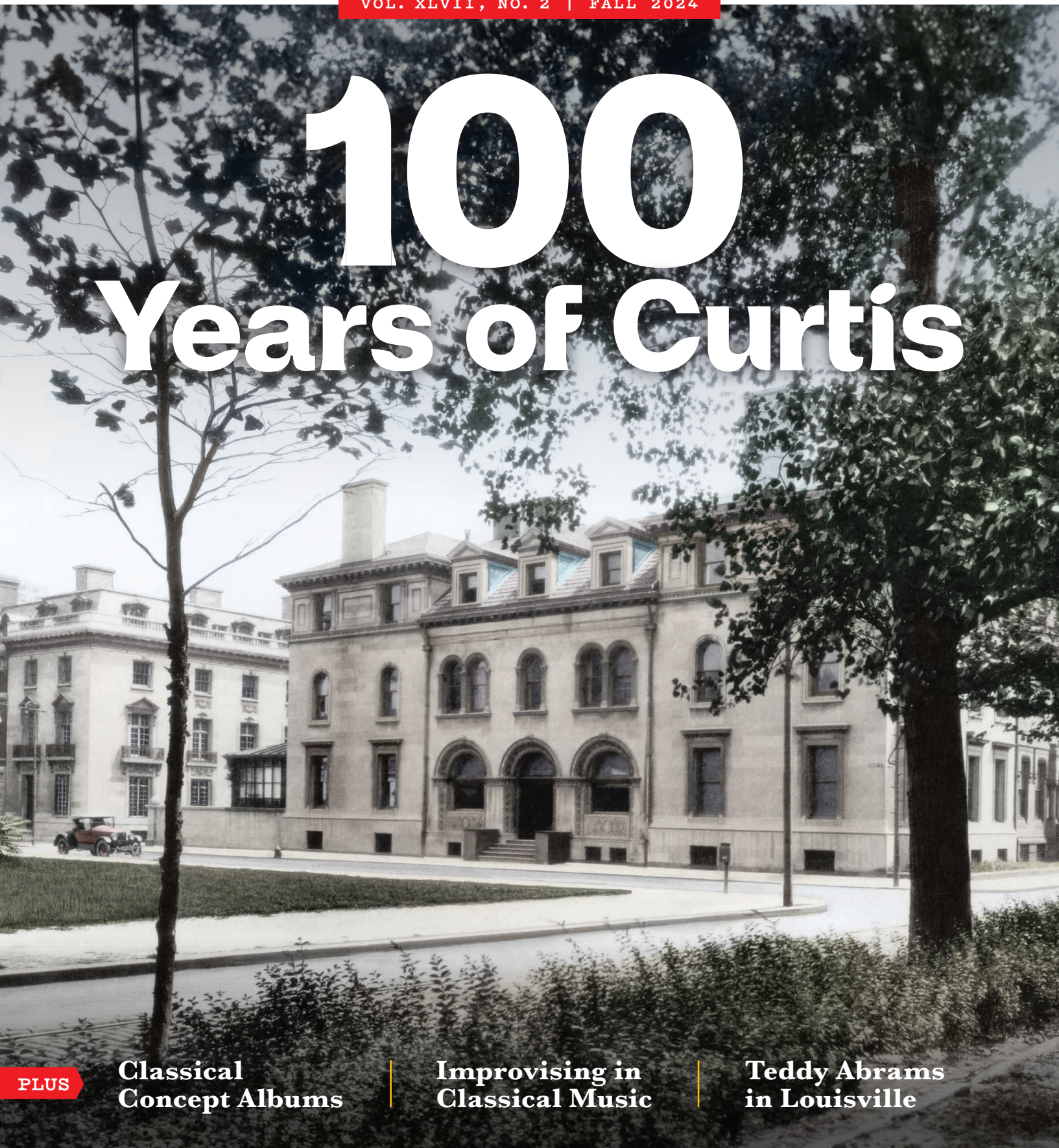


Curtis Overtones

VOL. XLVII, NO. 2 | FALL 2024

100 Years of Curtis



PLUS

Classical
Concept Albums

Improvising in
Classical Music

Teddy Abrams
in Louisville



Ten Places in Philadelphia That Will Take You Back to 1924

Local spots that existed during Curtis' early years.

1. Academy of Music (1857)

Modeled on Milan's La Scala, and once home to the Philadelphia Orchestra, the Academy is said to be the oldest continuously operating opera house in the U.S.

2. Aloft Philadelphia Downtown

(Formerly Liberty Title & Trust Building, 1924)

Though visitors today will encounter a modernized interior, the bones of the Art Deco Liberty Title & Trust Building remain. The building was vacant for two decades before Aloft purchased it in 2017.

3. Bellevue-Stratford Hotel (1904)

Curtis chamber groups once played in its elegant ballroom. The Bellevue-Stratford—once called the Grande Dame of Broad Street and now the Hyatt at the Bellevue—remains a stately example of French Renaissance-style architecture.

4. Danta & Luigi's (1899)

This restaurant was already 25 years old when Curtis was established, and it is now one of the oldest Italian restaurants in the U.S. Housed in two converted townhouses, it is famous for its old-world Italian cuisine.

5. Macy's Center City (1910)

Wanamaker's is long gone but the marble-lined Grand Court of this National Historic Landmark remains. In recent years, Curtis' organ students have performed on the store's celebrated Wanamaker Organ.

6. Marra's Restaurant (1927)

The class of 1927 would have been the first to sample one of Marra's brick-oven pizzas and Neapolitan cuisine. Today, the restaurant is run by the founders' grandchildren.

7. McGillin's Olde Ale House (1860)

Though Curtis was founded at the height of prohibition, McGillin's stayed open at the time by serving food and ice cream (and "perhaps, a few teacups were tipped on the second floor," notes the tavern's website).

8. McNally's Tavern (1921)

Originally a working-class lunch spot, "McNally's Quick Lunch" opened at the trolley turn atop Philadelphia's highest hill. In 1927, it moved across the street, where it remains as a family-friendly pub.

9. Shane Confectionary (1911)

In the candy business since 1863, this Market Street shop contains many features from the 1920s, including a cast-iron buttercream churn from the era.

10. Tacconelli's Pizza (1921)

Originally a bakery, Tacconelli's converted its 20-by-20-foot brick oven to pizza production after World War II. The Tacconelli family is now in its fifth generation running the restaurant.



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FROM THE
PRESIDENT



A Milestone for the Curtis Community



AS WE MARK CURTIS' CENTENNIAL, our school is full of celebration, excitement, and anticipation. We joyfully celebrate the people, music, and moments of the last 100 years that make Curtis the most extraordinary music school in the world. We brim with excitement over the near-constant stream of inspiring concerts, debut performances, stellar master classes, and new faculty members as we undertake this year's incredible musical journey on our stages and in our classrooms. And we are filled with anticipation as we look ahead to Curtis' next century and all that we will do together in the years to come. This is an amazing time to be a part of the Curtis community, and I'm so thrilled to share it with you.

This past, present, and future perspective of Curtis permeates our entire centennial celebration—and this issue of *Overtones* is no exception. We trace Curtis' ties to Philadelphia's vibrant arts ecosystem over the last century ("The Philadelphia Story," p. 16) and we talk with Grammy-winning alumnus Teddy Abrams, music director the Louisville Orchestra, about building bridges across musical genres and the importance of community (p. 12). We explore new concept albums from celebrated alumni and faculty (p. 20), and consider the role of improvisation in classical music (p. 9). Opera singer turned content creator Elizabeth Zharoff discusses her popular YouTube channel (p. 24) and Curtis composition faculty member Amy Beth Kirsten shares what inspires her as she prepares to premiere her latest work—*Infernal Angel*—at Curtis in May (p. 7). And of course, we share news and highlights from members of our community ("Notations," p. 22).

On behalf of the *Overtones* editorial team, I hope you enjoy reading this issue of the magazine. We always welcome your feedback and suggestions for future content—reach out to us at overtones@curtis.edu. And remember that you can read and share issues of *Overtones* online at curtis.edu/overtones.

Sincerely,

Roberto Díaz

PRESIDENT AND CEO

NINA VON MALTZAHN PRESIDENT'S CHAIR

Curtis100



**Celebrating a legacy of greatness.
Launching a new century of groundbreaking artists.
Curtis sounds like this.**

Curtis Institute of Music,
founded in 1924 by
Mary Louise Curtis Bok,
has been a beacon of
excellence in music
education for a century.
Join us this spring as we
continue to celebrate 100
years of musical greatness
with a historic performance
season and milestone
projects designed to inspire
our community.

curtis.edu/100

Feb 15: **BOLD EXPERIMENT** | New Music Ensemble

Feb 27–Mar 2: **LE NOZZE DI FIGARO** | Opera

Mar 13: **ROSAMUNDE STRING QUARTET** | Curtis Presents

Mar 25: **GUITAR QUARTET** | Curtis Presents

Apr 11 & 13: **CANDIDE** | Opera

Apr 23: **MICHELLE CANN & IMANI WINDS** | Curtis Presents

Apr 26: **YUJA WANG PLAYS RAUTAVAARA** | Orchestra

May 8: **CURTIS CENTENNIAL GALA** | Special Event

May 9 & 10: **INFERNAL ANGEL & SAVIOR** | New Music Ensemble

2024/25 Season: Great to Groundbreaking

Curtis alumni are entitled to complimentary tickets for mainstage performances.
Gala tickets are available at a special price for alumni; email tickets@curtis.edu for details.

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), TJ 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."

THE PLAYLIST

Amy Beth Kirsten



FOR AMY BETH KIRSTEN, inspiration comes from far and wide. A trained jazz singer, published poet, photographer, and member of Curtis' composition faculty, she has often composed works on literary themes, be they Cervantes' *Don Quixote* or the story of Joan of Arc.

The latter prompted Ms. Kirsten to write one of her most significant musical theater works to date, *Savior*, which premiered in 2018 by members of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and her own ensemble HOWL.

