

OVERTONES

VOL. XLVI, NO. 1 | SPRING 2023



Music's Healing Powers

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Rachmaninoff at Curtis

Sergei Rachmaninoff, who was born 150 years ago this year, was a frequent guest in Philadelphia and, on at least one occasion, at Curtis. In November and December 1939, The Philadelphia Orchestra presented a Rachmaninoff Festival to mark the 30th anniversary of his orchestra debut (which was as a conductor, although he played a solo piano piece on that concert). During the 1939 visit, Rachmaninoff and his wife, Natalie Rachmaninoff, stopped by Curtis, possibly for a reception or similar event, and signed the school's guestbook.

Though little information about the visit is available, the composer is remembered today with a drawing by Alfred Bendeiner, on display at 1726 Locust Street.

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Contents

18 Orchestrating Gender Pay Equity

Curtis graduates face a field in which men are more likely to hold the highest-paying jobs.
by **Heidi Waleson**

“We know music shares brain areas with movement, memory, motivation, and reward. The scientific evidence so far shows it’s more than an emotional connection.”

—Dr. Francis S. Collins, M.D., Ph.D., former director, National Institutes of Health



Music’s Healing Powers
Doctors increasingly understand how music can be used in medical care.
by **Michele C. Hollow**

14

02 Message from the Chair of Liberal Arts

Jeanne M. McGinn on women in leadership.

A Tempo

03 FEARLESS FOURSOME

The Dover Quartet welcomes a new violist.

**07 THE Q+A:
JENNIFER KOH**
From recital stage to fashion runway, a violinist thinks in broad strokes.

**10 UNDER NEW
MANAGEMENT**
What should an artist look for in a manager?

Notations

- 24** Alumni
- 28** Faculty and Students
- 29** Those We’ve Lost
- 26 HANDEL’S CAUTIONARY OPERA**
A director and conductor make a case for *Ariodante*.
- 30 DOCTORS’ NOTES**
Curtis alumni share the skills that transfer from concert stage to operating theater.
- 33 SALUTING THE CLASS OF 2023**



FROM THE
CHAIR OF
LIBERAL
ARTS

It's all there in the letters.



TO UNDERSTAND WOMEN in leadership, consider the correspondence of Mary Louise Curtis Bok. Her words reveal a leader in action: generous, creative, fierce, humorous, and humble. She writes to a correspondent: “Many thanks for your very kind note about Sam Barber, but really you are too generous to the Curtis Institute, and to me in this case. He is a very real talent” (Founder’s Records, Curtis Archives, 1935).



Not every visionary manages to realize her dream *and* establish that dream as a reality for future generations. Not every visionary dedicates herself to clearing a space for young artists to flourish. What a gift to us that Mrs. Bok was that visionary leader.

As we prepare to mark Curtis’s centennial, it is a perfect moment to salute women in leadership. Norman Rockwell caught the intelligence, strength, and shy smile of the founder of Curtis. Her portrait, on display in the Common Room, reminds us of the power and the possibility of leadership.

When pondering strength in leadership, I look to see who is serving students most keenly, celebrating them as Mrs. Bok celebrated Sam Barber.

Gifted teachers elicit my admiration as they pore over essays with students or listen to the same phrase over and over, somehow pulling the sublime from the quotidian. Applause is due to women prepping the salad bar in Lenfest Hall or cleaning practice rooms so that their freshness clears the path for music-making. Women across campus lead with integrity and dedication to the mission while managing family commitments and, in many cases, artistic careers of their own.

In this issue of *Overtones*, we invite you to read about contemporary women leaders changing the landscape of the arts, including Jennifer Koh (Violin ’02), artistic director of the Kennedy Center’s Fortas Chamber Music Concerts, discussing mentorship (p. 7), and opera director Omer Ben Seadia, offering her take on the relevance of Handel’s *Ariodante*, with conductor David Stern (p. 26). Writer Heidi Waleson highlights efforts to overcome gender disparities in orchestras (p. 18), while other features explore music’s role in healthcare settings (pp. 14 and 30), wellbeing for musicians (p. 22), and management decisions (p. 10).

We marvel at leadership and generosity in letters, on stage, and in classrooms. But how do we translate our encounters with the marvelous? I learn from students, gathered around the hand-hewn seminar table, a gift of Marguerite and Gerry Lenfest, in the Rock Resource Center. This semester, students pondered Emily Dickinson’s luminous words, “I shall keep singing!” The poems gained resonance as students inspired one another with their interpretations. At last, and at the beginning, the work is to make room for artists to speak with one another about how best to sing. Of the unsung leaders among us, perhaps, with Dickinson, this is the moment to “bring a fuller tune.”

Jeanne Minahan McGinn, Ph.D.

RUTH W. AND A. MORRIS WILLIAMS JR. CHAIR OF LIBERAL ARTS
SENIOR ASSOCIATE DEAN OF ACADEMICS

A TEMPO



Dover Quartet Finds Its New Violist in Boston Symphony Violin Section

Julianne Lee returns to the viola—and her alma mater.

THE DOVER QUARTET THIS past winter reached into the Curtis family tree and plucked Julianne Lee (Violin '05), a longtime member of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, as its next violist. She replaces the founding violist Milena Pajaro-van de Stadt (String Quartet '14, Viola '11, '10), who departed last August.

Ms. Lee has served as assistant principal second violin of the Boston Symphony Orchestra and principal second violin with the Boston Pops since 2006. Additionally, she was the BSO's acting assistant concertmaster from 2013 to 2015.

Ms. Lee arrives at an auspicious moment for the Dover, which was founded in 2008 and in 2020 became Curtis's Penelope P. Watkins Ensemble in Residence. In March, Ms. Watkins, a member of the Curtis board of trustees, donated \$10 million to endow the residency



in perpetuity. The new funds will support performing, touring, and possibly recording, as well as the Dover’s ongoing teaching role on the faculty.

Like a switch hitter in baseball, Ms. Lee has pursued both the violin and viola ever since her third year at Curtis, when she discovered a course called Viola for Violinists. She proved a fast study on the viola. “During my last year at Curtis, I was principal viola of the Curtis [Symphony] Orchestra, so it really forced me to learn the alto clef and to read quickly,” she notes. Her viola studies continued with Kim Kashkashian at the New England Conservatory (NEC), where she earned a master’s degree.

At Curtis, Ms. Lee studied violin and chamber music with Joseph Silverstein, later a teacher to Joel Link (String Quartet ’14, Violin ’11) and Bryan Lee (String Quartet ’14, Violin ’11), the Dover’s first and

The Dover Quartet

second violinists, respectively. “That similar language from our training definitely shapes us as players,” Ms. Lee says, alluding to their shared sound concept and approach to matters such as fingerings.

For her Dover audition, Ms. Lee sat with the group to perform works by Mozart, Beethoven, Brahms, Dvořák, and Ravel. She returned for a second session, but by then, it was clear “how easy things felt,” she said. Over dinner, the musicians discussed their shared enthusiasm for the Guarneri String Quartet, whose members coached the Dover. “It felt so easy to talk about different topics. I immediately felt at home.”

Ms. Lee will move to Philadelphia and step down from her teaching posts at NEC and the Berklee College of Music. The Dover, meanwhile, will finish its summer season with violist Hezekiah Leung, who has been temporarily filling in.

“To say it was ‘love at first sound’ might sound silly, but that’s exactly what we experienced when we first read with Julianne,” said Dover cellist Camden Shaw (String Quartet ’14, Cello ’11, ’10). “There was the uncanny feeling that we had already played together for years; and yet at the same time, the group sounded uniquely fresh and inspired.”



Faculty and Staff Anniversaries



50 YEARS

Ford Mylius Lallerstedt



35 YEARS

Joan Patenaude-Yarnell



30 YEARS

Paul Bryan
Meng-Chieh Liu



25 YEARS

Nitzan Haroz



20 YEARS

Jeffrey Curnow
Edgar Meyer



10 YEARS

Julie Landsman
Andrew Lane
Yoni Levyatov
Eric Millstein



5 YEARS

Midori
Ashley Hsu
Patricia McCaffrey
Eric Owens
Peter Williams
Christine Witkowski



Osmo Vänskä leads the Curtis Symphony Orchestra

Tour de Force

Curtis undertakes its first-ever west coast orchestra tour.

How many trunks does it take to carry the Curtis Symphony Orchestra’s instruments across the United States?

