



VIRTUAL
CONCERT
HALLS



LAUREATE GALA WEILL RECITAL HALL AT CARNEGIE HALL



FEBRUARY 16, 2026 @ 7 PM



Anna Ouspenskaya



Igor Zubkovsky



Frane Rušinović

Welcome to the Laureate Gala, presented by Sound Espresso and Virtual Concert Halls.

Our mission is to support musicians of all ages in their artistic growth through innovative online competitions. Since 2020, we have created virtual platforms that enable performers to reach global audiences, receive expert feedback, share their artistry, and gain opportunities to perform in prestigious venues. We celebrate the dedication of teachers, families, and communities, as well as the courage it takes for musicians to share their art.

Music weaves together storytelling, history, mathematics, imagery, and emotion. It reflects cultural heritage, inspires other art forms, and fosters meaningful human connection. Strong musical training — uniting expert instruction, disciplined practice, collaboration, and performance opportunities — allows individual artistic voices to flourish. We are proud to work with an extraordinary team of professionals who educate, encourage, and recognize musicians at every stage of their artistic journey.

Tonight's program is dedicated to celebrating the cultural heritage of Croatian music through the featured artists performing this evening. Their performances highlight the richness and diversity of Croatian musical culture, offering a vibrant expression of tradition, creativity, and artistic excellence.

Thank you to our families, supporters, and contributors — this Gala would not be possible without you. We hope you enjoy the celebration!

SOUND ESPRESSIVO
AND
VIRTUAL CONCERT HALLS

proudly presents its

4TH SEASON
LAUREATE GALA

WEILL RECITAL HALL
CARNEGIE HALL

FEBRUARY 16, 2026 | 7PM

FEATURING

CROATIAN MUSICAL CULTURE
THROUGH ITS
COMPOSERS AND PERFORMERS

Program

February 16, 2026, 7:00 PM

Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall

Robert Schumann (1810–1856)

Kreisleriana, Op. 16

Äußerst bewegt

Sehr innig und nicht zu rasch

Sehr aufgeregt

Sehr langsam

Sehr lebhaft

Sehr langsam

Sehr rasch

Schnell und spielend

Franz Liszt (1811–1886)

Scherzo and March, S. 177

Scherzo: Allegro vivace, spiritoso – Allegro moderato, marziale

March: Allegro vivace, spiritoso – Stretta – Molto più animato, quasi Presto

La lugubre gondola, S. 200/1

Mephisto Waltz No. 1, S. 514

Zoran Velić, piano

Ante Božić-Kudrić (b. 1990)

Moment Musical in B minor, Op. 7

Jennifer Savage, piano

Ivan Viočić (b. 1982)

Prelude (1994)

Two Preludes (1998)

Variations for Piano (2006)

Suite for Piano (2010)

Ivan Viočić, piano/composer

Ivan Viočić (b. 1982)

Groove for piano (2026), for four hands

(Ivan Viočić, piano; Jennifer Savage, piano)



The Host

Steve Robinson

Steve Robinson is an American radio executive, producer, and media leader whose 50-year career spans some of the nation's most respected public radio stations. He has held senior management roles at WFMT and the WFMT Radio Network/Chicago, WBUR/Boston, WGBH/Boston, WCRB/Boston, KPFA/Berkeley, WBGO/Newark, Vermont Public Radio, and the Nebraska Public Radio Network, where he served as General Manager from 1990–2000. From 2000 to 2016, he was General Manager of WFMT and the WFMT Radio Network.

Robinson has produced an extensive range of programming—from classical music documentaries to public affairs—and directed more than 100 on-air fundraising drives. In 1984, he co-founded AIR: the Association of Independents in Radio, securing its first major grants from NYSCA and the NEA.

His broadcasts have reached audiences worldwide, including live programs from Salzburg for Mozart's 250th birthday, Durban for the premiere of Princess Magogo, Quebec City for Mahler's Symphony of a Thousand, and Jerusalem for the Jerusalem International Chamber Music Festival. He has collaborated with leading composers such as William Schuman, Elliott Carter, Charles Dodge, Roger Reynolds, and Alan Hovhaness.

