

# OVERTONES



VOL. XLV, NO. 1 | SPRING 2022

## Refreshed

Behind the Renovations  
of 1726 Locust Street

A SCHEHERAZADE FOR  
THE SCREEN GENERATION

MEET CURTIS'S FIRST  
FACULTY WIND QUINTET

ECO-FRIENDLY ARTISTS





# 18

## **Grand Designs**

BY BRUCE HODGES

Renovations to 1726 Locust Street have restored its stately grandeur while vaulting the former mansion into the 21st century.



SPRING  
2022

# Contents

## OVERTONES

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**CURTIS**  
INSTITUTE OF MUSIC

# 08

## Tania León, composer in residence for 2021-22 season

BY NICK DIBERARDINO

“When a student walks into a conservatory or any institution to learn the art of putting sounds together, the only thing we can do is help them to bring it out.”



**Scheherazade Is Ready  
for Her Close-up**  
BY DAVID PATRICK STEARNS  
A multimedia installation  
of Rimsky-Korsakov's score in  
the Black Box Theater.

02

## Message from the President

Roberto Díaz reflects on a year of resiliency.

## A Tempo

### 03 REHEARSING PHILADELPHIA

Curtis students take to the streets.

### 08 THE Q+A: TANIA LEÓN

The composer considers her mold-breaking journey.

### 10 ECO-FRIENDLY ARTISTS

The Curtis community goes green.

### 12 WINDS OF CHANGE

Meet Curtis's faculty wind quintet.

### 16 A CENTURY OF STRIVING

Behind Curtis's merit-based acceptance policy.

## Notations

### 26 ALUMNI

### 28 FACULTY

### 29 STUDENTS

### 29 THOSE WE'VE LOST

### 31 A FUND TO FURTHER EARLY CAREERS

### 33 CLASS OF 2022

A salute to the graduates.



FROM THE  
PRESIDENT

## Welcome Back to Overtones



**I AM SO PLEASED** to welcome you back to *Overtones*, the twice-yearly magazine from the Curtis Institute of Music. After a hiatus in which we reimagined the magazine from the ground up, *Overtones* is back, and we're so proud to share this issue with you.

Since our last full issue of the magazine at the end of 2019, our world has irrevocably changed. And while we were faced with immense challenges, we were also presented with opportunities—opportunities to reconsider how we teach, learn, and rehearse; how we relate to our communities; how we help each other as people and artists; and how we can reemerge from the pandemic stronger and more resilient.

Throughout this issue of *Overtones*, you'll see stories about a few of the ways Curtis has been addressing these needs and opportunities. Through a major restoration and renovation of our beloved 1726 building ("Grand Designs," p. 18), we invested in our past, present, and future by lovingly improving our facility while the campus was closed to in-person operations. We explored the possibilities of multimedia with our groundbreaking Immersive Scheherazade orchestra project (p. 22). With our Drexel University and Pew Center partners, we engaged with our communities in new and meaningful ways ("From Street Corner to Storefront," p. 3). To help our alumni navigate challenges in the early stages of their careers, we established the Young Alumni Fund (p. 31). And we made significant additions to our incredible faculty roster, including the recent appointments in violin, oboe, and composition (p. 5) and chamber music (p. 12).

I am so proud of all we accomplished together during the pandemic, and excited by the opportunities before us in the years to come. The work we do, however, is only possible thanks to the generous support of our community. I am very grateful for the time and resources you invest in our students and our school.

On behalf of the school and the *Overtones* editorial team, I hope you enjoy reading this issue of *Overtones*. We'd love to know what you think! Please send your feedback, as well as any suggestions for future content to [overtones@curtis.edu](mailto:overtones@curtis.edu). You can also view this issue online at [Curtis.edu/Overtones](https://Curtis.edu/Overtones).



*Roberto Díaz*  
PRESIDENT AND CEO



# A TEMPO



Tyshawn Sorey conducts students from Curtis and Drexel University

## From Street Corner to Storefront

Rehearsing Philadelphia Embraces the City

AS WINTER TURNED TO spring, Curtis students fanned out across Philadelphia as part of Rehearsing Philadelphia, a sprawling performance project that encompassed street corner vocal duets, gallery concerts, a multi-genre orchestra, and the talents of city employees. Produced and presented by Curtis and Drexel University's Westphal College of Media Arts and Design, the project spanned two weeks in late March and early April and carried an idealistic premise: to use music to unite everyday Philadelphians in an era of isolation and social upheaval.

Some 67 free performances were split among four components. For the Duet component, 25 students from the Curtis Opera Theatre joined members of two choirs—the Philadelphia Heritage Chorale and Singing City—around Clark Park, in Philadelphia's Spruce Hill neighborhood. Singers approached passersby with a simple question: "Would you like to sing with



me?” If answered “yes,” the singer taught the stranger *Duet*, a two-part score by Ari Benjamin Meyers, a Berlin-based American artist who is the creator of Rehearsing Philadelphia.

“The idea is to challenge how we perform, and [explore] what is rehearsal and what is performance,” says Mary Javian, chair of career studies who, together with Dean Paul Bryan, led the project at Curtis through her Social Entrepreneur course. “We’re challenging the idea that there is some perfect product that you put out into the world.”

Another component, Ensemble, brought together small groups of students from Curtis and Drexel to perform newly composed or adapted works by Tyshawn Sorey and Zoë Keating. Performances also featured the Dover Quartet (String Quartet '14 and current faculty) and took place at the Pearlstein Gallery at Drexel University.

The module known as Solo considered power structures by highlighting the talents of public servants, including a Philadelphia police officer, a City Hall employee, and an attorney at Community Legal Services. And the Orchestra component gathered 50 musicians representing what Ms. Javian called a “genre-agnostic” philosophy. Instrumentation spanned the tango bandoneon and lute-like oud to the horn and Korean percussion. Following rehearsals at Curtis, the event took place at Cherry Street Pier.

With a \$700,000 grant from the Pew Center for Arts & Heritage, the project was two years in the making. “It came out of this time of the virus and the racial reckoning,” Javian explained. “Curtis is a rich part of Philadelphia’s history, but it isn’t always known and doesn’t always reach out in such a deep way to connect.”

More information, including a map of project locations, is available at [rehearsingphiladelphia.com](http://rehearsingphiladelphia.com).



Viano String Quartet

## Curtis Musicians Raise Money, Awareness for Ukraine Relief

Fundraising concerts include a rare multi-conservatory venture.

→ **THE CURTIS COMMUNITY** gathered for multiple fundraising concerts this spring to support humanitarian relief efforts in Ukraine.

Curtis was one of eight music conservatories and professional training programs that organized a virtual concert fundraiser on April 16, streamed on The Violin Channel and hosted by Curtis faculty member Midori. Viewers were invited to give to a selection of aid-related charities.

“Like many in the world, we, at music conservatories—teaching staff and students alike—are galvanized by the senseless, gruesome war happening in Ukraine,” said Midori in her opening remarks. “How can we stay uninvolved? To so many of us, that is simply not an option.”

The Viano String Quartet, Curtis’s string quartet in residence for the 2021-22 school year, presented a movement from Bartók’s String Quartet No. 5. The other contributing organizations were the Cleveland Institute of Music, the Colburn School, Manhattan School of Music, New England Conservatory, New World Symphony, Royal Conservatory of Music in Toronto, and San Francisco Conservatory. The performances included a Schubert sonata, jazz, klezmer music, and a Ukrainian melody for string orchestra.

A month earlier, on March 14, a group of Curtis students, faculty, and alumni assembled at St. Mark’s Church in Philadelphia to raise funds for Ukrainian relief. The chamber music concert raised just over \$4,000 for the Ukraine Crisis Relief Fund at Global Giving, an organization that connects nonprofit groups with donors.

The concert was organized by bassoon faculty member Daniel Matsukawa, who, together with Ukrainian-born violinist Solomiya Ivakhiv (Violin '03), performed a duo by Ukrainian composer Julia Gomelskaya. The program also featured works by Beethoven, Schubert, Mozart, and Poulenc.



Benjamin  
Beilman



→ **TWO VIOLIN ALUMNI** are joining the Curtis faculty this fall: Benjamin Beilman (Violin '12) and Erin Keefe (Violin '03). Both will teach individual lessons and hold chamber and orchestral coachings, becoming part of a seven-member violin faculty that includes their former teacher, Ida Kavafian.

“They check every box,” said Ms. Kavafian, citing their “incredible musicianship, integrity, stellar violin playing, musical knowledge, and continuity of the great Curtis violin tradition.”

Ms. Keefe will commute to Philadelphia from Minneapolis, where she has been concertmaster of the Minnesota Orchestra since 2011. Mr. Beilman is based in New York and regularly performs as a recitalist and as a soloist with some of the world’s leading orchestras.

→ **COMPOSITION FACULTY GROWS BY FOUR**

Curtis’s composition faculty is also expanding. The school announced in May the addition of four composers to its ranks: Nick DiBerardino ('18), Jonathan Bailey Holland ('96), Amy Beth Kirsten, and Steven Mackey. They will work with Curtis students alongside current faculty member Richard Danielpour.

Mr. DiBerardino has served as Curtis’s director of composition studies and Ensemble 20/21 since July 2021. He holds a post-baccalaureate diploma from Curtis along with degrees from Princeton University, the University of Oxford, and the Yale School of Music.

A former composer in residence with the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, Dr. Holland holds a B.M. from Curtis and a Ph.D. from Harvard University. He is the incoming head of the Carnegie Mellon University School of Music.

Dr. Kirsten is known for her multimedia theatrical collaborations. She holds degrees from Roosevelt University and the Peabody Institute, and is also director of the artist residency at the Longy School of Music of Bard College.

Dr. Mackey has been a professor of music at Princeton University for the past 35 years. An electric guitarist, his music has drawn on the gestures of rock music and improvisation.

## New Faculty

Violin, Oboe,  
and Composition

→ **KATHERINE NEEDLEMAN AND PHILIPPE TONDRE JOIN OBOE FACULTY**

In another two-pronged appointment, Curtis announced in April that two oboists will lead the oboe studio. Philippe Tondre and Katherine Needleman (Oboe '99), principal oboists of the Philadelphia Orchestra and Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, respectively, will jointly lead the department starting this fall.

Mr. Tondre and Ms. Needleman represent different, but complementary, schools of playing. The French-born Mr. Tondre comes from a European pedagogical tradition while Ms. Needleman, who studied at Curtis, represents an American style and training. Both artists will teach lessons as well as chamber music coachings.

Ms. Needleman joined the Baltimore Symphony in 2003; Mr. Tondre joined the Philadelphia Orchestra in 2020.



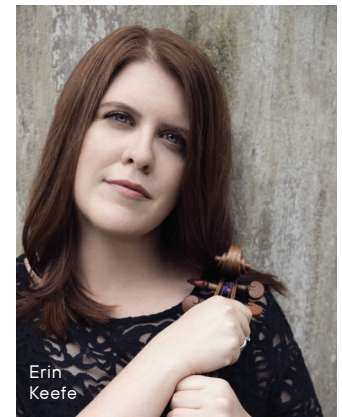
Steven Mackey, Nick DiBerardino,  
Amy Beth Kirsten, Jonathan Bailey  
Holland



Katherine  
Needleman



Philippe  
Tondre



Erin  
Keefe





## All-School Project Focuses on Civil Rights Era

A reflection from the chair of Curtis’s liberal arts department.