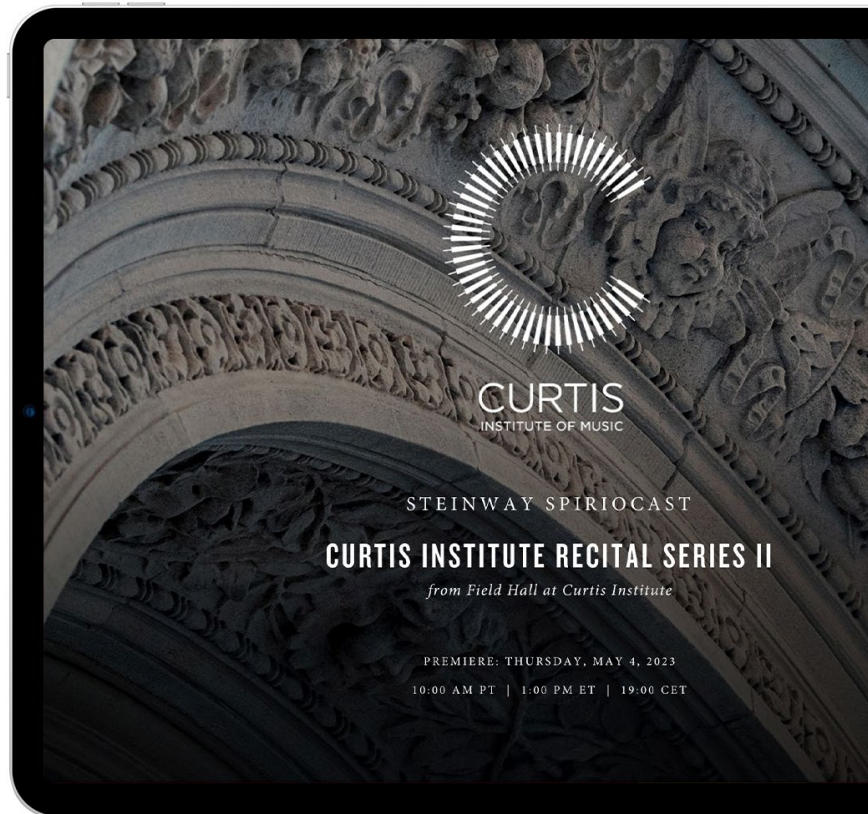
Twenty-eight, to be exact, and that doesn’t include the 11 wardrobe trunks, and two more for scores, sheet music, and other supplies (small instruments were hand-carried). Altogether, the cargo traveled some 6,000 miles in a 53-foot, climate-controlled truck, with two drivers trading shifts to ensure an on-time delivery.

The tour, which was the orchestra’s first-ever to the west coast, opened May 12 at Longwood Gardens in suburban Philadelphia, and continued with concerts from May 16 through 21 in Prescott, Ariz. and Santa Barbara and Davis, Calif. Audiences experienced the efforts of 88 students, 15 staff members, three guest artists—conductor Osmo Vänskä, pianist Janice Carissa (’22), and piano faculty member Yefim Bronfman (’78)—and composer Dai Wei (’19), whose *Awakening Lion* was commissioned for the tour.

For behind-the-scenes staff, the journey was a highly choreographed exercise involving hotel assignments, bus connections, catered meals, concert recordings, and the occasional Walmart run. Mr. Vänskä, who is conductor laureate of the well-traveled Minnesota Orchestra, led works by Bartók, Schumann, Tchaikovsky, Rimsky-Korsakov, and the commission by Ms. Dai.

Along with the concert programs, Curtis traveled with *Immersive Scheherazade*, its 360-degree video installation, which was staged over two days at the Mondavi Center for the Performing Arts in Davis.

ZOART PHOTOGRAPHY



Play Us a Song, You’re the SpirioCast

Steinway’s high-tech player piano arrives at Curtis.

→ **STEINWAY PIANOS HAVE** filled the halls of Curtis since its founding in 1924, but the piano maker’s presence took a technological leap forward when the school acquired its first Steinway Spirio in 2020. A high-tech player piano, it has been used in two live events, dubbed SpirioCasts, which highlighted Curtis pianists, and it has inspired student composers to write original works incorporating the instrument’s technological capabilities.

A SpirioCast allows Spirio users to instantly stream live performances to other owners of the instruments. Performances by six piano students were captured on March 30 in Field Concert Hall and beamed out in real-time to Spirio owners in North America, Europe, and Africa (a synced video feed of the performance accompanied the Spirio transmission). The pianists were Charmhee Han, Yangyang Ruan, Zhu Wang, Nachuan Tao, Adrian Zaragoza, and Avery Gagliano.

The Spirio differs in significant ways from old saloon-style player pianos. Instead of rolls of perforated paper, it uses an embedded sensor system that

connects to the piano's hammers and pedals. Though the instrument looks like a conventional Steinway Model B or D, the interior sensors connect to software that captures the nuances of touch and tone, producing a high-resolution sound. It also comes with an iPad to control the system and provide access to a growing catalogue of thousands of live performances by Steinway artists; anyone with the app can download and replay those performances on their Spirio.

Just as Aaron Copland and Igor Stravinsky were inspired by the original player piano, Curtis composers have written works for the Spirio. Composition student Maya Miro Johnson has created *bruises; yellow, green, & purple*, which got its premiere by Katelyn Bouska on April 29 in Gould Rehearsal Hall. It follows a Spirio-focused piece by Alistair Coleman, which premiered in 2021. Curtis is also the only institution with a dedicated channel on the Spirio app, which features recordings by select students, faculty, and alumni.

Amy Yang ('06), associate dean of piano studies and artistic initiatives, and provost and artistic director Ed Gazouleas, oversaw the initiative, having brought Curtis and Steinway together for the groundbreaking collaboration. She hopes that the technology can broaden the reach of Curtis. "Collaborations with Steinway provide us with new ways of highlighting the hard work of our students and faculty as we seek to reach both a local and global community," she commented. "Plus, we are proud for the artistry of each student's voice to be heard around the world."



Quick Hits



The sumptuous restoration of 1726 Locust Street (see the Spring 2022 issue of *Overtones*) was recently selected by the Preservation Alliance for Greater Philadelphia to receive its Grand Jury Award for the highest achievement in historic preservation. The award ceremony took place on June 6 at Vie in Philadelphia.



Curtis Studio, Curtis's house recording label, on May 5 released its second recording: *Revival*, Music of Price & Bonds, featuring performances by faculty member Michelle Cann ('13). The recording features Florence Price's prize-winning Piano Sonata in E minor, three of her *Fantasia nègre*, and Margaret Bonds's magnum opus for piano, *Spiritual Suite*. The album is available on all major streaming platforms.



The All-School Project for the 2023–24 season will focus on "Music of the Earth." The initiative will bring together coursework, performance projects, and archival studies to examine "the music that emanates from the earth and its inhabitants." Specific areas of focus might include ancient percussion traditions, music of the spheres, and Messiaen's fascination with birdsong. These will provide a framework to understand contemporary issues involving climate change and global justice. The All-School Project is an annual initiative that began in 2007 and in the past two academic years focused on "Civil Rights and the Music of Change."



THE Q+A

Jennifer Koh

Whether on a recital stage or a fashion runway, the intrepid violinist thinks in broad strokes.

BY
BRIAN
WISE



WHEN JENNIFER KOH (Violin '02) accepted an offer last fall to become artistic director of the Kennedy Center's Fortas Chamber Music Concerts, she viewed it as a chance to work on a broader canvas. The Korean-American violinist has made expansive projects her calling card, most recently with *Everything Rises*, a 70-minute multimedia piece in which she and bass-baritone Davóne Tines explored their respective relationships to classical music's historically white culture.

Last year, Ms. Koh won a GRAMMY Award for *Alone Together*, an album of 39 newly commissioned works for solo violin that grew out of a lockdown-era streaming series of the same name. And she is currently touring with Missy Mazzoli's Violin Concerto, a work that casts the soloist as "a soothsayer, sorcerer, healer, and pied piper-type character."

No stranger to managerial roles, Ms. Koh runs the ARCO Collaborative, a nonprofit that commissions new works, especially by women and artists of color. The ruby-haired Illinois native, who in February performed at a Marc Jacobs fashion show, talks with *Overtones* about her expanding role as a concert programmer.



You started as artistic director at the Kennedy Center in December. How did this come about and what excites you most about it?

At the time, the search process was quiet, and I had no idea who else was in the mix. They let me know a couple of months before the official announcement, which was in December. The idea of this was the furthest thing from my mind but what I'm most excited about is having an opportunity to advocate for others. The Kennedy Center is the only nationally funded cultural center in the United States, and it can serve as a kind of creative incubator. I'm most looking forward to giving platforms to other artists, but also advocating for the series to really look like what America looks like.

Do you see this as an opportunity to get classical music in front of politicians and Washington power brokers?

One thing that I do know is that one does not talk about political positions at the Kennedy Center. The board of trustees is presidentially appointed. Their tenure is six years, so the people in charge right now were chosen by the previous president.* Here's the thing: I already know what's going on in my head. But it has always been interesting to me to know and learn the stories of others who are not like me and whose stories have not been heard.

Your first fully programmed season will be in 2024–25. How will classical music fit in?

Even when I was young everybody was saying that classical music is dying, or it's almost dead. So how do we serve this art form in the future? I think it's really by making it relevant. If we just keep these composers on pedestals of the past, then it's only about history. And it's not necessarily relevant to present-day life. Every project that I've done has been a way to create a different lens into the



past and into the repertoire. *Bach and Beyond* was about exploring Bach's influence on compositions for solo violin throughout the centuries. *Bridge to Beethoven* was about how different composers engaged with Beethoven sonatas in different ways. So, I think the Kennedy Center [series] will be an extension of that kind of musical curiosity.

Some concert presenters have come through the upheavals of the past three years with a great-

er willingness to shake up their programming. But there also seems to be a concern that audiences are not returning to their pre-pandemic numbers. How do you see this playing out?

When I've witnessed a space for artists to make their own things, I have not observed a drop-off in audiences. When I played with The Philadelphia Orchestra in Missy Mazzoli's concerto, every night was sold out. When I've done *Alone Together* programs or any kind of new music,

Above: Jennifer Koh performs Bernstein's *Serenade* with the Boston Symphony Orchestra and music director Andris Nelsons.

Right: Jennifer Koh performs *Everything Rises* with Davóné Tines at BAM.

ARAM BOGHOSIAN

*President Biden appointed six trustees to the 36-member board in October 2022. Former President Trump made multiple rounds of appointments, including four in December 2020.



project now, three years later?

