in Romania to her profound exploration of George Crumb's "Makrokosmos," underscores her status as not only an international concert pianist but also as an influential educator and a versatile artist in the realm of music and arts.



*Crystal Gaynor  
Guitar*

Crystal Gaynor, singer/songwriter, acoustic and classical guitarist and a self-proclaimed "Late in Life Student of the 6 Stings". As a vocalist, Crystal has recorded and performed background vocals with George Clinton /Parliament Funkadelic, Paul Schaffer of the David Letterman Show, and many others. While serving in the United State Air Force, Crystal performed with the USAF touring performance ensemble, "Tops in Blue." While living in Detroit, by day Crystal worked for BMG Distribution, one of the music industries largest music distributors. And by night, as a vocalist, Crystal recorded and performed on the Techno House and Rock Music circuit with various Detroit artists. Wanting to become a self accompanied vocalist, in 2018, Crystal began her guitar journey, with a local street busker. Wanting to explore the guitar more, in 2020, Crystal enrolled in the online guitar program at Berklee College of Music and received her certificate in Advanced Guitar in 2022. Soon after, Crystal became an active student at the Classical Guitar Corner Academy (CGCA) and Tony's Acoustic Challenge (TAC).



*Lucia Tang  
Piano*

Lucia Tang is a vibrant 12-year-old girl with a deep passion for the arts. She has been playing piano under the guidance of Dr. Anna Ouspenskaya since 2020. Lucia performed Haydn Concerto in D major at Carnegie Gala in November 2022. Lucia's love for melodies extends to her ballet dancing, where she brings music to life with every elegant movement. Her expressive voice adds another dimension to her artistic repertoire, as she enjoys singing a variety of songs, blending her love for music and performance.



*Sophie Dunér  
Mezzo-Soprano*

Sophie Dunér is a Swedish singer, improviser, and composer who travels and performs internationally. Her performances span from the infamous 'CBGB's' to the '13th & 14th Annual Charles Mingus Festival' in NYC, the 'Buenos Aires Festival de Música Contemporánea La Plata,' and the 'Festival O/Modernt' in Sweden. She has been a composer in residence with the US-based new music group 'Present Music.' CD recordings include 'The City of My Soul' (2013) together with the UK-based string quartet 'The Callino Quartet,' produced by legendary Grammy award-winning producer Michael Haas (PARMA). She is also a collaborator with 'Composers Concordance' in NYC. During fall 2021, she toured with Dutch composer Jacob TV, premiering his 'The Freedom Songs' at the 'Concertgebouw' in Amsterdam. She is a four-time award winner from The Swedish Arts Council. Sophie studied jazz improvisation with horn players Hal Crook, George Garzone, and Ed Tomassi, and she has a degree in vocal performance from Boston's 'Berklee College of Music.' She has also studied at the Stockhausen summer courses in Germany, awarded a grant from The Swedish Arts Council. Apart from musicians already mentioned, Sophie has collaborated with Guy Livingston, Francis Schwartz, Paul Clarvis, Don McCaslin, Guillermo Klein, Aaron Goldberg, Dick Griffin, Mark Turner, Seamus Blake, Steve Hamilton, Daniel Schnyder, Eric Segnitz, Gerry Brown, Craig Harris, Steve Swell, José Luís Greco, Hugo Ticciati, Valery Ponomarev, Tommy Campbell, Sébastián Dubé, Eleonor Sandresky, and others. Previous CDs include her solo album 'Strictly Business' produced by Darren Allison (2022), 'The City of Dizzy' together with electric cellist Jeremy Harman (2016), 'Songs Eclectic' together with guitarist Gene Pritsker (2020), and 'The Rain in Spain' with guitarist Rory Stuart, bassist Matt Penman, and percussionist Kahlil Kwame Bell (CIMP). Sophie has also recorded a duo CD with the late iconic avant-garde jazz bassist Dominic Duval Sr (previously in free jazz legend Cecil Taylor's band) in 2014, which is finally set for release in 2024. Her new CD 'Modern Mingus' together with Bertram Lehman on percussion and electronics is also to be released in 2024. Sophie was recently awarded SKR 50,000 (\$5,000) as a composer from The Swedish Performance Rights Organization. Last year, she participated as one of the female composers contributing to Clarice Assad's composition 'TAPESTRY,' as part of 'The Mosaic Project,' premiered in November 2023 in San Diego during the 'Mainly Mozart Festival' directed by Anne-Marie McDermott. Other performances include appearances at venues such as Concertgebouw, Tivoli Vredenburg, November Music (NL), Confidencen, Festival O/Modernt, Stockholm Jazz Festival, Stockholm New Music Festival, Scandinavium, Gothenburg Symphony Hall, Glenn Miller Café (SE), EMX / Sowieso Neukolln (DE), Círculo de Bellas Artes, Jazz en La Costa, Getxo Jazz Festival, Bimbache Open Art Festival (ES), Moods (CH), Baltic Jazz Festival (SF), Pizza Express Jazz Club (UK), Sapporo Snow Festival (JP), Carnegie Hall, Symphony Space, Cornelia St. Café, ShapeShifter Lab, Small's, The Bop Shop, The LilyPad, PARMA Music Festival, NPR, NBC, and Harlem Jazz Boxx (USA). Upcoming engagements include a new duo collaboration with acclaimed pianist Steve Beck. For more info, visit [www.sophiedunermusic.com](http://www.sophiedunermusic.com)



