

Curtis Overtones

VOL. XLVIII, NO. 1 | SPRING 2025



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Apr 30 & May 2: **A Midsummer Night's Dream** | Opera

Curtis alumni are entitled to complimentary tickets for mainstage performances. Email tickets@curtis.edu for details.

SPRING
2025

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SALUTING THE
CLASS OF 2025



The graduates don their gowns before the ceremony.



Robert Frazier



Roberto Díaz



L-R: Adrian Zaragoza (marshall), Jackson Allen, Benoit Gauthier, and Julin Cheung.



Juliet Rand and Yizilin Liang turn their tassels.



Kylie Kreucher and Juliette Tacchino display their diplomas.



Hilary Hahn gives her address.



Hilary Hahn congratulates Emily Damasco.

→ **THIS SPRING ISSUE** of *Overtones* arrives just after Curtis' centennial school year reached its final flourish with the school's 92nd commencement ceremony.

President Roberto Díaz (Viola '84) opened the ceremony and introduced graduating voice student speakers Sam Higgins and Juliet Rand. Mr. Higgins—who entered Curtis during the COVID-19 pandemic—centered his speech around the theme of “solitude.” He spoke about how his personal relationships and interests outside of music have fueled his artistic expression.

Composer John Williams and Hilary Hahn (Violin '99) received honorary doctorates, and though Mr. Williams was unable to attend due to health reasons, he conveyed his hope that this year's graduates find as much joy in music as he has. Ms. Hahn spoke about her own transition from Curtis student to working artist, and about the lessons she has learned about identity, authenticity, and building a career in music.

Curtis faculty and staff presented several awards and prizes, graduates collected their diplomas, and pianists Anna Polonsky ('99) and Amy Yang ('06) capped the proceedings with stirring musical selections.

A TEMPO



L-R: Robert Mundheim, Guna Mundheim, Yannick Nézet-Séguin, Rita E. Hauser, and Roberto Díaz at New York's Lincoln Center last November.

The Maestra Behind the Conducting Program

With a \$10 million gift, Rita E. Hauser ensures the future of Curtis' conducting program.

BY BRIAN WISE

AS CURTIS SOUGHT to expand its training for conductors in the early 2010s, it received interest from a donor well versed in matters of leadership and diplomacy: Rita E. Hauser, a lawyer and philanthropist whose career brought her to the highest echelons of international relations, including to nonpartisan advisory boards for presidents Barack Obama and George W. Bush.

In November, Ms. Hauser, president of the Hauser Foundation, committed \$10 million to endow the conducting program in perpetuity, capping a series of gifts to Curtis spanning more than 25 years. To be paid after her passing, the gift's size and timing—amid the celebration of Curtis's 100th anniversary—make it especially significant.

The conducting program has drawn support



from Ms. Hauser since 2013, when she and her late husband, Gustave M. Hauser, donated \$1 million to establish the Rita E. and Gustave M. Hauser Chair in Conducting Studies, which funds guest conductor appearances at Curtis. Since 2021, Ms. Hauser has made a pair of \$2 million donations that support the Rita E. Hauser Conducting Fellows; the second gift expanded the program from two students to three, and from two years to three. It also funded the hiring of James Ross as director of orchestral studies.

Ms. Hauser's \$10 million gift was sealed just days after she attended the Curtis Symphony Orchestra's November 24 performance at David Geffen Hall. A longtime concertgoer and board member at Lincoln Center, she has been especially enthused by Metropolitan Opera music director Yannick Nézet-Séguin, who is also Curtis' head of conducting. "I am pleased with the support from Yannick, who has been instrumental in shaping Curtis' program, and for his enthusiasm for the next generation of conductors," she told *Overtures*.

Wide Philanthropic Interests

Ms. Hauser has been a generous donor in academia, health care, and the arts through the Hauser Foundation, which she and her husband created in 1988. The couple met in the 1950s at Harvard University, where she was one of the first women admitted to Harvard Law School. Her husband had graduated earlier and returned to Harvard Law School as a teaching fellow after his discharge from the military. She earned her law degree from NYU in 1959. Ms. Hauser was an international affairs and human rights lawyer and, for more than 20 years, was a senior partner at the New York law firm of Stroock & Stroock & Lavan. She has also served on numerous boards. Mr. Hauser died in 2021 at the age of 91 after a pioneering career in cable television and communications.

Ms. Hauser's most recent donation to Curtis illustrates how even the largest benefactors can begin with comparably modest gifts: Her first donation to Curtis, in 1997, was for \$1,000.

"The expansion of Curtis' conducting program is exciting for the future of leadership in our field," Mr. Nézet-Séguin said in a statement. "The idea that Curtis will help create conductors who are equally at home in the worlds of both operatic and orchestral conducting—as I am—is unique in this country."



Alan Morrison with Peter Richard Conte, the Grand Court organist, and students at Macy's in 2022.

An Inflection Point for Philadelphia Organ Lovers

Will the king of instruments continue to get the royal treatment?

The Center City Macy's closed its doors for the last time on March 23, silencing—for now—the legendary Wanamaker Organ in the store's Grand Court. Considered the largest fully functioning organ in the world, with more than 28,000 pipes, the 1904 instrument is a National Historic Landmark. The day before the store's closing, Macy's hosted a marathon sendoff concert featuring a parade of organists, including Mark Bani ('85), Monte Maxwell ('88), and Aaron Patterson ('22).

The Grand Court has hosted numerous Curtis performances over the decades, including those by participants in the summer organ camp led by organ faculty member Alan Morrison. In 1984, Curtis marked its 60th anniversary by holding a celebratory concert there.

The Macy's store, located at 1300 Market Street, was one of 66 branches slated to close in 2025 as part of a national downsizing effort. TF Cornerstone, the property's owner, told the *Philadelphia Inquirer* in January that it is committed to preserving the organ. According to CBS News, a tenant has already been identified for the Chestnut Street side of the building, while retail tenants are being considered for the Market Street side.

Meanwhile, Curtis is preparing to install a new pipe organ in Field Concert Hall this July, built by Dobson Pipe Organ Builders, their Opus 100. It replaces an Aeolian-Skinner Opus 1022 organ installed in 1941. The new instrument, whose voicing will be completed in 2026, has been funded by a portion of an anonymous \$20 million gift.

THE PLAYLIST

Benjamin Beilman



THE 2024–25 SEASON for faculty member Benjamin Beilman (Violin '12) brought some unexpected twists. On two occasions, he stepped in on short notice for an injured Hilary Hahn (Violin '99): first when the Chicago Symphony Orchestra needed a substitute for its season opener in September, and subsequently, when the Berlin Philharmonic needed a fill-in for its Washington, D.C. and Ann Arbor, MI dates.

The *Chicago Tribune* wrote that Mr. Beilman was thoroughly prepared, stating, “Every once in a while, a performance has such finesse, such *je ne sais quoi*, that it far exceeds the sum of its parts. Beilman’s Barber [violin concerto] was one of them.”

As Mr. Beilman’s regularly scheduled season winds down, he’s been enjoying some quality family moments, as he tells us in this rundown of his recent cultural discoveries.

Album: Murray Perahia’s *Complete Mozart Piano Concertos* recording with the English Chamber Orchestra. My wife and I welcomed our son Felix in January, and it’s been fun introducing him to my favorite music. This recording (especially K. 503 and 537) is grand yet human and a very welcome pick-me-up the morning after many sleepless nights.