This was a way to band together to help the next generation of musicians. But when I look back at the music now, it's like an archive of that period. When I have played those programs, or when people have heard that album, they come up to me and say, 'Oh, wow, I've been trying to block out that period of time, but this really brought me back to remembering how I felt.'

For the Kennedy Center's 2023–24 season, you'll be presenting a reboot of *Two x Four*, a project with your former Curtis teacher, Jamie Laredo (Violin '59). What prompted you to revive this?

When *Two x Four* debuted, it was about the passing down of tradition and the evolution of music-making from one generation to the next. So, using the Bach Double Concerto as a starting point, we commissioned Anna Cline, David Ludwig (Composition '01), and a work by Philip [Glass] called *Icarus*, for two violins and string orchestra. The idea of mentorship felt appropriate, given that I'm inheriting this series from Yossi [the late pianist Joseph Kalichstein], who is of my teacher's generation. I

wanted to honor that because I have received so much from my teachers.

Another one of your early mentors was the late Felix Galimir, a long-time Curtis faculty member who once worked with figures like Ravel and Schoenberg. I understand that he helped to inspire your passion for contemporary music.

Basically, he guided me to go to the Marlboro Festival when I was quite young. But his guidance also really shaped how I thought about music. Felix's life was saved by Branislav Huberman, who is one of my favorite violinists. Aside from being a great musician, he took the time and spent the money to get Jewish musicians out of Europe, including Felix, who was in the Vienna Philharmonic at the time. He saved their lives. Felix changed the landscape of string playing in the United States. So, in that sense, it's important to remember that we are active participants in history, and that every decision can impact the lives of others in very profound ways. I've seen that in my own life through my teachers.

This interview was edited and condensed.

every show is sold out. Of course, I know it's in the dialogue. But my hope coming out of the pandemic is that artists will get the opportunity to dream ourselves out of this time. Because that's our job: to imagine the world we want to live in and then make it. Right?

With *Alone Together*, you commissioned some 40 solo violin works by both established and emerging composers at a time when there was little work to go around. How do you view that





Sound Off

What should an artist look for in a manager (and vice versa)?

BY BRIAN WISE

Michelle Cann ('13)

Eleanor Sokoloff Chair in Piano Studies

→ Pianist Michelle Cann signed to Curtis's management division in 2021 after having mixed results with earlier managers. She recommends that young musicians do their homework. "Sometimes, we have a little bit of a starry-eyed view of things and think, 'As long as I have management, then I'm good to go,'" she says. But it's important that management understands your artistic priorities as you grow—and that you understand them.

"For most managements, they get paid when you perform. They get their 20 percent, so they are sometimes very motivated by money. I get it because that's their bottom line. Therefore, if you say, 'I would love to do this [unconventional] venue,' they may respond that 'these venues are cool, but they don't pay as much.' There's a balance, and you must respect the management team. Do your research on a manager. Look up the artists that they are working with and what they program. If they have a variety of artists who do a variety of things, that means that this manager does know how to book for different audiences and venues.

"Look at how many artists they have and look at who is on the staff. At the same time, if it's a decent management, they only want artists that are bookable. And the only way they're going to know if you are bookable is if you are out there doing things. Say yes to performance opportunities."

STEVEN MAREAZI WILLIS

Jonathan Biss ('01)

Pianist

→ After years of working with separate managers in New York and Europe, the concert pianist, writer, and teacher Jonathan Biss recently signed exclusively with the London offices of IMG Artists. The consolidation, he said, was for efficiency. Regardless of one's career goals, Mr. Biss believes that trust and creativity are the essential traits of a manager.

“A manager ends up having hun-

dreds, if not thousands, of conversations about you and your strengths, weaknesses, and what you have to offer—that you will never be party to. For the relationship to work, you must feel that that person understands you, and you must feel that you can trust them.

“There is stuff in the contract about what kind of piano has to be provided. But sometimes, it happens that there are three days

between concerts on tour in California and it doesn't make sense to go home, and you have to figure out where you're going to practice. You need people who are going to be creative and kind of come up with a lot of different solutions.

“There's such a huge spectrum of piano situations that a manager has to be able to read. And of course, it's their job to keep you out of five-alarm fires in the first place.” →



BENJAMIN EALOVEGA

Maria Ioudenitch ('18)

Violinist

→ After Maria Ioudenitch won first prizes at three competitions in 2021, including at the Joseph Joachim International Competition, she received management inquiries from multiple agencies—including one that “just dropped off the face of the earth.” Now she is signed with Emily McClean at Opus 3 Artists, who oversees her dates in the Americas, and Christopher Dingstad at Künstleragentur Dr. Raab & Dr. Böhm, who serves as her general manager. Ms. Ioudenitch stresses the importance of flexibility.

“For me, it was especially important that I build a personal relationship with my manager in addition to the business side. You have to talk to them weekly, even daily, and if you don’t have that personal connection, then it’s going to be really tough. It was also important that both Chris and Emily understood the importance of taking care of oneself and being aware of the amount of work that I can take on. Of course, for an agent, it’s important to have many concerts because the more concerts you play, the more money you bring in. But for me, it was important that both understood that, for the longevity of my career, they can’t just book concerts whenever and just hope that I can make it. They both ask me, ‘Is this feasible, and are you going to be okay after this period?’ They really care, and that’s maybe even more important.”



JENNY CHOU

Andrew Lane

Vice President, Touring and Artist Management

→ Since Curtis expanded into artist management in 2020, Andrew Lane has overseen a growing roster that now includes the Dover Quartet, Michelle Cann (see above), and Trio Zimbalist. Mr. Lane also heads Curtis on Tour, booking students, faculty, and alumni on four continents. Honored by *Musical America* as one of its 2022 Professionals of the Year, he stresses the importance of a 50/50 partnership with an artist.

“The artistry must be there, but what I’m also looking for in an artist is a personal and professional drive and charisma, on and off stage. In terms of a more measurable thing, I’m looking for a critical mass of past and upcoming engagements. And most importantly, meaningful connections with conductors or artistic programmers that result in reengagements. That’s how careers are built. I’m looking for an artist who’s willing to do 50 percent of the work. It’s not that I would expect an artist to bring 50 percent of the dates to me, necessarily. But an artist is willing to do the press interviews, dinners, and receptions with donors or presenters—and is building those relationships when on the road and making those connections. Ultimately, once I’ve booked a date, arranged [transportation], and done everything on the management side, then it’s up to the artist to deliver and to hit the home run.”



Josef Špaček ('09)

Violinist

→ Josef Špaček has a management team that includes a Brussels-based general manager (Jeroen Tersteeg of Nymus Artists) and regional managers representing central Europe, Japan, China, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia. Such specialization is beneficial, Mr. Špaček says, when dealing with “niche” markets where it helps to know the local language. Mr. Špaček is also a member of Trio Zimbalist, which is managed by Curtis’s artist management program.

“The ideal manager is not just a person who books you for concerts but who serves as a personal therapist, in a way. You share all your struggles as an artist and have someone to rely on. So, someone very reliable and trustworthy is key. A good manager should know about repertoire, should know what pieces you do well, and can recommend repertoire choices—what you should play where. Of course, you can have managers who are total sharks and know nothing about music and just take it as a business. And maybe you can have a successful career with them. But I always enjoy working with someone who is kind of a music connoisseur.”

Comments have been edited for clarity and length.



RADOVAN SUBIN (ŠPAČEK)

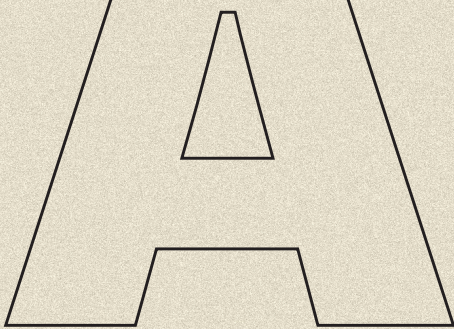
Music's



Healing

BY MICHELE C. HOLLOW

Recent scientific advances show how music can be used in treatments of conditions as diverse as chronic pain, PTSD, and neurological disorders. Members of the Curtis community are exploring these connections.



Deforia Lane (right)

fter a few unresponsive days in intensive care following brain surgery to remove a cancerous tumor, five-year-old Tim's parents sat by his bedside waiting for him to

wake up. Deforia Lane, Ph.D. (Voice '71), former director of art and music therapy at University Hospitals Cleveland Medical Center and a Curtis Institute of Music graduate, approached and asked Tim's parents if they would join her in singing a few of his favorite songs.

"They were reticent and didn't think the ICU would be amenable to their making noise," Dr. Lane said.

With a bit of coaxing, Dr. Lane learned that Tim liked "She'll Be Coming 'Round the Mountain" and "Who Let the Dogs Out." She sang softly, intentionally made up and left out a few words, and waited for Tim to fill them in. When she sang, "He'll be eating mushrooms and spinach when he comes," and stopped, Tim clearly said, "Sounds good to me."

He also sang "Woof Woof" in response to "Who Let the Dogs Out" while "Tim's parents went bonkers and the doctors came running in," Dr. Lane said. "Tim's mom and dad smiled and cried at the same time and wanted to hear more from their son."

The doctors asked her to keep singing while they tested Tim's neurological function. Tim continued to fill in Lane's missing lyrics. After a few weeks of bed rest and healing, he was able to go home. "Young children and adults have a desire to communicate what they're feeling and thinking through music," Dr. Lane said. "It's like a light switch comes on."