BY JEANNE M. MCGINN

→ **THE INVITATION** IN my mailbox was to meet with the new president of Curtis.

Curiosity? Trepidation?

As I gathered with others in President Díaz’s office one day in 2007, I never imagined that the conversation would launch a program that would animate curricular offerings for more than a decade.

Early all-school projects garnered *New York Times* attention for innovative approaches to holistic pedagogies. Whether in readings of Beethoven’s late quartets or by pouring over the composer’s letters, students found resonances between stage and classroom work.

That first question: “Can we collaborate?” has become the hallmark of multi-year investigations into artistic movements, cultural capitals, iconic literature, and explorations of biodiversity.

This year was no exception. Through *The Civil Rights Era and the Music of Change*, we examined and contextualized artistic outpourings between 1950 and 1975. In musical studies, liberal arts, and career studies classes, as well as in Curtis recitals, performances, and the citywide project (see page 3), we asked: How did the work of artists provide the impetus for a nation to reckon with injustice and to begin to change? Courses such as “The Age of Aquarius,” “Jazz and the Civil Rights Movement,” “Global Social Movements, Universal Music,” “Musical Improvisation in Theory and Practice,” and “Works of George Walker and Samuel Barber” provided rich resources for students to carry with them to performances that, in turn, become catalysts of change.

The all-school project that began with a question continues to challenge, excite, and invite faculty and students to examine their part in the music of change.



### Faculty and Staff Anniversaries

#### 50 YEARS

Paul Krzywicki

#### 35 YEARS

Susan Nowicki  
Keiko Sato

#### 25 YEARS

Roberto Díaz  
David Bilger  
Blair Bollinger

Richard Danielpour  
Ida Kavafian

#### 20 YEARS

Alan Morrison  
Daniel Matsukawa

#### 15 YEARS

Shmuel Ashkenasi  
Gordana–Dana Grozdanic  
Robert McDonald

Jennifer Montone

#### 10 YEARS

Barbara Benedett  
Mia Chung  
Jeffrey Lang  
Reese Revak  
Michael Rusinek  
Leon Schelhase  
Matthew Vaughn

#### 5 YEARS

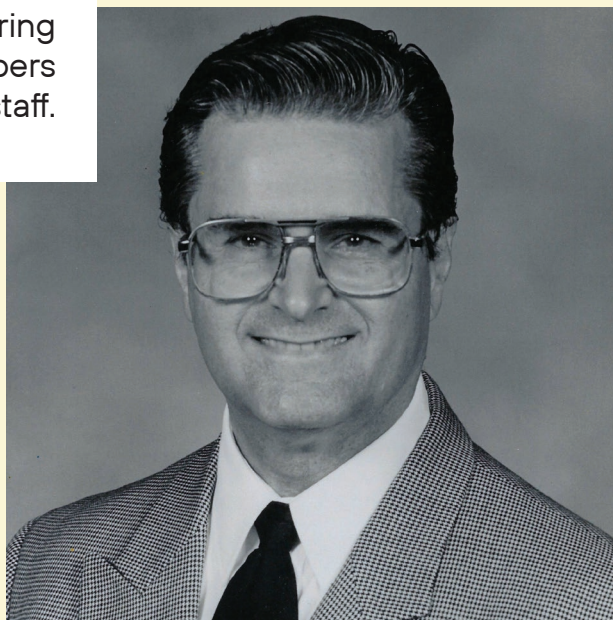
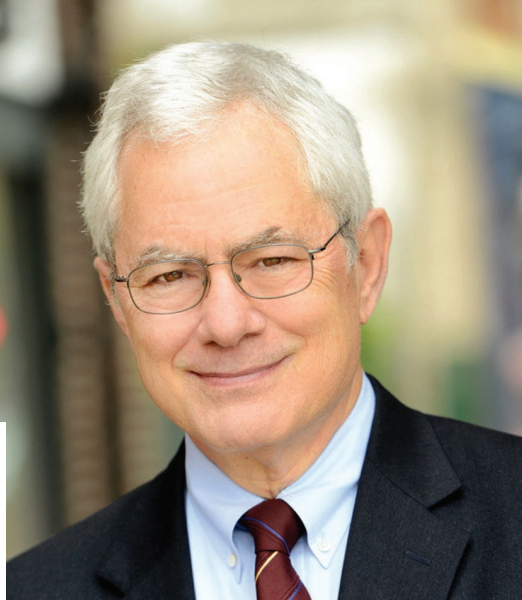
Stefano Baldasseroni  
Ed Gazouleas  
Elaine Li  
Belmary Lorcas  
Matt Morgan  
Bill Schuman  
Manuel Sosa  
Ting Ting Wong



## In Memoriam

Remembering longtime members of the Curtis staff.

Top photo:  
Charles  
Sterne III;  
Bottom photo:  
Richard Crittenden



→ **CURTIS MOURNS THE** loss of friend and former longtime staff member Charles “Chuck” Sterne III, who passed away on January 9, at age 74, from cancer.

Mr. Sterne was a dedicated member of Curtis’s development and advancement departments for 27 years, from February 1993 until his retirement as director of principal gifts and planned giving in December 2020. In those nearly three decades, Mr. Sterne led important fundraising initiatives at the school, including the campaign to develop Lenfest Hall and the creation of The Founder’s Society. His work helped transform the school and contributed significantly to its long-term financial stability.

Upon Mr. Sterne’s retirement, Curtis announced that the first floor reading room of the library would be renamed in his honor. Mr. Sterne had always loved that room—he found it to be a place of solace and of inspiration for writing many important proposals. Curtis hopes that its community will also find both solace and inspiration in the Sterne Reading Room for years to come.

Mr. Sterne’s dedication to Curtis extended far beyond his daily job functions. He genuinely cared about the school and the Curtis community and was truly devoted to its students, alumni, faculty, staff, trustees, and donors.

He was generous with his time, resources, knowledge, and words of encouragement. But most importantly, Chuck was a friend and a much-valued member of the Curtis family.

Curtis extends its heartfelt sympathies to his wife, Eileen, and to his daughters, as well as to all his friends, family, and colleagues. He will be greatly missed.

→ **OPERA DIRECTOR AND** baritone Richard Crittenden, who served as a stage director at Curtis from 1976 to 1987, died on November 19 at age 83. The cause was prostate cancer, his daughter, Carol Crittenden, said.

A passionate educator, Mr. Crittenden taught voice and directed Curtis productions of operas by composers from Mozart to Poulenc. Among his credits was a 1984 staging of Carlisle Floyd’s *Susannah* in the auditorium at Wanamaker’s department store. He also taught at the Yale University School of Music, Mannes School of Music, and New York University. For more than 50 years he ran a series of summer workshops known as the Crittenden Opera Studio, taking place in Boston and Washington, D.C. and drawing up to 40 singers at a time.

Mr. Crittenden’s other directorial credits included operas at New York City Opera Theatre, Washington Civic Opera, the Utah Opera Theatre, and numerous regional companies in the New York City area.

Born in San Diego, Calif., Mr. Crittenden attended Occidental College in Los Angeles. He sang with the U.S. Army Chorus in the early 1960s and studied voice with the late baritone Todd Duncan. He was a longtime resident of Teaneck, N.J. Curtis extends its deepest condolences to Mr. Crittenden’s family and friends.





THE Q+A

# Tania León

The composer reflects on her mold-breaking journey.


BY  
NICK  
DIBERARDINO



**TANIA LEÓN IS BUSIER THAN** ever. A presence on the American music scene for over 50 years, she has always “done things her own way,” as she tells *Overtones*. In 2021, the Cuban-born composer was awarded the Pulitzer Prize in Music for her *Stride*, a work commissioned by the New York Philharmonic for its Project 19 initiative, marking the centennial of the Nineteenth Amendment. Months after receiving the prize, Ms. León, 79, became the composer in residence at Curtis







for the 2021–22 season. She tells us about the role, the Pulitzer win, and industry-wide efforts to make classical music more inclusive.

**Nick:** We are so excited to welcome you to Curtis this year. What sort of guidance have you sought to impart to our students?

**Tania:** Well, let me say this: I am of the mindset that when we choose what we want to do, and we deposit so much effort—hours, insecurities, moments of triumph and failure—it’s because whatever we are putting our attention to is what is very prevalent inside of us. When a student walks into a conservatory or any institution where he or she wants to learn the art of putting sounds together, whether it’s an interpretation or creating a new chapter out of twelve notes, I think the only thing we can do is help them to bring it out.

**Nick:** What did the Pulitzer Prize win mean to you?

**Tania:** It was a total surprise because I’ve never been a chaser of awards. I had no idea I had been nominated. I had no idea who put this together. And all of a sudden, I found out because of a call from Frank Oteri [New Music USA’s Composer Advocate]. I was not on the Internet, and I had my phone off because I was at the dentist. I was totally nonchalant, and I couldn’t believe my ears. Frank had to tell me about three times. And then, of course, I got emotional and started thinking about my grandmother, who was the one who started this whole thing about music in my family.

**Nick:** How so?

**Tania:** She saw me acting very strangely when I was four years old. She said that every time I flipped on the radio and there was something with movement, I would start dancing with the rhythms that I was hearing. And she said, “Well, I better get

us aware; we have to find out what this is!” All of that came to my mind at that point.

**Nick:** I know that *Stride*, your Pulitzer Prize-winning piece, was inspired in part by your grandmother and the work of Susan B. Anthony. What was your process like when you were composing in response to these ideas?

**Tania:** *Stride* for me was a revelation. I did not know so much about the suffragist movement or Susan B. Anthony. [New York Philharmonic president and CEO] Deborah Borda told me, “We are doing such and such, and we are interested in you writing one of the opening pieces.” And that is when I went to YouTube to find out about Susan B. Anthony. I even heard her voice, her manifestos, I virtually visited her home, and I started reading all about that era. So, I had to research and figure out when the women in Cuba were allowed to vote, and therefore the rest of the world. It was something that became bigger than the celebration of Susan B. Anthony and the hundred-year celebration. No, it transcended to women over the centuries.

**Nick:** What spoke to you about the fight for change in that era?

**Tania:** When I arrived in the United States, one of the first things that I saw on television were the marches with Martin Luther King Jr. I didn’t speak English, but I was watching the body language. And there’s a moment in *Stride* where, suddenly, I create a march inside of the piece [to suggest] all these women walking together. And you cannot predict it because I made sure that people could not count, “one, two, three, four,” or “one and two and.” No. Nuh-uh. You never know [where the beat is]. I did all kinds of things using sixteenth notes and displacing them. To give the sensation of shoes on pavement, I accompany

that with a sand block.

**Nick:** How do you regard the current efforts to better champion composers from underrepresented groups, and what do you hope will change going forward?

**Tania:** Well, I’m glad that I am still alive while this restructuring is going on. This is something that has been part of my mantra.