Podcast: *Search Engine* is an excellent show hosted by PJ Vogt that tackles a little bit of everything (the show’s tagline is “no question too big or too small”). There’s a great mini-series on what it’s like to try to gain entry to Berlin’s famous techno club Berghain and all the ways one can experience rejection.

TV: *Severance* on Apple TV+. That show alone is worth the monthly subscription.

Book: *Klara and the Sun* by Kazuo Ishiguro.

Gallery: The American Wing at the Met Museum in New York City. They’ve refreshed it in celebration of the gallery’s 100th anniversary, and it’s a gem. There’s a Frank Lloyd Wright-designed living room on display that I still think about often.

Place for a meal: Dizengoff is my go-to for a quick lunch in between lessons.

Quick Hits

■ Curtis Artist Management announced three additions to its roster this spring. Sarah Fleiss (Voice '23 and Opera '25) and Juliette Tacchino (Opera '25), both sopranos, become the first singers on the roster. Also newly signed is the Rosamunde String Quartet, an ensemble comprised of members of several top orchestras: Noah Bendix-Balgley, first concertmaster of the Berlin Philharmonic; Shanshan Yao (Violin '08), a member of the Kammerakademie Potsdam; Teng Li ('05), principal viola of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra; and Nathan Vickery ('13), a cellist in the New York Philharmonic. Mr. Bendix-Balgley was also announced as Curtis’ first visiting faculty member, starting this fall. In this role, he will visit for one residency each semester.

■ Jessie Montgomery will be Curtis’ composer in residence during the 2025–26 season. One of today’s most in-demand composers, Ms. Montgomery will give lectures, masterclasses, and coachings as student ensembles present her music throughout the season.

■ The 2025–26 All-School Project will expand on this year’s theme with “Bold Experiments: Reflections on Democracy and Music.”

Curtis Scoops Up Art Alliance Building

Curtis purchased one of the prized properties of the shuttered University of the Arts in January as part of a bankruptcy liquidation auction. The school successfully bid \$7.6 million for the Art Alliance building, located on the southeast corner of Rittenhouse Square at 251 S. 18th Street—mere steps from 1726 Locust Street.

It was the first of nine buildings in the UArts portfolio to be sold since the school abruptly closed last June and filed for bankruptcy some three months later. Curtis outbid Temple University and a local real estate developer during the auction. The building, designed in the style of an Italian Renaissance palazzo, includes galleries and an outdoor space. Curtis will likely use the space for rehearsals, master classes, and workshops, as well as administrative needs.

SOUND
OFF

How do you handle flying with an instrument?

As summer travel season arrives, five musicians offer tips on how to navigate air travel with large or valuable instruments.

BY BRIAN WISE

Nick Canellakis ('06)

Curtis cello faculty and Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center member

→ Cellist and filmmaker Nick Canellakis drew knowing laughs this spring when he posted a video on Instagram titled “Musicians Comparing Airline Status.” It features him portraying two musicians boasting about their award status and benefits on an airline. “I’m addicted to the lounge; what can I say?” begins the one musician while smugly tossing his credit card on the table. Mr. Canellakis says that while a seasoned musician can avoid certain hassles at the airport, getting a bulky instrument onto a plane requires extra planning.

PRE-BOARD: “For cellists, keep in mind the basic stuff. You must buy a seat for it, and if you don’t know that, you’re not in the game yet (laughs). You usually need to get the cello in a window seat. You can get an extension seat belt. I don’t personally care about that stuff, but the flight attendants usually do. Pre-boarding is key for me, just for ease of comfort. Some airlines allow a cellist to do that; some don’t. Delta certainly does. I avoid Air Canada because they put this Hannibal Lecter-like cage over the cello.

“Occasionally, even on airlines that I fly regularly, you get a flight attendant that is a bit uptight and maybe has never seen a cello before and doesn’t know the FAA rules, which allow musical instruments. They’ll give you a real problem. You just have to stay calm and explain that you’re not leaving the flight and you’re not changing. You can pull up the FAA regulation.”

TSA CHECKPOINT: “The bins at security are the worst thing for cellists. The cello does fit through the X-ray machine, but they won’t let it in. So, you must go to the oversized [checkpoint] and hand the cello to a TSA agent. That’s when I say, ‘It’s extremely expensive. You have to handle it with care, and put it on its back, not on its front.’ It feels very vulnerable when that happens. That’s way worse than being on board.”

ARABELLA OZ

Bella Hristova ('08)

Violinist

→ Though a self-described “airplane nut” on her social media accounts, Bella Hristova admits that her relationship with flying is more of the “love-hate” variety. She remembers flying as a child and once being delighted to visit the cockpit mid-flight during a trip to Salzburg. But weather delays and turbulence can add to the stress of a journey. She’s developed a series of travel hacks over the years.

ARRIVAL: “I have TSA PreCheck and Clear, both of which I recommend, though Clear, I suppose, is more of a luxury to save time. TSA Pre is great for flying with an instrument because you usually go through another belt, and you can get to your instrument on the other side faster without having to take out liquids, etc. From the time I was a student, I tried to keep airline loyalty with an airline based in Philly, which has lots of non-stop options—then US Airways, now American Airlines. That allows me to board earlier. I try to get to the gate 30 minutes before boarding, and I get in line as soon as they announce boarding.”

AT THE TSA: “Although very rare, if the TSA asks to do a manual inspection, insist that you are present and talk the agent through how to go about opening the case, what’s inside, etc. Saying ‘this is an antique instrument’ helps.”

ON THE PLANE: “I try to select the exit row. I like that for many reasons, one of them being that I can board early, but also, there’s more legroom. If one is a nervous flyer, being in the middle of the plane is great.”

OVERHEAD SPACE: “I have a Gawa Air 2.1 case. It’s a very sturdy hard case, and in the winter, I travel with a cushy case around it. Most airplanes in the U.S. now will fit a violin case. I’m always just on alert until the bins are closed. I’m very happy to work with passengers. In mid-sized planes like the 737 and the Airbus A321, a suitcase will fit in front of the case sideways. In trying to find solutions, I’m often looking at other bins, trying to see what can be moved in front of the violin. I’m always plotting ahead.”

INTERNATIONAL CONSIDERATIONS: “For international travel, make sure you have your instrument insurance papers with you, and be sure you’re not traveling with any controlled materials out of the country—i.e., tortoiseshell frogs, ivory. I don’t have a bow with a tortoiseshell frog anymore, but when I did, I never took it out of the U.S.”

TWO PERSPECTIVES ON THE DOUBLE BASS:



Xavier Foley ('16)

Double Bassist

→ There are different schools of thought about traveling with a double bass: Removable neck or not? Fly with your instrument or borrow one? A few years ago, Texas-based bassist Xavier Foley found air travel so onerous that he took flying lessons in the hopes of doing it himself. Ultimately, he arrived at other solutions.

THE DETACHABLE NECK: “My bass has a screw in the neck. All you do is screw it off, you take the tailpiece, and the end pin off, and that’s pretty much it. That goes next to the body of the instrument. If it’s not a removable neck, then it’s glued on. If workers drop the bass, which is what they often do, the glue will come apart. Now you have a problem.”