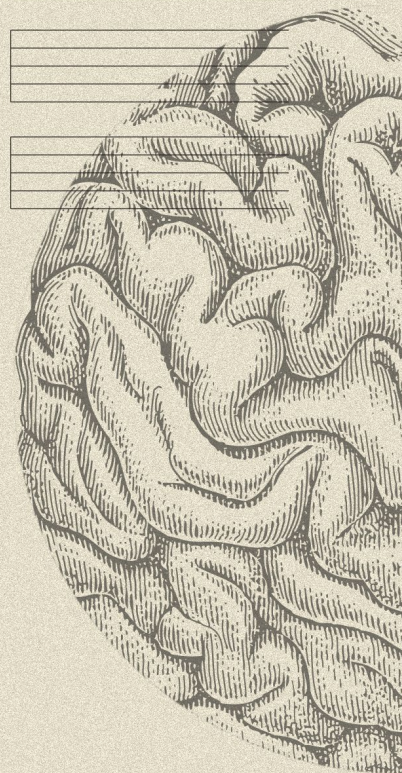
Francis Carr (Cello '21, CAF '23), who earned a bachelor's degree and was a Community Artist Fellow at Curtis, sees

that light switch turn. He curates student concerts at Thomas Jefferson University Hospital in Philadelphia. "When we perform in concert halls, there's a slight disconnect between the musicians and the audience," Mr. Carr said. "Performing in Jefferson Hospital's atrium, with no concert stage dividing us, connections are made."

Visiting family and friends of patients and hospital workers often approach Mr. Carr after each concert to express their thanks. "Listening to a concert can be calming and uplifting for many at the hospital," he said.

Music's Multiple Benefits

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) and the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts explore the links between music and mental health in their Sound Health: Music and the Mind



Powers





Left: Dr. Francis S. Collins, M.D., Ph.D., former director, National Institutes of Health
 Right: Violinist I-Hao Cheng
 Below: Francis Carr

program. Dr. Francis Collins, former director of the NIH and acting science advisor to President Joe Biden, co-created Sound Health at the Kennedy Center with soprano Renée Fleming in 2016.

“Sound Health explores how listening to, performing, or creating music involves brain circuitry that can be harnessed to improve health and wellbeing,” Dr. Collins said. “This program brings neuroscientists together with musicians to speak each other’s language.

“Music connects with us in powerful ways. Recent advances in neuroscience teach us more about how this works and how that knowledge can be used to enhance the benefits of music interventions for conditions such as chronic pain, PTSD, Parkinson’s disease, epilepsy, traumatic brain injury, and mental health. We’re bold enough to think we might figure out how the circuits in the brain do what they do and use that information to help people with many different disorders that affect the brain.”

Music as Medicine

While music benefits patients and caregivers, Mr. Carr also knows firsthand that performing boosts one’s energy. He

takes part in Curtis’s Medicine + Music program, a partnership with Thomas Jefferson University Medical School where medical students and Curtis students rehearse and perform together. “The life of a medical student is stressful,” Mr. Carr said. “Many medical students and doctors play instruments. They enjoy playing with the musicians from Curtis’s Medicine + Music program. It gives them an opportunity to unwind.”

A 2021 article in *U.S. News & World Report* noted a “disproportionately large number of medical students in the U.S. have a background in music,” including a “considerable number” with formal training. Debra Lew Harder, M.D., D.M.A., co-director of the Medicine + Music program at Thomas Jefferson University, is also a musician and host of the Metropolitan Opera’s radio broadcasts. She’s not aware of the exact number of medical students or physicians who play musical instruments, but it makes perfect sense. “There’s a lot of correlation between medicine and music,” she said. “A lot of the skills you hone as a musician are applicable to medical professionals.”

She points to the physical and mental stamina that musicians and medical

students develop over time and the ability to listen and connect with their patients. “Teamwork and having the ability to pivot when necessary are skills musicians and pre-med students develop,” Dr. Lew Harder said.

Mr. Carr agrees. “Feedback from the medical students is positive,” he said. “It not only helps them de-stress, it helps them connect to their patients.”

“It’s something I can relate to,” he said. “When I’m rehearsing, I relax. And performing can be energizing.” He occasionally performs cello duets with Zachary Mowitz (Cello ’19, CAF ’23), and was also a Community Artist Fellow.

One part of Mr. Mowitz’s fellowship is the Creative Expression Through Music workshop with Penn Memory Center, a weekly program designed for people with dementia and their caregivers. The program features guest performers and Mr. Mowitz leads participants in singing, body percussion, improvisation, graphic score notation, and more. “The program offers respite as well as fulfillment and creativity through music-making,” he said. “For an hour and a half every week, they participate. It’s strictly on a volunteer basis. This allows them to get away

from the daily struggles of the disease. They enjoy connecting with others through music. That's how music works. It allows us to connect on a deep level."

Musicians, Not Music Therapists

Mr. Mowitz and Mr. Carr emphasize that they are not music therapists. "I have a lot of respect for what they do," Mr. Mowitz said.

Mary Javian (Double Bass '99), chair of career studies at Curtis, underscores this point. "We're performers who partner with healthcare workers," she said. "We know music therapy is evidence-based. It helps boost memory, lower blood pressure, reduce stress and depression, elevate mood, and improve speech and physical and motor skills. Our goal as musicians is to enhance the healthcare experience. The music therapist's role is to address the individual's health goals."



For the students in her course, Ms. Javian says, empathy remains the goal. "Empathy allows us to experience what our clients experience. It allows us to be part of their world."

Ms. Javian adds that music therapy is sometimes active, where patients, their families, and caregivers create music.

Other times, it's passive. "Those listening respond to the music," she said. "Music therapy can combine active and passive approaches."

What makes this program work is the fact that Curtis students come prepared and can adjust to different situations. "We have to respect the fact that music is not always welcome," Ms. Javian said. "A patient may be having a bad day. We refer to the music therapists and listen to the healthcare workers before we enter a patient's room."

Music's Impact

At Jefferson Hospital's atrium, people stop and listen or choose to move on. Not everyone is on board. "In a patient's room or a nursing home's public space where dementia patients are wheeled in to listen to a concert, not everyone will be happy," said Sarah Adams Hoover, D.M.A., associate dean for innovation, interdisciplinary partnerships, and community initiatives at the Peabody Institute of the Johns Hopkins University. "Music has the power to heal and to harm.

"We know music can reduce the length of a hospital stay and reduce the amount of medication for some patients. Music can also be used to cause harm by triggering negative memories."

Dr. Adams Hoover explains this in her book *Music as Care: Artistry in the Hospital Environment: CMS Emerging Fields in Music*. "Heavy metal and other genres were used as a form of torture to accompany waterboarding. That's one extreme," she writes, referring to the Iraq War. "Loud music or music that someone doesn't like can feel overwhelming. A lot of untrained people with good intentions can cause anxiety and confusion when the music doesn't serve the needs of the client."

According to the American Music Therapy Association, music therapy plans should meet specific needs of the individual or group. "Patients should be able to have the choice of whether they want to hear the music or not," Dr. Adams Hoover said. "In some nursing homes, patients are wheeled into a performance space regardless of whether they want to be there. Like any other resource brought into a

healthcare environment, the music has to be carefully matched to the situation."

The term, "first, do no harm" is a guiding principle for physicians. Dr. Adams Hoover wants all who work in healthcare settings to follow that belief and be mindful of the type and length of the music, the patient's musical preference, when to stop, and what to do if things go awry. "I know Mary's program at Curtis works because she takes that all into account," she says, referring to Ms. Javian's social entrepreneurship curriculum.

Giving Healthcare Workers a Voice

Many frontline healthcare workers suffered immensely due to COVID-19. "Alan Tolbert, one of our graduate students, wanted to raise awareness about the burnout frontline healthcare workers faced," Ms. Javian said. "He commissioned Edward Babcock (Timpani and Percussion '15), a Curtis composer, to write a piece for string quartet that incorporated spoken stories from healthcare workers."

Called *The Hero's Quartet*, lyrics ranged from a healthcare technician talking about risking his life while treating patients with COVID to a nurse dealing with PTSD. One healthcare worker said she felt like she aged 20 years in one week. Others expressed fear of bringing COVID home to their loved ones.

"Working on this gave healthcare workers a voice," Ms. Javian said. "It allowed them to express their feelings and be listened to."

Hippocrates, the father of clinical medicine, played music for his patients who suffered from mental illness around 400 B.C. Today, many physicians, musicians, and music therapists observe a multitude of benefits that come from playing, performing, and listening to music.

"We know music shares brain areas with movement, memory, motivation, and reward," Dr. Collins said. "The scientific evidence so far shows it's more than an emotional connection."

Michele C. Hollow writes about health, mental health, pet care, climate, and lifestyle.



Curtis
Symphony
Orchestra
horn section



ORCHESTRATING GENDER EQUITY

New Curtis graduates will enter an orchestral field in which gender disparities have diminished but where pay gaps and instrument-based stereotypes persist.

BY HEIDI WALESON

In November 2022, the *New York Times* published an article noting a classical music milestone: For the first time ever, the New York Philharmonic's roster had more female than male players—45 to 44. It was significant statistic, given the fact that U.S. symphony orchestras were entirely or predominantly male through most of the 20th century. However, while overall membership in U.S. orchestras now approaches 50-50 for male and female players, that number conceals disparities at other levels. First, in instrumental sections: There are many women playing the high strings (27 out of 30 New York Philharmonic violinists are female), flute, and harp but very few playing bass, percussion, and brass instruments other than horn.