But we all created this situation. We’re trying to correct it in a hurry now, right? I’m very happy about the fact that the opportunities are coming more and more, for all involved. But unfortunately, we have lost incredible talents—Wendell Logan and George Walker, for example. These people were the equivalent of, say, Charles Wuorinen, but all of them had a different voice, a different way of expressing themselves. And now, everybody’s asking, “Where are those pieces? We need to play those pieces.” In other words, I would like to actually make sure that this is genuine. And that this is going to continue.

*This interview has been lightly edited for length and clarity.*

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NICK DIBERARDINO IS A COMPOSER NOTED FOR CREATING “RICHLY TEXTURED, MULTILAYERED” SOUND WORLDS (MINNEAPOLIS STAR TRIBUNE) THAT TELL FANTASTICAL TALES. HE IS CURTIS’S DIRECTOR OF COMPOSITION STUDIES AND DIRECTOR OF ENSEMBLE 20/21. HE JOINS THE COMPOSITION FACULTY IN THE 2022–23 SCHOOL YEAR.





# Sound Off

How are you addressing environmental issues through your work? Five members of the Curtis community weigh in.

BY BRIAN WISE

grappling with the things that I feel passionate about. Hopefully, regardless of what you believe, you can recognize that. Even if you are very conservative, if you are living in a rural environment, you have first-hand experience with environmental challenges: with flooding, extreme fires, and heat. So, for me, to deal with it on a human level, I hope it finds common ground.”

→ **TEDDY ABRAMS**  
(Conducting '08), Music Director of the Louisville Orchestra,  
Music Director of the Britt Festival

Teddy Abrams has seen the devastation from climate change up close. At the Britt Festival in Medford, Ore. wildfire smoke in recent years prompted organizers to move the 2022 orchestra season to earlier in the summer. Mr. Abrams has also championed environmental issues through his music, notably in *The Song of the River* (2019), a meditation on the earth's rising water levels, and *The Order of Nature* (2019), a collaboration with singer-songwriter Jim James.

“We often tend to think of this as just an urban versus rural issue. We assume that people think one way in city environments and differently in areas that, ironically, are most connected to the natural environment. It's a lot more complex than that. In a piece like *The Song of the River*, I'm not telling people what to think, but rather, I'm working out my own fears and

→ **LARRY BOMBACK**  
Senior Vice President of  
Administration at Curtis

Curtis launched a three-year project in 2020 to increase the energy efficiency of its facilities. An audit conducted by The Efficiency Network (TEN) identified several key measures that would reduce the school's carbon footprint and result in more than \$35,000 in annual savings. Larry Bombback is overseeing the initiative.

“The majority of the improvements come in the form of lighting upgrades. We're taking out the var-



ious fluorescent and incandescent lights across the campus and moving to LED bulbs which will save us a ton in energy costs. We're also putting in new systems controls, which allow us to monitor HVAC (humidity, ventilation, and air conditioning) remotely so that we can schedule based on usage. That allows us to make sure we are not wasting energy by heating or cooling the building unnecessarily when nobody is there. You can also almost think of these controls as a giant, campus-wide smart thermostat. Combined with the energy efficiency improvements made through the 1726 Locust Street modernization project, we expect to recover our upfront investment within 10 years. After that, we expect to be saving money, relative to what we would have spent if we had kept to our old systems."

→ **VIET CUONG**  
(Composition '19),  
composer

In 2019, the Albany Symphony introduced *Re(new)al*, a percussion quartet concerto by Princeton, N.J.-based composer Viet Cuong. It was commissioned by GE Renewable Energy, a division of General Electric that develops wind turbines, solar panels, and hydroelectric power, and which is based in Schenectady, N.Y.

"There are three movements: about water, wind, and solar power. On a deeper level there are instruments that suggest thinking about how to use things that we have. For

example, I use crystal glasses and refillable air canisters as instruments. What I think is the biggest message of the piece is that I always treat the [percussion quartet] as essentially one person. It's about synergy and working together and equal involvement. For example, the second movement has a drum set formation that is supposed to look like a wind turbine. There's actually some choreography where they spin, and each of them is essentially a blade of a wind turbine."

→ **ANDREW LANE**  
Vice President, Touring  
and Artist Management  
at Curtis

With concert touring expected to further rebound in 2022, artists and their managers are scrutinizing how to travel in healthier, more sustainable ways. Andrew Lane, who has been a driving force for Curtis on Tour, is exploring these questions as the school expands its global presence.

"Good tour routing is one way we can be mindful of the environment when booking tours. The same consideration that makes artists' lives easier when on the road also reduces their carbon footprint. If we're going to the Bay Area with a chamber group, that means trying to book multiple performances in that area so we can make the most of the trip. It makes artists' lives easier, and it is also better for the environment. When I am thinking about touring now, I think about

how we can keep people off planes as much as possible."

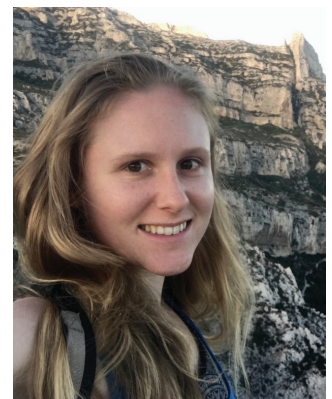
→ **GABRIELLA SMITH**  
(Composition '13, Artist-  
Year '16), composer and  
environmentalist

Gabriella Smith says environmental issues have been her greatest passion since she first learned about the climate crisis as a child in the San Francisco Bay Area. The composer's music includes a work about the loss of biodiversity: *Requiem*, written for Roomful of Teeth and the Dover Quartet (Curtis's Penelope P. Watkins Ensemble in Residence). Ms. Smith's *Lost Coast*, a cello concerto written for Gabriel Cabezas (Cello '13), was inspired by a solo backpacking trip along the California coast.

"I've struggled with this question [of how to address climate change] and have had different opinions over time. I've wondered if there's any use in writing music about this because am I just preaching to the choir? In recent years I've concluded that convincing people is not really what we need to be doing anymore. Most people are not climate deniers, so why focus on that group? But what music can be great about is getting people excited about solutions. I really think that the only way to solve the climate crisis is just to completely change our culture. It can't be just scientists working on this; it really needs to be an active part of everyone's life."

*Responses have been lightly condensed and edited for clarity.*

Left: Viet Cuong.  
Below: (left  
to right) Larry  
Bomback; Teddy  
Abrams; Andrew  
Lane; Gabriella  
Smith.







FACULTY HIGHLIGHT

# Winds of Change

Imani Winds began its 25th year by embarking on a new role: as Curtis's first-ever faculty wind quintet. The trailblazing ensemble explains how they aim to foster community-minded artists.

BY VIVIEN SCHWEITZER





Above:  
Imani Winds



→ **“ONE OF THE GREAT JOYS** of our first year at Curtis has been watching students open up to the possibilities of what they can do on their instruments,” said oboist Toyin Spellman-Diaz, a member of Imani Winds. “We’re telling them to do things they haven’t been told to do much, like communicate more. We talk a lot about what you can do on stage but also how to orient your career and your sense of what it means to be a musician.”

Imani, whose name derives from a Swahili word for faith, is certainly a dynamic example of a non-traditional career path. Founded in 1997 by the flutist Valerie Coleman to expand the repertoire for woodwind quintet, explore non-European genres, and attract more diverse audiences, the trailblazing ensemble has carved out an innovative and multifaceted path: by commissioning, teaching, recording, and maintaining a busy performing calendar. In 2016 Imani became part of a permanent exhibition at the Smithsonian’s National Museum of African American His-

tory and Culture in Washington, D.C.

The group’s position as Curtis’s inaugural faculty wind quintet is the first such appointment for Imani, which has been ensemble in residence at institutions including the University of Chicago and Mannes School of Music in New York City. Imani has built a relationship with Curtis over the past few years, giving masterclasses and serving as faculty for the school’s summer programs. Bassoonist Monica Ellis said the group had many conversations with dean Paul Bryan before accepting the faculty appointment. She asked Mr. Bryan whether Curtis was truly ready for a group like Imani Winds, and the answer was a resounding yes. It became clear, she added, that Curtis was interested in adapting both its curriculum and culture.

“We didn’t want to come into the old guard. The school knows it has potential for growth and development and I’m inspired by the institutional willingness to evolve and to acknowledge that in many ways



they did not make the right decisions in several instances,” said Ms. Ellis, alluding to the 2020 report of external review by the firm Cozen O’Connor, which led to changes in many areas of the school.

“There is an acknowledgement of the need to evolve and recognize the people they are representing, the students. It’s one thing to be asked to be part of something that has an incredible history and honor, but then you think, ‘What am I walking into? They need me, but do I need them? Frankly, do I want to be a part of this institution, as revered as it is?’ For sure, the answer is yes, because I see that growth and acknowledgement of moving forward into the 21st century.”

#### EMPOWERING STUDENTS

The Imani musicians have no interest in a conservatory model where teachers are put on a pedestal. Instead, they aim to equip students with the confidence to effectively express their own ideas. The group also wants to change the mindset that students have limited options after graduation. “It’s possible to create the space you want to exist in,” said horn player Kevin Newton, who replaced Jeff Scott in 2021. “Imani is proof of that.”

Community engagement has always been a major component of Imani’s activities. In an endeavor called the Inspire, Mentor and Nurture Initiative (I.M.A.N.I.), the group coaches early-career African American and Latinx musicians, who work with the quintet to teach underserved children at community music programs nationwide. The Imani musicians are also thinking about how to better serve a much wider audience in Philadelphia. “We want to bring the creativity and the awesomeness of these students out into the community,” said Ms. Spellman-Diaz. “In the years to come, Curtis will be more a part of the fabric of the community of Philadelphia at large, and we’ll be happy

to be at the forefront of that.”

Curtis is renowned for producing top orchestral players. “We’re trying to shake things up a bit and show the students what’s out there,” said clarinetist Mark Dover. Imani is not trying to discourage anyone from pursuing an orchestral career, he added, but hopes to convey that chamber music can also be a viable and exciting option. “We’re trying to open their minds and are thinking about how artistically we can shape them into more well-rounded musicians.”

During coaching sessions, said Mr. Newton, the Imani musicians might ask students for their thoughts about a particular measure, focusing on deeper questions instead of logistics such as whether the A-flat is in tune. The students, who might be asked, “What does it mean and what are you trying to communicate?” are sometimes initially uncomfortable with the process, said Mr. Newton, adding that he’s been impressed with their willingness to be open-minded. “Every time they come into a coaching, growth has occurred, and that’s a really beautiful and invigorating thing to experience as a teacher.”

Throughout its career Imani has been an important role model for young musicians of color. During his undergraduate studies at the University of Virginia Commonwealth, Mr. Newton, who describes former and current Imani musicians as his “heroes,” began to lose interest in the horn and even in being a musician at all. “The reason was that I didn’t see myself or hear myself [represented] and I was not feeling the excitement I felt as a kid when I first picked up the instrument,” he said. His eureka moment came when he heard a visiting ensemble perform *Imoja*, by Ms. Coleman, the founding flutist. Mr. Newton felt reinvigorated, founded his own woodwind quintet, and realized that he could cre-

ate a meaningful career as a chamber musician and teacher. He calls joining Imani “a dream come true, to say the least.”