PILOTING: “The problem was the fees for the bass were so high on certain airlines. I enjoyed flying at first, but then I started getting headaches and getting tired. Plus, I don’t want to have to calculate weight and balance and wind speed and runway length. I figured it would be safer for a professional to fly. I’d rather sit back, relax, and watch a movie.”

BASS-FRIENDLY AIRLINES: “It’s less common for airlines in other countries to accept basses in general. I take American Airlines because they have a policy where musical instruments are not charged oversized fees. Southwest Airlines has a flat fee for oversized instruments. It’s simple, and they fly the same 737s. JetBlue is another one that always flies the big jets.”

PRO TIP: “If you have problems with a gate agent, which often happens, remain calm. Some of them have ego issues. They don’t want to be wrong. Show them the policy—and good luck.”

Marguerite Cox ('23)

Double Bassist; fellow in Ensemble Connect

→ New York-based bassist Maggie Cox is a seasoned road warrior, having once traveled with a suitcase, a bass stool, a cat, and her instrument. These days, she prefers trains and has even created an online video on “how to take a double bass on Amtrak.”

FLYING WITH A BASS IS STRESSFUL: “Do Amtrak when you can. Their policy is very consistent: No one touches the bass except you. Otherwise, see if you can borrow or rent an instrument, and if you do need to fly, make sure you have a good flight case. Make sure you give yourself lots of extra time. Carry printouts of the airline policy and TSA policy that say you can bring a musical instrument. If you’re not that experienced with flying with your bass, ask for help carrying it. Have a friend drive you to the airport if you can so you don’t have to deal with Uber.”

INSPECTION TIME: “Don’t forget to inspect it when you land. When I land and go to oversized baggage, I always take the bass completely out of the case in the airport to see if there’s any damage. You must check it while it’s at the airport for insurance to work. If you don’t, the airlines will say, ‘You can’t prove that we did that.’

“Also, know that it’s out of your control at a certain point, and if something happens, basses are fixable, and that’s why we have insurance.”



MATT DINE (FOLEY)



Craig Knox ('89)

Curtis tuba faculty; Principal Tuba, Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra

→ For Craig Knox, most of his long-distance travel takes place with the Pittsburgh Symphony, where his tuba is shipped in dedicated cargo. But when traveling to give a recital or workshop, he'll often ask to borrow a tuba from someone at the destination or drive, if possible. Otherwise, it pays to understand some customer service psychology at the airport.

OVERSIZE CHARGES: "The first big stress is just what it's going to cost [to check your tuba(s)]. The over-size and overweight charge sometimes can be \$150 or \$200 each if they really play by the book. So, you must learn how to sweet-talk the agent at the check-in counter and come up with a sad story about how difficult it is to be a traveling musician and hope you can get them to sympathize with you and cut you a break (laughs). But you're at the mercy of whoever's behind the counter. Sometimes they'll look the other way and put it in there like any other suitcase. Other times, they go by the book and charge you hundreds of dollars just for one leg of the journey."

TSA CHECKPOINT: "I usually ask if I can accompany the instrument to the TSA [inspection] station. They

usually are happy to let me do this. I'll go with the instrument and meet with the TSA person, where they're doing a visual inspection. They'll let you stand there and talk them through it. But if it's not possible to be there, inside the case I have this big sign with a warning that it's a fragile instrument, and to please handle and close it this way. I don't know if they're going to read it, but you hope that it helps."

TUBA AS CARRY-ON: "There is one other option, which is to buy an extra seat and fly with the instrument in the cabin of the plane. That can be a good solution to all the difficulties I just described. However, it's not as great as it sounds. You have a ticket [for the tuba], but you're still at the mercy of the flight crew, and if they don't like the looks of this whole thing, they can still give you a hard time. It's never ended up being as improved a choice as I'd hoped."

BORROWING AN INSTRUMENT: "We've had students who come to audition for us at Curtis from across the country. Especially when students must bring two tubas, they may not have the means to manage that. Sometimes, they'll ask if they can borrow an instrument when they get here. We always try to accommodate that when we can. No one wants to play on a borrowed instrument, but sometimes that's the best option."

Interviews have been edited and condensed for clarity.



THE Q+A

Yumi Kendall

One of three new cello faculty members at Curtis talks about her wide-ranging career as a public speaker and a member of the Philadelphia Orchestra.

BY
BRIAN
WISE

On a different stage, Ms. Kendall is the assistant principal cellist of the Philadelphia Orchestra, where she fills out the section's leadership duties, linking the front of the cellos with the very back. All of this grows out of family roots: her older brother Nicolas Kendall (Violin '01) plays in the trio Time for Three, and her late violinist grandfather, John Kendall, introduced Suzuki education to the United States. She tells *Overtone*s why she's a "forever student and a treasure hunter."

Many cellists come to Curtis for its proximity to the Philadelphia Orchestra and its famous string sound. What's unique about that sound today, and how do you experience it when you go to work?

I still remember my first time subbing. I was sitting in the back of the cello section, in front of the basses, and it was like being wrapped in a cashmere blanket. It's when sound becomes texture, sound becomes feeling. It's still that way. The quality of sound is so velvety and textured. And that's just the strings. This is my 21st season, and that love of sound has been a big crescendo.

In terms of the cognitive awareness of the history, it comes to me in our actual printed music. We still have fingerings and bowings and pencil marks from three or four generations ago—from people who were under the batons of Stokowski and Ormandy. It's amazing to see that physically written. We're so digitized now, which is necessary in so many wonderful ways, but it's fabulous to see that I'm touching the same parts that were used in the orchestra back when Rachmaninoff wrote the *Symphonic Dances* for us.

How do those old bowings then translate into sound?

Historically, our sound came from the Academy of Music, where we played for the first 100 years of our existence. The hall there is notoriously dead [acoustically]. That is where our Philadelphia string sound evolved from: We use a lot of free bowing—the concept of many people playing together and hiding our bow changes, meaning, we're not changing our bows at the same time as our stand partners. Cumulatively, it would mean a much more lush, full, vibrant, and deep sound.

→ **AS INSTRUMENTS** go, the cello has attracted its share of iconoclasts, activists, and outspoken types. For cello faculty member Yumi Kendall ('04), the instrument has been a launch pad to a secondary career in public speaking and podcasting. After earning a mid-career degree in positive psychology, she started giving talks on leadership, group dynamics, and inspiration. Her audiences have included surgery residents, management consultants, and fellow string players.

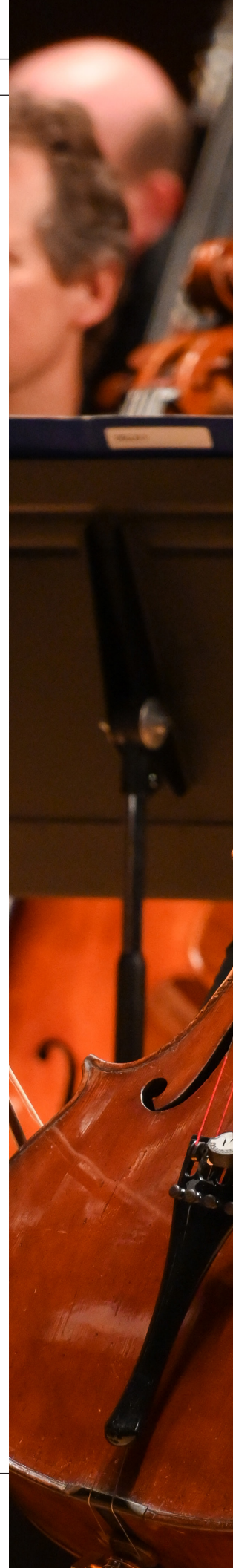
Philadelphia has also cultivated a forward-looking identity. The orchestra's repertoire has grown to include a Florence Price symphony cycle and works by Valerie Coleman and William Grant Still, for example. What has been the impact of this?