What is more, principal chairs are disproportionately held by men. The Los Angeles Philharmonic, for example, has one woman principal, violist Teng Li ('05). Female concertmasters are rare. One might expect to see a majority of female principal flutes but that is not the case. The more prestigious the orchestra, the fewer female principal players: Among the so-called "Big Five" orchestras few, if any, have had a woman in a tenured chair as concertmaster or principal bass, oboe, clarinet, trumpet, trombone, or timpani.

Within 40 leading orchestras in the U.S., the U.K., and Europe, 83 percent of principal players are male, according to a 2019 University College London study. Another study, conducted in 2022 by the nonprofit advocacy group Protestra, found that of the principal players in the top 20 U.S. orchestras, 78 percent were male.

Curtis graduate Cristina Cutts Dougherty (Tuba '22) says, "An orchestra has always been my ambition," but has found the lack of female representation there challenging. "Every



The Problem with ‘Blind’ Auditions

Part of the equation is the vagaries of the so-called “blind” audition. “A lot of orchestras, perhaps most, have screens in auditions, but a lot do not keep the screen up all the way until the offer is made,” explains Caen Thomason-Redus, vice president of inclusion and learning at the League of American Orchestras. “Also, depending on the orchestra, there are a variety of rules about who can be automatically advanced to certain rounds. You can have a situation where the person hired has participated only in a round that was not screened. That’s not really blind.”

Mr. Thomason-Redus is looking at ways for the League to collect data in this area. “There’s a misperception of how objective auditions are,” he says. “My guess is that when we have empirical information, we will see that there is more subjectivity than is acknowledged.”

Curtis faculty member Katherine Needleman (’99), principal oboe of the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra since 2003, has been outspoken about gender inequities in musician hiring in orchestras and elsewhere. She points out how the existing male-dominated power structure can maintain the status quo; given

time I’ve walked in to sub as the only woman in the low brass—if not in the whole brass section—it’s scary, when you are 23 and there are all these middle-aged men. And it’s tiring when no one looks like you at the top of the field.” In her 15 live auditions for permanent orchestra jobs, she has encountered two other female tuba players in the pool.

These numbers also translate into pay inequities. Principal players, with their individually negotiated contracts, make the most money, and according to a 2018 *Washington Post* article, over 80 percent of the top earners in U.S. orchestras are men. The *Post* also found that of the 78 highest paid players in 21 orchestras in the survey, the average male earned \$254,695, while the average female earner made \$202,629.

These statistics are surprising given the fact that orchestra hiring is thought to be entirely merit-based. Certainly, the widespread adoption of screened auditions in the 1970s in the U.S. corresponded with a considerable jump in the number of women hired overall: According to a 2023 report from the League of American Orchestras, women went from representing 38 percent of musicians in U.S. orchestras in 1978 to 47 percent in 2022. Non-binary people accounted for 0.8 percent of musicians in these statistics. So why are there still so few women in principal jobs and in so many orchestral sections?

Clockwise from top left: Katherine Needleman, Cristina Cutts Dougherty, Erin Keefe, Jennifer Montone.

who holds the principal positions, hiring committees are often predominantly male. “There’s a network of people who have power to invite other people to do things,” she says. This can play out in processes that skirt the supposedly equitable audition system.

“It’s very common, especially in the top orchestra solo jobs, to have a ‘failed initial audition’ where the committee doesn’t hear the expected high standard of messianic playing [and no one is hired],” she says. In these circumstances, she says, hiring committees may invite players—mostly men—to participate in more exclusive processes such as private auditions (sometimes in hotel rooms for conductors); paid playing weeks in the orchestra which lead directly to hiring; or invitation to subsequent audition finals where committees have already worked with the player, know they are auditioning, and can recognize them behind screens.

Trial weeks played after auditions, and probationary periods before tenure is granted, cannot be blind, and Ms. Needleman says, “There’s so much implicit bias when

LISA-MARIE MAZZUCCO (KEEFE)

you are looking at someone for a leadership role.” Her solution? “Invite everyone who is going to be considered for the job to the preliminary round,” she said, adding, “And grant people tenure from behind the screen. Not comfortable with that? Well, time to devise an audition process which actually tests what you want.”

Instrument Stereotypes Persist

Increasing the number of women playing non-typically “feminine” instruments—bass, brass, percussion—in orchestras has its own challenges. Rebecca Cherian, who recently retired after 34 years as co-principal trombone (and only female brass player) in the Pittsburgh Symphony, cites the persistence of “emotional stereotyping,” with women prohibited from feeling or exhibiting certain “masculine” emotions. “It’s not acceptable for women to be brass players, because brass expresses power through loud and aggressive sound,” she notes. “One trombone can overpower the entire string section.”

Individual women have successfully bucked that stereotype over the years. They include Carol Jantsch, principal tuba of The Philadelphia Orchestra, and Cynthia Yeh, principal percussion of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. Horn players like Curtis faculty member Jennifer Montone, principal in Philadelphia, have made somewhat greater inroads. However, while more women study these instruments in conservatory than was once the case, the orchestra numbers don’t seem to be rising. A 2014 survey of the top 20 U.S. orchestras by composer Suby Raman found that 28 percent of the horn players were female; trumpets and trombones were three percent each, and tuba and percussion players five percent each. When horn player Nikolette LaBonte looked at the same orchestras again in 2018, she found that those percentages had either stayed the same or decreased in four years. Female bass players had also dropped from nine percent to six percent.

On Facebook, Ms. Needleman regularly posts publicity photos of all-male brass ensembles, competition juries, and festival faculties. In these and other, often freelance organizations, what Ms. Needleman sees as the old-boy network often does the hiring. Mr. Thomason-Redus also sees “a striking homogeneity. An orchestra does a huge work with a ton of horns, and I see an entirely male section, including the four to ten extra horns they bring in.”

Changing the Workplace Culture

The effect of these gender disparities varies from orchestra to orchestra. Curtis faculty member Erin Keefe (Violin ’03), who won the post of concertmaster at the Minnesota Orchestra in 2011, found that her way as a female leader had been paved by her predecessor, Jorja Fleezanis, who held the position for two decades. But orchestral culture can cast a broad shadow. In Baltimore, Ms. Needleman has never felt part of the “inner circle” of male principal

players and committee leaders who play poker, have drinks together, and go out with guest conductors after concerts. “The three women principals are not included,” she says.

Elizabeth Rowe, the principal flutist of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, made headlines in 2018 when she sued the orchestra for gender discrimination, asking for equal pay with the male principal oboist. The dispute was settled out of court, and Rowe remained in her post. She now also works as a leadership coach and advocate for gender equity in the performing arts. She notes that being female in a heavily male environment “inevitably means that you stand out. The code-switching to fit in requires a cognitive load. I’m deciding if I’m going to laugh at that joke—it helps you fit in, but it’s sexist. When your brain is occupied with that, it’s not doing what you are there to do, which is make music.” Having few women in leadership roles also affects major

decisions on hiring, tenure, and the like, she says. “When nine out of ten people on a committee are white men, with similar lived experience, they tend to reward others that fit into that framework.”

The classical music industry’s recent focus on equity, diversity, and inclusion may shine a light on some of the practices that are holding back greater gender parity. Some individual leaders are already taking steps to rectify disparities. Kim Noltemy, who became president and CEO of the Dallas Symphony in 2018, surveyed the pay landscape at her orchestra and rebalanced salaries within job titles as well as in over-scale pay. Her administration also consults with orchestra committees on tenure decisions, trying to ensure that social as well as artistic aspects to the job are being holistically considered.

Generational change may help as well. Ms. Needleman says, “I started as the youngest in orchestra; now, I feel middle-aged at 44. I have hope for the young women now joining the orchestra, who see this and talk about it. We were always quiet. I hope their generation is less willing to accept being shut out of the network.”

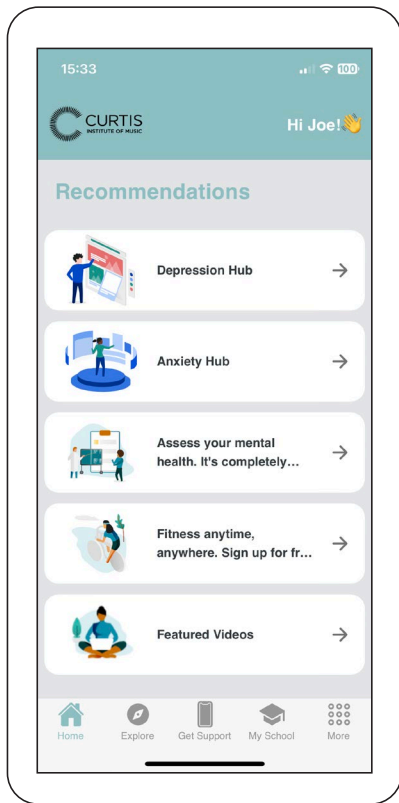
Ms. Cutts Dougherty is part of that new wave. “A lot of women of the older generation worked to not stick out, to fly under radar in how they acted and dressed,” she says. “I think that is changing. My colleagues in my quintet, Seraph Brass, are all women and we are learning to express our femininity, and not be afraid to do so. It’s going to change as more orchestras get more female players.” As of next fall, there will be at least one more: In March, Ms. Dougherty learned that she had won the audition for principal tuba of the Phoenix Symphony.

Heidi Waleson is the opera critic of the Wall Street Journal and the author of Mad Scenes and Exit Arias: The Death of the New York City Opera and the Future of Opera in America (Metropolitan/Picador).

“

**THE MORE
PRESTIGIOUS
THE ORCHESTRA,
THE FEWER
FEMALE PRINCIPAL
PLAYERS.**

”



The MySSP app.