*David Chidsey  
Guitar*

David Chidsey is a guitarist/educator with a broad vision of musical concepts, ideas, and teaching philosophies. After studying music with professors Jeffrey Erickson, William Day and Ann Applegate at the University of Wisconsin-Marathon County College, David entered a college-conservatory music program at Lawrence University in Appleton WI where he studied classical guitar performance with Kevin Gallagher. After graduating from the conservatory, David earned an MM from the UW-Madison where he taught guitar as an assistant to Javier Calderon. He serves as a guitarist in section one of the NJGO.

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*Diego Gallardo  
Guitar*

Diego is a graduate of the Kean Conservatory of Music, holding a B.A. in Music Education, and has been a high school music teacher since 2010. His students have gone on to study at schools such as University of the Arts, Mason Gross School of Music, William Paterson University, Kean University, Montclair State University, New England Conservatory, as well as becoming well regarded area musicians. He has performed at such venues as NJPAC, Merkin Hall, Carnegie Hall, and many others. He serves as a section two guitarist for the NJGO.

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*Gioconda  
Simmonds  
Guitar*

Ecuadorian-born American, Gioconda R. Simmonds Zanetti was raised in the Upper West Side of Manhattan and began her guitar studies when she was six years old at the former City Music School of New York. Other instruments such as the violin, piano and accordion were also explored but the Classical Guitar has always remained her passion. Gioconda holds a Master of Architecture degree from the University at Buffalo. She is an amateur classical guitarist who is excited to be part of Section 4 of NJGO. She is also the proud mother of her two children, Giovanna and Desiderio.

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*Jeffrey Wilt  
Guitar*

Jeff Wilt has played guitar since the early 1960's when his uncle (an organist) took note of his interest in Channel 13's presentations of classical guitar legend Andres Segovia's "Masterclass" television series and purchased Jeff's first guitar. His parents finally relented and engaged a teacher in the mid-60's after listening to Jeff banging on a guitar he couldn't even tune for two years! His early studies tended toward jazz. He lost interest as the jazz became progressively more...well, progressive! After not playing during college, Jeff returned to guitar around 1980 and taught himself classical guitar. As an adult, Jeff has relied on direction provided by a small army of accomplished classical guitarist friends, as well as classes with international concert guitarists at the annual convention of the Guitar Foundation of America. Now retired from the life insurance industry where he was in regional sales management for 35 years, Jeff plays in the New York City Guitar Orchestra and in several small ensembles with friends in addition to performing with the New Jersey Guitar Orchestra. He is on the Board of Directors of the New York City Classical Guitar Society. He is married to Lori Wilt with three adult children, Michala, Carmine and Kathleen. Jeff is also a lifelong motorcyclist and enjoys daily walks with Holly, the Golden Retriever. He is section leader three of the NJGO.



*John Asmuth  
Guitar*

New Jersey native Dr. John Asmuth is an amateur player who picked up the classical guitar at twelve years old, taking private lessons for a time with Alice Artzt and recently with Phil Circle. He enjoys performing not only as a soloist and with Section 3 of NJGO, but also composing and transcribing music. John holds a Ph.D. in Computer Science from Rutgers University, and currently works as a software engineer in Big Tech (TM). He lives in Verona, NJ with his wife, Stephanie, and two boys, Trent and Gavin. <https://skelterjohn.github.io/guitar>



*Jordyn  
Gallagher  
Guitar*

Jordyn Gallagher first started playing guitar at the age of 8. Jordyn went on to study classical guitar at The College of New Jersey, graduating with a Bachelor of Music in Instrumental Music Education, specializing in classical guitar, and a secondary focus on clarinet. Since then, Jordyn has been teaching in the Metuchen school district in New Jersey. Presently, she serves as the director of the 4th, 5th, and 6th-grade orchestras, as well as taking on the roles of kindergarten general music teacher and guitar instructor.