She returns to the 15th-century French mystic and martyr with *Infernal Angel*, only this time, the focus is on Joan's comrade-in-arms, medieval knight-turned-serial killer Gilles de Rais. With a starring role for baritone, the 60-minute music theater piece will premiere in Gould Rehearsal Hall on May 10, on a double bill with *Savior*.

Below, Ms. Kirsten shares some of her recent cultural discoveries.

Song/Album Mariana Brito da Cruz Forjaz Secca, known professionally as MARO, is a Portuguese singer-songwriter who I've recently come to know about and adore. I had the great pleasure of seeing her perform in Brooklyn this month at an intimate venue called Brooklyn Made, and it was one of the sweetest and most earnest live performances I've ever witnessed. Check out her album, *hortelã*, and specifically the song, "oxalá."

TV/Streaming Series I return to *Schitt's Creek* often. To me, it really is a perfect and hilarious series.

Podcast A recent favorite is Radiolab's multi-part delve into the "Dollyverse" with *Dolly Parton's America* (NPR/WNYC).

Book I've been reading a lot about Joan of Arc and Gilles de Rais because of my upcoming Curtis premiere. Books on that subject: *The Martyrdom of Gilles de Rais* by Margot K. Juby; *Gilles et Jeanne* (a novel) by Michel Tournier; and especially *Joan of Arc: A History* by Helen Castor. When not researching a new work, I typically read fiction and poetry. Recent favorites are *Mother Love* by Rita Dove; *Eating the Underworld* by Rachel Zucker; and *Matrix* by Lauren Groff.

Philadelphia Dining I recently tried Vedge, a vegan restaurant just a few blocks from Curtis (1221 Locust Street). It was superb! I'd highly recommend the smoked portabella carpaccio, and the rutabaga fondue.



FALL 2024: THE INCOMING CLASS IN NUMBERS

19%

increase in applications over 2023–24 season

24%

increase over pre-pandemic applications

3%

Acceptance rate

420

Number of live auditions

14 to 26

Age range of incoming students

10

The number of countries represented

16

The number of U.S. states/territories represented

Quick Hits

■ The Curtis Studio label issued its fifth album in October. Titled *A Century of New Sounds*, it marks the school's centennial with the music of Curtis composers across time. Alumni, faculty, and students perform works by early Curtis titans like Samuel Barber ('34), Ned Rorem ('44), George Walker ('45), and Leonard Bernstein ('41) alongside music by previous faculty members Jennifer Higdon ('88) and David Serkin Ludwig ('01), current faculty member Jonathan Bailey Holland ('96), and Curtis alumna Gabriella Smith ('13). The album also features a previously unpublished work by Julius Eastman ('63), licensed and arranged by Elijah Daniel Smith, Curtis' manager of new music activities, specifically for the recording. More info is at curtis.edu/century.

■ Curtis was the focus of a four-page Sunday *New York Times* feature on June 9, 2024. Throughout the 2023–24 school year, five Curtis students—composer Delfin Demiray, flutist Julin Cheung, conductor Micah Gleason ('24), violist Dillon Scott, and soprano Juliette Tacchino—were followed by *Times* senior staff photographer James Estrin and interviewed by Joshua Barone, assistant classical music and dance editor on the Culture Desk, documenting their lives on stage, in the classroom, and beyond. The piece offers a panoramic, behind-the-scenes look at their creative endeavors, artistic development, and Curtis experiences. Find the article at curtis.edu/NYT.



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.



SOUND
OFF

What's the Value of Improvisation in Classical Music?

BY BRIAN WISE

Robert Levin

Pianist, music theory teacher at Curtis from 1968–73

→ Earlier this year, keyboardist and musicologist Robert Levin completed a 30-year project to record all of Mozart's piano concertos with the Academy of Ancient Music. The performances feature improvised cadenzas and spontaneously ornamented solo lines, much like how Mozart would have played them. Bringing improvisation back to performances of 18th century music has been a quest for Mr. Levin, ever since he graduated from Harvard University in 1968 with a thesis on Mozart's unfinished works. That same year, Rudolf Serkin hired him to run the music theory department at Curtis.

"We must remember for whom Mozart wrote these pieces. When he's writing concertos for other people or he's writing for a student, he's got to show the student everything that is necessary. But when he's going to play it himself, we see repeatedly that he doesn't need to write down all the details of the embellishments because he knows exactly what to do.

"The written-out cadenzas were used for people who couldn't invent and improvise on their own. The idea [with a cadenza] is that the performer is telling a story, is communicating a plot, to recount to the audience. It's not about reproducing a written text. That's the problem we have had in the last century or so. We have trained people to reproduce music—not to tell stories, not to recount events, not to show the volatility of the discourse.

"If the audience not only knows the entire concerto but knows every note of the cadenza, then there's nothing exciting. It's just a re-engagement with totally familiar material, like wearing a comfortable pair of bedroom slippers. The purpose of the cadenza is adventure, unpredictability, risk. And this is the thing that I think is, if not destroying, then is creating problems with our culture of performance, which is that everybody is interested in risk avoidance. You go to an international competition, and if you play two wrong notes, the person who played one wrong note less will advance to the next round, and you maybe won't. And we need a culture where things feel and sound unpredictable and dangerous."

Gabriela Montero

Pianist

→ YouTube is dotted with clips of Gabriela Montero improvising on themes solicited from audience members, be they melodies from a Cantonese opera or Darth Vader's theme from *Star Wars*. Along with audience requests, she regularly improvises on themes by Bach and Chopin, or songs from her native Venezuela. An improviser since childhood, Ms. Montero insists that her approach isn't rooted in any formal study of improv, and that her extemporizations come deep from within her subconscious mind.

"I never studied counterpoint or any of the theoretical subjects. I just give in to the experience [of improvising], and I don't control it. I get out of the way. My brain basically goes to sleep, and something else takes over, which is much more powerful. It's nothing conscious that I do. [An improvisation] can be a seven-minute fugue, and sometimes, for fun, it will go into a tango, but these are compositions that happen in the moment. I'm creating it but I'm not planning it and not even thinking about it.

"For me, it begins in a state of absolute non-judgment. That's the whole point. There are no mistakes in improvisation, just opportunities and different roads to travel. Everybody will be a different kind of improviser. For me, there is a logic that guides me that I'm not aware of. But for anybody, the value of improvisation is the way it widens the scope of your relationship to metaphor, to yourself with the instrument, and to who you become as a communicator. I think that's incredibly valuable for anyone."



David Middleton

Adjunct Instructor at Curtis, guitarist, and member of the Sun Ra Arkestra

→ David Middleton is a fixture on in the Philadelphia jazz and contemporary music scenes, where he performs with everything from avant-garde big bands to DJs and Tuvan throat-singing ensembles. Together with faculty member Thomas Patteson, Mr. Middleton started a course on improvisational strategies that aims to help students develop a "toolkit" of improvisational techniques. "So, a student not only understands what improvisation is—as opposed to composition—but learns how to survive in some situations that they may find themselves in," says Mr. Middleton.

"Becoming a whole musician includes understanding what I consider the three pyramid points of musical life, which are composition, orchestration, and improvisation. Understanding all of them makes you a better musician.

"Modern classical composers and performers are recognizing the limitations of having to perform through-written material for the rest of their careers. In fact, their careers are on the verge of stagnation because of the economic and business model that the whole classical music empire is built on: We're turning out a bunch of classical musicians, but there aren't as many available, sustainable [careers]. This makes them have to become very entrepreneurial, and they may find themselves in situations where they must perform things that aren't necessarily the through-written classical pieces that they've been playing since they were teenagers.

"If you think about working in film scoring or media of some kind, a lot of times that score may be very minimal and not up to the technical expectations of what they might have dealt with in their schooling of classical music scores. Performers must understand the connection between the [instrument] families, or the harmonic texture, so they can either change what's been given to them in the moment or understand what the emotional intent is."



Nick Kendall (*Violin '01*), *Time for Three*
Ranaan Meyer (*Double Bass '03*), *Time for Three*

→ Time for Three grew out of informal jam sessions at Curtis, where violinists Nick Kendall ('01) and Zachary DePue ('02), and bassist Ranaan Meyer ('03) were all students during the late 1990s. They would dabble in bluegrass fiddling and backstage “cutting contests.” A hook would blossom into a full-fledged composition, and the group cultivated its now-signature blend of jazz, bluegrass, hip-hop, and Americana. (DePue left in 2015 for a full-time Indianapolis Symphony job and was replaced by the Juilliard-trained violinist Charles Yang.) In October, the Grammy Award-winning group returned to its alma mater to perform with the Curtis Symphony Orchestra in Jennifer Higdon’s *Concerto 4-3*.

Ranaan: “A lot of improvisation comes back to confidence. There have been so many examples where we go into a conservatory to work with classical musicians, to improvise, where in the first seven minutes people are looking at us like, ‘You want me to do what now?’ You

should see them 30 minutes into it. It’s like they’ve been improvising their whole lives. That doesn’t mean that if we work with 30 people, 30 of them are going to become professional improvisers. Probably not. Maybe one or two. But what’s exciting for everybody trying it is it somehow takes them to another level of their mindset.”

Nick: “In classical music—and I feel like we’re kind of getting over it—this idea of improvisation is such a big deal. But really, it’s a means to an end, just like learning how to play in tune. When you’re learning a piece, you want the technique to serve your music-making and not the other way around. Anyone who knows how to communicate with another person using language can improvise. We have always said that the future and the health of what we call classical music will continue evolving and reinventing itself if we keep introducing improvisation as a tool.”

Ranaan: “It’s about creating a vibe, creating a mood, not worrying if it must be about a million notes, and just wanting to do or say something. That really empowers classical music.”

Interviews have been edited and condensed for clarity.



THE Q+A

BY
BRIAN
WISE

Teddy Abrams

A conductor builds bridges with fiddlers, banjo pickers, and hip-hop artists in tow.