Moment of Zen

Curtis offers crucial mental health resources to students.

BY MEREDITH TARDITI

Colleges and universities across the United States are seeing dramatic changes in student mental health. In addition to longstanding challenges involving homesickness, relationships, and academic responsibilities, students in 2023 are confronting unforeseen obstacles unique to the current moment: political unrest, mass violence, racial injustice, career uncertainty, social media pressures, and overwhelming losses from the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Healthy Minds Study of 350,000 American students showed that during the 2020–21 school year, more than 60

percent of college students met the criteria for at least one mental health problem. The study was published in the *Journal of Affective Disorders* in June 2022. Another study, published in 2021 by the American College Health Association, revealed that almost 75 percent of students reported moderate or severe psychological distress.

Administrators and student affairs staff at schools across the country are thinking creatively about how to expand upon existing mental health support systems and implement holistic wellness interventions on campus. Curtis has worked to incorporate a culture of wellness, paying special attention to student mental health.

From Workshops to a CARE Team


For several years, Curtis, working with the Philadelphia Department of Public Health, has trained frontline student-facing staff in Mental Health First Aid, so they can respond quickly to a student in distress. In resident coordinator and peer ambassador training, Curtis student leaders receive additional guidance on how to care for a friend in need and recognize signs that someone may need help. Student orientation includes two workshops on mindfulness, breathing, and healthy movement, along with a workshop on breaking mental health stigmas and a 90-minute group session with a member of the Curtis Mental Health Team.

To ensure widespread access to mental health care, in 2021, Curtis partnered with LifeWorks to provide an app, MySSP, through which students can access a counselor, 24/7, from anywhere in the world, in five different languages, via text, chat, or phone. This ensures that students face no barriers to care in a moment of crisis, even while touring outside of the country.

In 2021, Curtis also formalized a behavioral intervention group called the CARE (Concern, Assessment, Response, and Evaluation) Team. The Curtis CARE Team is a group of administrators trained in mental health first aid and crisis response, who are poised to respond to situations that could disrupt a student's academic participation or psychosocial well-being. The CARE Team will intervene and coordinate an action plan to support a student through a difficulty. Faculty and fellow students can contact that CARE Team if they notice a student who may need additional support or a possible mental health intervention.

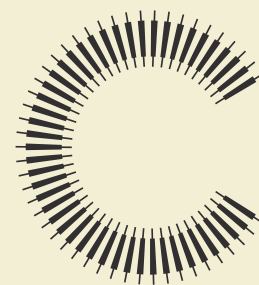
Curtis distributes information about national hotlines and other free mental health support services to all students and keeps an updated list of free resources on the student portal. Any student who seeks mental health care can contact a member of the Student Life staff for individual assistance.

Meredith Tarditi is Curtis's former associate dean of student life and international student affairs.



KEY RESOURCES:

- Suicide and Crisis Lifeline:** 988
- National Sexual Assault Hotline:** (800) 656-4673
- The Trevor Project:** (866) 488-7386
- Curtis Therapy Fund Hotline (for former students and alumni) with RAINN:** (844) 986-4426



CURTIS
INSTITUTE OF MUSIC



2023-24 SEASON

TIME TO DISCOVER

The *Time to Discover* season will feature beloved works and bold new compositions performed by some of the world's best young artists. Highlights include Strauss's *An Alpine Symphony* conducted by Yannick Nézet-Séguin, Tchaikovsky's *Symphony No. 6 in B minor, Op. 74* ("Pathétique"), and Janáček's *The Cunning Little Vixen*. Exhilarating new works include commissions by Steven Mackey, James Ra, and George Lewis, who joins as composer in residence!

View the full calendar of events at Curtis.edu/Discover

NOTATIONS



Composition/ Conducting

1940s

The Seattle Symphony in February released a recording of **George Walker's** (Composition '45) *Lyric for Strings, Lilacs, and Folksongs for Orchestra*, conducted by Roderick Cox, on the Seattle Symphony Media label.

1970s

Goin' Hollywood, a musical featuring a score by **David Krane** (Composition '74), will receive its world premiere this July at the WaterTower Theatre in Dallas.

1980s

In January **Gregory Hall's** (Composition '86) opera *Marvelous* was named a semi-finalist for the American Prize in the composition division.



1990s

Alan Gilbert (Conducting '92) has extended his contract as chief conductor of Hamburg's NDR Elbphilharmonie Orchestra through the summer of 2029. He is currently in his fourth season with the orchestra.

2000s

Former composition faculty member and chair **David Serkin Ludwig** (Composition '01) received an Arts and Letters Award in Music from the American Academy of Arts and Letters in May. The award, one of four in its category, comes with a \$10,000 cash prize, along with another \$10,000 to be used towards a professional recording.

2010s

Amalia Hall (Violin '13) and the NZTrio performed *Five Bagatelles* by **Daniel Temkin** (Composition '13) as part of their spring New Zealand tour. Temkin also visited the New Zealand School of Music in Wellington, Tianjin Juilliard in Beijing, and Hong Kong Baptist University as a guest lecturer in the spring.

In February **Rene Orth** (Composition '16) won first prize in the 2023 National Association of Teachers of Singing (NATS) Art Song Composition Award for her song cycle, *Weave Me a Name*, featuring poetry by faculty member Jeanne M. McGinn. Orth receives \$2,000, and her work will be performed at the 2024 NATS National Conference.



Strings

1950s

Frances Steiner (Cello '56), music director of the Chamber Orchestra of the South Bay for the past 40 years, will retire at

the end of the 2022–23 season. This 40th anniversary season has featured Curtis alumni **Daniel Hsu** (Piano '19), **Claire Huangci** (Piano '07), and **Ko Ni Choi** (Harp '10) as soloists.

1960s

In October **Marcia Peck** (Cello '68) retired from the Minnesota Orchestra, capping a 50-year tenure that is the longest in the ensemble's history. Her first novel, *Water Music*, will be released in June by Sea Crow Press.



1970s

Karen Dreyfus (Viola '79) was recently named a professor emeritus at the Manhattan School of Music. In March, she was the keynote violist at the SoCal ViolaFest in Azusa, Calif., where she taught a masterclass and performed a recital.

1980s

Last September **David Williamson** (Double Bass '81) was appointed professor of double bass at St. Olaf College. In 2023 he marks his 20th season as principal bass at the Oregon Bach Festival.

Michael Ludwig (Violin '82) and his wife Rachael Ludwig have established the Stella Schaevitz Concert Series, based in Cherry Hill, N.J. The first season, which launched in January, included several

Curtis alumni as featured artists, including **Benjamin Loeb** (Piano '92), **Alexander Kerr** (Violin '92), **Meng-Chieh Liu** (Piano '93), and **John Koen** (Cello '90).

1990s

Glenn Lewis Gordon (Double Bass '91) was appointed acting co-principal double bass with the Oslo Philharmonic.

Heather Miller Lardin

(Double Bass '96) has created an online course in Baroque double bass performance, launched in January on the online platform *Discover Double Bass*.

2000s

Zachary DePue (Violin '02) in March was named concertmaster of the Naples Philharmonic, in Naples, Fla. DePue has been the orchestra's acting concertmaster since September 2022.

In February Time for Three won a GRAMMY for Best Classical Instrumental Solo for the trio's album *Letters for the Future*. Time for Three contains two Curtis alumni: **Nicholas Kendall** (Violin '01) and **Ranaan Meyer** (Double Bass '03). The album features Kevin Puts's piece *Contact*, which won a GRAMMY for Best Contemporary Classical Composition.

2010s

As concertmaster of the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra, **Nikki Chooi** (Violin '12) performed Lukas Foss's *Three American Pieces* for violin and orchestra at Carnegie Hall in October. The performance, led

Milestones

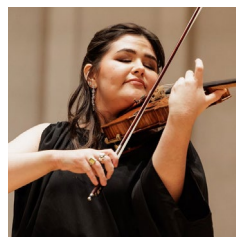
→ On October 22 special assistant to the provost **Mary Ann Hickox** and **Paul Matthew Moon** of the *New York Times* were married in Roxbury, Conn. The Moons say they are "thrilled to be a part of the Curtis family and look forward to many years in the fold."

by JoAnn Falletta, was part of a concert marking Foss's centennial in 2022; a recording of the piece is due out on Naxos this year.

The *Washington Post* in January named **Gabriel Cabezas** (Cello '13) one of its "23 for '23: Composers and performers to watch this year."

Christine Lee (Cello '13) joined the cello section of the Boston Symphony Orchestra in April. One of three new cellists in the orchestra, she will first perform as a member in August at Tanglewood.

In January **Ethan Jodziewicz** (Double Bass '15) joined singer-songwriter Aoife O'Donovan for television performances on *Jimmy Kimmel Live!*, *The Kelly Clarkson Show*, *Rachael Ray Show*, and *CBS Saturday Morning*.



Alexandra Switala (Violin '16) was awarded the \$20,000 second prize at the Sphinx Competition in Detroit in January.



Winds/Brass

1980s

Nadina Mackie (Bassoon '81) released two recordings last December: *CARNIVAL* by Augusta Read Thomas and *Silver Angel* by Constantine Caravassilis.

Steven Juliani's (Horn '82) *Explore* for eight horns received its premiere in March by the horn studio at the Eastman School of Music, led by horn professor Peter Kurau.

Elizabeth Masoudnia's (Oboe '84) *English Horn Expressions*, an album of solo English horn works, was released by Navona Records in February. It includes commissions and premieres by a variety of composers.