*Juan Carlos  
Rodríguez Argáez  
Guitar*

Juan's first guitar teacher was Ramiro Isaza Mejía, from the National University of Colombia. He studied Music with emphasis in classical guitar with Carlos Rocca Lynn at Universidad de los Andes. He has taken master classes with classical guitarists such as Aniello Desiderio, Betho Davezac, Carlos Barbosa Lima, Costas Cotsiolis, Fábio Zanon, Sharon Isbin, Ricardo Cobo, Lito Romero, Michael Newman, among others. Juan Carlos stopped playing the guitar for a few years to dedicate himself to his other great passion: literature. He holds a master's degree in literature and a doctorate in literature, both from the Universidad de los Andes as well. Over time, Juan Carlos has become a passionate poetry reader who very occasionally comes up with a good idea and/or with a kind of descent verse. He has written two completely unknown poetry books: *Selfies: Plumas de la voluntad* (2017), and another whose title is a little long and he does not even want to bother mentioning. He has been writing a third attempt of his first novel for a few years and at this moment he does not even know if he is going to finish it. In any case, he is not in a big hurry. Juan Carlos has studied literature with personalities such as Sophocles, Aeschylus, Aristotle, Horace, Virgil, and Sappho, to mention only some of the first ones. He has worked in the literary archives of Colombian writers like the poet María Mercedes Carranza and Rafael Humberto Moreno-Durán. His academic interests, among many others, are the theory of autobiography, and the impossibility of the novel of the second half of the XXI century in Latin America (he is not that optimistic). He thinks that this little "bio" could not be written if he had not come across "Autobiography as Defacement" by Paul de Man. That is why he really enjoys thinking about people's bios and, above all, epitaphs. Like everyone, Juan Carlos is a multifaceted person, so he usually rejoices when recalling one of his friends (Vicente Guedes) when he said: "My soul is a hidden orchestra; I don't know what instruments, what violins and harps —[and guitars!]— drums and tambours, sound and clash inside me. I know myself only as a Symphony." In 2021 he moved to the United States since his mother, his sister and her two adorable children are living here. He had the opportunity to teach Spanish at Monmouth University in 2023, although he is still waiting for other opportunities. In 2023 he also joined this amazing group of people who is the NJGO, where he serves as a section one guitarist.



*Lucy Gomez  
Guitar*

Lucy Gomez is one of the first members that graduated into the NJGO from the NJMEA High School Honors Guitar Ensemble. She is currently working towards her degree to achieve her Bachelors of Science in Nursing. She is a proud member of section two in the NJGO.



*Martin Brounstein  
Guitar*

Dr. Martin Brounstein is the Board President of Montclair Early Music. He is a retired attorney specializing in international regulatory compliance with pharmaceutical manufacturing and clinical research regulations. Martin has been playing guitar since the mid 1950s, and has been continuously teaching jazz, pop and classical guitar for several decades. As a member of the New Jersey, New York and Mid-Hudson Classical Guitar Societies, he has been instrumental in providing free recitals to communities throughout the tri-state area.

Dr. Brounstein received a Ph.D. in British Renaissance literature while simultaneously earning his Juris Doctor degree. Further, he holds several high black belts in three different martial arts disciplines and provides free classes in women's self defense. Martin is currently on the board of directors and regularly featured in the Bloomfield Mandolin Orchestra and plays in the New Jersey Guitar Orchestra in section three. <http://www.martybrounstein.com/>



*Michele Fiorindo  
Guitar*

Michele Fiorindo is a professional guitarist who has a thriving career working as a soloist, band leader, conductor, sideman and certified music educator.

After studying classical guitar with professor Christopher Kenniff at Kean University, Michele received a degree with honors in music education and classical guitar in 2007. That study of classical music influenced Michele's style and technique, both on nylon string guitar and traditional jazz hollow body guitar. Other notable teachers that influenced his style are Kurt Rosenwinkle, Pasquale Grasso, John Schofield and Barry Harris.

While working as a music educator in public school systems for 17 years, From 2007 to 2010, he taught guitar at Arts High School in Newark, NJ, where he was the Director of the Guitar Ensemble and the Latin-jazz band, having directed his ensemble on multiple performances on and off campus.