→ **IN SPEAKING** with Teddy Abrams (Conducting '08), you might expect him to steer the conversation towards his more glittery work: his summer dates at the Hollywood Bowl and the Aspen Music Festival, his Boston Symphony debut—slated for March 2025—or the Grammy Award that he won last February with Yuja Wang (Piano '08) and the Louisville Orchestra (LO), where he has been music director since 2014 (and where his current contract runs through the end of this season). While all those things are part of the Abrams mix, he's just as excited to talk about visiting backwoods Kentucky towns as part of the LO's statewide touring program, or the Creators Corps, a project to commission new pieces rooted in Louisville history and culture.

A composer himself who is currently at work on the score to *ALI*, a musical about Louisville-born boxer Muhammad Ali (premiering in Chicago next spring), Abrams, who hails from Berkeley, Calif., is a fervent booster for his adopted home state.

I'm reaching you today at your home in Louisville. It isn't so common for conductors to actually reside in the city where they do most of their work. What have been the biggest benefits of living in Louisville, whether for you or the orchestra?

It's weird that that is such an unusual decision. It's actually a disappointing fact how music directors often interact with their cities. I try and be respectful: Every orchestra has its own expectations, and every city has its own relationships with its arts institutions, so I can only really speak to myself. It's been my personal mission here in Louisville to serve people in every way that I can as an artist and educator, and simply as a citizen. That requires a level of understanding of the community, which means having it be your home. I don't think I could understand the ways our community needs music if I didn't live amongst the people that we want to make music for.

Since 2022, you've taken the LO on a statewide tour through dozens of cities and towns. The Kentucky State Legislature recently provided an additional \$4.3 million to extend the project through 2026. What have you learned from playing in all these locales?

That has been the most important and meaningful work that I've ever done. It's not the most traditionally industry-oriented concertizing, shall we say. We are playing in sometimes very small towns and rural communities throughout Kentucky. But the experience has a very specific intentionality: We are going

there to make music so that we can bridge the many gaps in society right now. We're going to try and grow and learn ourselves. We're going to places that were the cradle of bluegrass, old-time music, or folk music that have become some of the most popular music that's listened to today. So, it is a shared experience. Performances in places like Harlan and Prestonsburg and Murray have blown my mind: Some of the most kinetic, dynamic audiences I've ever seen.

The Louisville Orchestra puts a distinctly local spin on much of its work, whether commissioning pieces based on Kentucky writers or performing your own rap oratorio, *The Greatest: Muhammad Ali*. How do you identify subjects or themes that will resonate with the public?

There are so many musical storylines that have been really fascinating. In a way, Kentucky doesn't fully inhabit its own musical background. Bluegrass obviously has a wonderful hall of fame



LAUREN DESBERG

here, and there are sites like the National Thumbpickers Hall of Fame, where [Merle] Travis developed that style of playing. In Eastern Kentucky, there are festivals that celebrate old-time music. But we haven't maybe fully represented ourselves as the cradle of so much of this music. So, the orchestra tries to feature that. We've toured with people like [mandolinist] Chris Thile, who is from Kentucky, and Michael Cleveland, who is one of the greatest living fiddle players. We want to showcase that music in unconventional ways.

You composed the theater work *Mammoth* for a LO performance in Kentucky's Mammoth Cave National Park in April 2023, joined by cellist Yo-Yo Ma and other musicians. What was challenging or surprising about playing there?

I wrote this piece for Yo-Yo [Ma] and for the orchestra and chorus, and for bass-baritone Davóne Tines as the celebrant, as I call him. It was like a non-denominational service that celebrated the cave as a sacred place. The most challenging thing involved the obvious logistics—the fundraising, the transportation of instruments into the cave, the temperature. For some reason, I started writing for two harps and I insisted on having the two harps. Leaving harps for two weeks in a 54-degree cave is not ideal for the instruments! There was so much percussion because one part of the piece recreates this famous earthquake that occurred in the early 19th century, the New Madrid Earthquake. But the most joyous thing was everybody was fully present there. There was no cell phone reception. Nobody was trying to film anything. People were just present themselves because they all knew this was once in a lifetime.

You had a seven-person film crew on site capturing the performance. What are the plans for the film?

We're trying to make it into a full documentary. We're hoping to release it, pairing the recording and the documentary down the road. It's an expensive thing. We've raised a little money, but we have more to raise.

You've performed the Barber Violin Concerto with your former Curtis classmate Ray Chen ('10) this fall, first in Louisville and then with the Curtis Symphony Orchestra in December. Is there a different dynamic when working with fellow alumni?

I'm just excited to work with Ray because we went to school together. Ray was already super-talented and just a lot of energy and very fun to hang out with. He worked his butt off. Many of my closest friends and collaborators are from my class at Curtis: Harrison Hollingsworth (Bassoon '08), Gabe Globus-Hoenich (Timpani and Percussion '08), Nate Farrington (Double Bass '06), Johnny Teyssier (Clarinet '08), Yuja [Wang], of course. I'm sure it's common to every class and every generation at Curtis, but it's been enormous for my own sense of community that Curtis connects all these people. We went through those trials and joys and everything that Curtis is. And we've stayed together.

Autumn Rewind

And let the centennial year begin.

BY BRIAN WISE

Over a three-week stretch this fall, Curtis' departments and flagship ensembles kicked off the 2024–25 season by celebrating the school's past, present, and future. First up were two events on Founder's Weekend (October 11–13), which honors the legacy of Curtis founder Mary Louise Curtis Bok.



Ji Su Jung and Gabriela Ortiz.



Ji Su Jung performs Gabriela Ortiz's *Cedrus*.

→ On October 12 Curtis New Music Ensemble presented a *Portrait of Gabriela Ortiz*. The program featured several works by this year's composer in residence, including the world premiere of *Cedrus* for solo marimba, performed by faculty member Ji Su Jung.

Ortiz, who hails from Mexico City, is having a banner year herself, also holding Carnegie Hall's Debs Composers Chair and receiving performances of her music by top orchestras across the U.S. and Europe. Her first Curtis program included on-stage discussions and concluded with students performing her *Exilios* for clarinet and string quartet.



Serena Wang performing Beethoven.



Michelle Cann, Adrian Zaragoza, Nathaniel Zhang, and Elijah Orlenko.

→ The next day (October 13) brought *From Hofmann to Present: The Legacy of Piano*. Faculty, alumni, and student pianists saluted the Polish-American virtuoso who formed Curtis' piano department in 1924 and served as the school's third president, from 1927 to 1938.

The program began with first-year student Serena Wang performing Beethoven's Piano Sonata No. 21 in C major following a 1938 Casimir Hall recording of the same piece by Hofmann. After works by Chopin and Rachmaninoff, the event ended with Eleanor Sokoloff Chair in Piano Studies Michelle Cann ('13) leading a blazing, four-pianist rendition of Saint-Saëns' *Danse Macabre*.

MATT GODFREY (ORTIZ & JUNG)



Time for Three with the Curtis Symphony Orchestra and conductor Osmo Vänskä.



Nick Kendall ('01) with the Curtis Symphony Orchestra and conductor Osmo Vänskä.

→ The Curtis Symphony Orchestra opened its series on October 27 at the Kimmel Center with conductor Osmo Vänskä and *Time for Three*, the Grammy Award-winning roots-classical string ensemble.

Formed at Curtis more than 20 years ago (see p. 9), *Time for Three* performed *Concerto 4-3*, a bluegrass-inspired work by former composition faculty member Jennifer Higdon ('88). Framing the trio's performance were Sibelius' *Finlandia* (performed on the very first Curtis Symphony concert in 1926) and Prokofiev's *Symphony No. 5*.



Jeysla Rosario Santos (Poppea) and Sam Higgins (Nero) in *Poppea*.



Joelle Lamarre (Love) in *Poppea*.



The Comet with Cedric Berry (Jim). Right: *Poppea* with Jeysla Rosario Santos (Poppea) and Sam Higgins (Nero).

→ Finally, Curtis Opera Theatre's centennial series opened on November 1–3 with the East Coast premiere of *The Comet / Poppea* at Philadelphia's 23rd Street Armory. Led by the cutting-edge director Yuval Sharon, the striking production paired two works—George Lewis' newly composed *The Comet* and Monteverdi's 1643 *Coronation of Poppea*—and positioned them on a turntable stage, with each half devoted to each opera.

The Comet / Poppea juxtaposes Baroque and high modernist styles, which were performed by the rising young stars of the Curtis Opera Theatre, original cast members from the Los Angeles production, and members of the Curtis Symphony Orchestra, all conducted by Marc Lowenstein.

The Curtis Opera Theatre changes gears (and venues) to present four performances of Mozart's comic masterpiece, *The Marriage of Figaro*, starting on February 27 in the Perelman Theater.

ST

THE PHILADELPHIA



Commencement day, 1946, at Sansom and 17th Streets. Front row (sitting): Norman Carol (Violin '47), Abba Bogin; (standing) Lucille Rothman Felsenthal (Piano '50), Josephine Sitjar (Voice '46), Joseph Silverstein (Violin '50) Back row: Theodore Lettvin (Piano '49), Allison Nelson Loebbaka (Piano '49), Burton Fine (Violin '48), Joseph Rezits (Piano '48), Sylvia Zarembo (Piano '47).

ALONG THE WALK-OF-FAME sidewalk plaques on Broad Street in Philadelphia, the Curtis Institute of Music is an every-few-feet presence. Gary Graffman, Vincent Persichetti, and numerous others have their own embossed squares alongside the Soul Survivors, Jill Scott, and other icons of more mainstream music. It's symbolic. Though the Curtis headquarters up the street on Rittenhouse Square might seem to be a genteel island of the 19th century, the esteemed conservatory continually defines the Philadelphia identity in ways hugely noticeable—and not.