#### CHAMPIONING COMPOSERS OF COLOR

Ms. Spellman-Diaz said that Mr. Newton and flutist Brandon Patrick George, who replaced Ms. Coleman in 2018, “are invigorating us and inspiring us and bringing so much to the ensemble that we’re so proud of.” For Mr. George, Imani provides a platform to achieve his goals. “Just by seeing people of color on stage performing at a high level is in itself powerful and moving,” he said. “Seeing that the works the group has commissioned have become standard pieces in the repertory is incredible. Teaching and mentoring are incredibly important to me. Whether we play at a university or concert hall, we’re always taking opportunities to work with students and nurture them. I can’t think of another job that would let me do all those things on any given day.”

The Imani’s Legacy Commissioning Project (launched in 2008) has generated many works by composers of color, including Daniel Bernard Roumain, Vijay Iyer, Reena Esmail, Henry Threadgill, and Jessie Montgomery. Upcoming premieres include pieces by composers Andy Akiho, Miguel del Aguila, David Garner, Damien Geter, Yuan-Chen Li, and Mr. Scott. Other ongoing projects include “(im)migration: music of change,” a collaboration with the Catalyst Quartet inspired by stories from the African and Latin diasporas. Imani has frequently collaborated with jazz artists, including Wayne Shorter, Paquito D’Rivera, and Jason Moran.

According to Ms. Ellis, more composers have become interested in writing for winds and wind quintet, and the unsolicited submissions Imani receives are testament







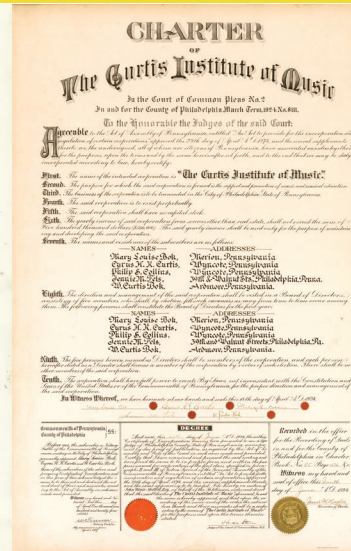
to that. The quality of writing for wind ensemble has also dramatically improved. “I would like to think that we’ve had a lot to do that,” she said.

At Curtis, the ensemble is strongly encouraging students to think creatively while “kindly discouraging” standard wind repertory by composers such as Anton Reicha and Franz Danzi. “We believe in music that has a forward-thinking concept, was written more recently, and that in many ways is more challenging,” Ms. Ellis adds. “These kids are so talented that they can do anything.”

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*VIVIEN SCHWEITZER IS A WRITER, PODCASTER, AND PIANIST. SHE IS THE AUTHOR OF A MAD LOVE: AN INTRODUCTION TO OPERA.*





# A Century of Striving

Since the Black Lives Matter protests of 2020, some of classical music's most august institutions have come to reckon with racial inequities and discriminatory practices that long went unaddressed. The Curtis Institute of Music has been a part of this process of self-scrutiny. But the past also provides a foundation on which future changes can occur. Kristina Wilson explains how Curtis's merit-based acceptance policy was part of its founding ethos.

➔ **MARY LOUISE CURTIS BOK** (1876–1970) was born into wealth and privilege. She was the only child of Cyrus H.K. Curtis, founder of the Curtis Publishing Company, and Louisa Knapp Curtis, founder and editor of the *Ladies Home Journal*. But her parents set an example of the importance of social responsibility and philanthropy, supporting local cultural organizations including the Franklin Institute, Drexel University, and the Philadelphia Orchestra. This, coupled with Mary's love of music—she

became both an accomplished pianist and, like her father, an organist—laid the groundwork for what, years later, would be embodied by the Curtis Institute of Music.

After marrying the philanthropist Edward Bok in 1896, Mary became involved with Settlement Music School, where she served as a trustee and President. Founded in 1908, Settlement provided music education to local immigrant children and, while a worthy endeavor, Mrs. Bok saw firsthand that some students, despite their talent, lacked

the funds to train after aging out of the school. She responded by organizing a conservatory department at Settlement in 1922, which, just two years later, would form the nucleus of the Curtis Institute of Music.

Leopold Stokowski, conductor of the Philadelphia Orchestra from 1912 to 1941, and Josef Hofmann, the Polish piano virtuoso, were longtime friends of Mary and Edward Bok. As the plans for Curtis materialized, both were instrumental in making Mrs. Bok's vision a reality, leveraging their esteemed positions within





(Left): Leopold Stokowski giving special awards to both male and female students outside the Academy of Music c. 1927. (Right): Al Brown and Joseph Silverstein c. 1951. (Inset) Curtis's original charter.

international musical circles to enlist faculty of the highest caliber.

Although being founded and funded by a woman already made Curtis unique, another facet—its merit-based acceptance policy—further separated it from its conservatory peers. While in theory it only applied to students, in practice, it also extended to faculty and staff. The first Curtis class had male and female students as well as six Black students (at a time when racial segregation was the norm in the United States). In addition, the school's first registrar and dean were both women, and the early faculty roster boasted numerous female instructors, including Lea Luboshutz, Isabelle Vengerova, and

Marcella Sembrich.

In May 1927, Mrs. Bok went one step further in leveling the musical playing field through the creation of a tuition-free policy, made possible by an endowment she established, and from which students still benefit today. Thus, her belief that all qualified students regardless of race, gender, religion, or financial background deserved a place at Curtis was now truly immutable, both legally and financially.

However, Mrs. Bok's conviction that any able student belonged at Curtis was not embraced by all. In 1939 Marcel Tabuteau, principal oboist of the Philadelphia Orchestra and a longtime Curtis faculty member, accepted female oboist Thelma Neft as his student—only to retract the acceptance days later, citing the difficulty women wind players faced in getting placements after graduation. Ms. Neft, in the role

of David against Mr. Tabuteau's Goliath, wrote a letter to Mrs. Bok pleading her case and asking if anything could be done. Mrs. Bok conferred with newly-appointed Curtis director Randall Thompson and decided that Ms. Neft be enrolled as Mr. Tabuteau's student. "If she does well, she has as much right as anyone to be at the Institute, by the terms of the Catalogue," Mr. Thompson wrote. The episode marked a reaffirmation of Curtis's merit-based acceptance policy.

As Curtis entered its second and third decades, another outcome of its merit-based policy emerged, and it is perhaps more remarkable in that it was completely unintentional. As students, faculty, and

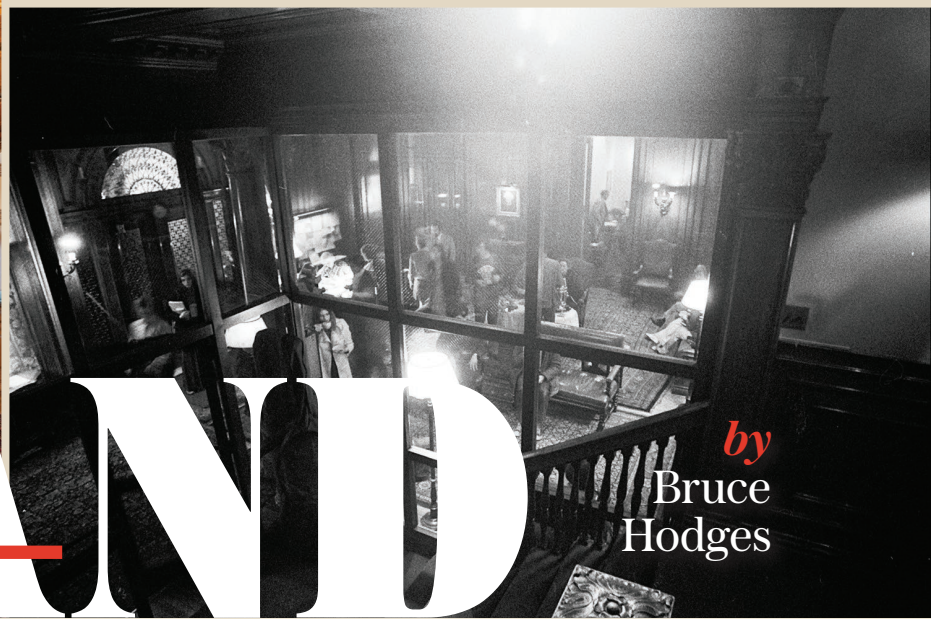
staff were accepted or employed solely on ability, this meant that varying nationalities, religions, racial backgrounds, and sexual orientations were represented in the Curtis community. Practicing this tacit acceptance in intolerant times allowed Richard Stöhr, an Austrian music professor of Jewish descent, to seek refuge at Curtis through an employment contract extended by Mrs. Bok, saving him from Nazi persecution. Gian-Carlo Menotti and Samuel Barber were not forced to hide their romantic relationship as, in the words of Seymour Lipkin (Piano '47 and faculty), "we never thought about it.... We knew they were living together. It never, never was an issue." And Louise Parker (Voice '50) and Theresa Green (Voice '50), both Black women, sang lead roles in the 1949 Curtis Opera production of *Eugene Onegin*—only three years after the first Black woman, Camilla Williams, signed with a major opera company.

These and many other stories demonstrate a degree of commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion at Curtis, long before these three words became a part of the common vernacular. However, Curtis is not perfect, and stories that cause discomfort, consternation, and anger also need to be acknowledged and confronted as the school moves forward into its next 100 years. The Curtis Archives hope to play an integral role in the ongoing interpretation of the school's history, helping the Curtis community contextualize and understand it in a way that resonates with the 21st-century ethos.

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KRISTINA WILSON IS THE ARCHIVIST AT CURTIS, A POSITION SHE HAS HELD SINCE 2016.





# GRAND

by  
Bruce  
Hodges

# DESIGNS

The three buildings that form Curtis's original home have undergone a meticulous restoration—enhanced with leading-edge technology—after work was accelerated during the pandemic.

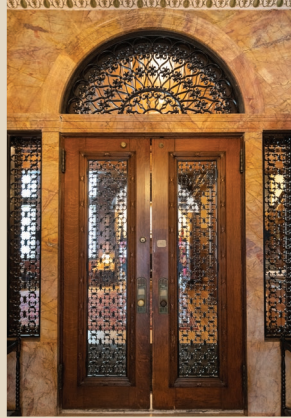




Clockwise from top left: Casimir Hall (now Field Concert Hall), 1927; Gian Carlo Menotti (Composition '33) by Victor Scharf; Bok Room as a reading room,

1928; Leopold Stokowski leading rehearsal in the Common Room, 1925; Common Room entry; Angel by Abbott Handerson Thayer, c. 1885–89; Entrance

to Field Concert Hall; President's office; Tea in the Common Room, 1974. Photo by George Krause; The Common Room.



its seemingly chaotic, unfinished state, one could sense the grandeur of the mansion beginning to re-emerge, as if from a decades-long slumber.

### USING HISTORY AS A GUIDE

When Mary Louise Curtis Bok and her husband, Edward, established Curtis in 1924, they purchased and renovated three mansions in Rittenhouse Square, an idyllic neighborhood in Philadelphia's Center City. In addition to the former Drexel mansion, the Boks acquired the Theodore Cramp Mansion, built in 1908 and now home to the Milton L. Rock Resource Center, containing the school's library and archives. Also acquired was the Edward A. Sibley House (c. 1875), which was annexed to the Drexel mansion.