In 2003, Robinson created the acclaimed daily classical music program Exploring Music with Bill McGlaughlin, now airing on more than 60 U.S. stations and internationally. He also established the first classical music radio exchange between the United States and China.

During his WFMT tenure, he expanded live broadcasting, broadened programming, and launched new series including Introductions and Impromptu. In 2007, the Chicago Tribune named him "Chicagoan of the Year" in the arts.

Robinson also led major charitable broadcast campaigns in 2004 and 2010, each raising over \$3 million for global disaster relief, earning him two Wesbury Awards from the American Red Cross of Greater Chicago.

His work has been recognized with numerous honors, including the ASCAP/Deems Taylor Award, the Champion Award from the Merit School of Music, and the Dushkin Award for Exploring Music.

THE MUSICIANS



Zoran Velić, piano

Zoran Velić (born 1985, Split) graduated from the Academy of Music in Zagreb in 2008, studying with Prof. Đuro Stanetti and guest professor Prof. Karl-Heinz Kammerling. He continued his postgraduate studies with Prof. Kammerling at the Mozarteum University Salzburg, completing them in 2009.

He began his piano studies in Split at the Josip Hatze Music School in the class of Prof. Kosovka Čudina, where he already distinguished himself by winning numerous awards.

He is a two-time laureate of the Daleki akordi Competition (Split, 1996 and 1998), a winner of national competitions for solo pianists (Sisak, 1997; Dubrovnik, 2003), and, together with Marin Limić, a prizewinner at the Piano Duo Competition in Vinkovci (2001).

He won first prizes in his categories at the Zlatko Grgošević International Competition (Zagreb, 2000 and 2002), was the absolute winner of the Etide i skale International Competition (Zagreb, 2002), received first prize at the National Competition in Dubrovnik (2005), and was awarded the Yamaha Award at the Academy of Music in Zagreb in 2005.

Among his numerous concert performances, notable appearances include concerts in Zagreb (Croatian Music Institute; Small Hall of Vatroslav Lisinski; Matica hrvatska), Split (Croatian National Theatre — main stage and foyer; Meštrović Gallery), Osijek (Darko Lukić Memorial), Zadar (Donat Evenings), and Rijeka and Samobor (Samobor Music Autumn Festival). In December 2012, he performed at the charity event Concert with the President for the association Most at the Croatian National Theatre in Split. In April 2014, he performed Mozart's Piano Concerto in A major, K. 414, at the Croatian National Theatre in Split under the baton of Pavle Dešpalj, and in December 2018 appeared as soloist in Chopin's Andante spianato et Grande polonaise brillante at the New Year's concerts, conducted by Hari Zlodre.

Further notable engagements include a recital within the Pleyel Cycle of Svetislav Stančić in Zagreb (2020), a recital at the Croatian House in Split (2021), an appearance at the 68th Split Summer Festival (2022) as a member of the piano quintet Arthesis, and a solo recital at the Croatian House in Split (2024). In May 2025, together with Katja Repušić, he performed Mozart's Concerto in E-flat major for Two Pianos with the Zadar Chamber Orchestra under the baton of Ivan Repušić, and in January 2026 he gave a solo recital at the Croatian House in Split.

He has performed with the Split Chamber Orchestra (Ivan Repušić), the Zagreb Philharmonic (Vjekoslav Šutej), and the HRT Symphony Orchestra (Tomislav Fačini), and has appeared as a soloist with the Zagreb Soloists. He furthered his studies in seminars with K. H. Kammerling, K. Bogino, V. Krpan, Đ. Tikvica, A. Valdmaa, D. Cikojević, I. Kordić, and C. Stańczyk.

Since 2010, he has worked as a piano professor at the Josip Hatze Music School in Split; since 2014 as a répétiteur at the Vocal Department of the Academy of Music in Split; and since 2024 as a piano professor at the Academy of Music in Split.