The most quantifiable, durable, and all-around-beautiful manifestation of the Curtis imprint can be summed up in three words: *Adagio for Strings*. That famous orchestral work by West Chester, Pa.-born Samuel Barber (Composition '34)—finished between his student years at Curtis and his teaching tenure (starting in '39)—was premiered in 1938 by the much-idolized Arturo Toscanini, something almost unheard-of in those years when America was still finding its voice in classical music. “Curtis was in an uproar!” recalled pianist and one-time

GIFT OF JOSEPH REZITS

ORY

SINCE ITS EARLY YEARS, CURTIS HAS FORGED TIES WITHIN PHILADELPHIA'S ARTS ECOSYSTEM. AS THE SCHOOL TURNS 100, STUDENTS CONTINUE TO HAVE A DYNAMIC PRESENCE ACROSS THE CITY.

BY DAVID PATRICK STEARNS



1726 Locust Street in 1924.



Students pose for a selfie outside Reading Terminal Market.

student Ruth Slenczynska, now 99, in a video interview. Since then, the Philadelphia Orchestra has played the piece some 40 times, averaging almost every other year, often on Martin Luther King, Jr. Day, with added narration by Charlotte Blake Alston.

That's only one out-of-the-blue Curtis gift to Philadelphia. In more recent times, the Grammy- and Pulitzer-winning Jennifer Higdon (professor of composition from 1994–2021) had her similarly elegiac *blue cathedral* premiered by the Curtis Symphony Orchestra in 2000, making her one of America's most performed living composers. Some 14 Philadelphia Orchestra performances have followed, played by some of the musicians who were at that first rehearsal conducted by the very unsure composer—since Curtis graduates account for as much as 45 percent of the orchestra.

On recordings, whether found at the Philadelphia Record Exchange in Fishtown or via invisible sound files on Amazon, Curtis directors, faculty, and students are unavoidable and often legendary, such as pianists Josef Hofmann and Rudolf Serkin, not to mention conductor Fritz Reiner leading the populist, summertime Robin Hood Dell Orchestra. In concert halls, Curtis on Tour has given 450 concerts in 120 cities over 15 years, which may have more relevance at Curtis Symphony Orchestra tour stops in London and Berlin—but Philadelphia hears those programs first in launch concerts at the Kimmel Center.

Smaller-scale programs touch down at the Woodmere Art Museum in Chestnut Hill and Longwood Gardens in Kennett Square—and they're hardly business-as-usual programs with infrequently encountered names such as Erno von Dohnanyi

and Erwin Schulhoff. Says Andrew Lane, vice president of touring and artist management, "Audiences get to hear music they've never heard before, or only rarely. We can be very flexible with the makeup of these ensembles. We have every instrument at our disposal." Every? Longwood even has a majestic organ installed at its indoor space.

Then there are the rescuers. When Opera Philadelphia's star baritone Nathan Gunn canceled out of Higdon's *Cold Mountain* in 2016, Jarrett Ott ('14) stepped in, having sung the workshops at Curtis. When a power failure at the Mann Center for the Performing Arts made a 2003 Philadelphia Orchestra Beethoven concert a lost cause, Curtis students Zachary DePue ('03) and Ranaan Meyer ('03), both playing substitute gigs with the orchestra, stepped forward, improvised their own hybrid bluegrass, and with Nick Kendall ('01) became the popular Time for Three (a self-described classically-trained garage band). The point is not the rescue so much as the readiness. Though Lang Lang ('02) had a major turning point replacing an ill Andre Watts at Chicago's Ravinia Festival in 1999, his career was already assured, even at age 17, according to his teacher, Mr. Graffman, thanks to the many private-occasion concerts he had played around Philadelphia.

One of Curtis vocal department's success stories—bass Matthew Rose ('03)—had no such Cinderella moments after arriving at the school in 1998. But he left Philadelphia having performed some 20 secondary roles thanks to associations—established by the now-retired faculty Mikael Eliassen—with Opera Philadelphia and the now-defunct Opera Festival of New Jersey. Only two years out of Curtis, he was listed on the cover of an EMI *Tristan und Isolde* recording with Plácido Domingo and has gone on to leads in Britten's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and Strauss' *Der Rosenkavalier*.

What comes out of Curtis is only part of the story. One other part is what comes in—and the numbers are particularly impressive post-pandemic. Among the 100 or so free-with-registration student recitals at Field Concert Hall, attendance has grown 300 percent since 2018–19, says Vince Ford, senior vice president of digital strategy and innovation, thanks to "improved communications" with the public. Online streaming has become a way of life. "Our 75 concert streams have grown by about 1,000 percent to an average of 5,000 viewers per recital last year, with some much higher," he said.

“THE MOST QUANTIFIABLE, DURABLE, AND ALL-AROUND BEAUTIFUL MANIFESTATION OF THE CURTIS IMPRINT CAN BE SUMMED UP IN THREE WORDS: ADAGIO FOR STRINGS.”

The kids reportedly love it; the more ears they have, the better they play.

Less documented is the intensive once-every-January coaching and side-by-side performances with Curtis students and 100 to 120 high school players in the All-City Orchestra. Benefits are apparent on both sides. “This sort of exposure allows Curtis students to view the world more holistically, including examining their role ... as future leaders in the music industry,” said Joseph Conyers (’04), music director of the orchestra and principal bass of the Philadelphia Orchestra.

Outside the so-called “Curtisphere,” students have always been free agents to pursue their causes in the outlying community—and have. Mr. Rose, the bass, was seen at City Hall passing out leaflets protesting the Iraq War as it was starting in 2003 and helped organize a protest concert with members of the Philadelphia Orchestra and Christoph Eschenbach. When not making major debuts with the likes of the New York Philharmonic, Hilary Hahn (’99) took the initiative to play in senior communities, pushing back against the assumption that such performances were just test-driving new repertoire in low-pressure settings. These were thoughtfully curated concerts, sometimes with audience members coming forward with flowers—between movements—that she graciously received.

Guidelines and ethics create invisible boundaries around what the students do outside the school’s walls, perhaps summed up in a word that surfaces repeatedly—dignity—in maintaining the integrity of the artform. Mary Javian (’99), chair of career studies, puts it more directly: “What we don’t do is background music or weddings.” One manifestation of those fine lines is a children’s opera version of *The Three Little Pigs* that toured schools years back and featured singers who are now international stars. But this time, the familiar bedtime story had music adapted from Mozart.

More serious is the ongoing Curtis presence at Philly House in North Chinatown, which is the largest homeless shelter in the city. Visits are monthly, with three to six students. Repertoire ranges from Bach to transcriptions of classic songs such as “Over the Rainbow.” After performances, they all eat lunch together. “We don’t just play concerts,” said Ms. Javian. “Performances are interactive. For a Mozart oboe quartet, four guests stood behind each player to observe that instrument’s role in the piece. Then we discussed the music. One time, a guest broke out his harmonica and jammed with a Curtis harpist.” The key point is making the listeners feel that they’re heard: “These are people who are used to being ignored.”

In many ways, Curtis presents to Philadelphia what is less feasible for more established organizations with marketing and budget concerns. Besides having wider options for mixed-instrument, non-traditional chamber music concerts, Curtis Opera Theatre stages ensemble pieces in non-traditional productions—Leonard Bernstein’s troubled, late-period opera *A Quiet Place* directed by Daniel Fish, for example—often in partnership with Opera Philadelphia.

Such public projects emerge with a strong sense of what, why, and where. In Curtis Opera Theatre’s November performances of *The Comet / Poppea*, past and future collided and coalesced with the new George Lewis opera based on W.E.B. Dubois’ 1920 Afro-futurist science fiction story, juxtaposed with Monteverdi’s 1643 *The Coronation of Poppea* about political skullduggery in the Roman Empire. The high-concept production by revisionist director Yuval Sharon that originated at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles needed space—and got it with a revolving stage in the unconventional interior of the 23rd Street Armory. All three performances were virtually sold out before opening night, addressing the Philadelphia public in a manner not seen previously and drawing people interested in theater, literature, and social issues. The experience was no doubt transformative for singers, too, by being thrust onto the operatic cutting edge.

“There are new demands on people these days and new skills to develop,” said Miloš Repický, chair of vocal studies and principal opera coach. “It’s less about their aria and more about what they’re doing onstage. It demonstrates that we’re looking ahead and thinking about relevance.”

David Patrick Stearns is a contributor to the Philadelphia Inquirer, Gramophone magazine and Classical Voice North America. He holds a master’s degree in musicology from New York University.

Top: Betty Benthin (Viola and Piano ’49) and Joseph Silverstein (Violin ’50), circa 1948. Bottom: Curtis students catch up on the front steps.



CONCEPTUAL BY DESIGN

CURTIS FACULTY AND
ALUMNI RELEASE
INNOVATIVE ALBUMS
LINKED BY THEMES
OF PROTEST,
PRESERVATION, AND
CONNECTION

BY RYAN LATHAN

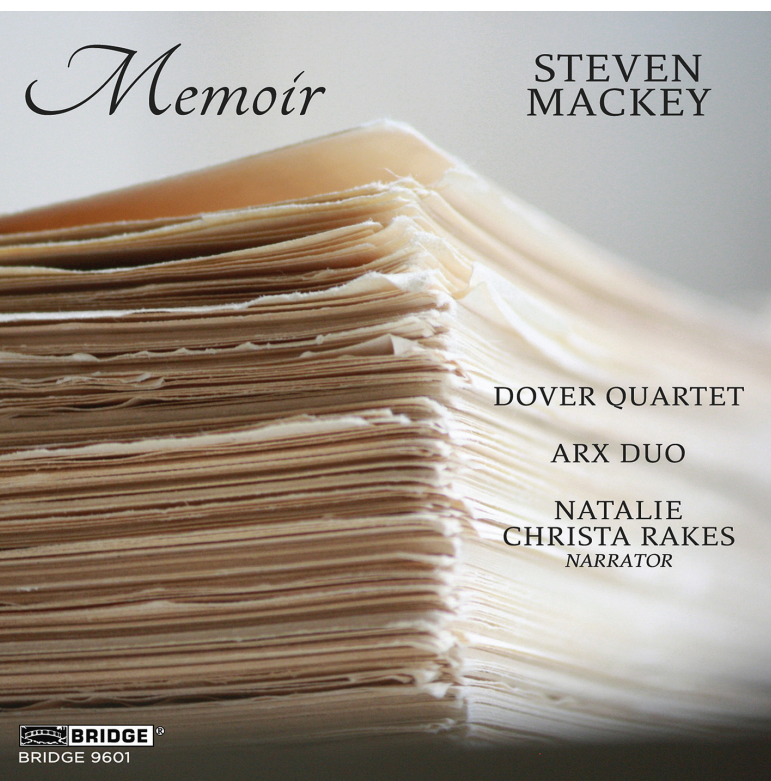


WHETHER IT'S THE Beatles' *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*, Kendrick Lamar's *good kid, m.A.A.d city*, Sufjan Stevens' *Illinois*, or even Woody Guthrie's seminal 1940 folk classic, *Dust Bowl Ballads*, the concept album has been a signifier of grand musical ambitions for decades. But conceptual projects have deep roots in classical music, too, from song cycles of the 13th century (Martin Codax's *Cantigas de Amigo*) to collections of German lieder and French chanson from the 19th. All are typically unified by a cohesive storyline or centered on a particular cultural, political, or philosophical theme. In the spirit of this tradition come three exceptional new recordings by Curtis faculty and alumni, giving a 21st-century spin on the concept album.