When I think of our responsibility in premiering brand-new works like Valerie Coleman's [Concerto for Orchestra], or resurfacing works that should have rightfully received their premieres when the composers were alive, repetition of these new works [is essential]. Everything is new at some point, and our role is to keep playing this music so that our collective ears determine what stands the test of time, and what is telling our human story over time.

During the Philadelphia Orchestra's Chapter 11 bankruptcy reorganization in 2011, you first developed the idea of returning to school. You were accepted to the University of Pennsylvania's Master of Applied Positive Psychology (MAPP) program. How did that relate to music?

It's coming from a place of struggle and wanting to know how other organizations and entities flourish when they go through struggle and how they come out of it even stronger. It comes from my love of orchestra and an appreciation and belief in the power of the arts. I wanted to do my part, and so I just read a lot. When the bankruptcy happened, I found myself in Barnes & Noble reading many books that led me down this path to positive psychology.

You attended Penn in 2016–17. Several years on, how is positive psychology part of your career today?





PETE CHECCHIA

The current manifestation of the intersection of positive psychology and my love of our orchestra is *Tacet No More*, the podcast that I do with my [Philadelphia Orchestra] colleague Joseph Conyers (Double Bass '04). We're also giving keynotes, and I've given keynotes on my own. That has been really enriching to see how other organizations and industries are looking to learn from classical music, and about how we approach what we do.

What sorts of things are organizations looking to learn?

When it's Joe and me, we cater our keynotes to the organization and their goals. For me, it's about excellence and artistic striving, and my identity as a forever student and treasure hunter. Those are the two identities that I carry, speak about, and share based on those inspirations. I incorporate my life experience in music and relevant aspects of positive psychology for that particular audience.

Your clients run quite a wide gamut, from the Association of Program Directors in Surgery to the management consulting firm CRA to the American String Teachers Association and the Suzuki Association of the Americas. What is the through-line?

The lens of positive psychology is about what makes us thrive at the individual level—think, solo Bach—what makes us thrive at the dyadic or relational level—think, partnerships of any kind. And then, what makes us thrive at the societal and group level? It's been so rewarding to get to explore those realms through music.

This seems to relate to your work as an assistant principal cellist, too. You must regularly deal with group dynamics in your section.

I see myself as a connector. The principal [cellist] is usually making bowing decisions or on-the-spot decisions in a rehearsal. Because I sit with or directly behind her, my role is to communicate those decisions smoothly and efficiently to the rest of the section. And then, I'm also occasionally stepping into the principal role myself—planned or unplanned. That means being prepared to the point where I could play solos without rehearsals, which has happened before. It means being on the ball for everything.

Cellists have a reputation for being the iconoclasts and rebels of classical music. One thinks of Mstislav Rostropovich and Pablo Casals, or the cellists who've made viral videos by playing in war zones in Ukraine and Iraq. What is it about the cello and this urge to speak out?

Maybe it's that the cello is closest to the human voice. It's got such a genuine range and depth. It's just such a natural expression of the human voice and the human experience. There's an element of beauty and solace and serenity in a Bach suite. And in the emotional spectrum of Bach, there's the dance and the joy that is so relatable.


This conversation was condensed and lightly edited from two interviews.



Fit to




Clockwise from top: J'Nai Bridges,
Yannick N  zet-S  guin, Ray Chen.



Participating in sports and exercise isn't just about getting six-pack abs. It can help musicians cope with the physical and mental strains of high-level performance.

BY MICHELE C. HOLLOW

Perform




In high school, J'Nai Bridges (Opera '12) had to choose between basketball and opera. She loved shooting hoops and played basketball at her state's championship level. Choir practice often coincided with basketball games. Her coach told her to pick one. She chose opera.

Ms. Bridges still gathers with friends on the basketball court and runs sometimes in the morning on the day of a performance. She's thankful for her athletic abilities and has told the *New York Times* that it has made her a stronger performer. This past January, she sang in *Les Troyens à Carthage*, a five-hour marathon on the Seattle Opera stage.

Like Ms. Bridges, Curtis' head of conducting, Yannick Nézet-Séguin, sees a connection between sports and opera. For him, it's tennis. His favorite player is Rafael Nadal because of the way Nadal fought for every point on the tennis court (he retired from the sport last November). For Mr. Nézet-Séguin, music director of the Philadelphia Orchestra and the Metropolitan Opera, every note is important.

He told *Tennis World*, "When a match starts, I think of *Otello*, by



Verdi, where the strongest moment, a storm, is almost at the beginning. I also observe the relationship between intensity and precision, between calculation and emotivity; how you balance your head and your heart, a concept just as essential for musicians."

Numerous scientific studies show how participation in solo and group sports improves mental and physical health. A June 2024 review of 22 randomized studies published in the *European Journal of Preventive Cardiology* detailed how exercise programs had a "significant clinical value" in reducing the occurrence of musculoskeletal disorders in musicians.

"Regular exercise is especially beneficial in helping musicians cope with the demands of long performances," said Steven Cheung, owner of Synaptic Rehabilitation, a physical therapy practice in New Jersey. While Mr. Cheung didn't participate in the study, he works with musicians and athletes.

"Strength and flexibility training can reduce the risk of repetitive strain injuries, which are common in musicians," he adds. "And aerobic activities can help prepare musicians for moments of increased heart rates similar to the demands of performing on stage."

Taking Risks

Some sports are more dangerous than others. Ray Chen (Violin '10) lifts weights and skis. On the slopes, he wears a helmet and avoids unnecessary risks. "A healthy body and mind are important," he says. "And for musicians, our bodies literally craft our sound and artistry. Traveling extensively across time zones isn't easy, and staying in top shape physically helps sustain a long career as well as resets the muscles that are often overused. The same discipline and care needed to learn an instrument also applies to fitness."

Steven Mackey, a composer, electric guitarist, and Curtis composition teacher, is also passionate about skiing. If he could do anything other than music, he would ski. "The rhythm of skiing moguls influences my music," says Dr. Mackey, who is a former championship-level skier. He believes the rugged terrain and steep slopes have influenced his music's rhythmic patterns. He also knows the dangers.

In 1974, Dr. Mackey tore his Achilles tendon in a skiing accident. The pain was so intense he fainted. It was a wake-up call. "I decided to go back to college instead of being a leather-skinned ski bum," he says.

He's being more careful. However, skiing remains a part of his life. In January, after one of Dr. Mackey's compositions premiered at Wigmore Hall in London, he and his family drove to Geneva in a blizzard to hit the slopes. "Skiing, composing, and performing raise your endorphins and get your heart rate up," he says. "The pros of doing what you love outweigh the cons."