Further changes to the campus have occurred since then—most notably, with the 2011 opening of Lenfest Hall down the street, containing a cafeteria, dormitory, and additional teaching and rehearsal spaces. An additional structure, now the Rubenstein Centre, was the latest acquisition (in 2012), which houses many of the school's administrative staff.

But the original property had never undergone the current depth of evaluation, with the pandemic providing the impetus. Making these renovations possible were substantial grants from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, the William B. Dietrich Foundation, Joseph and Marie Field, the McLean Contributionship, and the Presser Foundation. The total cost is estimated at \$15 million.

Field Concert Hall, completed in 1927 and originally named Casimir Hall, is among the beneficiaries of this generosity. In addition to substantial upgrades in the theater's ceiling and HVAC systems, permanent theatrical lighting has been installed, microphones and cameras have been upgraded, and a direct connection made to the basement-level audio-visual studio has been established.

The 250-seat concert hall is now a state-of-the-art facility, enabling events including multimedia presentations. Another happy result: The number of concerts open to the public is expected to increase.

Plans to renovate 1726 Locust Street date back to 2015, and a phased, multi-year process was initially envisioned. But when COVID-19 struck in early 2020—prompting the cancellation of in-person classes and leaving the facility mostly empty—the decision was made to complete the refurbishment at one time. (As a parallel example, consider how the New York Philharmonic used the pandemic closure to fast-track its planned renovations to David Geffen Hall, now undergoing a massive transformation. The changes are scheduled to be completed earlier than planned.)

**I**N A MEMORABLE 1925 photo from the Curtis Institute of Music Archives, renowned conductor Leopold Stokowski leads a rehearsal—not in Field Concert Hall, which had not yet been built, but in the Common Room of the school's main building at 1726 Locust Street.

Fast-forward to the present, when the maestro might summon a grin, seeing the handsome changes that have restored the space to its late 19th-century glory. But the renovations, completed over the past two years, have also vaulted the former George W. Childs Drexel mansion squarely into the 21st century. Numerous technological upgrades underpin the gilded-age surfaces. Students, faculty, and friends of the school will find the Curtis they love remains intact, now augmented with modern innovations.

On a crisp December afternoon, I toured the building, buzzing with hundreds of changes in progress—the elegant spaces filled with drop cloths, sawhorses, paint splotches, and genial contractors on their lunch break. Even in



## A GRACIOUS COMMON ROOM

Stepping inside the main Curtis entrance, the most noticeable change is the removal of a glass firewall, installed in the early 1960s at the base of the stairs in the Common Room. But thanks to better and more modern fire safeguards, the wall was superfluous. Removing it revealed a missing column to the right of the grand limestone mantel. Enter a team of 21st-century craftspeople, who recreated the missing right column. Additional architectural details—done in Romanesque and Renaissance style by Peabody and Stearns in 1894—have been gently scrubbed and brought back to life. (INTECH Construction was the general contractor for the entire operation, with help from architectural firms IEI Group and Vitetta Architects.) Fireplaces around the building have been preserved—even if they are nonfunctional—to maintain the old-world elegance.

In rooms, most notably studio 235B, aging linoleum tiles were peeled away, revealing long-hidden wooden parquet floors. These have been completely restored, showing off the handsome decorative marquetry.

And as a symbol of the care taken during this entire process, one can look no further than the lighting in the Bok Room. Decades ago, a bland chandelier was installed—pleasant enough, but with no reference to the room's historical significance. The Curtis Archives produced photographs of the original pewter ceiling fixture, and artisans will fabricate a new fixture reminiscent of the original.

## ACCESSIBILITY UPGRADES AND A REFRESHED BLACK BOX

One of the most dramatic moves is the addition of an elevator, uniting all five floors of the building. Architects carved out space for an industrial-sized lift, not only making daily life immeasurably easier for students, faculty, and staff, but capable of shuttling two grand pianos between the basement and the top level. A piano in use by the opera department can now be moved more easily down to the piano technician's workshop for repairs.

On the top level, a new "black box" space, dubbed the Media and Innovation Lab, is outfitted with 21st-century recording technology to enable digital-first projects, including short-form video content, artificial intelligence, gaming, and augmented reality productions. Each year the lab will highlight a distinct technological and performance concept, drawing on mini residencies with guest musicians and technical experts.

For opera students, the rest of the top floor will be a revelation. Curtis has gained 1000 square feet of space by repurposing a classroom and enclosing former rooftop areas. This has yielded reconfigured spaces for the costume shop, a hair and makeup room, and wardrobe storage. New window panels em-



(Clockwise from Top Left) The Bok Room with a portrait of Mary Louise Curtis Bok and Cyrus H.K. Curtis's piano; Portrait of Cyrus H.K. Curtis, outside Field Concert Hall; Student Lounge; Mieczyslaw Horszowski Room. (Left) The Bok Room ceiling.

phasize views of the neighborhood, overlooking Rittenhouse Square. As elsewhere throughout the building, preserving architectural details was a high priority. Equally important, modern HVAC capabilities will bring temperature control into the modern age. In most spaces, a window air-conditioning unit was the sole comfort for hardy students, sweating through the





humid Philadelphia summers.

This shift away from window units—and steam heat—is part of a larger overhaul of the heating and cooling systems at 1726 Locust Street. Contemporary “smart thermostats” now allow for more precise temperature adjustments, and new controls allow staff to remotely monitor room usage and adjust accordingly. If a room is vacant over the weekend, the system responds automatically. Gone too are the incandescent and fluorescent light fixtures of the past, replaced with LED bulbs, which are expected to increase energy efficiency by approximately 20 percent.

And to further bring daily life into 2022, rooms now have video technology from Crestron, which allows faculty—and guest artists—to do presentations from anywhere in the world. Even the bathrooms did not escape evaluation, becoming more spacious, better lit, and more accessible. Most are now gender neutral.

### PRESERVING THE PAST, PREPARING FOR THE FUTURE

Increasingly, music conservatories around the country are being challenged to teach students more than just instrumental or vocal technique. Technological fluency has jumped into the queue. Traditional concert formats are being joined by multimedia projects, and creative collaboration between musicians and other artists.

And while some may wax sentimental about the school’s formerly dark corridors, oddly arranged spaces, and practice rooms that were either too hot or too cold, for most people, all of that will be quickly forgotten.

As Curtis prepares for its centenary in 2024, the school has taken a long, intense gaze. Some of the renovations are cosmetic to enhance the pleasure of being in one of Philadelphia’s most revered spaces. Other improvements reflect the evolving nature of classical music—how it is studied, conceived, and presented in the digital age.

Still other changes may be in the background but make day-to-day life more civilized for those who work and study there. And good design is more than “how things look;” good design makes life easier. It will be interesting to see how the architectural expertise deployed here affects daily routines for those most familiar with the building.

In the meantime, if Mr. Stokowski and Mrs. Bok were standing on Locust Street, I suspect they would be delighted and add their fervent applause as they gazed at the legend they set in motion. The storied past of Curtis has never looked more promising for the future.

*A PHILADELPHIA RESIDENT SINCE 2020, BRUCE HODGES IS A REGULAR CONTRIBUTOR TO THE STRAD (LONDON), AND HAS WRITTEN ARTICLES FOR LINCOLN CENTER, PLAYBILL, THE JUILLIARD JOURNAL, AND THE SOUTHBANK CENTRE.*











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## Scheherazade Is Ready for Her

# Close-up

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BY  
David Patrick Stearns



“I am holding the whole of Scheherazade in the palm of my hand!”

And Curtis Institute of Music video director and editor Matt Hagestuen didn't even have his hands full with the multicolored video memory cards, looking like flattened M&Ms candies—none of them vaguely resembling composer Rimsky-Korsakov or the legendary Scheherazade, whose masterful story-telling staved off her execution for 1001 nights. Ancient meets ultramodern here: Immersive Scheherazade, a multimedia installation with the famous Rimsky-Korsakov piece played, heard and seen in a setting writ larger than perhaps ever before, is one of the most ambitious undertakings in recent Curtis history. Production began last July and it culminated in a premiere run from April 29 through May 15. But all the expansive majesty of the piece could fit into the Persian queen's jewelry box.

Translating this quintessential Russian orchestral work from the Curtis Symphony Orchestra's usual rehearsal space in Gould Rehearsal Hall into a visual environment that splashes images of the musicians all over the floor, walls, and ceiling—with sound to match—required a 60-hour setup for three long recording days in December, 14 technical personnel, 48 microphones, 26 cameras (4K) under 20 lights, and 3,000 feet of wiring to power it all. And, of course, the 80-member CSO led by conductor Osmo Vänskä. While the music pulsed in the rehearsal space, the images were refracted and scrutinized in the adjacent room over three large screen monitors and eight small ones.

“More back light on the harp player,” barked one technician. “That's perfect! Lock it down.”

Though the production was made by some of the most experienced professionals in the business, even Vince Ford, Curtis's senior vice president of digital strategy and innovation who has produced televised New York Philharmonic concerts, admits to being on new ground. If there was a template for the project, it wasn't the Live From Lincoln Center shows on PBS but the two competing Vincent van Gogh installations that ran in New York and are touring the world that engulf ticket buyers in crowds, wheat fields, and starry nights. Matisse's *Thousand and One Nights* is the only classic painting seen in Immersive Scheherazade. But unlike the Van Gogh exhibits, “there won't be a gift shop at the end,” quipped Mr. Ford in an interview after a recording session.



Brilliant sound quality—right down to the violin's bow-to-string friction—must match the heat of the video element. The word used by Drew Schlegel, director of audio engineering, is “presence”—not an uncommon term in the audio production world, though here, it's essential. Unlike pop music videos in which the visual element has a life of its own, the students are the stars of this project, says Mr. Ford.

One might wonder if true music making is possible under such a technological magnifying glass. But one never underestimates Vänskä, who is best known as the music director of the Minnesota Orchestra and has led the Curtis Symphony Orchestra on multiple concert tours. Even a casual observer would have to be struck, for example, by the mixture of urgency, fun, and lightness in the “Festival at Baghdad” movement of *Scheherazade*, which was recorded in long takes that enhance overall concentration.

“His relationship with the students is so down to earth and nurturing in so many different ways that the students adore being around him and make music like crazy for him,” said Curtis president and CEO Roberto Díaz.

Efficient, hyper-focused excitement was the atmosphere of the day, with a sense of easy familiarity among the technicians, partly because they were all hired from the Philadelphia area. The proper equipment, however, came from a further-afield search. “No one company had everything we needed,” said Mr. Ford. “This in itself was a logistical challenge—getting all the equipment within budget when we needed it, and during a





pandemic with supply-chain challenges. It took seven weeks to find everything.”

And the recording sessions were only the starting point: “We will spend another 300 hours editing and putting the installation together,” said Mr. Ford.

The enterprising spirit of the project has not been unusual during the pandemic, during which many groups refused to be silenced by forced shutdown—some releasing to the public their library of performance videos that had already been seen (such as the Metropolitan Opera’s simulcasts) or releasing little-known archival ones (such as the Philadelphia Orchestra’s Verdi Requiem under Yannick Nézet-Séguin).