Michele currently works as a freelance guitarist throughout the New York metropolitan area, teaches privately, and directs strings and guitar ensembles in Union County NJ, and is also a member of the New Jersey Guitar Orchestra, an ensemble that collaborates with world-class guitarists and performs in the tri state area in various festival-colleges (Kean-WPU-NJCU-Carnegie Hall).



*Omar Reyes  
Guitar*

Omar Reyes is a Newark native and has been playing guitar since the age of 12. He was introduced to classical guitar while studying with Jayson Martinez at Essex County College. After earning his Associates Degree in Music, Omar earned his BA from NJCU in Music Education. Omar currently teaches elementary and middle school music in his hometown for the Newark Public Schools, where he graciously gives back to his community. Omar serves as a section one member of our NJGO.

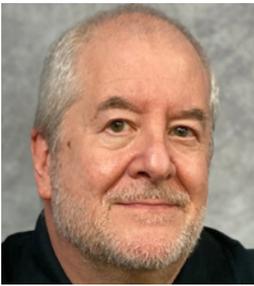
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*Patrick Callahan  
Guitar*

Patrick Callahan has been involved as a coach and adjudicator for NJMEA Honors Guitar Ensemble since its inception and is excited to be performing with NJGO this season as a section four member. Patrick is a passionate educator and has run the classical guitar program at Franklin High School in Somerset, NJ for close to a decade. In addition to performing with the NJGO, he is an active performer for pit orchestras for musical theater.

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*Rick Florio  
Guitar*

Rick is an amateur classical guitarist and is a member of the NJ Classical Guitar Society. He plays in various small ensembles in addition to the NJGO, where he serves as a section one player. Rick is a project manager working in the pharmaceutical industry space. He resides with his wife Joann in Hillsborough and has one daughter and two granddaughters aged 7 and 2.

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*Steve Sabet  
Guitar*

Dr. Steven Sabet is a music teacher at the Thomas Jefferson Arts Academy where he teaches guitar and music technology. He is also adjunct professor at Kean University and has taught at Rutgers where he received a Doctorate in Music Education. His doctoral research was published by the Journal of Popular Music Education. Sabet's guitar work can be heard on several studio albums on platforms like Apple Music and Spotify. He studied guitar at The Hartt School and Florida State University before becoming a teacher and performer. Dr. Sabet serves as concertmaster for the NJGO.



*Sandy Meltzer*  
*Guitar*

Sandy Meltzer began her career as a French Horn player. By the age of 12 she was already a member of the Westchester Philharmonic and the Westchester Symphony. She went on to study at Manhattan School of Music where she earned both her Bachelor's and Master's degrees and subsequently taught in the pre-college division there for 12 years. During this time, she was an active freelancer in the New York metropolitan area performing in groups such as the Julius Grossman Orchestra, American Chamber Opera Company, the National Orchestral Association and the Village Chamber Orchestra as well as numerous regional theater companies, occasional subbing on Broadway and one national tour. She was also a featured soloist with the Village Chamber Orchestra and the Bloomingdale House of Music Chamber Orchestra. By her late 30's, she decided she was ready for a career change and decided to go back to school to become a teacher. Most of her teaching career was spent at the Academies @ Englewood, a program connected with Dwight Morrow High School. While there, she was able to grow creatively and directed every group on campus, from Concert Band and Chorus to Jazz Band and an award-winning A Cappella group as well as directing the annual school musical. She also implemented a guitar program, finally being able to reach the students who otherwise were not involved with music on campus. She is a self-taught classical guitarist and was happy to share this passion with her students. Since retiring from teaching in 2021, she has taken the opportunity to hone her skills as a classical guitarist. She joined 2 groups in this capacity, the NJGO as well as the Montclair Early Music Society where she was recently appointed Assistant Music Director. She feels it is a true privilege to perform with the extremely talented members of the NJGO as a member of section four.



*Manuel Casares*  
*Castanets*

Manuel Casares embarked on his musical journey under the guidance of Irina Moryatova at the age of five, a mentorship that endured until 2022. His dedication led him to excel at the Conservatory of A Coruña, where he earned his Professional Degree with top honors and the prestigious End of Degree Award. He studied at the Superior Conservatory of Music of A Coruña from 2012 to 2017, accumulating thirty honors and culminating in a distinguished Final Degree Recital, on which he achieved a special honor distinction. He undertook a Master's in Piano at the Academy of Music in Krakow from 2017 to 2019, graduating with honors after presenting insightful research on the influence of Spanish music on the works of Albéniz and other composers. Manuel's talent has been recognized through his success in both national and international competitions. He has offered recitals in prestigious venues worldwide and participated in renowned festivals in Europe. Balancing his performing and teaching career with a role of Content Manager at HDpiano, Manuel is committed to sharing his passion for piano music with audiences globally, leveraging digital platforms and technology.