A Healthy Combination

Many researchers agree with Dr. Mackey's sentiment and maintain that a sports routine carries many health rewards. "Exercise is known to raise cardiovascular fitness and muscle strength," said Steven K. Malin, Ph.D., FACSM, a professor at Rutgers University's Department of Kinesiology and Health, in an



email. "In the long term, stronger muscles help minimize strain on tendons, thereby minimizing risk for musculoskeletal issues (e.g., tendinopathies) that could develop.

"Stronger muscles are also associated with better motor control to activate and coordinate muscles. This will assist musicians in operating their instrument of choice and sustain longer performances and practices."

Dr. Malin continues, "In addition, [musicians] need good pulmonary function so their lungs can help deliver oxygen to the heart. Strength exercises will help, but cardiovascular forms of exercise will really develop their lungs and heart to adapt and support endurance. At the same time, good lung function will help people breathe better for those who play wind instruments or even for drummers or pianists who sing."

Many professional or conservatory-level musicians spend hours each day practicing. The violinist Hilary Hahn ('99) stretches between practice sessions. Sitting in the same position, hours on end, caused her arm to cramp up. She recently suffered from a pinched nerve and wrote about adding exercise to ease and prevent pain. "I took a course on myofascial stretches and discovered that if you can learn how to stretch your fascia, it's helpful for mid-practical recovery," she told the *Strad*.

Rehearsals for Nicola Everton (Clarinet '86) also include stretch-

↑
Steven Mackey
has specialized in
freestyle skiing.

←
Conductor Sarah
Ioannides com-
pletes a marathon
in Washington
State.

ing, and she tries to get a run in as often as possible. On cold and rainy days, she does weight training. Ms. Everton, who recently moved to Kootenays, British Columbia, after 20 years as a member of the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra, tells her students that exercise complements performing. “We sit for so many hours with our shoulders hunched over,” she says. “It’s important to exercise.”

In high school, Ms. Everton had to choose between a career as a competitive runner and music. She competed in the British Columbia Summer Games. Track meets, music rehearsals, and performances often occurred on the same day. “I had to choose, and I chose music,” she says. “It’s hard to do both on a professional level. It’s possible to work out on the side. I ran as often as possible while I was at Curtis.”



Gonna Fly Now:
Wellness Day
runners pose on the
Rocky Steps.

Ms. Everton also skis. She had an accident while downhill skiing three years ago, which left her with a broken leg. It took a while to heal. She’s back running and hopes to compete in the World Masters Athletics Championships, for athletes ages 35 and over, in South Korea next year.

Team Spirit

Tae McLoughlin (Timpani and Percussion ’24), sees a link between being part of an orchestra and playing tennis. “Being a percussionist is a team effort,” he says. “There’s a rhythm to performing and to participating in a sport that’s part of a team.”

At age five, he began piano lessons, and three years later took up tennis. In high school, he joined the orchestra, and his teacher told him he needed to pick a different instrument because there was only one piano. He chose percussion.

In high school, Mr. McLoughlin joined the varsity tennis team. “My pathway to percussion was a bit unorthodox,” he tells *Overtones*. “I started at age sixteen. And like tennis, I spent a lot of time practicing. When I got to Curtis, I played tennis infrequently and devoted more time to percussion. There’s a connection between the two. I approach striking the xylophone, triangle, cymbals,

your body. It also helps with stamina and breath control.”

Being Well-Rounded

Curtis faculty member Thomas Weaver, a conductor and pianist, is a competitive runner. He participated in the BMW Love Run in Philadelphia in March. “Running gave me a hobby outside of music,” he says.

Depending on his performance schedule, Mr. Weaver tries to run between four and five days a week, and averages three to fifteen miles a run. “It’s a source of great enjoyment,” he says. “All you need is a good pair of running shoes.

“In middle school, I played soccer and baseball and stopped around the 10th grade.” He spent most of his time practicing piano. Running brings him clarity and makes him feel stronger. He also talks to his students about running. Every spring, Curtis hosts a Wellness Day with a fun run. A number of students participate.

Sarah Ioannides, music director of Symphony Tacoma and a competitive runner, knows several musicians who engage in sports. She also coaches conductors and leads contemporary music performances at Curtis. “Being an athlete helps me maintain my overall strength when I’m at the podium,” she says. “Like music, running feeds my soul and gives me time and space to reflect.”

Ms. Ioannides (Conducting ’98) began running while in graduate school in London. In 2017, she started competing. A few years ago, she had multiple knee surgeries. She credits working with a physical therapist to getting back to running. “It’s a process, and like music, both take a dedicated amount of training,” she says. “I love setting goals and achieving them.”

Michele C. Hollow is a journalist and author. She writes about health. Her middle grade book, Jurassic Girl, is about Mary Anning’s first major fossil find.

and the timpani in a similar way I hit a tennis ball.”

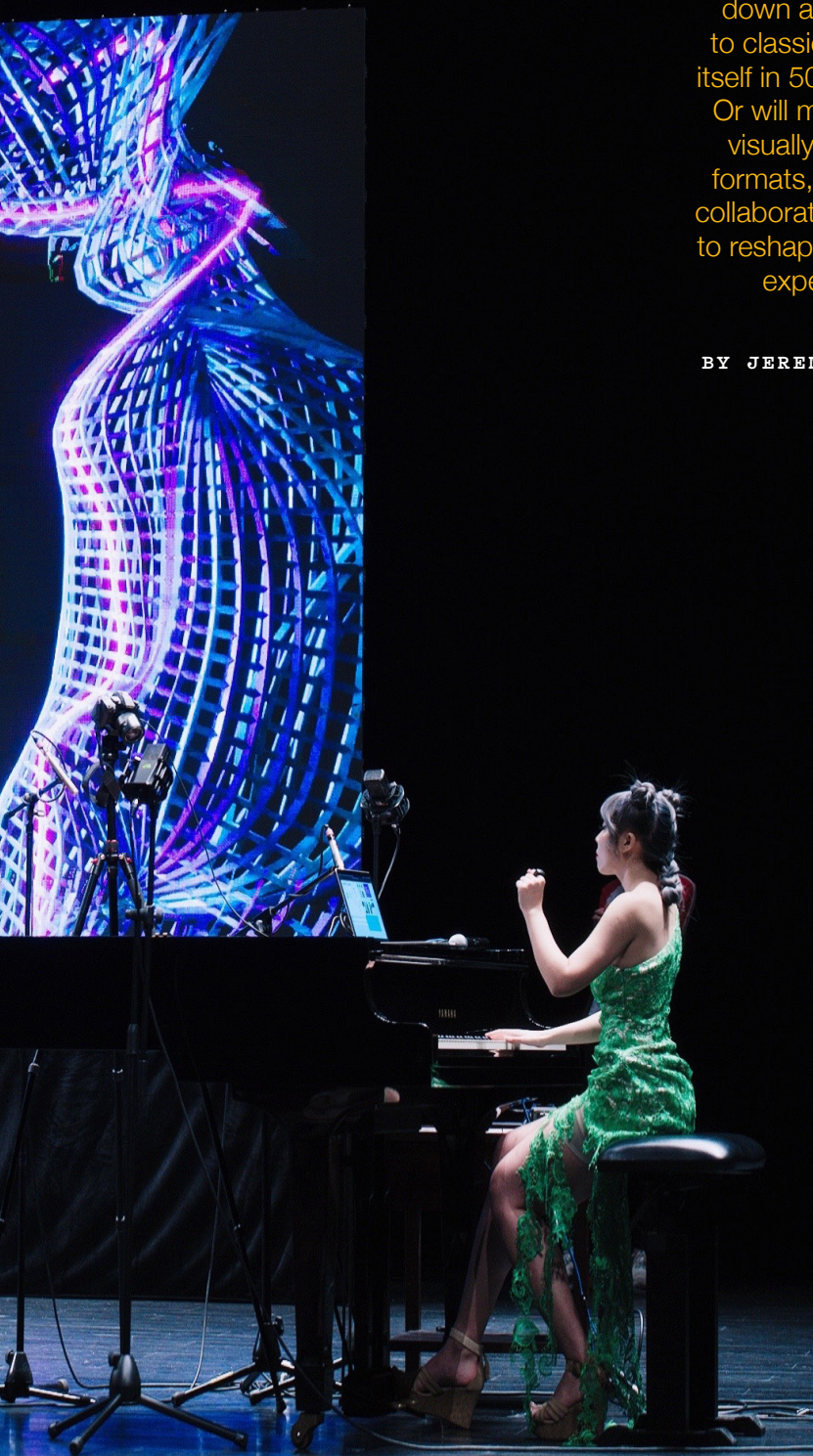
“Like tennis, percussion instruments are physical instruments. I work out how to approach it, how to hit it, and how to follow through.”