1990s

In February **Mimi Stillman** (Flute '99) appeared with the Allentown Symphony to

perform the Concerto for Flute and Orchestra, written for her by Zhou Tian (Composition '05).

2000s

Anthony Wise

(Trombone '02) in May was named executive director of the York Symphony Orchestra in York, Penn. He had previously been the orchestra's operations manager and personnel manager.

Stanford Thompson

(Trumpet '09) in April was named the first executive director of Equity Arc, a new membership organization that aims to "align, develop, and promote equitable opportunities for musicians of color." Thompson was previously the executive director of Play On, Philly.

2010s

Catherine Van Handel

(Bassoon '15) is featured on *Bassoon Soirée: From Latin America to Paris*, an album of works for bassoon and piano, released in January by Acis Productions.

2020s

Doron Laznow (Bassoon '20) joined the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra as its second bassoonist last fall.



Piano

1960s

Sony Classical in November released a recording featuring **Lambert Orkis** (Piano '65)

Continued on page 28



Opera at Curtis

Handel with Care

Curtis's spring staging of *Ariodante* revealed the interpretive challenges and rewards of Handel's music. **BY BRIAN WISE**

→ **THE CURTIS OPERA THEATRE** concluded its 2022–23 season in May with Handel's *Ariodante*, and in doing so, offered a cautionary tale for our own time, says David Stern, the production's conductor, and a noted Baroque music authority.

Handel's 1735 opera is a twisting tale of jealousy and misjudgment based on an episode in Ariosto's epic poem *Orlando Furioso*. The plot is fairly simple: Ginevra, daughter of the king of Scotland, is set to marry the knight Ariodante. But the duke Polinesso conspires, with help from a naïve servant, to make it appear as if he is having an affair with Ginevra, thus placing him in line for the throne. Both Ariodante and the king swallow the ruse. After misunderstandings and near disasters, Ginevra is exonerated, and she and Ariodante reconcile.

"It's about the choices we make," says Mr. Stern. "It means we must be more responsible with our understanding of the situations in front of us and not just say, 'I saw it on Fox News, so they must have been living together.' This is a cautionary tale of today as much as it was 300 years ago."

Ariodante featured the debuts of Omer Ben Seadia as director, and Mr. Stern, who conducted a student cast and members of the Philadelphia Baroque orchestra *Tempesta di Mare*.

Mr. Stern and Ms. Ben Seadia spoke with *Overtones* ahead of performances.

Handel's operas have taken off in the last roughly 40 years, but they are still rarely seen as core repertoire. What is your argument for staging *Ariodante*?

Omer: I would argue that this is core repertoire for emerging artists. Baroque allows us both to learn the foundations of opera, and there's a big connective tissue between Handel and new opera. Our approach allows for a lot of perspective, editing, dissecting, and dramaturgy as we look at this repertoire. For someone like me who does a lot of new opera at the same time, there are so many parallels between the two.

David: All Baroque music is about gesture. It's not about notes. It's not even that much about the voice. It's much more about the gesture. What does the gesture mean? It means that these notes are like sketches of human gestures, of rhetoric, so if we are being heroic or passionate or we're lying, there are certain gestures that are appropriated by composers to show psychologically what's going on in the character.

One frequent criticism of Handel operas is that, dramatically, they often contain a succession of arias and connecting recitatives without a lot of plot or stage action. What is your take on that?

David: In Handel's first acts, you take your time to find out who everyone is. They take a long time singing their arias. [You might say], 'Really? Can't we just start with the second act?' But with this one, we do get to know every character, and it gets involved in their story quickly.

Omer: Yes, this kind of defies all the tropes that we joke about with Handel—the lack of plot or the lack of dramatic timing. Here, you have everything. It's like he took all the notes from the executives and said, okay, 'You want action packed? I'll give you action packed!'

David: Right. I think he was right, except he was talking to another century. Frankly, this could be a very good story for Netflix.

Omer: Working on repertoire like this is so much like working on new opera these days because there's so much about the singers' ability to interpret the role. It almost feels like they're creating it for the first time. Handel leaves you so much [interpretive] room where Puccini doesn't. Puccini spoon-feeds you every bar; you know exactly what you're supposed to be doing, and he's writing in all the physical gestures. It almost means—and I say this carefully—that you don't need us [directors] for it!

David: The challenge then is keeping the musical and stage muscle in this and making sure that we keep up with the demand that the piece has. The mean guy, Polinesso, is truly a predator. There's all kinds of room for Omer to figure out how to make him truly, humanly evil. There's got to be a psychology to it, you can't just be two-dimensionally evil. That's the point. There's a lot of room to fill out the blanks, and the fact that Handel doesn't spoon-feed you means that it's the job of both of us to give singers the tools to figure this out.

How did you approach the staging?

Omer: With the design, we are focusing a lot on the concept of veils, from the physical wedding veil to this concept of using a veil to obstruct others' vision. It's a shadowy approach to see how we pour light on things and create shadows, darkness, and illusions as we go along.

A lot of the work I'll do with singers involves how we evolve physically on stage as well as psychologically. We also have singers singing outside of their age group, as we say. So, we're trying to figure out how that materializes physically.

David: There are some big pieces



Above, left to right: Omer Ben Seadia, David Stern

in this opera, and it's a big role both for the *Ginevra* and the *Ariodante*. The point is: How to use the voice so that it's constantly speaking and not over-singing.

Do you find that conservatories are more open to Handel these days?

Omer: I did Handel at Rice, Aspen, Juilliard, and now Curtis. It really is all the rage right now [laughs]. But again, we are trying to prepare students both for this period of music and also for modern opera. We're really in the golden age of new opera right now—or opera written in the last 20 years. This allows us to prepare [singers] for both.

And I will say, for directors, Handel is a pleasure. It really gives us a lot of room to shine, to interpret, to design, to bring something new. For audiences, you don't have to have prior knowledge, and you don't have to be educated in the style to connect with it. It is visceral, and if you sit down and open yourself up to it, you'll connect with it.

The interview has been edited and condensed for clarity.

alongside longtime collaborator, violinist Anne-Sophie Mutter, as well as cellist Pablo Ferrández, in a performance of Clara Schumann's Piano Trio in G minor.

1970s

James Adler (Piano '73, Composition '76) presented the James Adler Audience Favorite Award at a Weill Recital Hall gala hosted in November by the Sound Espresso, an online streaming platform.

1990s

Min Kwon (Piano '90) was a soloist on the New Jersey Symphony's Lunar New Year gala concert in January. She gave the premiere of *Fantasia on Sae Taryung* by **James Ra** (Composition '04).

2000s

Jonathan Biss (Piano '01) joined the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra in February for the U.S. premiere of Brett Dean's piano concerto, *Gneixendorf Music—A Winter's Journey*.



Voice/Opera

1970s

Osceola Davis-Smith (Opera '72) was awarded the "Lift Every Voice" Legacy Award by the National Opera Association at their January conference in Houston.

2010s

Kevin Ray (Opera '12) made his Portland Opera debut appearing as the Prince in a

production of *Rusalka* in April.

Anthony Reed (Opera '15) made his European debut as Collatinus in Britten's *The Rape of Lucretia*, co-presented by Britten Pears Arts and London's Royal Opera House in November.

In November **Jean-Michel Richter** (Voice '16) performed the role of Larsen in the world premiere of Patrick Burgan's *Enigma* at the Opera-Théâtre de Metz in France.

In January **Johnathan McCullough** (Opera '17) was appointed the opera program director of the National Children's Chorus. The organization comprises 30 choirs based in several chapter cities across the U.S.



Amanda Lynn Bottoms (Voice '19) is scheduled to premiere composition faculty member Richard Danielpour's *The Unhealed Wound* in a performance with **Eric Owens** (Voice '95) this September at Skidmore College. This summer she joins the Chautauqua Opera as a festival artist.



Organ

In January **Paolo Bordignon**

(Organ '96) appeared with the American Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Leon Botstein, in a performance of Saint-Saëns' "Organ" Symphony at St. Bartholomew's Church in New York. The next month, he was a soloist with The Philadelphia Orchestra and conductor Tristan Rais-Sherman on Organ Day at the Kimmel Center.

Faculty/Staff

Gordana-Dana Grozdanic has translated the novel *Der Weg ins Freie* by Arthur Schnitzler from German into Croatian (as *Put u otvoreno*). It was published in November by the Croatian publisher Gymnasium.

Katelyn Bouska in February released *Women and War and Peace* (Yarlung Records), an album of piano works by women composers, including Caroline Shaw, Maria Szymanowska, and Ludmila Yurina. It follows the January release of *Štěpán Filípek & Katelyn Bouska: Vol. II* (Český Rozhlas), an album of works for cello and piano by Voříšek, Dvořák, Kaprálová, and other composers.

Ed Gazouleas was named the interim director of the Boston Symphony Orchestra's Tanglewood Music Center for the 2023 season. He assumes the post while maintaining his current roles at Curtis. Gazouleas was a violist in the Boston Symphony for 24 years.

Students



Dillon Scott (Viola) won the \$10,000 third prize at the Sphinx Competition in Detroit in January.



Anastasia Samsel (Flute) won first place in the Flute Society of Greater Philadelphia's Young Artist Competition in March.

Alistair Coleman (Composition) has been named the 2023 composer in residence for Young Concert Artists. He was selected out of 150 applicants. The position comes with a three-year management contract and an \$18,000 fee for three YCA commissions to be premiered in upcoming debut concerts.