*Marta Casas  
Castanets*

Soprano Marta Casas obtained her Voice degree at the Escuela Superior de Canto de Madrid. She also holds a master's degree in Musical Research and Performance from Rey Juan Carlos University of Madrid, where she graduated with the highest marks. In 2021, she completed a course in Flamencology at the University of Córdoba, earning a perfect score of 10 out of 10. Additionally, Marta has studied the violoncello for eight years at the conservatory in her hometown. She holds a degree in Law from both Spain and the Università Statale of Milan, and a Master's in Public Policy Management from Alfonso X University of Madrid. Marta is proficient in multiple languages, including English, French, Italian, Arabic, Portuguese, German, Galician, Hieroglyphics, and Coptic. She has studied under prestigious lyrical figures such as Josep Carreras, Mirella Freni, Mariella Devia, Ana María Sánchez, Manuel Burgueras, Emilio Sagí, Fernando Balboa, José Miguel Pérez-Sierra, María Bayo, and Delfo Menicucci at the Conservatorio Giuseppe Verdi of Milan. She has performed on various stages in Spain, Italy, the United States, and Jerusalem, and has sung before notable personalities such as H. M. Queen Sophia of Spain on her 80th anniversary. Since 2020, Marta has been a professor at the Higher Conservatory of Music of Castilla-la Mancha. Marta studied the entire Castanets Method at the Teresa Laiz International Castanet School and is a member of the Madrid Castanet Choir, directed by Teresa Laiz. She participates as a soloist and singer in the choir and has co-founded the Compañía Española de Canto y Palillos with Teresa Laiz. Together, they have performed in various theaters in Spain and abroad, winning two awards in international music competitions.

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*Jenaro Sosa  
Castanets*

Graduated from the Yucatán Higher School of Arts with a degree in Classical Ballet, as well as from the Nellie and Gloria Campobello National Dance School with a degree in Spanish Dance. Since 2014 he has continued his professional training in Spanish dance with the Mexican teacher and dancer Pilar Rioja. This has boosted his career as a dancer and teacher of this genre. Since 2010, Jenaro Sosa has worked as a dancer, choreographer, director and teacher in different Mexican companies and institutions. In addition, he has continued his training outside of Mexico, at the Columbus Dance Theater company, under the direction of Seth Wilson and Jaime Kotrba. As a dancer, he has performed in some of the most important spaces in the Mexican Republic - the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM), the National Center for the Arts and the National Palace of Fine Arts - as well as in the United States and Colombia. He is a professor at the Rioja Academy, directed by teacher Pilar Rioja. In February 2024 he was awarded First Prize in the "Teresa Laiz" International Castanet Competition.



*Nora Muñoz  
Castanets*

Since she was a child, she began studying Classical Ballet, Spanish Dance and Mexican Folklore, but it is Stylized Spanish Dance, Spanish Classical and Flamenco dance where she specializes and receives her training at the school of the Mexican master Oscar Tarriba, through the teachings of Ana María Sánchez. She has taken classes, courses, workshops and seminars with internationally renowned Mexican and Spanish teachers. She has participated as a guest artist in various Flamenco groups and shows; recitals and concerts of Classical Spanish Dance, as well as in the Opera Carmen at the “Apollo Art Performance” in California, USA. She has been a teacher of Spanish Dance, introduction to the art of Flamenco and Castanet playing for government institutions and private ones, as well as directing her own Spanish Dance studio. She was one of the four finalists (Second Prize) in the I “Teresa Laiz” International Castanet Competition (2023). In 2023, she received the Degree in the specialty of Concert Castanets from the Teresa Laiz International Castanet School, a school member of the International Dance Council CID-UNESCO (Spain). Currently, she is a member of the Castanet Choir of Madrid, directed by Teresa Laiz, in which she participates as a soloist.



*Florencia Fourcade  
Castanets*

Dance teacher, composer and choreographer. She has taught at the ELINA MOLINA ESTRELLA Dance School since 2000, where in addition to castanets she also teaches classical, contemporary, flamenco and Spanish dance. Since 2020 she has been the Director of this school. She is a castanet soloist trained at the Teresa Laiz International Castanet School. She is a member of the Castanet Choir of Madrid, directed by Teresa Laiz, in which she participates as a soloist.