Ivan Viočić, composer

Born on 24 May 1982 in Dubrovnik, Ivan Viočić completed his primary and secondary music education at the Luka Sorkočević Arts Gymnasium.

He earned the degree of academic musician–pianist and qualification as a piano professor/teacher at the Academy of Music in Zagreb in 2006, studying with Prof. Pavica Gvozdić. In 2012, he completed postgraduate studies in chamber music at the University of Music and Performing Arts Graz in the class of Prof. Chia Chou. As part of the Erasmus student exchange program, he studied at the Institute for Electroacoustic Music with Prof. Dr. Karlheinz Essl during the 2017–2018 academic year.

In 2019, he completed composition studies at the Academy of Music in Zagreb in the class of Prof. Frano Parać. During and after his studies, he has performed regularly as a soloist and collaborative artist throughout Croatia.

Notable performances include concerts with the Dubrovnik Symphony Orchestra, the Symphony Orchestra of the Academy of Music in Zagreb, and the Zagreb Youth Orchestra, as well as appearances in the Virtuoso concert series, at the Krk Summer Evenings, the Epidaurus Festival, the Darko Lukić Young Artists Tribune, and the Osor Musical Evenings.

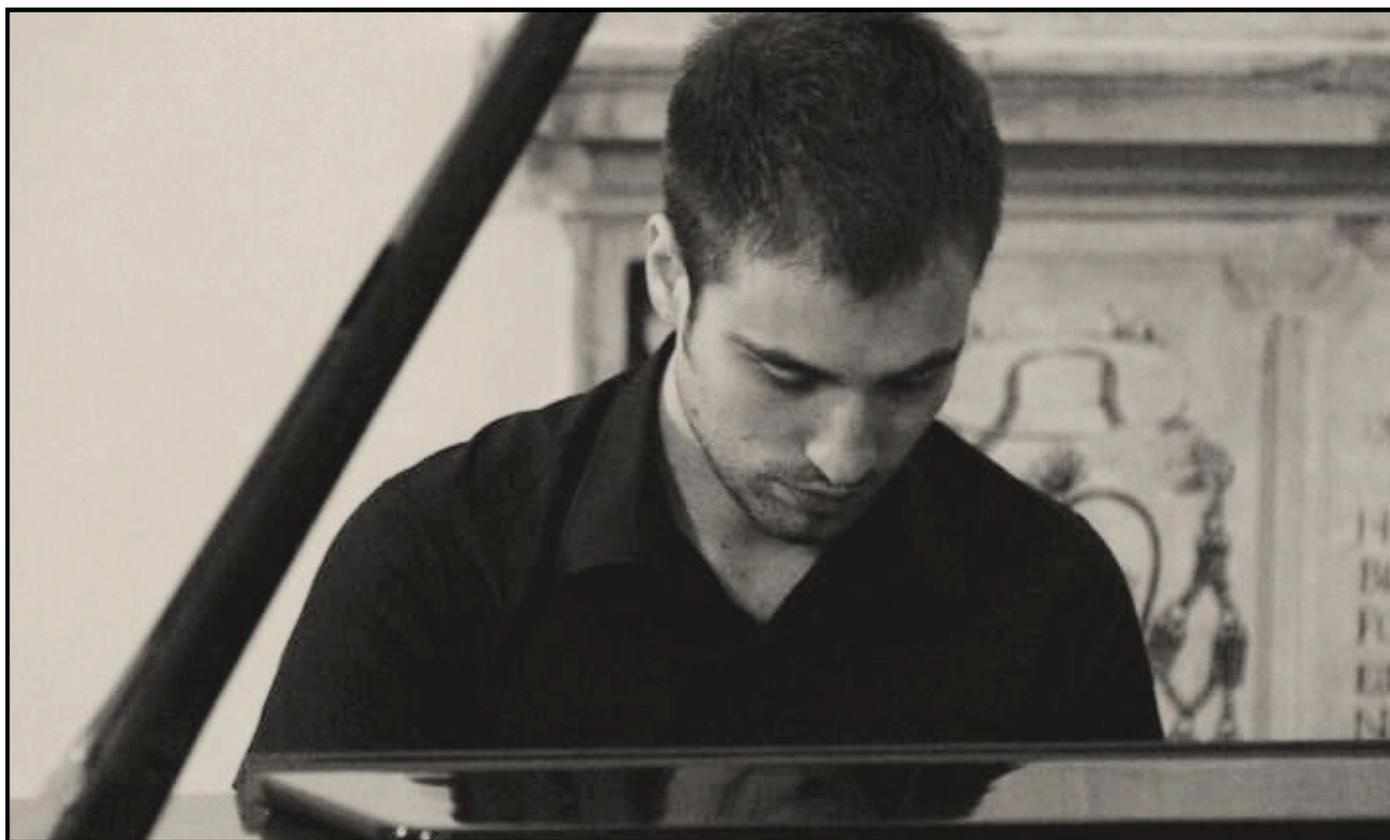
His compositions have been performed on numerous occasions within Croatian projects such as Code:new and Code:new Goes Chamber, in the Virtuoso series, at Izlog suvremenog zvuka, at ISA 2015, the Music Tribune in Opatija (2016), during the Sebastian Quartet season 2016–2017, within the bilateral project Year of Culture Croatia–Austria 2017, at the Dubrovnik Summer Festival, and at the Music Biennale Zagreb.