Soprano **Emily Damasco** (Voice) won the \$10,000 first prize in Opera Grand Rapids's VanderLaan Prize competition, which concluded on April 1.

Those We Have Lost



Michaela Paetsch (Violin '84), who rose from a large

string-playing family to pursue a wide-ranging career as violin soloist, died of cancer on January 20 at age 61. She lived in Bern, Switzerland, for much of the past 30 years. Ms. Paetsch came to Curtis as a student of Szymon Goldberg, with whom she had previously studied at Yale University. In 1985, Ms. Paetsch won the bronze medal at the Queen Elisabeth Competition; the next year, she participated in the International Tchaikovsky Competition. By the late 1980s, her career was increasingly centered in Europe, where she appeared

with the Leipzig Gewandhaus, Bergen Philharmonic, Orchestre de la Suisse Romande, and BBC Symphony Orchestra. Her recordings included a noted set of Paganini's 24 Caprices in 1987 and a collection of works by Daron Hagen (Composition '84) in 2015. Ms. Paetsch was born in Colorado Springs, Colo., the second oldest of seven children, to parents who performed in the Colorado Springs Symphony Orchestra. After teaching their children string instruments, they formed the Paetsch Family Chamber Music Ensemble, which toured the region in the 1970s. Ms. Paetsch is survived by her husband and daughter.



Charles Wetherbee (Violin '88), a founding member of the

Carpe Diem String Quartet and a longtime concertmaster of the Columbus Symphony Orchestra, died of cancer on January 9. He was 56 years old. Mr. Wetherbee, who was known as "Chas," studied at Curtis with the late Aaron Rosand ('48). His orchestral career began when he was appointed principal second violin of the National Symphony Orchestra in Washington, D.C. Five years later, he moved to Ohio to join the Columbus Symphony as concertmaster, a post he held from 1994 to 2011. An active chamber musician, in 2005, he co-founded the Carpe

Diem String Quartet, an ensemble with an eclectic repertoire that includes folk arrangements as well as five volumes of Tanejev string quartets. For the past decade, Mr. Wetherbee lived in Boulder, Colo., where he taught violin at the University of Colorado, Boulder, and served as concertmaster of the Boulder Philharmonic. A native of Buffalo, N.Y., Mr. Wetherbee debuted at age six with the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra and later appeared internationally with the Japan Philharmonic, Philharmonic Orchestra of Bogota, and Orquesta Sinfónica Nacional de Mexico, among other ensembles. Mr. Wetherbee is survived by his wife and three children.

Curtis Mourns Death of Chris Hodges, Curtis's Longtime Director of Admissions

Chris Hodges, Curtis's longtime director of admissions, passed away on February 12, at age 66. Mr. Hodges joined the Curtis staff in 1995 and was an integral part of the school for 25 years. When he arrived in the mid-nineties, he carved out the admissions office and made it his own. He welcomed countless prospective students and their families to Curtis each year, gave knowledgeable and memorable campus tours, and supported our faculty throughout the audition process. He was often spotted running between the campus buildings, ensuring that everyone felt welcome and positioned for success.

Supportive, funny, and always a generous colleague, Mr. Hodges was the first to offer his assistance or a shoulder to lean on. Above all, we remember how he genuinely cared for Curtis's students. He supported and rooted for them throughout their journeys, from potential applicants to students to alumni and beyond. Chris loved Curtis and our community. And we loved him in return.

We extend our heartfelt sympathies to his brothers, Bruce and John; to his sister, Susan; to his mother, Barbara; and to all his friends, family, and colleagues. He will be deeply missed.



For more obituaries, please visit Curtis.edu/in-memoriam. We welcome your news and updates for possible inclusion in a future issue. Please email us at overtones@curtis.edu.

→ **MUSIC AND MEDICINE** have long been entwined, even noted as early as 350 B.C. in Aristotle's scientific treatise *De Anima*, as Greek physicians of the day believed that musical vibration had the power to heal. From Benedictine abbess, composer, polymath, and biologist Hildegard von Bingen to bassoonist Dr. Thomas Südhof, winner of the 2013 Nobel Prize in Medicine for his work in cell transport, the link between the two fields is compelling. While there is limited research to substantiate the evidence of musical talent as a clear indicator of success in medicine, an inordinate number of doctors and mental health professionals studied music long before they entered medical school.

Many Curtis alumni continue to perform on the world's greatest stages, but some have pursued other career paths, among them, anesthesiology, cardiology, dermatology, radiology, and nursing. They can be found at healthcare facilities throughout the U.S. and elsewhere.

Dexterity, self-discipline, stamina, and technical mastery are all necessary aspects of playing an instrument or singing proficiently, and the same can be said for doctors, who must maintain their composure as they work alongside colleagues in highly stressful environments, not unlike artists performing within ensembles in front of live audiences. Two Curtis alumni, Dr. Korey Marshall (Oboe '10) and Dr. Heide Rice (Piano '72), shared their thoughts about how their studies at Curtis served as a predictor of future success.

Dr. Marshall, an anesthesiology resident at Philadelphia's Thomas



Alumni Highlight

Finding Harmony in Medical Careers

Curtis alumni share skills that transfer from concert stage to operating theater.

BY RYAN LATHAN

Jefferson University Hospital, who earned a doctorate in medicine from the University of Virginia in 2019 and degrees from Carnegie Mellon in biological sciences in 2013 and biomedical engineering in 2014, started playing the clarinet in sixth grade and transitioned to the oboe the following year. He later successfully auditioned for Atlanta Symphony's Talent Development Program, which encourages diversity in classical music and provides free lessons with

an Atlanta Symphony Orchestra member instructor. There he studied with oboist Barbara Cook, who had subbed with the orchestra for many years. Towards the end of high school, she encouraged him to apply at Curtis, and from 2007 to 2010, he attended the school as a student of Richard Woodhams ('68).

"Just being inside those walls with some of the other student musicians opened your mind to the possibilities. I learned early on, probably my first

Above: Korey Marshall
Right: Heide Rice with Fritz, Stephanie Yen-Mun Liem Azar

year, that you didn't practice until you got it right; you practiced until you couldn't get it wrong," says Dr. Marshall, who ultimately decided he wanted to pursue another path. "It has a way of consuming your whole being, and that's the price of pursuing a dream, especially if you want to be great at it. That discipline, that sort of almost obsessive, relentless pursuit of whatever your ideal is in your field, is applicable—the idea



that against the odds, in the face of whatever was going on, you had to find a way to perform.

"It's a mindset that if you miss, you're among the stars, even if you don't get to the moon. That parallels medicine because the stakes are often very high. Everything is in service of the patient."

Dr. Rice played the piano in public for the first time at age six on local television and appeared with the New Orleans Symphony when she was nine. As a child and teenager, she gave recitals and was primed for a career as a soloist. She entered Curtis in 1968, studying first with Eleanor Sokoloff ('38), then with Seymour Lipkin ('47) and Rudolf Serkin, as well as with theory teacher Robert Levin, who guided her through those years of personal growth.

"Towards the end of my time at Curtis, I finally became a little more independent personally and then began to think of the direction of my life," says Dr. Rice. "That's when the thought of medicine came up. Both my grandfathers were physicians. However, I was encouraged to continue and get a master's in performance [at the Manhattan School of Music]." She finished her studies and then went to the University of Alabama, where she became a board-certified anesthesiologist, and retired five years ago to be a German translator.

"When an anesthesiologist and a surgeon work together, it's kind of like playing chamber music. You anticipate each other's moves, you anticipate the difficulties, and you watch each other. Intense musical training gives you focus, and it gives you discipline. You can't get anywhere in the sciences without those."

Another inspiring alumna continued to perform as an organist and choral singer, even while she was training to become a specialized heart surgeon at the Columbia

College of Physicians and Surgeons. Stephanie Yen-Mun Liem Azar (Organ '08) was born with a congenital heart defect, but she didn't let that hinder her ambitions. She mastered the violin and piano at a young age and began taking organ lessons at nine. When she turned 15, she was admitted to Curtis where she studied with Alan Morrison. After her first year at the school, she suffered a stroke in her sleep and was diagnosed with a neurological disorder that caused tremors.

In 2006, a pioneering procedure involving the surgical implantation of an electrical stimulator in her brain changed her trajectory. She became an advocate for people with movement disorders and was invited to speak at the first national conference. Moved by everything she learned, the 20-year-old took pre-med science courses at Harvard University and entered medical school at Columbia, where she encountered another musician turned doctor who took her under his wing.

"Stephanie mentioned that there was always this incredible response as soon as you mentioned Curtis," said her mother, longtime Curtis trustee Lisa Liem. "She was in line at the John Hopkins cafeteria one time and started chatting with this person in front of her. It turned out to be a very well-known heart surgeon. He invited her to come into his operating room, and it turned out that he was a piano graduate from Peabody before he became a doctor. Curtis opens a lot of doors. I think people who graduate from this school and are not performing for a living—it's still in them and they always keep it with them."

This article is dedicated to the life and memory of Stephanie Yen-Mun Liem Azar, who passed away after a bout with pneumonia on July 19, 2013.



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.”

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

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- Ruby Dibble, opera
- SaiSai Ding, cello
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- Joseph Tancredi, opera
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Tianyou Ma



Graduates prepare for procession



Lucy Baker and Ruby Dibble



Osmo Vänskä receives honorary degree



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INSIDE THIS ISSUE

“A lot of women of the older generation worked to not stick out, to fly under radar in how they acted and dressed. I think that is changing.”

CRISTINA CUTTS DOUGHERTY (TUBA '22), PAGE 18.