

A TEMPO



Cello and Clarinet Faculties Expand

Musicians with sidelines in filmmaking,
podcasting, and charity work.

CURTIS' CENTENNIAL SEASON began in August with the addition of three alumni to the school's cello faculty: soloist and chamber musician Nicholas Canellakis (Cello '06), Philadelphia Orchestra assistant principal Yumi Kendall (Cello '04), and Boston Symphony Orchestra (BSO) member Christine Jeonghyoun Lee (Cello '13).

Also joining the faculty is YaoGuang Zhai (Clarinet '09), principal clarinet of the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra.

With the new hires, Curtis moves closer to a goal of having multiple faculty members across each musical discipline, allowing for greater flexibility in scheduling and more personalized learning opportunities. The new cellists join current faculty members Gary Hoffman and Peter Wiley ('74) while Mr. Zhai joins current faculty member Anthony McGill ('00). Both cello and



clarinet students will also study with members of the chamber music faculty in each discipline.

Nicholas Canellakis is a member of the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center's roster, a frequent orchestral soloist, and a regular guest of leading music festivals, including Santa Fe, Ravinia, and Music@Menlo. He is also a filmmaker, having produced, directed, and starred in several short films, including *Thin Walls* and *My New Cello*, which are currently available to stream online. He arrived on the classical Internet in 2011–13 as co-host of *Conversations with Nick Canellakis*, a satirical interview show that featured guests including Itzhak Perlman, Emanuel Ax, and Osmo Vänskä.

Yumi Kendall won the Philadelphia Orchestra post in 2004, during her final year at Curtis. In 2013, she was awarded the orchestra's C. Hartman Kuhn Award. Beyond orchestral and chamber music, she is also a burgeoning podcast host, in 2023 launching *Tacet No More* with her Philadelphia colleague Joseph Conyers (Double Bass '04) (detailed in the Fall 2023 issue of *Overtones*). Ms. Kendall earned a Master of Applied Positive Psychology in 2017 from the University of Pennsylvania, where she has since returned as an assistant instructor.

A native of South Korea, Christine Jeonghyoun Lee joined the BSO cello section in August 2023 after studies at Curtis and, later, at the Juilliard School and Royal Academy of Music. In 2021, she released her debut album, *Voyage*, which includes the Cello Sonata of Samuel Barber ('34), among other works. She has organized charity concerts and fundraisers, raising funds for a mobile library for underprivileged children in North Philadelphia.

YaoGuang Zhai became Baltimore's principal clarinet in 2016 after previous roles as associate principal clarinet of the Toronto Symphony and principal clarinet of the Shanghai Symphony. He is an associate professor at Boston Conservatory at Berklee and teaches annually at the Interlochen Arts Camp. Mr. Zhai's early training began at the Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing.



All-School Project Salutes Experimentation in the Arts

Curtis' annual cross-disciplinary project explores the spirit of 1924.

As the Roaring Twenties gathered steam in 1924, the arts and higher education witnessed a notable boost. With the recovery from World War I largely complete, Wall Street boomed, innovation soared, and Americans took in jazz, radio, speakeasies, flapper fashion, and dance crazes like the Charleston and the Foxtrot.

Into this heady moment, Mary Louise Curtis Bok assembled a prominent faculty and handed them a carefully selected crop of students. It was the foundation for the Curtis Institute of Music. "Not only shall [students] learn to sing or play an instrument," she told the *New York Times*. "We also hope to teach them to think and to express their thoughts."

The 2024–25 All-School Project uses Bok's pioneering spirit as a springboard to explore experimentation and modernism in the arts. Concerts will spotlight Curtis-trained composers and Curtis premieres over the last 100 years. The Curtis Symphony Orchestra on Dec. 13 will present works by Samuel Barber ('34), T.J. Cole ('16), and George Walker ('45). Curtis New Music Ensemble will offer George Crumb's 1971 landmark *Black Angels* as well as works by Julius Eastman ('63), Du Yun, Villa-Lobos, and others (Feb. 15).

Among the course offerings, Dr. Jeanne McGinn explores American modernism in literature, with a focus on Gertrude Stein, T.S. Eliot, Langston Hughes, Ernest Hemingway, and other luminaries. Austin Rooney will survey the aesthetic and philosophical movements of the past century, from futurism to post-modernism. And Dr. Carla Puppini will focus on abstraction in the visual arts in her early 20th-century art course.

The All-School Project is an annual initiative that began in 2007 and, in recent years, has focused on sweeping themes including "Civil Rights and the Music of Change" and "Music of the Earth."



Is Philadelphia's Public Arts Funding at a Crossroads?

Sounds of both alarm and potential reverberate across the city.

BY CARLETON GHOLZ

WHEN WAS THE FIRST TIME YOU WERE INSPIRED BY THE ARTS?

The auditorium of the Bok Building in South Philly was filled with staff members from arts organizations from across the Philadelphia region when Gerald Veasley, the newly elected board chair of the Greater Philadelphia Cultural Alliance (GPCA), took the stage at their recent annual meeting and asked those assembled to turn to their neighbor and share that very story. For Mr. Veasley, a bass guitarist, it was writing his first piece of music for his own mother to perform and experiencing the creative process of “making something out of nothing.”

“We create the community we want to be a part of,” Mr. Veasley reminded those converted congregants.

For 100 years now, Curtis has been creating the community we want to be a part of, a community inspired by creativity and made possible by the giving of trustees, alumni, faculty, staff, and thousands of donors both in Philadelphia and around the world. That community is also maintained by funding from federal, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, and Philadelphia city agencies—for

which membership organizations like the GPCA advocate—enabling Curtis to remain competitive and sustainable as we enter our second century.

This year, a modest but meaningful seven percent of funding for Curtis’ mainstage performances in Philadelphia has come from public sources. And over the last five years, discretionary funding from Harrisburg, annual funding from the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts (which is in turn supported in part by the National Endowment for the Arts), capital funding from the Commonwealth’s Redevelopment Assistance Capital Program, and even COVID-19 recovery funds, cumulatively and concretely expresses the public’s support and pride in Curtis’ educational mission. And perhaps most encouragingly,

this has included a recent grant from the Philadelphia Cultural Fund, a public-private funding agency for cultural organizations. This civic support, along with the appointment of longtime and respected arts advocate Valerie Gay as the City’s new cultural officer and director of Creative Philly (formerly the Office of Arts, Culture and the Creative Economy) by Mayor Cherelle Parker, should be music to our community’s ears.

But there are also alarms sounding from the larger Philadelphia arts community. Just this spring, University of the Arts closed its doors, throwing the lives of its students, faculty, and staff into a tailspin. And this fall, within Philly’s classical music community, Astral Artists announced it would close its doors after more than 30 years. Amid these changes, Opera Philadelphia, facing a budget shortfall, postponed productions, and lagging ticket sales in recent seasons, gambled on an \$11 “Pick your Price!” campaign, which means that all tickets start at \$11, and with the option to pay more. The early results are a healthy publicity boon, increased philanthropic support, and many nearly sold-out performances. But what does this boom and bust of longstanding arts organizations, not to mention recent election results in both D.C. and Harrisburg, mean for this community we have spent so long building?

If one thing is certain, the best way to maintain public momentum for our arts community in the midst of ongoing economic and political upheaval is to continue to nurture partnerships within our regional civic, educational, and cultural community, which Curtis does in our programs, outreach, and public engagement, and every night we open the doors of 1726 Locust Street to the public and inspire another generation through the arts.

Carleton Gholz is the institutional giving officer at Curtis.