*Roxana Prast  
Castanets*

She is co-founder of the International Castanet Foundation “Castamusic”. Dance teacher and castanets soloist. After the traditional path of using castanets for dancing, such as Sevillanas, Flamen- co and Bolera School (the latter in the Escuela de Flamenco de Andalucía Course, Lisbon), she decides to deepen her study of this instrument with the castanets soloist Teresa Laiz, achieving an advanced level of Castanets Diploma recognized by CID - Unesco. She studies musical notation and composes around 60 scores that she uses in her methodology. After introducing concert castanets classes in Portugal, she created the EFO Castanets Choir (Escola Flamenca de Oeiras), training the most advanced students and taking them to perform in various shows. She is a member of the Castanet Choir of Madrid, directed by Teresa Laiz, in which she participates as a soloist.



*Paloma Aguado*  
*Castanets*

She has a degree in Veterinary Medicine. After having spent some time dancing flamenco as a non-professional, in 2018 she started playing castanets. She studied the whole Castanet Method at Teresa Laiz International Castanets School. She was a semifinalist in the 1st and 2nd edition of the “Teresa Laiz” International Castanet Competition in 2023 and 2024. She has performed in different spaces as Teatro Lara, Teatro de Flamenco de Madrid, Teatro Reina Victoria de Madrid, Iglesia de San Miguel de Brihuega, el Monasterio de Santa María de El Poular, Iglesia de San Ildefonso de Madrid. She is a member of the Castanet Choir of Madrid, directed by Teresa Laiz. With some other members of this choir they have created the group “Al son de las Castañuelas”, with which they play in nursing homes altruistically.



*Reema Ayache*  
*Castanets*

Being raised in a family with a love for the arts and music, Reema has developed her own forms of artistic expression and creativity. An award-winning artist, she showcases her interpretative and creative skills through intricate pieces of art and with diverse media such as drawings, paintings, and Persian and Arabic calligraphy. Her art and works have been published in both national and international journals, including the Global Equality for Medical Care Organization International Journal Volume I, HopeWorks Howard County 2021, and the Americans with Disabilities Art Contest. She has also been commissioned to design and draw a variety of logos for different organizations and groups, album covers, as well as making and selling stickers. Further, Reema is involved in music, playing a variety of instruments including piano, violin, setar (Persian), daf, and flute. A member of her high school chamber orchestra, vice-president of Youth of the World Orchestra, and the former membership chair of her high school’s Tri-M National Honors Society (a musical honors society). In 2023, she began taking online castanet classes with Teresa Laiz to build upon the skills she had learned when dancing flamenco and has since joined Madrid Castanet Choir.



*Yara Ayache*  
*Castanets*

She is currently a junior in university. Since the beginning, music and the arts have been a vital and important part of Yara’s life. Through listening to the singing of her mother, learning how to play instruments, dancing flamenco, singing, marching band, orchestra, band, creating music groups such as the Youth of the World Orchestra, and constantly engaging in different forms of art and creation, Yara gained an extremely great appreciation for artistic expression. Her interest in music has led her to study and perform a variety of instruments, including traditional Persian instruments such as the santoor and tombak, piano, violin, and clarinet. Some of her musical accomplishments and leadership experiences include having served as her high school’s marching band drum major and clarinet section leader, performing as an invited guest at various university, community, and international events, a member of the Persian National Music Ensemble, performing with/as a member of her high school chamber orchestra at Midwest Clinic in Chicago (2017), and founding and directing the youth volunteer orchestra Youth of the World Orchestra. Having been exposed to and growing up listening to the beautiful, soulful, and expressive sounds of flamenco music, she began pursuing flamenco dance in 2015 and has since trained with a variety of talented artists including Edwin Aparicio, Cristobal Reyes, Domingo Ortega, Rapico, Karime Amaya, Farruquito, Alfonso Losa, Norberto Chamizo, and others and has performed in a variety of companies and venues/events within the DC, Maryland, and Virginia (DMV) area. Beginning her castanet training within the realm of flamenco dance, she joined Teresa Laiz’s castanet school in 2021 to further her skills and knowledge. Yara is now a part of Teresa Laiz’s Castanet Choir and looks forward to sharing this art on stage alongside the choir members.