Others assembled new videos under heroically makeshift circumstances. Curtis’s own contribution to lockdown culture was *MERCY*, a film adaptation of Mozart’s *La clemenza di Tito* made with singers in their separate quarters, probing this opera about betrayal and forgiveness.

Luckily, Immersive Scheherazade emerged during the less restrictive, pre-Omicron window of time in the pandemic when musicians could be in the same room—albeit with frequent testing—though not so open that the usual round of concerts and tours was possible. “The feeling was that if we can’t have public performances, we can do something that would create a different experi-

ence that’s as meaningful as possible,” recalled Mr. Díaz, “and can live beyond the performance.

“If you look at what is happening at the Metropolitan Opera, singers have to be as comfortable in front of a camera as they are on stage,” he continued. “Why not create something ‘in-house’ that will give them a new experience, something that will immerse them in repertoire, and with an end result that’s a different type of performance experience? We considered a range of repertoire. At one point, we considered putting a piece together section by section: We didn’t know if we could have everyone together in the room.”

Then, pandemic-related restrictions temporarily eased. And as Mr. Díaz put it, “*Scheherazade* rose to the top.”

The 45-minute piece, written in 1888 at the height of Russian romanticism, showcases the Curtis student players but does so with music whose descriptive qualities are more open-ended than, say, Richard Strauss tone poems. Visual interpretation can take many forms. Though one of the movements is titled “The Kalendar Prince,” one need not know that such a “prince” is actually an ascetic mystic to be pulled into the theme-and-variations format of the music. However, the mythology and its implications, both ancient and modern, have been taken up in other classroom studies at Curtis. Mr. Díaz went so far as to describe the school as “rallying around” *Scheherazade*.

A full-length piece like this requires a full-length budget of \$120,000—rather more than most makeshift videos made under lockdown but a lot less than what a major, non-student orchestra would require. “One benefit of developing a project like this within a university/conservatory is that we can attempt something new without predefined rules,” said Mr. Ford. “In fact, a part of the goal

of this project is to determine how to bring something new and ambitious to life that doesn’t fit within an existing template.”

Outside the academic world, such projects face work rules that strictly govern concert lengths, recording fees, and media distribution channels. Overhead costs can make multimedia projects prohibitive. Such mercantile questions are not essential in this setting by any means. But with a substantial financial and technological investment, they still loom.

Almost like a Hollywood film preview, Immersive Scheherazade began with a limited run in the Black Box theater at Curtis. And then? In a project that’s still in progress and with no clear-cut finish line, Immersive Scheherazade has a wide-open future in terms of how it can be accessed by the public. Such installations thrive in expansive spaces. Such as the lobby of the Kimmel Center? Or as a “value-added” factor in any number of concert halls when the orchestra is on tour?

Mr. Díaz believes the finished project could be “shopped” most anywhere—without commercial monetizing goals but with the intention of reaching visual-age musicians of the future. “The opportunity to engage and inspire young people far beyond our buildings has such incredible value,” he said. “One of the things we’ve always talked about at Curtis is that no one inspires young people like young people.

“How do you put value on that?”

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DAVID PATRICK STEARNS IS A CONTRIBUTOR TO THE PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER, GRAMOPHONE MAGAZINE AND CLASSICAL VOICE NORTH AMERICA. HE HOLDS A MASTER’S DEGREE IN MUSICOLOGY FROM NEW YORK UNIVERSITY.

(Top) Photo of the installation.  
(Bottom) A filming session in December.





# NOTATIONS



## Strings

### 1950s

In October **Frances Steiner** (Cello '56) led the Chamber Orchestra of the South Bay with Los Angeles Philharmonic concertmaster **Martin Chalifour** (Violin '84) as soloist in Bach's Violin Concerto in E Major and Part's *Fratres*. Curtis faculty member Jason Vieaux in November joined the ensemble in Castelnuovo-Tedesco's Guitar Concerto.

**Diana Steiner** (Violin '57) has taken up harp playing as a senior citizen. Her first book of arrangements for lever harp, *7 Easy Folksongs*, has been published by Fatrock Ink Music Publishers and is available at its website. Ms. Steiner was inspired by her daughter, Los Angeles-based harpist Marcia Dickstein.

### 1970s

**Chin Kim** (Violin '79) held online master classes for Louisiana State University in November and for the InterHarmony International Music Festival in July. Also in July, he gave an online performance of the Ysaÿe Violin Sonata No. 6 for Summit Music Festival.

### 1990s

In October **Benjamin Schmid** (Violin '91) received an Opus Klassik Award for his recording of Mozart's Piano Quartets Nos. 1 and 2 (Onyx) with colleagues Dejan Lazić, Zen Hu, Johannes

Erkes, and Enrico Bronzi.

**Hilary Hahn** (Violin '99) became the Chicago Symphony Orchestra's artist-in-residence for a two-year term beginning last September.

**Tim Fain** (Violin '98) performed on the soundtrack for the Joel Cohen film *The Tragedy of Macbeth*. Released in January, the recording features music by Carter Burwell.

**Soovin Kim** (Violin '99) will join the faculty of the Yale School of Music in July as a visiting professor of violin. He will teach a private studio, coach chamber music, and conduct a master class each semester.

### 2000s

**Tina Chang Qu** (Violin '00) joined the Interlochen Arts Academy string faculty last fall.

In October **Benjamin Bowman** (Violin '02) was the featured soloist at Carnegie Hall in *An imaginary concerto* for violin by Bach (with excerpts from the composer's Easter Oratorio, BWV 249, and Sinfonia in D Major, BWV 1045) with the Orchestra of St. Luke's.

**Daniel Chong** (Violin '00) in October released an album of works by Dvorák and Kurtág with the Parker Quartet and violist Kim Kashkashian.



**Jennifer Koh** (Violin '02) gave the world premiere of Missy Mazzoli's Violin Concerto (*Procession*), with the National Symphony Orchestra in February. In April, Ms. Koh won a Grammy Award for best classical instrumental solo for "Alone Together," her Cedille Records release containing some 40 works recorded in response to the pandemic and the financial hardship it has placed on the arts community.

In April **Earl Lee** (Cello '05) was named the winner of the 2022 Sir Georg Solti Conducting Award. The award comes with \$30,000 in cash, career guidance, and industry connections. Mr. Lee is currently the assistant conductor of the Boston Symphony Orchestra.

In September the Netherlands Radio Philharmonic Orchestra extended the contract of chief conductor **Karina Canellakis** (Violin '04) through July 2027.

Trio Zimbalist, comprised of **Josef Špaček** (Violin '09), **Timotheos Gavriilidis-Petrin** (Cello '17), and **George Xiaoyuan Fu** (Piano '16), joined Curtis's artist management roster in January.

### 2010s

**Derek Zadinsky** (Double Bass '11) was promoted to assistant principal bass of the Cleveland Orchestra in November. Mr.



Zadinsky has been a member of the Cleveland Orchestra since 2012.

**John-Henry Crawford** (Cello '14) is the 2021–2023 Young Artist in Strings at the National Federation of Music Clubs (NFMC), a nonprofit organization based in Greenwood, Ind.

**The Aizuri Quartet** (Quartet '16) has won the Cleveland Quartet Award, presented by Chamber Music America. The biennial award honors a rising string quartet “whose artistry demonstrates that it is in the process of establishing a major career.”

**Laura Park** (Violin '16) began studies at Harvard Law School last fall.

In September **En-Chi Cheng** (Viola '17) was one of three soloists along with the New York Classical Players to premiere the Concerto for Three Violas and Strings by **James Ra** (Composition '04).

**Youna Choi** (Cello '17) won the Pablo Ziegler Award as part of the Sonos Piano Trio at the inaugural Piazzolla Music Competition in June.

**Maria Ioudenitch** (Violin '18) in March joined the roster of Opus 3 Artists. This comes after winning first prize in September at the Tibor Varga International Violin Competition in Sion, Switzerland, followed by first prize in October at the Joseph Joachim International Violin Competition Hannover.



## Winds/Brass/ Percussion

### 1970s

A recording of Max Reger's Clarinet Sonata No. 3 by **David Singer** (Clarinet '71) and former Curtis director and faculty member Rudolf Serkin was re-released by Pristine Classical in November.

**Charles Salinger** (Clarinet '77) received the Philadelphia Youth Orchestra Music Institute Ovation Award in June.

### 1990s

**Katherine Needleman** (Oboe '99) gave the U.S. premiere of Ruth Gipps's Oboe Concerto in November. This is believed to have been its first performance since its London premiere in 1942.

### 2000s

In November **Anthony McGill** (Clarinet '00) along with pianist Gloria Chen released *Here With You*, a recording of works by Johannes Brahms, Carl Maria von Weber, and Jessie Montgomery.

### 2010s

**Scott Devereaux** (Tuba '10) took part in the world premiere of Eric Ewazen's Quintet for Strings and Tuba at the Newburyport Chamber Music Festival in August.

**Shiqi Zhong** (Percussion '17) was a finalist in the solo category of the inaugural Piazzolla Music Competition in June.

In 2021 **Lydia Roth** (Flute '18) joined the Columbus Symphony, in Columbus, Ohio, as second flute and piccolo player.



## Voice/Opera

### 1990s

**Juan Diego Flórez** (Voice '96) in January was named artistic director of the Rossini Opera Festival, in Pesaro, Italy.

### 2000s

**Karen Slack** (Opera '02) is one of three recipients of a 2022 Sphinx Medal of Excellence. The award recognizes extraordinary classical musicians of color and comes with a \$50,000 career grant.

### 2010s



**J'Nai Bridges** (Opera '12) was featured on the cover of *Opera News* magazine's February issue. She is also one of the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts' Next 50, a group of 50 cultural leaders who will take part in Kennedy Center

programs, forums, residencies, and events. And in April Ms. Bridges received a Grammy Award as part of the Metropolitan Opera recording of Glass's *Akhmaten*, which was honored for Best Opera Recording.

**Roy Hage** (Opera '16) in September entered the Stanford Graduate School of Business at Stanford University.

**Sean Michael Plumb** (Opera '16) made his Metropolitan Opera debut in March, singing the role of Harlekin in Strauss's *Adriadne auf Naxos*.

**Emily Pogorelc** (Voice '18) was the third prize winner of Operalia 2021, held at Moscow's Bolshoi Theater in October.



## Conducting/ Composition

### 1980s

The Buffalo Philharmonic gave the premiere of *Bandanna Overture* by **Daron Hagen** (Composition '84) in September in Buffalo.

**Robert Spano** (Conducting '85) became music director designate of the Fort Worth Symphony in April 2021 and will begin a three-year term as music director this August.

**Paavo Järvi** (Conducting '88) in November was awarded an Order of Merit by Estonia's



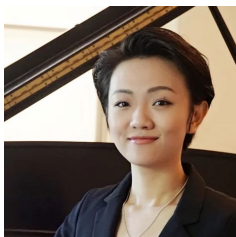
Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The award recognizes his “exceptional contribution to raising Estonia’s profile in the world.”