On June 14, Grammy Award-winning ensemble Imani Winds, Curtis' first-ever faculty wind quintet, and virtuosic steel pannist and composer Andy Akiho, released the world premiere recording of their mesmerizing 2022 work, *BeLoning*. Inspired by the pounding protests of shivering immigrant detainees banging on the walls and windows of Brooklyn's Metropolitan Detention Center during a winter 2019 power outage, this hypnotically angular, rhythmically complex, 30-minute chamber work speaks to the universality of humanity and utilizes actual audio footage from the protest (the words are shot into and out of a vacuum chamber) as it unfolds across seven parts. The ensemble has received funding from the National Endowment for the Arts to present five performances of *BeLoning* in prisons, detention centers, or juvenile facilities across the following two seasons.

Workshopped at New York's Riker's Island, a facility long embroiled in controversy due to overcrowding, inhumane living conditions, violence among inmates and staff, and inadequate mental and medical care, the project's overarching goal, says Imani Winds oboist Toyin Spellman-Diaz, "is to penetrate walls of places of detention and incarceration across the country with positive musical intent, and to highlight, empower, and uplift people who have been incarcerated."

She continues: "It's pretty difficult to get the paperwork and logistics done to go into a prison and perform a concert, but we have had extraordinarily inspiring experiences behind the walls of the prisons every time we have gone. Music really



can break down walls!”

With *Beyond the Years: Unpublished Songs of Florence Price*, internationally acclaimed soprano Karen Slack (Opera ’02) joins forces with Michelle Cann (Piano ’13, ArtistYear ’15), Curtis’ Eleanor Sokoloff Chair in Piano Studies and a leading interpreter of Price’s music. Produced by Azica Record’s Alan Bise and ONEcomposer, an organization that celebrates and amplifies the voices of underrepresented and historically excluded musicians, the album features 19 unpublished songs by Price set to poetry by writers of the Harlem Renaissance, Lord Byron, and Theodore Roosevelt biographer Hermann Hagedorn (but a sliver of the 300-plus works Price composed), including 16 world premiere recordings. Since the 2009 discovery of a major cache of nearly 300 unpublished manuscripts hidden in an Illinois summer home attic, Price (1887–1953) has been the subject of a significant revival and reappraisal in concert halls and on recordings. While her three surviving symphonies and several concertos have drawn considerable interest, her exquisite songs are still not as widely known and are mostly unpublished.

“Labor of love is an understatement. It is an absolute honor to be one of the first singers to record many of these pieces,” says Ms. Slack. “I chose the title *Beyond the Years* because, personally, I believe they transcend time. My biggest wish is that [they] are published by 2025, made available to every musician who is interested in the works of Price, and that they become a part of the American art song canon. *Beyond the Years* is advocacy for Florence Price, who was kept out of her rightful place among the great composers because she was a Black woman.”

“It is so important to change the narrative—the whole idea that this music is other, that this is for Black History Month or a special project,” says Ms. Cann. “It lives right next to Schumann or Tchaikovsky. Now you’re starting to see [Price’s work] being

programmed by many orchestras, by many different pianists of all genders, of all races. That, to me, is success. It’s when we are now just seeing this music as great music that everybody should enjoy, everybody should play, consume, and learn about—this is how she becomes part of history in the way she deserves to be.”

Another recent concept album, titled *Memoir*, released on July 18, brings together an assemblage of Curtis luminaries: Grammy-winning composer and composition faculty member Steven Mackey; the celebrated Dover Quartet, Curtis’ Penelope P. Watkins Ensemble in Residence; and the electrifying arx duo—comprised of percussionists Mari Yoshinaga (Timpani and Percussion ’12) and Garrett Arney. Recalling Igor Stravinsky’s *L’histoire du soldat* at times yet existing in its own unique musical and theatrical world, this poignant, genre-blurring work is a 75-minute portrait of Mr. Mackey’s mother based on her unpublished memoir.

“The challenge for me as a composer was to provide a musical language that would be sympathetic to my mother’s guileless reflections while being true to my current musical preoccupations and aspirations—something lyrical and expressively direct but still quirky and with surprises,” notes Mr. Mackey. “I was particularly interested in playing with the counterpoint between diegetic sounds—train whistles, mimeograph machines, etc.—and the more abstract music tracing an internal psychological and emotional arc. Woven into this dialogue are references to some of the music she loved to sing.”

“*Memoir* is an undertaking logistically,” adds Dover cellist Camden Shaw (String Quartet ’14, Cello ’11, ’10), “with so many percussive elements to be transported or sourced and also an immense amount of preparation on the part of the narrator [performed by actor Natalie Christa Rakes]. We have already had immensely powerful experiences playing the piece live. Audiences really connect with the common humanity of the protagonist, and essentially what is the most important story of all—an ordinary human life, from beginning to end.” ●



Composition/ Conducting

1970s

In October **Thüring Bräm** (Conducting '73) presented the world premiere of *Rombo*, his new triple concerto for violin, trombone, accordion, and ten-part brass ensemble, together with his violin concerto *Dirge* to celebrate his 80th birthday. Bjørn Sagstad conducted the Brass Ensemble of the Music Academy of Basel.

James Adler (Piano '73, Composition '76) released his newest album, *Reflections*, on Albany Records in June. The album features *A Curtis Reflection*, commissioned as part of the Curtis 100 for 100 centennial commissioning initiative.

1980s

Daron Hagen (Composition '84) released his album *Heike Quinto* on Naxos in May and presented his opera-based film *9/10: Love Before the Fall* at film festivals and on international streaming platforms. His tone poem *City of Light*, honoring JoAnn Falletta and the Buffalo Philharmonic, opened the orchestra's season in September.

Columbia University presented works by **Paul Brantley** (Composition '85) on its Sacred Music at Columbia series in October. The program included four premieres, with performances by cellist Laura Metcalf, classical guitarist Dan

Lippel, pianist Steven Beck, and alto flutist and soprano Alice Teyssier.

James Helgeson (Composition '86) was elected dean of the Barenboim-Said Akademie in Berlin, where he is a professor of musicology and composition. He recently defended his second Ph.D. in composition at Royal Holloway, University of London, and wrote a solo horn piece for the Curtis centennial.

1990s

Juan Carlos Lomónaco (Conducting '96) will be the new music director of the Guanajuato University Orchestra in Guanajuato, Mexico, where the Cervantino International Festival is held every year. He will assume the post in 2025.

Mischa Santora (Conducting '97), music director of Boston Ballet, premiered his own composition, *Toccata for Orchestra and Live Electronics*, with the company in May, in collaboration with Ken Ossola (choreography) and Michael Cain (electronics).

2000s



Adam Glaser (Conducting '00) was appointed visiting professor of orchestral conducting and interim director of orchestras at the Hartt School at the University of Hartford. As music director of the Juilliard

Pre-College Orchestra, this season, he conducts new works by Jeff Scott and Chen Yi.

2010s

TJ Cole (Composition '16) received a New Music USA Creator Fund grant for *TAROT*, a project with Gabriel Cabezas (Cello '13) featuring audio stories from genderqueer individuals in Louisville. The premiere is scheduled for October 2025.

In the 2024–25 season, **Conner Gray Covington** (Conducting '17) makes his debuts with the San Francisco Symphony, Vancouver Symphony Orchestra, Knoxville Symphony, and Tallahassee Symphony Orchestra.



Strings

1970s

Michael Reynolds (Cello '77) was recently appointed director of Boston University's School of Music, where he has been a cello professor since 1983. A founding member of the Muir String Quartet, he co-founded the Classics for Kids Foundation, which is in its 27th year.

1980s

Nadya Tichman (Violin '80) retired from the San Francisco Symphony in August after 44 years in its violin section. She served as associate concertmaster for 32 of those years, including three years as acting concertmaster.

1990s

Derek Barnes (Cello '91) joined the Wister Quartet, replacing founding cellist Lloyd Smith (Cello '65) and joining violinists Nancy Bean (Violin '81) and Meichen Liao-Barnes (Violin '81), and violist Pamela Fay.

Eugene Watanabe (Violin and Piano '92) was appointed executive director of the nonprofit Gifted Music School in Salt Lake City. Founded in 2009 by Mr. Watanabe and his wife, pianist Vera Oussetskaia, the school has 58 faculty members and provides music education to more than 740 students.

Jenny Oaks Baker (Violin '97) performed in and produced the multimedia Easter production, *The Redeemer: Music on the Life of Jesus the Christ* on a seven-city tour with vocal soloists, choirs, and orchestras.