Mr. McLoughlin, who lives in Chicago, takes a break from tennis during the winter. “It’s cold outside on the tennis courts,” he says. “I work out at the gym. It helps you clear your mind, relieves tension, and strengthens

The

CONCERT





Will we still be sitting
down and listening
to classical music by
itself in 50 years' time?
Or will mixed media,
visually-enhanced
formats, and remote
collaborations continue
to reshape our concert
experience?

BY JEREMY REYNOLDS

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□ Jenny Q Chai

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HEN THE PITTSBURGH Symphony Orchestra performed its ambitiously titled series “Concert of the Future” in 1991, the orchestra paired video projections with famous classical works like Debussy’s *La Mer* and a light show with Bartók’s Concerto for Orchestra. The orchestra hosted a Q&A during intermission and provided a short slideshow presentation before racing through Wagner’s *Ride of the Valkyries* and even included some electronic music during the concerts.

“It was really weird at the time, but everything we predicted 30 years ago in Pittsburgh, we’ve already crossed that threshold, now,” says Barbara Yahr (Conducting ’86), a former staff conductor at the Pittsburgh Symphony who now leads the Greenwich Village Orchestra in New York City.

Orchestras have indeed adopted many of the innovations Ms. Yahr mentions and more, and there’s no question that technology, including AI, is going to change the ways musicians learn their craft and interact with each other and the public. What, then, would a “Concert of the Future” program look like today? Is the future of classical music still about

adapting to new technologies more seamlessly and imagining techniques to attract new listeners? Or will the core experience of communally listening to music by itself endure?

A quarter-of-a-century into this new millennium, *Overtones* asked a range of Curtis graduates, including musicians and administrators to speculate on what the future may hold for the classical music industry in 50 years or more.

TECH BOOM

Fast forward 30 years from Pittsburgh’s “Concert of the Future” and across the state to Philadelphia, where Curtis created an immersive installation of Rimsky-Korsakov’s *Scheherazade* in 2022. The project captured live audio and used 360-degree video technology to allow visitors to experience the work from *inside* the orchestra, bringing Rimsky-Korsakov’s stunningly colorful score into the 21st century. “I see our role at Curtis as sort of an R&D lab for the field,” says Vince Ford, Curtis’ senior vice president of digital strategy and innovation.

Mr. Ford, who has a long history of working with orchestras like the New York Philharmonic and the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, makes the case that conservatories and universities are ideally positioned to experiment with new technologies and concert experiences and that they are the logical place to look to for guidance on where the classical industry is headed. “Maybe there will be some dead ends, but it’s OK because we’re a conservatory, and we can take that risk,” he says, pointing out that it’s more cost-effective for universities than professional orchestra and opera companies.

Most musicians say they believe that institutions large and small will continue to add visual elements to their perfor-



Tim Fain performs his multimedia recital “Portals.”

MARYANN BATES



Immersive Scheherazade, a performance installation, was presented at Curtis in 2022.

manes in the future, ranging from film to dance or immersive projections, but they disagree on whether they are necessary for classical music. “I think we cannot stay in the old times where people are used to just sitting still for two hours, watching nothing and only listening,” says Jenny Q Chai (Piano ’04), a pianist, lecturer, and educator on the forefront of blending new technologies with the concert experience. “I think that time is just gone.”

Ms. Chai’s website showcases numerous performance videos of her playing with video projections, including some where the projections use AI to respond in real time to her playing. In one series of videos titled *Juicy*, different fruits appear and rotate or flash or burst across the screen in time with her playing, a curious musical twist on still-life fruit bowl paintings. She says that these sorts of multimedia concerts will become more mainstream, and that teaching new music and media will become more essential in the years to come.

What effect will bringing new media into the concert

hall have on composition? Jonathan Bailey Holland (’96), a composition faculty member and a composer with several residencies with major American orchestras under his belt, points out that technology has democratized access to compositional tools. Mr. Holland, who is also the dean of the Bienen School of Music at Northwestern University, says he’s seeing more and more high school-aged artists trying their hands at orchestral works, opera, and film scores. The latter path, in particular, no longer carries the same “less-than” stigma that it did historically.

“The field of composing has blown wide open, and there’s less pressure to be a specific type of composer,” he says, continuing, “I think there are plenty of folks who still want to write for the concert hall—everybody wants to write an opera these days—but then there are composers who want to create music that falls between concert music and something that might be more appropriate for like an art museum. That’s where it becomes a part of the experience and not only an

aural experience. There's a broader range of what's possible and considered 'composition' within the field now."

Timothy Fain ('98), a violinist and composer whose music appears both in the concert hall and in film, still writes his music out with pencil and paper, at first, since using pencil and eraser leaves marks in a way that allows him to refer back to old versions of ideas on the page as he works. (Mr. Fain's daughter, who dabbles in composition as well, also prefers pencil and paper, he says.) Other musicians, too, were skeptical of digital sheet music ever fully replacing printed music, as many orchestral parts, in particular, act as living documents, with historical markings that evolve from conductor to conductor—a "retro" quirk of the classical world.

Mr. Fain sees developing technologies like instrumental synthesizers as a useful tool in music production and recording, but not as a force that will fundamentally change the way music is produced in the future: "I imagine that in 50 years, we may have surmounted our real problem: latency," Mr. Fain says. Today's technology cannot completely eliminate lag in streaming media, and even a fraction of a second delay is to be



Conductor Miguel Harth-Bedoya



Barbara Yahr leads the Greenwich Village Orchestra and focuses on special needs children.

too imprecise to effectively rehearse remotely, he says.

Even with new player piano technology like Steinway's Spirio and Yamaha's Disklavier, both of which can link pianos anywhere in the world to stream a live performance, lesson, or masterclass, there will never be a replacement for actually being in the room, Mr. Fain argues. "It's elusive, what it means to be in the same room with somebody else. It's picking up on micro expressions on peoples' faces that give us insight into what other people are thinking or how they're going to react."