**2000s**

**Teddy Abrams** (Conducting '08) was named *Musical America's* Conductor of the Year for 2022.

**2010s**

**Carlos Ágreda** (Conducting '18) made his conducting debut with the Bogotá Philharmonic Orchestra in August and released his debut album of his orchestral works in February.



**Dai Wei** (Composition '19) received a commission from the American Composers Orchestra to write a work for chamber orchestra with multiple voices. The work, *Invisible Portals*, received its premiere in March at Carnegie Hall with Marin Alsop conducting.

**2020s**

Two alumni and one current student received 2021 Morton Gould Young Composer Awards from the ASCAP Foundation: Alistair Coleman (Composition), **Chelsea Komschlies** (Composition '18), and **Elizabeth Younan** (Composition '21).

**Yuwon Kim** (Conducting '20) was one of six conductors chosen to lead the Louisiana Philharmonic Orchestra at the League of American Orches-

tras' Bruno Walter National Conductor Preview, March 16–17, in New Orleans. There were more than 150 applicants for the showcase.



Organ/Piano

**1980s**

**Ketty Nez** (Piano '83), a Fulbright Scholar at the Liszt Academy in Budapest, taught graduate composers and presented her music at the Bartók Archives and the Liszt Academy last fall. She also taught at the Ljubljana Academy of Music in Slovenia in December, coaching opera projects.

**Mark Bani** (Organ '85) directed a performance of Fauré's Requiem in November at Old St. Joseph's Church in Philadelphia where he is director of music and organist.

**1990s**

Pianist **Jenny Q Chai** (Piano '94) in April released *Songs of Love*, an album featuring Schumann's *Kreisleriana* alongside two movements by Bach and Ives. Ms. Chai says the album is a tribute to the late Seymour Lipkin (Piano '47), with whom she studied at Curtis. It is available on the Divine Art Recordings Group label.

**2000s**

In January **Yuja Wang** (Piano '08) gave the premiere of the Piano Concerto by Teddy

Abrams (Conducting '08), under his direction at the Louisville Orchestra.

**2010s**

**Micah McLaurin** (Piano '18) was a semifinalist in July at the PIAM (Premio Internazionale Antonio Mormone), held in Milan, Italy.

In July **Ying Li** (Piano '22) won first prize and the audience prize at PIAM (Premio Internazionale Antonio Mormone). The next month, Ms. Li was a semifinalist at the Cleveland International Piano Competition.

Faculty

**David Bilger** has been appointed professor of trumpet at Northwestern University's Bienen School of Music, beginning this September. A member of the trumpet faculty at Curtis since 1997, he has also served as a lecturer at Northwestern since 2018.



**Michelle Cann**, Eleanor Sokoloff Chair in Piano Studies (Piano '13, ArtistYear '15), in February released a recording of Price's Piano Quintets Nos. 1 and 2 with the Catalyst Quartet. In January she received the 2022 Andrew Wolf Chamber Music Award from Bay Chamber Concerts, and in March,

she was one of three recipients of the Sphinx Medal of Excellence. The latter prize is valued at \$50,000 and awarded by the Sphinx Organization.

The Philadelphia Orchestra in January performed *The Desires* by faculty member **Ke-Chia Chen** (Musical Studies). The piece featured a concerto-like solo role for principal viola **Choong-Jin Chang** (Viola '94).

In March bassoon faculty member **Daniel Matsukawa** (Bassoon '92) was named a member of the Governor's Advisory Commission on Asian Pacific American Affairs from the Commonwealth of Philadelphia. In this role, he joins a 30-member committee that works to ensure that Pennsylvania state government is accessible and accountable to Asian Pacific American communities.

Violin faculty member **Midori** was one of five artists to receive a Kennedy Center Honor from the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in 2021. During the televised ceremony Midori received tributes from, among others, Curtis alumna **Hilary Hahn** (Violin '99).

Organ faculty member **Alan Morrison** (Organ '91, Accompanying '93) in January released *Florence Price - Virtuoso and Poet*. The album, on the ACA Digital Recording label, includes Price's First Sonata for Organ and the recently published Passacaglia and Fugue.

Director of Vocal Studies **Eric Owens** (Opera '95) appeared as Philippe II in the Metropolitan



Opera's new production of *Don Carlos* this season.

**Harvey Sachs's** book, *Ten Masterpieces of Music*, was published by Liveright (New York) in October and focuses on "ten extraordinary works of classical music in ten different genres," from Mozart to Stravinsky. Mr. Sachs is currently working on a short, interpretive biography of Schoenberg for the same publisher.



Guitar faculty member **Jason Vieaux** on April 1 released *Bach Volume 2: Works for Violin* on Azica Records. Focusing on solo guitar versions of Bach's music for solo violin, it follows Vieaux's 2009 release dedicated to the composer's music for lute.

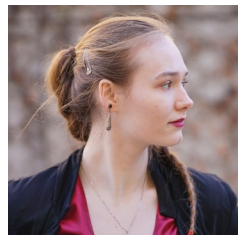
## Students

**Tianxu An** (Piano) was named *Musical America's* New Artist of the Month in August.

In November **Karisa Chiu** (Violin) won first prize at the IsangYun Violin Competition, held in Tongyeong, South Korea.

**Avery Gagliano** (Piano) gave a recital in November at Carnegie Hall's Weill Recital Hall. The concert was presented by the National Chopin Foundation

of the United States. That same month she recorded *Reflections*, her debut album on the Steinway & Sons Label. In October she was the only American semifinalist in the 18th International Chopin Competition in Warsaw, Poland.



**Maya Miro Johnson** (Composition) was the youngest female conducting fellow ever selected to attend the Aspen Music Festival and School's Aspen Conducting Academy, held last summer. She was hired as a cover conductor for the Minnesota Orchestra in January.

In September **Subin Lee** (Harp) won first prize at the Suoni D'Arpa harp competition in Saluzzo, Italy. In November she won the silver prize at the Hong Kong International Harp Competition, which was held online.

**Anton Mejias** (Piano) won second prize and the audience prize at the Viotti Piano Competition, held in Vercelli, Italy in November.

Two Curtis students won second prize in their respective categories in the Johansen International Competition for Young String Players: **Hannah Tam** (Violin) and **Emad Zolfaghari** (Viola). The event, for string players ages 13-17, is held every three years in Washington, D.C.

## Milestones

In June 2021 **Martina (Smith) Adams** (Horn) married trombonist **Hayden Adams** in Abington, Pa.

## Those We Have Lost

### Alumni



**Cecilia Brauer** (Piano '40), who played the celeste, piano, and glass harmonica with the Metropolitan Opera, died on October 16 in Teaneck, N.J. She was 97. Ms. Brauer was a noted champion of the glass harmonica, the instrument invented by Benjamin Franklin, which produces an ethereal sound when a player rubs their fingers on glasses of many sizes. At the Met, Ms. Brauer introduced it in Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor*, first in 1992 and again in the 2000s. She also performed the instrument on PBS specials, film scores for *Interview with the Vampire* and *Frida*, and at the Franklin Institute in Philadelphia. Ms. Brauer studied piano at Curtis under Isabelle Vengerova and maintained close ties to the school ever since. She was an associate member of the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra, where her brother, Raymond Gniewek (1931-2021), was concertmaster.



Cellist **Leslie Parnas** (Cello '51), who was a member of the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra and a teacher at Boston University, died on February 1 in Venice, Fla., at age 90. The cause was heart failure. Mr. Parnas was born into a musical family in St. Louis on November 11, 1931, and began studies on the piano at age five. Three years later he switched to the cello, and at age 14, he made his solo debut with the St. Louis Symphony. He served as the orchestra's principal cellist from 1954 to 1962. After studies with Gregor Piatigorsky at Curtis, Mr. Parnas won the Pablo Casals Prize at the International Cello Competition in Paris (1957) and took second prize in the International Tchaikovsky Competition in Moscow (1962). Mr. Parnas was a founding member of the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, for which he frequently recorded. He made numerous international tours, including to the Soviet Union, where he saw the potential for bridge-building during the Cold War.



**Christopher Rex** (Cello '72), the long-serving principal cellist of the Atlanta Symphony



Orchestra, died March 22 in Atlanta, Ga. Mr. Rex studied at Curtis with Orlando Cole and after graduation, won a cello position in the Philadelphia Orchestra. After seven seasons in Philadelphia, he joined the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra in 1979 as its principal cellist. Mr. Rex was an active presence in Georgia, leading the cello department at the McDuffie Center for Strings at Mercer University and serving as the founding artistic director of two festivals: the Amelia Island Chamber Music Festival and the Madison Chamber Music Festival. His brother Charles posted on social media, “It is with great sadness and sense of extreme loss that not only have I lost my dear brother, but the world of music has lost a true artist and devotee to the love of beauty.” The brothers were the subject of the 2016 documentary *Concerto for Two Brothers*, which examined the siblings’ troubled Florida childhood living under a domineering father.

**Jay Samuels** (Bassoon ’63), died on December 13 in Hilton Head, S.C. He was 83. Born December 18, 1937, in Albany, N.Y., he studied bassoon at Curtis with Sol Schoenbach. He went on to have a six-decade career in music, often performing as a pianist in jazz and popular styles.

**Robert H. Sayre** (Cello ’48) died on December 15 in Rocklin, Calif. He was 94. Born in Pittsburgh in 1927, Mr. Sayre entered Curtis at age 14 to study with Gregor Piatigorsky. After graduation he performed for three seasons with the Cleveland Orchestra and later held posts with the Cincinnati Symphony,

San Antonio Symphony, and Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestras. Most notably, he served as principal cello of the San Francisco Symphony from 1964 to 1976. Mr. Sayre was a longtime cello professor at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music and founded and conducted the San Francisco Young Professionals Orchestra. An active recitalist, Mr. Sayre was once called “one of the top half-dozen cellists in the world today” by the *Cincinnati Enquirer*.



**Donald Peck** (Flute ’51), principal flute of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra from 1958 to 1999, died on April 29 in Chicago. He was 92.

A native of Yakima, Wash., Mr. Peck studied at Curtis with William Kincaid, the celebrated principal flute of the Philadelphia Orchestra. “Kincaid wanted me to make the flute sound like an instrument, instead of tootily-flutily,” he told the *Chicago Tribune* in 1985. “I would go to hear the Philadelphia Orchestra every week, and he would be playing, and I’d see what he was talking about.”

Beginning in 1952, Mr. Peck worked his way up the orchestral ladder, performing with the National Symphony Orchestra and the U.S. Marine Band, followed by two years as principal flute in the Kansas City Philharmonic. In 1957,

Fritz Reiner appointed him assistant principal flute of the CSO, before promoting him to principal less than a year later. In addition to Reiner, Mr. Peck performed under music directors Jean Martinon, Georg Solti, and Daniel Barenboim. He appeared on more than 300 recordings in Chicago. In 1985, he gave the premiere of Morton Gould’s Flute Concerto with the CSO under Georg Solti.

Mr. Peck served on the faculties of DePaul and Roosevelt universities, where he taught flute and woodwind ensemble, and was a frequent guest lecturer and teacher at universities and conservatories around the world. Mr. Peck told his life story in a 2007 memoir, *The Right Place, the Right Time! Tales of Chicago Symphony Days*, published by Indiana University Press.