*Carmen Benayas  
Castanets*

She was a primary school teacher, specializing in English. She is currently retired. Since she was young, she has always loved music, especially singing, and she has been part of various choirs. Her first contact with castanets was at a senior center where this activity was taught. She became fond of it and thought it would be good to advance further, which is when she met Teresa Laiz, her current teacher, with whom she has been perfecting this art for about five years and participating in events in cities such as Seville, Guadalajara, and Madrid. Nowadays, she belongs to the Castanet Choir of Madrid, directed by Teresa Laiz.



*Lola Bernabeu  
Castanets*

Lola holds a Degree in Pharmacy. She began playing the castanets in 2022 under the renowned castanet player and teacher, Teresa Laiz. The same year she joined the Madrid Castanets Choir, founded and directed by Teresa Laiz, and under her direction performed classical, Spanish and popular repertoires in, among others, the Teatro Flamenco in Madrid, The Royal Monastery of Santa María de El Paular in Madrid, Church of San Ildefonso in Madrid, St. Michael's Church in Brihuega in Guadalajara, Teatro Lara and Teatro Reina Victoria in Madrid. The latter in the Castanet Soloists, Masters and Groups Gala within the framework of the IX and X International Castanets Festival. She is a student member of the International Dance Council CID – UNESCO. She is known for her talent in realistic charcoal drawing.



*Ana Cristina Dias  
Castanets*

She is a Banking Director. In 2007 started to learn Flamenco and Sevillanas in Escola Flamenca Oeiras (EFO) of Portugal, participating in all the events of the school. In 2012 she started to learn dances with castanets: Sevillanas, Flamenco and later on Bolera School. In 2019 she started to learn Concert Castanets. Participation in several shows throughout the country. In February 2023 participated in 1st International Castanet Competition in Madrid organized by Teresa Laiz representing Coro EFO, where they were semifinalists. In April and July 2023 representing EFO was part of a castanet choir and performed with the Philharmonic Orchestra of Porto Salvo. She currently studies at the Teresa Laiz International Castanet School and is a member of the Madrid Castanet Choir.



*Carmen Fernández  
Castanets*

My professional life has passed between direct teaching as Geography and History High School Professor and Technical Teaching Advisor at the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Employment. When I reached the end of my work period, I discovered that in addition to enjoying music as a listener and audience, I could practice it through a simple and popular instrument. I joined Professor Teresa Laiz's courses in September 2018 and followed her whole course method at the Teresa Laiz International Castanets School. As a member of the Madrid Castanet Choir I have participated in concerts in various cities Together with other classmates from the same school I have participated in the I and II International Castanet Competition, remaining as semifinalists.



*Carmen Gracián  
Castanets*

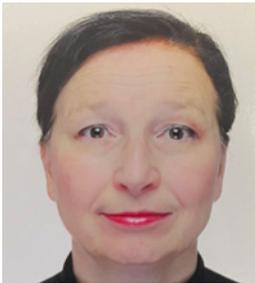
She is a mother of 4 children, retired. Her passion for castanets dates back to her youth, when she participated in a contest at school. Although she didn't play them again for a while, the memory endured. After retiring, she reignited her passion for castanets by taking a beginner's course. Her natural talent led her to pursue advanced training, when she met Teresa Laiz. Over 5 years, she honed her skills and performed at various events, including the 1st and 2nd Edition of the International Castanet Competition in Madrid. Her dedication and talent landed her a spot in the Madrid Castanet Choir, directed by Teresa Laiz, where she continues to captivate audiences with her passion for this traditional art.



*Bárbara Martín  
Castanets*

- 2018 Politics and Administration Degree at Spanish Open University.
- 1997 Law degree at Granada University (Spain).
- 2022 Master's degree in Fundraising Management for non-profit organizations.
- 2000 Master's Degree in legal practices and procedures.
- 1998 Master's Degree in managing small and medium-sized companies.
- 2021 XI Strategic Management and Social Leadership Program by IESE (University of Navarra).
- 2012 4th International Disability Summer School on CRPD by National University of Ireland.
- 2011 Course on the rights of persons with disabilities by Spanish Open University.
- 2008 15th Intensive Seminar on the European Union by College of Europe (Bruges, Belgium).
- 2007 Course in Institutions of the European Union by Spanish Diplomatic School.

She is Vice-President, European Blind Union (EBU) since 2015 and Head of the co-ordination unit of institutional agreements and external collaborations of ONCE since 2019. She speaks Spanish, English and Italian. She is passionate about castanets. In 2021 she started playing them at Teresa Laiz Castanet School. Since 2022 she belongs to the Madrid Castanets Choir and since 24th September 2023 she is the President of Teresa Laiz's Fun Club.