Hilary Hahn (Violin '99) won Recording of the Year and the Instrumental Award at the 2024 *Gramophone* Classical Music Awards for her album of Ysaÿe's solo violin sonatas, released in 2023. The awards ceremony took place in London in October.

2000s

Julianne Lee (Violin '05) in June 2025 will leave the Dover Quartet, the Penelope P. Watkins Ensemble in Residence at Curtis, where she has served as its violist since September 2023. Citing the demands of constant touring, she says she will return to her former position as a violinist with the Boston Symphony Orchestra.



Jung-Min Amy Lee (Violin '05) was appointed to the Oberlin Conservatory faculty as associate professor of violin beginning this fall.

Teng Li (Viola '05) joined the Chicago Symphony Orchestra in September as its principal violist.

2010s

John-Henry Crawford (Cello '14) released his debut concerto album, *Dvořák and Tchaikovsky*, with the San Francisco Ballet Orchestra and conductor Martin West on the Orchid Classics label in June. The album was produced by the late Adam Abeshouse.

Katya Poplyansky (Violin '14) joined Les Violons du Roy as co-concertmaster in July.



Zachary Mowitz (Cello '19) joined the cello section of the Los Angeles Philharmonic in September.

2020s

Solomiya Ivakhiv (Violin '03) recorded a Ukrainian Christmas album with Lviv National Philharmonic, released by

Naxos in November. The dozen carols on the album, arranged by Bohdan Kryvo-pust, celebrate the Ukrainian people and their holiday traditions.

Youjin Lee (Violin '21) has been loaned the 1736 "Muntz" Guarneri 'del Gesù from the Tokyo-based Nippon Music Foundation. The foundation loans rare instruments to promising musicians under the age of 35.

Toby Vigneau (Double Bass '24) in September was appointed assistant principal bass of the Philadelphia Orchestra.



Winds/Brass

1970s

David Singer (Clarinet '71) in June published his memoir, *From Cab Driver to Carnegie Hall*, which chronicles his time as a principal member of the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra and performing at venues from the Marlboro Music Festival to Carnegie Hall, all while driving a taxi to make a living.

1980s

Richard Stout's (Trombone '87) *Songs of Correspondence*, based on the letters of Willa Cather, was released in October on the album *as we are*. The cycle was commissioned by the University of Nebraska in celebration of their newly opened digital archive of

Cather letters. Performers include mezzo-soprano Nancy Maultsby and the Poiesis Quartet in their debut recording.

Nadina Mackie (Bassoon '81) recorded Augusta Read Thomas' second bassoon concerto, *CARNIVAL* for bassoon and wind ensemble. It was released on an album of Thomas' recent compositions, *Terpsichore's Box of Dreams*, and in June was named recording of the month by *BBC Music Magazine*.

1990s

Master gunnery sergeant **Chris Clark** (Trombone '95) retired from "The President's Own" United States Marine Band in July after 25 years of service. Mr. Clark served under five U.S. presidents and performed over 1,200 full honors funerals at Arlington National Cemetery as the trombone section leader and low brass section commander. He will remain in the Washington, D.C. area, concentrating on his audio and video production business, Clark Media Productions.

2000s

Alma Maria Lebrecht (Horn '06) is featured on new recordings of Mahler's Symphonies Nos. 1–6 by the Orquestra Filarmônica de Minas Gerais in Belo Horizonte, Brazil, conducted by Fábio Mechetti. Ms. Lebrecht has been the orchestra's principal horn since 2013.

2010s

Diana Wensley (Trumpet '14) won the audition for

Alumni Highlight

Rapid Reactions

From opera singer to content creator, **Elizabeth Zharoff** has persisted in a sometimes-fickle industry. **BY BRIAN WISE**

→ **When the soprano** Elizabeth Zharoff (Opera '12) launched her YouTube channel *The Charismatic Voice*, she wasn't too keen on reaction videos—a genre in which YouTubers deliver their responses to hearing well-known songs, comedy routines, or movies for the first time. But then she determined that there was a way to make it more substantial, even educational, by featuring deeper analyses of vocal styles. As of publishing time, Ms. Zharoff has 1.8 million YouTube subscribers, 7,000 donors to her Patreon account, and a five-member production team.

You take a more upbeat approach than some of the reaction roasts that one finds on YouTube, which can veer towards the snarky.

I grew up with both of my parents being teachers. My mom was a music teacher, and my dad was a middle school teacher, and I've learned from them that it's extremely important to point out first the good things, and I knew that on the channel, I didn't want to tear an artist down. Could I say 10 million negative things about performance? Yeah. But I wanted to use this as a way to boost performers and help people appreciate the music more. And so, picking out the positive things and talking about how those are done—like how they achieve this incredible high note—that felt much more natural.

Some of your most popular videos have featured heavy metal bands such as Pantera, Metallica and Iron Maiden. How do you explain that?

I think there are both surprising similarities and surprising differences between

metal and opera. And that is partly, at least, why it's so appealing. I think that the musicians in metal are extremely good. I hear these virtuosic solo guitar passages sometimes that I think are similar to a violin concerto. There's some really impressive musicianship that happens, and then it's the same deal for voice. They're both pushing the voice to the extreme. At the same time, they both are leaning into drama.

You spoke to Vince Ford's Digital Media Essentials course in September and noted how some 70 percent of your revenue comes from the clicks on your videos alone (via the advertising that YouTube sells against them). That's remarkable.

The views that we have are extraordinary. There are so many things that have to be perfectly in place to be making 70 percent of your revenue through views. But some people will make it and get to that. I think that the most common model I've seen working is a combination of things that includes



views, [paid] memberships, and often some sort of online training: teaching a course or lessons. Originally, the course and lessons were where I thought our main revenue model was going to go.

So, what happened?

If you have a billion views on a video that is 60 seconds and a million views on a video that is 60 minutes, the 60-minute video is going to make so much more money. The [number of] views don't directly translate to money. It's views for a longer duration of time that will translate to more money. We've got a lot of long-form content. Most of our videos are hanging out around 25 or 30 minutes. I think that's a little lucky. We got to that without doing it intentionally, and then realized it was really great for monetizing.

You also told Vince Ford's class that the average career span of a video content creator is about two years, according to one analysis. You've been at this a lot longer. How do you keep evolving?

So, this two-year metric I heard at a conference was given by people who are doing a lot more short-form content and on platforms that tend to reward creators with an instant viral moment—like TikTok—and do not necessarily reward longevity. But I don't think it applies to long-form creators. And there's a clear delineation: I think long-form will be able to last for a long time, whereas short-form is often following trends that come and go. I do think trends in music could shift, and that might affect me, and we develop with them. But we've been very careful to broaden our reach in music, and never get stuck in one particular area.

the United States Army Old Guard Fife and Drum Corps and will be stationed at Joint Base Myer-Henderson Hall as of December.

2020s

James Vaughen (Trumpet '23) joined the Detroit Symphony Orchestra as assistant principal trumpet. In December he solos with the Nürnberger Symphoniker in Nürnberg, Germany, the result of winning first prize and the audience award in the 2023 Aeolus International Competition for Wind Instruments.



Percussion

1990s



Victor Yerrid (Timpani and Percussion '92) produces two new shows this season, *Halloween Fandemonium* and *Leopold Loves Opera*, for his original family concert series with the Pacific Symphony at Segerstrom Concert Hall in Costa Mesa, Calif.

2000s

Patricia Brennan (Timpani and Percussion '08) released her septet album *Breaking Stretch* on Pyroclastic Records in September.



Piano/ Accompanying

1960s

William Dawson (Piano '65) was named professor emeritus at the New World School of the Arts in Miami. His musical drama *Refuge: The Love Story of Ruth* will be performed in March 2025 at Florida Gulf Coast University.

Lambert Orkis (Piano '65) joined his longtime recital partner, violinist Anne-Sophie Mutter, for concerts in August and October in Germany, Denmark, and Austria.

Craig Sheppard (Piano '68) performed Chopin's complete nocturnes at London's Westminster Cathedral for the Chopin Society UK in June. He held the 14th annual Seattle Piano Institute at the University of Washington alongside Dr. Robin McCabe in July.

1970s

Andrew Willis (Piano '72) has been appointed artistic consultant at the Cornell Center for Historical Keyboards.

1980s

In February, Albany Records will release *through the light*, featuring works by **Ketty Nez** (Piano '83), including the title work for string quartet.

Audrey Axinn (Accompanying '88) joined the faculty

at Manhattan School of Music and the Tianjin Juilliard School in fall 2024, teaching courses in fortepiano and performance practice. She is also on the Juilliard faculty in New York and at Mannes School of Music.



Organ

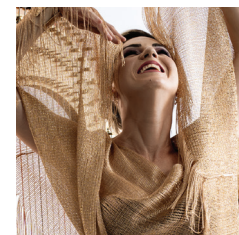
2000s

Naxos released a recording in August featuring organist **Paul Jacobs** (Organ '00) as soloist with the Nashville Symphony conducted by Giancarlo Guerrero. The album includes Charles Ives' *Variations on America* for solo organ and organ concertos by Horatio Parker, Wayne Oquin, and Christopher Rouse.



Harp

2010s



Coline-Marie Orliac (Harp '10) has been appointed solo harp of the Spanish National Orchestra in Madrid.

Milestones



→ Longtime faculty member and Philadelphia Orchestra principal bassoonist **Bernard Garfield** celebrated his 100th birthday this past May surrounded by family, friends, and former students. Guests enjoyed a program of works for bassoon choir, including a song written by Mr. Garfield himself and arranged for voice and bassoons by Michael Hope.



→ Organ student **Andy Brown** spent two weeks this summer in Japan, where he climbed Mt. Fuji. "It is certainly very difficult to climb but absolutely worth it once you reach the summit," he reports. "The view at 12,388 feet is spectacular and watching the sunrise up there is one of the most beautiful things I've ever seen."