Opera director **Plato Karayanis** (Voice ’56), who served as general director of the Dallas Opera nearly a quarter-century, died on April 29 in Santa Fe, N.M., at age 93.

Born in Pittsburgh, the son of Greek immigrants, Mr. Karayanis studied music at Carnegie Mellon University, followed by voice at Curtis, where he earned an Artist Diploma. His student days at Curtis were pivotal in at least two respects: There, he met mezzo-soprano Dorothy Krebill,

whom he married in 1956. Additionally, Herbert Graf, then the director of Curtis’s opera department, encouraged Mr. Karayanis to expand his horizons to include management and stage directing.

Mr. Karayanis later spent six years in Europe studying opera administration and production at the Hamburg State Opera, while also directing and singing baritone roles. After returning to the U.S. in 1964, he held administrative positions with the San Francisco Opera, the Metropolitan Opera National company, and Affiliate Artists, a New York nonprofit organization.

Named general director of the Dallas Opera in 1977, Mr. Karayanis was recognized for his collaborative work ethic. He oversaw an expansion in the company’s repertory, the creation of a separate Dallas Opera Orchestra, and the 1994 hiring of Graeme Jenkins as the company’s music director and conductor. After retiring from the company in 2000, he held interim directorships with Opera San Antonio and Palm Beach Opera. Mr. Karayanis is survived by his wife, Dorothy, and extended family.

For more obituaries, please visit [Curtis.edu/in-memoriam](http://Curtis.edu/in-memoriam).

We welcome your news and updates for possible inclusion in a future issue. Please email us at [overtones@curtis.edu](mailto:overtones@curtis.edu).





# A Fund to Further Early Careers

BY MARY  
CLAIRE  
SULLIVAN

Young Alumni Fund has backed concerts, recording projects, and instruments.

→ Each May, the Curtis Institute of Music sends its graduates out into the world with the hopes they'll take everything they've absorbed at Curtis and spread their wings as artists. This necessary transition from student to young professional is often rocky, and the pandemic has only intensified matters.

Photos: Natalie Helm performs as part of her non-profit organization, Upward Notes.

**NOT ONLY DO ALUMNI** face an unpredictable touring landscape and a winner-take-all music streaming economy but scattered across the globe, they often lack access to the kinds of physical resour-

es—instruments, recording equipment—that Curtis can provide. It was to address this shift, and to further Curtis's ongoing efforts to strengthen support for alumni in the years after graduation, that in

September 2020, the school launched a new annual grant program: the Young Alumni Fund.

Soprano Ashley Milanese (Opera '18) was among the first group of recipients. "At Curtis, they take care of us so much that [when you graduate], you get a bit of a reality check," she says. "You start to learn about how livable it is to be a performing artist." Milanese received a grant to support the creation of a website and online promotional materials.

In its inaugural year, Curtis offered \$37,000 for distribution through the fund, with over half of it coming directly from donations from alumni and other donors. Grants of \$1,000 to \$10,000 were

awarded to eleven standout proposals drawn from a pool of 41 applicants. An anonymous panel of Curtis alumni evaluated each proposal, assessing the impact that the funding might have on each project's success.

Shea Scruggs (Oboe '04), Director of Institutional Research and Musician Experience/Chief Enrollment Officer, oversees the initiative. "We wanted to make sure that Curtis's alumni had a voice in every part of this program—from design to implementation—in order to ensure that their experiences informed our actions at every level," he says.

To maximize the program's impact, the Young Alumni Fund's focus is intentionally broad. Grantees are invited to seek funding for any project or need, with the only requirement being that they are Curtis alumni within 10 years of graduation. For Joshua Stewart (Opera '12) and Oliver Herbert (Cello '19), grants helped fund the creation of new works. Says Stewart, "The funding definitely helped validate a creative hunch: Why have I never sung music that directly relates to me?" Stewart used his grant to publish a collection of original poetry, which reflects on the stories that have shaped him as a young American Black man now living in Europe. The poems will serve as source material for a newly commissioned song cycle entitled "A Man Without a Home."

For Sonora Slocum (Flute

'11), who used the funding to finance her third studio album, the grant's impact was more straightforward: "I wouldn't have released [the album] if I hadn't received the grant," she says of her collection of Mozart's flute quartets, recorded with members of the Dover Quartet (Quartet '14 and current faculty) and the Escher Quartet. After using her grant to cover the final editing and distribution costs, Slocum released the album digitally last December, capitalizing on timely promotional opportunities, including an appearance on a local PBS affiliate. Without the funding, "it would've been on the back burner."

Tessa Ellis (Community Artist Fellow '18), Joshua Halpern (Cello '19), and Natalie Helm (Cello '11) used their grants to engage and serve their communities. Helm's Sarasota, Fla.-based nonprofit, Upward Notes, brings musical performances to underserved audiences, including prisons, domestic abuse shelters, and dementia wards. "For years we've been working on a budget of zero, so making Upward Notes an official [nonprofit] has been very scary from a financial perspective," she says. "I'm a musician. I was trained to play the cello." The grant has enabled her to hire advisers to help her navigate the complicated process of filing for tax-exempt status. "I can put my passion project in their hands and know that I'm not going to get a phone call and be out thousands of dollars because I didn't cross a T or dot

an I."

Others used the funds to continue moving their careers forward when COVID-19 upended their plans. Tania Villasuso Couceiro (Clarinet '19) was preparing for orchestral auditions when the American audition circuit went dark starting in the spring of 2020. "I didn't want to lose all that work while waiting," she says. "I thought there were going to be auditions that spring, but by the fall of 2020, there still was nothing." With grant funding, Villasuso Couceiro has been able to travel to Europe to continue taking auditions.

Similarly, Jahleel Smith (Bass Trombone '18) and Lyman McBride (Trombone '18) used their grants to purchase new instruments. Smith, who plays bass trombone with the Hawaii Symphony Orchestra, was playing on an instrument built in the 1970s and requiring constant repairs. "It's putting a Band-Aid on a leaky faucet," says Smith. With his grant funding, Smith was able to custom-build an instrument to his own specifications, creating a trombone that will truly operate as an extension of his artistic voice.

Thanks to a generous grant from the Daniel W. Dietrich II Foundation, Curtis now has a permanent endowment for the program, embedding it in the framework of the school's musician lifecycle initiatives for years to come. In conversations with that organization, Curtis leadership learned that Daniel Dietrich, who died in 2015, was a great

lover of music and understood how important it is for artists to have opportunities to take risks as part of their artistic development. The school hopes to carry this ethos forward as it formalizes the program's structure, creating additional resources for alumni applicants, and more than doubling the funds available on an annual basis to support even more ambitious projects in the future.

George Xiaoyuan Fu (Piano '16) used his grant towards production costs for *Solitude with Schubert*, a documentary film about his preparation for a concert of Schubert's music with soprano Lotte Betts-Dean. The film will use the music of Schubert as a vehicle to explore themes of solitude and death, Fu says, while holding hope for life. "For Curtis to believe this much in its alumni, I can't think of another place that does that."

*More information on each of the grantees, their projects, and the impact of the Young Alumni Fund is available at [Curtis.edu/YAF](https://Curtis.edu/YAF).*

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MARY CLAIRE SULLIVAN, ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR OF CAMPAIGN AND STRATEGIC INITIATIVES, AND BOARD LIAISON, JOINED CURTIS'S STAFF IN JANUARY 2021. A MUSICIAN HERSELF, SHE IS PASSIONATE ABOUT ENSURING THAT CURTIS STUDENTS AND ALUMNI ARE ARMED WITH THE TOOLS THEY NEED TO UNLOCK THEIR CREATIVE POTENTIAL.



# Class of 2022



1 Colin Aikins, *Voice*; Tianxu An, *Piano*; 2 Merissa Beddows, *Voice*; 3 Justin Bernardi, *Trumpet*; Keoni Bolding, *Viola*; Ethan Burck, *Opera*; 4 Charles Buttigieg, *Voice*; 5 Janice Carissa, *Piano*; 6 I-hao Cheng, *Violin*; 7 Karisa Chiu, *Violin*; 8 Soyoung Cho, *Viola*; 9 Alistair Coleman, *Composition*; Cristina Cutts Dougherty, *Tuba*; 10 Sage DeAgro-Ruopp, *Opera*; 11 Ruby Dibble, *Opera*; Naomi Ford, *Flute*; Mekhi Gladden, *Oboe*; Justin Goldsmith, *Community Artist Fellow (CAF)*; 12 Matthew Hakkarainen, *Violin*; Sara Han, *Clarinet*; 13 Jamison Hillian, *Oboe*; Ming-Yu Hsu, *Viola*; Sophia Hunt, *Opera*; Sarah Jessen, *Trumpet*; Robert Kahn, *Conducting*; Yoonseo Irene Kang, *Percussion*; 14 Gawon Kim, *Violin*; Haram Kim, *Violin*; 15 Jiyeon Kim, *Cello*; Aimi Kobayashi, *Piano*; Markus Lang, *Double Bass*; John Lee, *Cello*; 16 Rachael Lee, *Bassoon*; 17 Ying Li, *CAF*; Xu Kun Alan Liu, *Guitar*; 18 Wei Luo, *Piano*; 19 Sophia Maekawa, *Voice*; Calvin Mayman, *Flute*; 20 William McGregor, *Double Bass*; 21 Emma Meinrenken, *Violin*; Aaron Patterson, *Organ*; 22 Thomas Petrushka, *Opera*; 23 Gabe Polinsky, *Double Bass*; 24 Lindsey Reynolds, *Opera*; 25 Thomas Roy-Rochette, *Bassoon*; 26 David Schonberger, *Bass Trombone*; 27 Anastasiia Sidorova, *Opera*; Andrew Stump, *Horn*; 28 Yuhsin Galaxy Su, *Clarinet*; Takumi Taguchi, *Violin*; 29 Grace Takeda, *CAF*; Joseph Tancredi, *Opera*; 30 Claire Thai, *Harp*; 31 Alan Tolbert, *Trumpet*; Ray Ushikubo, *Piano/Violin*; 32 Fuki Wang, *Flute*; 33 Zitong Wang, *Piano*; Patrick Wilhelm, *Opera*; 34 Cherry Choi Tung Yeung, *Violin*; Hao Yang, *Guitar*; 35 Jinyoung Yoon, *Violin*; Jihoo Yu, *Flute*



## The Founder's Society

Named to honor Mary Louise Curtis Bok, the Founder's Society invites you to include the Curtis Institute of Music in your estate plans. Legacy gifts are a meaningful way to honor the indelible impact Curtis had on your life and, like Mrs. Bok, you too can make a difference in the lives of future Curtis students.

“Music, beginning where speech leaves off, tells more of things human and divine, of nature, life and love, than we can stammer in words, and tells it in a language that is universal and understandable to every human heart.”

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*Mary Louise Curtis Bok*  
*Founder, Curtis Institute of Music*

For information on how to include Curtis in your estate plans, or to learn more about creative philanthropic tools, please contact the Advancement Office at (215) 717-3131 or [Giving@Curtis.edu](mailto:Giving@Curtis.edu).

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