He was a scholarship recipient at the International Summer Academy in Mürzzuschlag, Austria (2015), and in 2017 was selected to represent the Academy of Music in Zagreb at the European Atelier for Composition Students in Sofia. He received the Rector's Award in the 2017–2018 academic year.

During the 2018–2019 academic year, with the support of the First Department of the Academy of Music in Zagreb, he initiated and led the student workshop Slušaonica – Music in the 21st Century, dedicated to presenting and contextualizing diverse aesthetic directions in contemporary music. As part of Music Biennale Zagreb 2019, he moderated the round table Music, Society, Now, devoted to contemporary musical issues.

In 2019, within a cooperation between the University of Melbourne and the University of Zagreb, he gave a lecture at the Academy of Music in Zagreb on the fundamentals, guidelines, and creative possibilities of the Max programming language. He is a regular member of the Croatian Composers' Society.

Following the completion of his piano studies, from 2006 to 2017 he worked as a piano teacher and accompanist at the Albert Štriga Music School in Križevci (elementary and secondary levels). Since 2019, he has been on the faculty of the Josip Hatze Music School in Split. Since 2020, he has served as an external associate at the Arts Academy in Split, and since 2023 he has regularly performed as a collaborative artist at the Croatian National Theatre in Split.



Ante Božić-Kudrić, composer

Ante Božić-Kudrić (Split, 1990) is a composer and pianist. He received his elementary and secondary music education at the music school Josip Hatze in Split in the class of Professor Valentina Štrbac-Čičerić. Ante earned his bachelor's and master's degrees from the Academy of Music at the University of Zagreb in the class of Ante Milić in 2012.

He has won awards at several competitions for young pianists in Croatia. During his studies, he attended seminars with distinguished pedagogues, including Valdma, Kämmerling, Simone, Bogino, Krpan, and Indić. In addition to composing, he has performed extensively, worked as a piano accompanist in ballet studios and with singers, taught piano in schools and privately, and accompanied performances at the National Theatre in Split for operas and musicals, also performing with the orchestra.

Since 2014, Ante has been actively composing. He wrote the music for the animated short film *From the Depths* (2014), which won the award for Best Animated Short Film from the children's jury at the Olympia International Film Festival.

He composed his first major work in 2014, Suite for Two Violins and Piano, which premiered in the Small Lisinski Hall in Zagreb in 2015.