→ Current students **Hun Choi** (Cello '23) and violist **Jiwon Grace Kim** had their wedding ceremony in South Korea on July 20. **Soyoung Cho** (Viola '24) took their wedding pictures in front of 1726 Locust St. Mr. Choi and Ms. Kim met at Curtis in 2022, and both anticipate graduating with their master's degrees in May 2025.



→ **William Miletich** (Double Bass '19) married Brigid Lucey on August 31 in West Hartford, Connecticut. In attendance were alumni **Samuel Casseday** (Double Bass '17), **Braizahn Jones** (Double Bass '18), and **Michael Sparhuber** (Timpani and Percussion '12), as well as faculty member **Harold Robinson**.



→ On July 25 in Bled, Slovenia, **Emily Pogorelc** (Opera '18) married Fabio Ghamam, a global chief operations manager for Siemens Energy.



→ Last June **Manuel Sosa** married his longtime partner, visual artist Laura Karetzky, at a ceremony in Brooklyn, N.Y. That same month Mr. Sosa took part in a residency at Yaddo, in Saratoga Springs, N.Y.

→ **Andrew Hauze** (Conducting '07) and Emily Hauze are delighted to announce the birth of their son, Rory Frederick Hauze, on September 20.



Voice/Opera

1980s

Janellen Farmer (Opera '84) has completed a master's in voice pedagogy with distinction from Westminster Choir College of Rider University. She is currently pursuing a certification in vocology at New York University. Ms. Farmer and her daughter, dancer and dance educator Sarah Vogan, are opening the Studio of Valley Forge, a studio in Devon, Pa.

2000s

Sukchul Charles Kim (Opera '02) gave the world premiere of Schubert's *Winterreise* in Müller's order with pianist Kyung Sook Lee ('67) at the Seoul Arts Center.

Jonathan Beyer (Opera '07) was appointed director of the Chautauqua Opera Conservatory in August.

2010s

Anthony Reed (Opera '15) joined the Metropolitan Opera roster for the 2024–25 season in productions of *Tosca* and *Salome*.

Emily Pogorelc (Opera '18) appeared at the Metropolitan Opera as Musetta in *La bohème* in November and as Pamina in *The Magic Flute* in December. In January she will sing Violetta in *La traviata* at the Semperoper Dresden.

Vartan Gabrielian (Opera '19) debuted at the Paris Ope-

ra in January as Dottore in *La traviata*.

Students

Julin Cheung has been named assistant principal flute/piccolo of the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra, effective April 2025.

Fátima Landa Velazquez, an oboist from Mexico, is the 2024 recipient of the ICSOM Boston University Tanglewood Institute Scholarship. Valued at \$10,000, the scholarship is designed to support musicians from historically and currently marginalized backgrounds who have a financial need.

Violist **Emad Zolfaghari** won the \$15,000 first prize at the Primrose International Viola Competition held at the Colburn School in Los Angeles in June.

Faculty/Staff

Benjamin Beilman (Violin '12) stepped in for Hilary Hahn for performances of Barber's Violin Concerto with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra in September and of Korngold's Violin Concerto with the Berlin Philharmonic in November.

At the National Competition in Organ Improvisation held in San Francisco in July, all five semi-finalists were students of faculty member **Jeffrey Brillhart** (Organ '79). Four of the students were from Yale University;

one, Alexander Leonardi (Organ '24), is from Curtis.

Mary Javian (Double Bass '99) has been appointed principal bass of the American Composers Orchestra.

In August **Don Liuzzi** presented a faculty concert at Curtis in November marking his 30 years on the faculty. Titled *Intersections II: Third Stream/Fourth Stream*, it featured several Curtis students and faculty, as well as two special guests: pianist Adam Glasser (Conducting '99) and banjo legend Tony Trischka.

The Metropolitan Opera has extended **Yannick Nézet-Séguin**'s contract through 2029–30. The extension includes a new production of Wagner's *Ring* cycle, which begins in the 2027–28 season and culminates with full cycles in the spring of 2030.

Alexander Technique teacher **Ariel Weiss** has become a teaching sponsor for Alexander Technique International and was invited to be a continuous learning presenter at the 13th International Alexander Technique Congress, to be held in Dublin in August 2025.

Jason Vieaux's 2024–25 season includes his debuts at Bravo! Vail Music Festival with Orpheus Chamber Orchestra, Detroit Chamber Strings & Winds, and Beaches Fine Art Series. Mr. Vieaux's next solo album, *JV*, to be released in 2025, will feature his original works.

Johnny Gandlesman is Music's MacArthur Winner



Johnny Gandlesman (Violin '99) in October was named one of 22 recipients of a MacArthur Fellowship, popularly known as a "genius grant." The only musician to receive the honor, he was recognized for "reimagining classical works and nurturing the creation of new music across genre and stylistic boundaries." The award is given out each year by the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, recognizing individuals in a variety of disciplines, and carries a grant of \$800,000.

Gandlesman is the founder of In a Circle Records, was a founding member of the string quartet Brooklyn Rider, and a former member of the Silkroad Ensemble. He recently gave a two-day marathon performance at New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art featuring music from *This Is America*, a collection of 28 pieces he has commissioned from composers of a variety of ethnic, racial, and religious backgrounds.

This is the second time a Curtis alum has received a "genius grant." The first was Leila Josefowicz (Violin '97) in 2008.

THOSE WE HAVE LOST

Carolyn Burger, a member of Curtis' board of trustees from 1999 to 2009 and a trailblazer in the regional business community, died on July 4 at age 84.

For Curtis, Ms. Burger chaired the audit committee and served on the finance and executive committees, among others. After becoming a trustee emerita in 2009, she continued to serve on Curtis' audit committee.

Born in Abington, Pa. in 1940, Ms. Burger received her bachelor's degree in 1962 from Wilson College in Chambersburg, Pa. She earned an M.B.A. from the University of Pittsburgh and a master's degree in economics from the University of Illinois. In 1962, Ms. Burger started her career at the Bell Telephone Company of Pennsylvania, rising to become president and CEO of Bell Atlantic-Delaware—the first female CEO of a telecommunication company in the United States—before her retirement in 1996.

In addition to her time with Curtis, she served on the boards of nonprofits, including the Delaware Art Museum, the Philadelphia Orchestra, and many others. An advocate for gender equity, she was a member of the Delaware and Pennsylvania chapters of International Women's Forum and a founder of the Fund for Women. In 2007, she was inducted into the Hall of Fame of Delaware Women and received Connecting Generations' lifetime achievement award for her commitment to family and children's issues. Ms. Burger's husband, Allen Burger Jr., died in 2007.



Anthony Checchia (Bassoon '51), the former administrative director to director Rudolf Serkin at Curtis, an influential cultural leader, and concert impresario, died at his home in Rittenhouse Square on September 7. He was 94.

The former general manager of Marlboro Music School and Festival, Mr. Checchia was the founder of the Philadelphia Chamber Music Society (PCMS) and artistic director of the organization for its first 28 years, noted for his vital role in helping to identify, develop, and nurture generations of leading musicians worldwide.

Born in Philadelphia in 1930, Mr. Checchia studied at Curtis from 1950 to 1951. His early career as a bassoonist included engagements with the Baltimore Symphony, New York City Ballet Orchestra, and other ensembles, while his passion for nurturing young talent began as the music director of Young Audiences in Philadelphia, presenting such artists as a young Richard Goode (Piano '64).

Mr. Checchia first attended the Marlboro Music Festival in 1956, and two years later, Rudolf Serkin, with whom he had worked at Curtis, asked Mr.

Checchia to take on the festival's administrative leadership. During his administration which, from 1960 onward, he shared with his colleague Frank Salomon, he worked tirelessly to advance its mission and ideals, engaging eminent resident artists ranging from Pablo Casals and Leon Fleisher to members of the Guarneri and Juilliard String Quartets. Following Serkin's death in 1991, Mr. Checchia and Mr. Salomon played a crucial role in steering Marlboro as it changed artistic leadership.

In 1986, Mr. Checchia created the Philadelphia Chamber Music Society and served as its founding artistic director. Over the years, Mr. Checchia and his colleague, Philip Maneval, transformed PCMS's program from a series of seven concerts to an organization respected worldwide, presenting an annual season of some 65 performances and 50 educational programs.

Mr. Checchia received a lifetime award from the Musical Fund Society of Philadelphia and an honorary doctorate from Curtis in 2001. He is survived by his wife, Benita Valente (Voice '60), son Pete, and a large extended family.

Deborah Fleisher (Harp '76), a Miami concert harpist whose six-decade career spanned classical, popular music, and Broadway, died on September 29. She was 70 years old.

A third-generation musician from a remarkable musical family, Ms. Fleisher was the eldest of five children of famed pianist Leon Fleisher. Her grandfather was Louis Druzinsky, principal second violin with the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra, and her uncle, Edward Druzinsky, was a principal harpist for the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. Ms. Fleisher attended Curtis before going on to earn an artist's diploma from the Peabody Institute of the Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore.

Over the course of her career Ms. Fleisher held principal positions with the Baltimore Opera, Delaware Symphony, Annapolis Symphony, Florida Grand Opera, Maryland Lyric Opera, and the Miami City Ballet. Outside of classical music, she accompanied an extraordinary range of singers including Frank Sinatra, Ella Fitzgerald, Tony Bennett, Lena Horne, Luciano Pavarotti, Renée Fleming, and Joni Mitchell. She performed with touring Broadway productions of *The King and I* (with Yul Brynner), *Hello Dolly* (with Carol Channing), *Phantom of the Opera*, *A Chorus Line*, and *My Fair Lady*.

The Fleisher family performed together on several occasions, notably premiering a Concerto for Four Harps and Orchestra, written for the family by another family member, composer Nicholas Jacobson, with Leon Fleisher conducting the Naples Philharmonic Orchestra. Ms. Fleisher is survived by her daughter Lena, her mother, siblings, and nephew.



Dorothy Krebill Karayanis (Voice '54), a mezzo-soprano who was active in the U.S. and Europe during the 1960s and '70s, died on August 3, in Santa Fe, N.M., at age 94.