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

"I used to joke with my clients that, you know, in 30 years, we're going to see that we're going to have holographic concerts that we can tune in to instead of going to concerts," says Earl Blackburn (Timpani and Percussion '76), a veteran arts manager and the founder of Kazen Arts. "But whether you're looking 50 or even 20 years down the road, I think the most important thing is that people ask the question: 'What are the principles that further this industry?'" Mr. Blackburn says that personal relationships between artists and managers will continue to be essential in the decades to come, even as the ways artists are able to connect with the public evolve.

He adds that social media will become increasingly critical in an artist's ability to build a following, an idea that Ms. Chai echoes: "I just set cameras up and hit stream, and I'll see thousands of people watching. Maybe a room can only hold 200 people, which might not make the concert feel worth it, but with streaming, I can play for a much larger audience, even though it's not the same as being there," she says, noting that some of her fans who found her through social media have traveled hours to hear her perform live.

But a local following could be crucial in the future, as well.

“The field of composing has blown wide open, and there’s less pressure to be a specific type of composer.”

—Jonathan Bailey Holland

Miguel Harth-Bedoya (Conducting ’91), now the director of orchestras at Rice University in Houston, was previously music director of the Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra. “After every Sunday matinee, I would drive home, and I would stop at the supermarket,” he recalls. “I cannot tell you how many people I ran into that had come from the concert.” Mr. Harth-Bedoya became a fixture in Fort Worth, launching a composting initiative and personally inviting countless residents to the hall. He says he’s not one to suggest to other conductors what they should or shouldn’t do, but that living locally allowed him to connect more regularly and deeply with his orchestra’s community.

Ms. Yahr, too, lives in her orchestra’s area in New York

City. She began to research music therapy after her friend introduced her to her nephew, who is autistic. “I got completely, you know, blown away by this thing that you could communicate with non-verbal children through music,” she says. Ms. Yahr says that music’s impact on mental and physical health outcomes led her to the idea that music therapy could become a larger part of performing arts institutions’ core missions and activities in the future. She’s also founded a program, “Together in Music,” a new kind of orchestral concert designed to forge partnerships between orchestras and the special needs communities.

Regardless of the screens at concerts or other bells and whistles and remote collaboration technology concerts, everyone interviewed agrees that performing both great historical repertoire and new works at the very best level would remain a critical part of the industry. “I actually talked to David Beckham [the English former pro soccer player] about this idea in Madrid,” says Mr. Harth-Bedoya. “He told me that the one thing in soccer that will never change is that you kick the ball to wherever you want it to go. You can put on nicer uniforms, you can advertise more on TV or on social media, but if you cannot kick the ball to where you want it to go, then you and the whole sport will disappear. And, ultimately, it’s the same in music.”

Jeremy Reynolds is the classical music critic at the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette and the editor of OPERA America Magazine.



Out with the old school: Jenny Q Chai at Curtis.

ORCHESTRATING OPPORTUNITY

Business skills are essential to music careers. But how do you embrace entrepreneurship? Five alumni offer their insights.

BY RYAN LATHAN

Success in today's cutthroat classical music landscape demands more than technical skill or artistic excellence—it requires an entrepreneurial mindset to carve out a sustainable career. Five acclaimed Curtis alumni—**Adrian Anantawan** (Violin '06), **Joseph Conyers** (Double Bass '04), **Helen Liu Gerhold** (Harp '18), **Mary Javian** (Double Bass '99), and **Johnathan McCullough** (Opera '17)—offer tips on how young musicians can become better entrepreneurs in the 21st century.



For **Joseph Conyers**, the key to entrepreneurial success lies in shifting one's perspective from individual achievement to broader impact. The award-winning principal bass of the Philadelphia Orchestra and renowned educator is the founder and vision advisor of Project 440. Originally launched in Savannah in 2007 and now based in Philadelphia, the organization teaches leadership skills to high school-age musicians, with a mix of college preparedness workshops and after-school programs devoted to community-focused skills.

Recognize that teaching and mentoring fuel your artistry: "I like working with young people because I like providing opportunities for them. I think music is a wonderful thing that all people should have in their life, but it is also an investment in the future of this wonderful art form. All those levels end up actually fueling me as an artist."

Diversifying your focus can enhance your musicianship: "Some musicians think concentrating on anything other than your art is a distraction, but it could actually be the one thing that keeps them going throughout their career. Look at the world as an opportunity—what can I do with this [instrument] in my hand? How can I make things better with it?"



Over the years, Canadian violinist **Adrian Anantawan**—artistic director of Shelter Music Boston and the Music Inclusion Ensemble at Berklee College—discovered his calling at the intersection of music and disability advocacy. His inspiring Virtual Music Instrument (VMI) Initiative at the Holland Bloorview Rehabilitation Hospital in Toronto brought together experts in technology and rehabilitation to enable musicians with disabilities—especially those with paralysis—to perform chamber music.

Recognize the power of your uniqueness: "I challenge young musicians with a call to hope: The world needs what you have to give, in all of your uniqueness and individuality, anchored by your values."

Embrace both tradition and disruption: "Conservatories like Curtis are a celebration of tradition but also disruption. The possibilities are endless and know that you already have all you need to realize a more beautiful, equitable world."



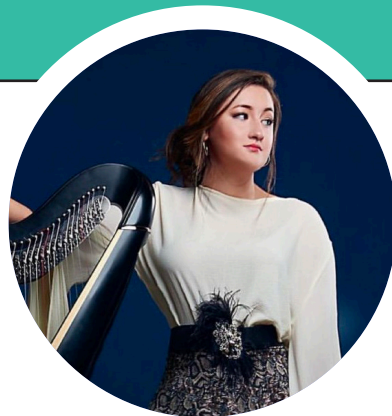
Mary Javian, esteemed Curtis faculty member and bassist, advocates for a broader perspective on the global music scene. As chair of career studies, she has developed a social entrepreneurship curriculum that helps students develop community partnerships that blend artistry with social impact. These inspire many graduates to launch their own educational programs, innovative ensembles, and music festivals worldwide.

Understand your unique value and create community:

“Young artists can build upon their passions and talents, but they must consider what is needed in the world. How are they unique? What does their work as an artist provide that makes the world a better place while sustaining themselves? We all need a community in order to achieve our goals, and entrepreneurs are experts in building community.”

Embrace an iterative process and continuous learning:

“The process of creating something is always iterative. We create a prototype that people can react to, and then we do what musicians do best: we listen. We take that feedback [from audiences and peers] and allow the idea to morph and ask new questions. The process never stops.”



Understanding the business side of music is critical to entrepreneurial success, and Curtis alumna **Helen Liu Gerhold**, executive director of the Lyra Society and a recent M.B.A. graduate, encourages musicians to develop fundamental business acumen, from understanding contracts and intellectual property to budgeting and tax management.

Form a unique personal brand and offering: “Pretend you’re on *Shark Tank* and you’re selling yourself as the product. What is your ‘market differentiator?’ How is what you are selling different, newer, and/or better than what anyone else is selling? Create a clear narrative online and in-person about who you are as a musician and what you stand for, whether it’s a particular style, a focus on innovation, or a deep connection to classical traditions.”

Build trust by humanizing yourself—especially on social media: “Everyone likes to see a perfect performance; however, people connect with each other through vulnerability, which builds trust. We’re not robots; being human brings beauty to music. Connecting with your fans and patrons via social media platforms creates a community of support.”