With a commission from the Dutch Grieg Piano Duo in 2018, he composed his *Rhapsody for Piano Duet*, premiered by the Grieg Piano Duo at the Piano Loop Festival in Split in 2019. Among his smaller works are the song *Oblak* for tenor or soprano, set to a text by Dobriša Cesarić, two colorful vocalises for soprano, and *Serenade and Minuet* for double bass. In 2019, he composed *Album for the Young*, consisting of 72 progressive pieces designed for young pianists as well as intermediate and advanced players.

In 2024, Ante made his Carnegie Hall debut, performing his composition *Oblak (Cloud)* with countertenor Marin Vitas. In 2025, he composed *Three Sonatinas in the Classical Style, Op. 6*, and is currently working on his *6 Moments Musicaux, Op. 7*.



Jennifer Savage, piano

Jennifer Savage is a pianist, professional accompanist, and collaborator based in New York and the DC area. She regularly performs at Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall, collaborates with the New York Chamber Players Orchestra and Orchestra Manhattan, and serves as Program Coordinator and Administrative Assistant at the Summit Music Festival.

She received her Master's degree from 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 Scholarships, and previously studied at the MSM Precollege and at the Levine School of Music with Dr. Anna Ouspenskaya.

Jennifer is also a technical director, producer, broadcast host, scriptwriter, and social media manager for Virtual Concert Halls (VCHs), producing live programs such as the Sound Espresso International Competition.

An avid performer, Jennifer has appeared as a soloist with the Lviv National Philharmonic of Ukraine, New York Chamber Players Orchestra, Virtuosi Brunensis Orchestra, and Czech Bohuslav Martinů Philharmonic, and at prestigious venues including the Kennedy Center in Washington, DC, Carnegie Hall, Merkin Concert Hall at the Kaufman Center, New York, Zlín Congress Center, Czech Republic, Palazzo dei Priori in Perugia, Italy, DiCapo Opera Theater, New York, and the Marian Anderson Hall of the Kimmel Center, Philadelphia.

She has won numerous competitions in both solo and chamber music, performing at venues such as the Kennedy Center, Zlín Congress Center, DiCapo Opera Theater, the Embassy of Italy, Mexican Cultural Institute, Lyceum in Alexandria, the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, Netherlands Embassy, Alden Theater, and Palazzo dei Priori in Italy, and gave a lecture-concert in Wuhan, China. She has also been featured on cable TV in A Holiday Recital.

As a recording artist, she appears on the digital album "The Road to Zlín" (Cicerone Music & Art, releasing November 2024), performing *Rachmaninov's Piano Concerto No. 2* with the Czech Bohuslav Martinů Philharmonic Orchestra, and *Gershwin's Piano Concerto in F* with the Lviv National Philharmonic in Ukraine.



www.virtualconcerthalls.com

**GALA
LAUREATE**

**WEILL RECITAL
AT CARNEGIE HALL**



**FEATURING
RITA COSTANZI**

Woman
on a ledge



February 19, 2026 at 7 pm

**BASED ON THE WRITINGS OF RITA COSTANZI
ADAPTED FOR THE STAGE BY HERSHEY FELDER
DIRECTED BY RITA COSTANZI**

[HTTPS://WWW.CARNEGIEHALL.ORG/CALENDAR/2026/02/19/SOUND-ESPRESSIVO-GALA-0700PM](https://www.carnegiehall.org/calendar/2026/02/19/sound-espresso-gala-0700pm)



RECORDING OPPORTUNITIES

FOR SOLOISTS AND COMPOSERS WITH BUTLER PHILHARMONIC ORCHESTRA

MARCH 8, 2026.
REHEARSALS AND RECORDING
IN HAMILTON, OHIO, USA



VIRTUAL CONCERT HALLS



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RECORDING OPPORTUNITIES

FOR SOLOISTS AND COMPOSERS WITH ORCHESTRA MANHATTAN

APRIL 28, 2026
GALA AT WEILL RECITAL AT
CARNEGIE HALL

APRIL 29, 2026
RECORDING
MANHATTAN, NEW YORK, USA



VIRTUAL CONCERT HALLS



[HTTPS://WWW.SOUNDESPRESSIVOCOMPETITION.COM/RECORDING-OPPORTUNITIES/ORCHESTRA-MANHATTAN](https://www.soundexpressivocompetition.com/recording-opportunities/orchestra-manhattan)