Born in 1930 to a Mennonite family in Lee County, Iowa, Ms. Karayanis attended the State University of Iowa, where she majored in voice and piano, followed by Curtis, where she received her graduate diploma in vocal studies and met her husband, Plato Karayanis (Voice '56), the future general director of the Dallas Opera.

As Dorothy Krebill, she performed in the original Broadway productions of *The Saint of Bleeker Street* by Gian Carlo Menotti (Composition '33) and *Candide* by Leonard Bernstein (Conducting '41) and spent eight years in Germany and Switzerland with her husband singing in regional opera companies in Europe, before touring with the Metropolitan Opera National Company starting in 1965.

Throughout her career, she made appearances with numerous opera companies, performing roles with Santa Fe Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Houston Grand Opera, Philadelphia Lyric Opera, San Francisco Opera, Cincinnati Opera, and San Diego Opera, as well as the Theatre de la Monnaie in Brussels. She retired from singing in 1977 but continued to serve the opera field alongside Mr. Karayanis, who became the Dallas Opera's general director that same year.

Off stage, Ms. Karayanis served as an elder at the First Presbyterian Church in Dallas and pursued her interests in calligraphy and bookbinding. She is survived by many nieces and nephews and their families.

THOSE WE HAVE LOST



Eugene Sârbu (Violin '73), a Romanian violinist who studied with Ivan Galamian at Curtis and won a series of major competitions in the 1970s, died on July 21 after a lengthy illness. He was 73.

Born in Pietrari, Romania, in 1950, Mr. Sârbu began his violin studies with his father before moving to Bucharest, Paris, and eventually, Philadelphia, where he came to study with Galamian at Curtis. He continued his studies with Galamian at the Juilliard School before moving in 1976 to London, where he studied with Nathan Milstein and Yfrah Neaman.

Mr. Sârbu began to earn a living on the violin competition circuit, winning top prizes at several contests, including the Carl Flesch and Paganini competitions in 1978, and third prize at the International Jean Sibelius Violin Competition in 1975. During this period, he also developed a passion for old instruments and auctions.

He purchased his first major Cremonese violin, a 1756 Tommaso Balestrieri, before upgrading to a Stradivari made in 1729.

Mr. Sârbu performed several times under the auspices of the BBC, and in 1977, gave the premiere of Rautavaara's Violin Concerto, which was dedicated to him. He also took up conducting and created the European Masters Orchestra, which he led at London's Royal Festival Hall. In 1981, Mr. Sârbu recorded the Sibelius Violin Concerto with the Hallé Orchestra conducted by Ole Schmidt for EMI.

"Eugene had a silvery, shimmering sound, and was most definitely a Strad player," Curtis faculty member Eric Wen writes in an appreciation on Tarisio.com. "His larger-than-life personality could sometimes appear almost theatrical. And before a live audience he had that indefinable charisma."



William H. Roberts, a Philadelphia attorney and philanthropist who served on Curtis' board of trustees for 24 years, died on August 30 after a brief illness. He was 79 years old.

A supporter of several nonprofit organizations in Philadelphia, Mr. Roberts served on Curtis' board from 1997 through 2021. Since his first gift in 1991, he was a regular donor to the school, with gifts that supported the building of Lenfest Hall and Curtis Presents programming. In 2007, he established the William H. Roberts Annual Fellowship, held as a student by now-faculty member Benjamin Beilman (Violin '12). To provide students with the opportunity to meet their fellowship donors, Mr. Roberts hosted the school's first Fellowship Luncheon in 1998—an event still held today.

After undergraduate studies at Harvard University, Mr. Roberts attended the University of Pennsylvania Law School, graduating in 1972. He joined the litigation department of Blank Rome in 1972, where he worked for nearly 50 years, specializing in antitrust litigation and dispute resolution. In addition to his support of Curtis, Mr. Roberts served on the boards of the Chamber Orchestra of Philadelphia, Philadelphia Chamber Music Society, Musical Fund Society of Philadelphia, and other organizations. Mr. Roberts is survived by a niece, a nephew, and two great-nephews.



Jude Mollenhauer (Harp '62), whose career as a harpist spanned orchestras in Philadelphia, Iceland, and Columbus, Ohio, died in Vienna, Va. on January 19. She was 85.

Born in 1939, Ms. Mollenhauer studied piano and harp in her native Quincy, Ill. During summers in high school, she traveled to Camden, Maine, to take lessons with Carlos Salzedo. At his encouragement, she successfully auditioned for the Angelaire, a professional harp quintet that toured extensively and appeared on the *Ed Sullivan Show* and other TV programs. Her studies with Salzedo continued at Curtis, where she earned her bachelor's degree. Upon graduation, she joined the Iceland Symphony Orchestra and moved with her then-one-year-old daughter, also named Jude, to Reykjavik.

Returning to the U.S., Ms. Mollenhauer held principal harp positions with Opera Company of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania Ballet Orchestra, and Chamber Symphony of Philadelphia before moving to Ohio, where she won the same role with the Columbus Symphony, and remained there for 32 years, until her retirement in 2018. She appeared as a featured soloist with many orchestras and served on the faculties of several schools, including Otterbein University and Capital University, both in Ohio.

In 2011, Ms. Mollenhauer married Rich Duesterhaus after the two reconnected at a fiftieth high school reunion. She is survived by Mr. Duesterhaus, her two daughters from a previous marriage, and an extended family.

Helen (Gay) Scott, a pianist who had close ties to Curtis and served on its board of trustees for over a decade, died on August 30 at the age of 95.

Born in Boston in 1928, Ms. Scott studied piano at the Longy School of Music in Cambridge, Mass., and later attended Radcliffe College, graduating in 1951. She resumed her piano studies as an adult, taking lessons at the Royal College of Music and Trinity College of Music while living in London during the 1960s and early '70s. After settling in Philadelphia in 1973, she joined the piano faculty at the Settlement School, remaining there for several decades and continuing to teach privately into her nineties.

Ms. Scott served on Curtis' board of trustees from 1973 to 1983, and in 1999, she established a fellowship that has supported several piano students in their education.

Active in Philadelphia's civic and cultural community, Ms. Scott was a supporter of several nonprofit organizations. She was married for 42 years to the late Robert Montgomery Scott, the longtime president of the Philadelphia Museum of Art. She is survived by her three children and seven grandchildren.



Roger Martin Janssen (Trombone '65), a United States Army veteran and trombonist, died at his home in Peoria, Ill. on May 2 at age 80.

Born in Peoria in 1943, Mr. Janssen embarked on a busy career after graduating from Curtis, performing on a tour with Eugene Ormandy and the Philadelphia Orchestra and playing in the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra during its 1965–66 season.

A trombonist in the Fifth Army Band in the late '60s, he went on to freelance with the Chicago, Cincinnati, Winnipeg, and New Orleans Symphony Orchestras. Upon his retirement, he returned to Peoria where he was principal trombonist in the Knox-Galesburg Symphony and Peoria Symphony Orchestra.

Mr. Janssen enjoyed traveling, whether by road or by rail, and he took great pride in his train lantern collection that he displayed at the Heart of Illinois Fair. A member of the Lincoln and Continental Owner's Club, he won several awards for his Lincoln automobiles. He enjoyed working on his cars, watching Indy car races, and eating cherry pie. Mr. Janssen is survived by his wife, brother, nieces, and nephews.



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.

Then & Now

Broadcasting at Curtis

The mic checks continue even as the technology has dramatically changed.

Then



KYW radio broadcast with the Curtis Orchestra and Marcel Tabuteau, April 22, 1945.

Curtis took to the airwaves soon after the school's founding in 1924. The very first public concert was broadcast by Philadelphia station WIP on April 25, 1926, from the Penn Athletic Club, featuring an orchestra of 64 students, 12 members of the Philadelphia Orchestra, and conductors Leopold Stokowski and Thaddeus Rich.

In 1928–29, several Curtis Orchestra concerts from Field Concert Hall were broadcast nationally by the Columbia and National Broadcasting networks. And in 1930, the Curtis Orchestra substituted twice for the New York Philharmonic on its national radio program.

Broadcasting expanded in 1931 when Fritz Reiner led the Curtis Orchestra on a weekly series over the CBS Radio Network. Other radio programs took place on Philadelphia's KYW during World War II.

After a long hiatus, broadcasting resumed in 1978 with the debut of *Concerts at Curtis*, a Monday night series that ran for six years and included recitals, chamber, and orchestral music concerts on WUHY (now WHYY). From 1988–97, WFLN broadcast *Concerts from Curtis Hall* weekly, although not live, while in 2002–03, WHYY presented *Sunday Showcase*, featuring weekly Curtis performances.

Now



Producing the multimedia piece, *Immersive Scheherazade*, in 2022.

Television and online media have brought Curtis to new, wider audiences. Since 2005, PBS affiliate WHYY-TV has presented *On Stage at Curtis*, which airs Fridays at 8:30 p.m. and features concerts recorded in Field Concert Hall. Curtis' YouTube channel, with nearly 27,000 subscribers, presents notable performances from the current and previous seasons.

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The Founder's Society recognizes individuals who have included Curtis as a beneficiary in their wills, trusts, retirement plans, and other estate planning arrangements. Its name honors Mary Louise Curtis Bok, who founded the Curtis Institute of Music in 1924, and in doing so, created an enduring legacy in classical music.

By including Curtis in your estate plans, you can create your own legacy here—joining Mrs. Bok and other dedicated friends. Contact the Development Department at Curtis at **(215) 717-3131** or **giving@curtis.edu** to learn more.



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“It’s not the most traditionally industry-oriented concertizing, shall we say. We are playing in sometimes very small towns and rural communities throughout Kentucky. But the experience has a very specific intentionality. We are going there to make music so that we can bridge the many gaps in society right now.”

—LOUISVILLE ORCHESTRA MUSIC DIRECTOR TEDDY ABRAMS
(CONDUCTING '08) ON THE GROUP'S STATEWIDE TOUR.