*Karolina Pek  
Castanets*

Karolina Pek, by the artistic name "La Paprika", is a Slovak Canadian High School Music Director at Shanghai American School, Shanghai China. She has studied music in Vancouver, Montreal and Prague where her instruments were piano and French horn. In addition to this, she has studied conducting in Montreal and Vienna. Becoming interested in Flamenco dance has led her to be active in Flamenco dance and percussion in the Shanghai scene. She became seriously interested in the castanets when one of her teachers visiting from Spain, lent her his grandmother's castanets to practice on for the duration of the course. Since then, she is hooked on castanets and loves being a student of Teresa Laiz. She is studying the advanced level at Teresa Laiz Online International Castanet School. She has performed on castanets in Shanghai and Mexico City. She is also a member of Madrid Castanet Choir, directed by Teresa Laiz.



*Christina Penney  
Castanets*

Hailing from St. John's, Newfoundland, Canada, flamenco dancer Christina Penney Harris was first introduced to the world of concert castanets when she was invited to accompany a guitar quartet in a performance of Boccherini's Fandango in 2016. In preparation for this show, she was fortunate to be coached by esteemed Canadian flamenco artist Carmen Romero. The pandemic presented further opportunities for virtual studies, and in 2020, Christina began studying castanets for Spanish dance and concert with renowned Canadian flamenco artist Esmeralda Enrique. In 2021, Christina enrolled in maestra Teresa Laiz's Online Castanet school, and is proud to be in the third year of the intensive program, working towards a teaching and professional performance certification.



*Luz Ruiz  
Castanets*

A lawyer by profession, she has maintained a constant relationship with flamenco and the world of dance since she was very young, participating in performances even internationally. She has been studying concert castanets at the Teresa Laiz Castanet School for 5 years. She is also a member of Madrid Castanet Choir, directed by Teresa Laiz.

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*Irene Valcárcel  
Castanets*

DANCE & CASTANETS TEACHER: Spanish classical dance, flamenco, classic ballet, folk dances and ballroom dances for more than 25 years in different teaching centers, mainly at “Escuela de Danza Irene Zambra” as owner, director and teacher. DANCER, CHOREOGRAPHER & DIRECTOR of “Ballet Español Irene Zambra” for 15 years, making performances in theaters, cultural centers and performance halls. POET & WRITER: I’ve read poems, including my own, at Spanish poetry associations, universities, cultural centers, theaters and national television “TVE” and also had some of my poems published in cultural magazines and anthologies. She has been studying Concert Castanets with teacher Teresa Laiz since 2016. She is also a member of Madrid Castanet Choir, directed by Teresa Laiz.

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*Lourdes Vita  
Castanets*

Lourdes was born in Granada and from an early age performed in amateur flamenco dance groups. Initially, she played castanets to accompany the dance and in 2022 she began studying concert castanets with the renowned castanet player and teacher Teresa Laiz. Currently, Lourdes is a member of the Madrid Castanet Choir, founded and directed by Teresa Laiz, which has performed, amongst others, in the Teatro Lara, Teatro Reina Victoria in Madrid, within the framework of the IX and X International Castanets Festival respectively. Lourdes is a student member of the International Dance Council CID – UNESCO.

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*Pilar Vita  
Castanets*

She holds a degree in Pharmacy as well as an MBA, and has completed postgraduate studies in Cambridge University. Born in Granada, Pilar has had an interest in traditional flamenco music, singing and dancing from an early age, taking classes and participating in amateur groups. She began playing the castanets over 30 years ago, and in 2022, continued her studies under the renowned castanet player and teacher, Teresa Laiz. The same year she joined the Madrid Castanets Choir, founded and directed by Teresa Laiz, and under her direction performed classical, Spanish and popular repertoires in, among others, the Teatro Flamenco in Madrid, The Royal Monastery of Santa María de El Paular in Madrid, Church of San Ildefonso in Madrid, St. Michael’s Church in Brihuega in Guadalajara, and Teatro Lara and Teatro Reina Victoria in Madrid, the last two within the framework of the IX and X International Castanets Festival. Pilar continues to expand her flamenco knowledge, and is currently enrolled in the course Flamenco Vivo, a deep journey through theory and praxis, taught by the Flamencology Department at the University of Cordoba, Spain. Pilar is a student member of the International Dance Council CID – UNESCO. She is a member of the Castanet Choir of Madrid, directed by Teresa Laiz.

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