2025-2026 CONCERT SEASON

07.28.25 Tahoe Philharmonic Orchestra and Chorus. Kevin Matheson, violin. James Rawe, conductor

09.11.25 Paducah Symphony Orchestra. Jennifer Savage, piano. Raffaele Livio Ponti, conductor

09.12.25 Tahoe Philharmonic Orchestra and Chorus. Jennifer Choi, violin. James Rawe, conductor

09.25.25 Magnificent Nine. Beethoven Symphonies. Internet TV Season 3

09.27.25 Barge Music. Recital by Misha Dichter, piano

10.11.25 Paducah Symphony Orchestra. Dina Nesterenko, violin. Raffaele Livio Ponti, conductor

11.07.25 Orquesta Filarmónica Municipal de Guayaquil. Kaiden Griggs, piano. Gevorg Sargsyan, conductor

11.15.25 Paducah Symphony Orchestra. Ayla Moreno, piano. Raffaele Livio Ponti, conductor

11.24.25 Laureate Gala - Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall

11.25.25 Laureate Gala - Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall

02.16.26 Laureate Gala - Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall

02.19.26 Laureate Gala - Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall

03.07.26 Butler Philharmonic Orchestra. Kate Lee, piano. Calliope Smith, violin. Scott Woodard, conductor

04.18.26 Paducah Symphony Orchestra. Anna Maria Medietta, harp

04.28.26 Laureate Gala - Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall

04.29.26 Recording session with Orchestra Manhattan. David Wroe, conductor

06.28.26 Laureate Gala - Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall

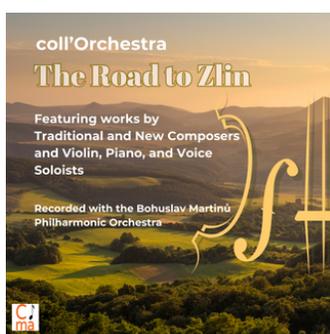
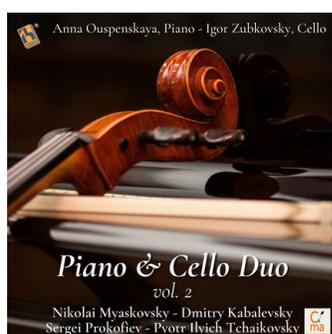
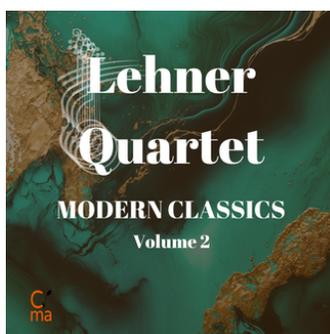
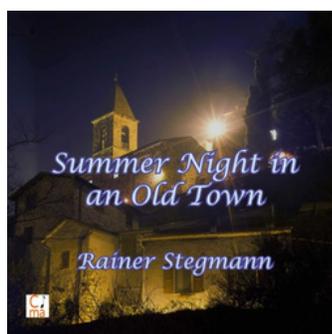
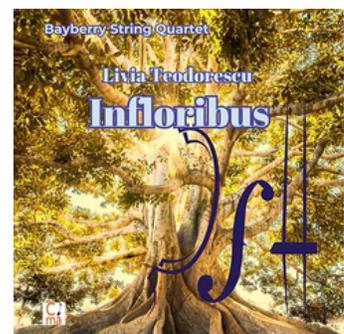
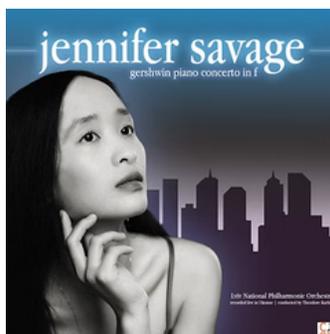
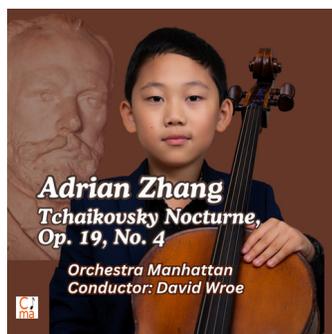
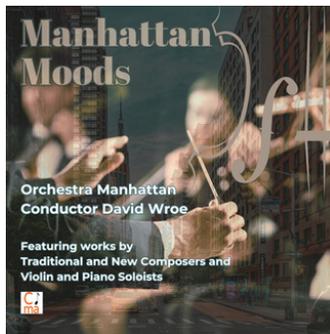
06.30.26 Laureate Gala - Weill Recital Hall at Carnegie Hall



VIRTUAL
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HALLS



ALBUM RELEASES



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**AT WEILL RECITAL HALL AT
CARNEGIE HALL**

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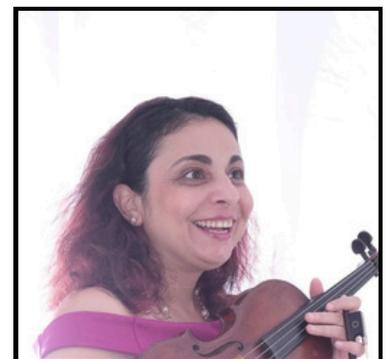
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Avguste Antonov
Concert Pianist & Educator



Ivan Viočić
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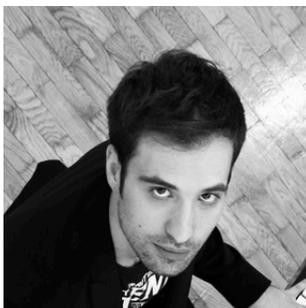
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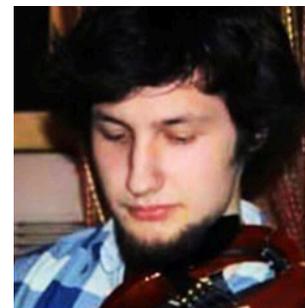
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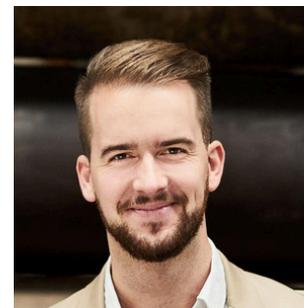
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Virtual Concert Halls
Technical Producer



Jennifer Savage
Virtual Concert Halls
Assistant Director, Host



Marko Torre
Virtual Concert Halls
Assistant Director



Krisztian Palagyi
Virtual Concert Halls
Assistant Director, Host



Kateryna Li Khemmett
Virtual Concert Halls
PR/Social Media, Graphic & Photo Design



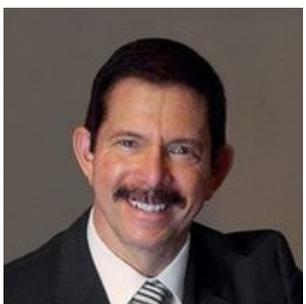
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Ann Lathan Kerzner
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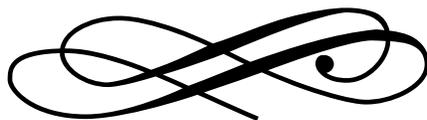
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Audio Producer



Irma de Jong
iClassical Academy
Publishing Coordinator



Thank You for Joining Us!

We are delighted to have you with us for today's performance.

*Your presence supports the dedication, passion,
and hard work of our talented musicians and composers.*

*We hope you enjoy the music and feel inspired
by the creativity on stage.*

*We invite you to stay connected with us through our programs,
social media, and upcoming events.*

*Your encouragement helps us continue to nurture artistic growth and share
extraordinary music with the world.*

*With gratitude,
The Sound Espresso Team*



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*Program Booklet Created and Designed by:
Kateryna Li Khemmett*