Grammy-nominated baritone and director **Johnathan McCullough** believes success comes from persistence, preparation, and sometimes, teaming up with inspiring fellow creatives. An international opera singer, guest speaker, and opera program director for the National Children’s Chorus, leading their Vail Opera Camp, he uses his platform for social impact. Moved by high veteran suicide rates, he reimaged David T. Little’s opera *Soldier Songs*, incorporating film to deliver an immersive experience of PTSD. He suggests you first find a cause that resonates with you.

Create a pitch deck: “No one can see your vision as clearly as you can, so put it on paper. I started using the digital painting and illustration app Procreate on my iPad to more clearly portray my idea. In your deck, answer the key questions: What is it? Who is involved? How much does it cost? Why is it important right now? Create a visual snapshot of the project’s aesthetic and final form. Remember, people don’t invest in uncertainty, they support clear, well-articulated ideas.”

Explore alternative funding options: “Grants, sponsorships, and partnerships can provide financial support if traditional funding isn’t available. Securing the first bit of financial backing is the hardest. Once people see that someone has taken the initial leap of commitment and trust, they are more likely to follow suit.”



Composition/ Conducting

1950s

José Serebrier (Composition '58) recently published several compositions for solo instruments, choir, band, and orchestra for the publishers Peermusic and Wise Music Group.

1960s

The National Library of Australia in December published *The Excellencies of Musick*, which gathers highlights from the print collection of musicologists **Michael Kassler** (Composition '60) and his wife Jamie Kassler. Included are music manuscripts, libretti, engraved tickets, advertisements, and portraits, among other items.

1980s

Paul Brantley's (Composition '85) piece *KITHARA* was performed in October by classical guitarist Dan Lippel at Columbia University and on the South Huntington Library chamber music series in Huntington Station, N.Y.

Mark Russell Smith

(Conducting '87) in February conducted performances of Michael Abels and Rhiannon Giddens' *Omar's Journey*, a concert adaptation of their Pulitzer Prize-winning opera, with the Quad City Symphony Orchestra, where he is music director. The next month, Mr. Smith led the second U.S. performance of Bright Sheng's

viola concerto *Of Time and Love*, co-commissioned by Curtis and performed by Curtis President and CEO Roberto Díaz (Viola '84).

The Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra led by JoAnn Falletta released *Contemporary Landscapes*, an album of new American works, which includes *Symphony in Three Movements (For Clyfford Still)* by **Russell Platt** (Composition '88), on its Beau Fleuve label. An all-Platt album featuring the Borromeo String Quartet and tenor Paul Appleby is planned for the Bridge Records later this year.



In March **Paavo Järvi** (Conducting '88) and the Tonhalle-Orchester Zürich kicked off a complete Mahler symphony cycle for Alpha Classics, starting with a recording of the composer's Fifth Symphony. Last November, Warner Classics released a box set of all of Mr. Järvi's recordings on the label to date, numbering 30 CDs in all.



Strings

1970s

Mi-Young Park-Mostovoy (Violin '71) is the subject of an online documentary film, *A*

Milestones



→ **Mari Yoshinaga** (Timpani and Percussion '12) and Noah Geller welcomed their first child, Jonah Masayuki Geller, on February 17 in Seattle.

→ **Robin Kesselman** (Double Bass '15) and Allegra Lilly welcomed the birth of their daughter, Dylan Jane Kesselman, on December 17. She weighs six pounds, one ounce.

Musical Journey of Distinction: Mi-Young and Pong-Hi Park. Tracing the sibling violin and piano duo's 50-year career, starting in South Korea and continuing in America, the film highlights Curtis' significant role in Mi-Young Park's early life.

1980s



Michael Ludwig (Violin '82) was named director and conductor of Pysm Strings New Jersey, a training program based in Cherry Hill, N.J.

1990s

Wilhelmina Smith (Cello '90) released *Sweetgrass*, an album of solo cello music by Dawn Avery, a Grammy-nominated composer of Mohawk Kanièn-keha descent, on the Azica label in May.

2000s

Karina Canellakis (Violin '04) in April renewed her contract as chief conductor of the Netherlands Radio Philharmonic Orchestra through 2031.

2010s

Rachel Yonan (Viola '11) and pianist Kwan Yi released their album *Kiss on Wood* in April on the Sono Luminus label. The program reflects on the contrast of light and darkness in works by Arvo Pärt, James MacMillan, and Robert Schumann.

Brandon Garbot (Violin '18) has joined the Geneva-based Aviv Quartet as its second violinist.

The Aizuri Quartet (String Quartet '16), Curtis' Quartet in Residence from 2014–16, has disbanded. Founded in 2012, the quartet was recognized for its creative programming and numerous commissions and premieres, including works by Jennifer Higdon (Composition '88), David Serkin Ludwig (Composition '01), and Gabriella Smith (Composition

'13 and '16). It won several prizes during its 13-year run, including the Cleveland Quartet Award in two consecutive seasons.

**Winds/Brass****2000s**

Shea Scruggs (Oboe '04) has been named director of the John J. Cali School of Music at Montclair State University. Familiar to many alumni, Mr. Scruggs has been Curtis' director of institutional research and musician experience, a post that he will hold until early this summer. He is also a co-founder of the Black Orchestral Network, a nonprofit organization that advocates for Black orchestral musicians.

2020s

James Vaughen (Trumpet '23) has been named principal trumpet of Minnesota Orchestra starting with the 2025–26 season. He succeeds Manny Laureano, who retires after 44 seasons. Mr. Vaughen is currently assistant principal trumpet at the Detroit Symphony Orchestra.

**Percussion****1960s**

An essay titled *Steve Reich Taught Me Yoga* by **Russell Hartenberger** (Percussion

'66) is featured in an extensive booklet accompanying Nonesuch Records' *Steve Reich Collected Works*, a 27-CD box set released in March.

**Piano/
Accompanying****1980s**

In October, New Focus Recordings released *belletude* by **Ketty Nez** (Piano '83) on the album *Boston Etudes* by pianist Jihye Chang.

1990s

Min Kwon (Piano '90) is performing a recital tour for her ongoing project *America/Beautiful*, in which she commissioned music by 76 American composers, including David Serkin Ludwig ('01), retiring Curtis faculty member Richard Danielpour, Jonathan Bailey Holland ('96), and Viet Cuong ('19). A five-CD album will be released by Delos this year.

2000s

Jonathan Biss (Piano '01) has joined the roster of Colbert Artists Management for North and South American management. He spoke about management in the Spring 2023 issue of *Overtones*, describing how trust and creativity are essential traits in a manager.

Roman Rabinovich (Piano '08) made his concerto debut with the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra in January. He returned to Israel in April for

a recital tour and concerto performances with the Haifa Symphony Orchestra and plans to release a recording of Bach's *Goldberg Variations* in May.

2010s

In March **Haochen Zhang** (Piano '12) released an album on BIS Records of Beethoven's *Hammerklavier* Sonata and Liszt's Sonata in B minor.

**Organ****2000s**

Paul Jacobs (Organ '00) was a soloist with the Philadelphia Orchestra for performances of Alfredo Casella's *Concerto Romano* and with the Seattle Symphony for performances of Francis Poulenc's *Organ Concerto*. He also gave a solo recital presented by the Los Angeles Philharmonic.

**Voice/Opera****1960s**

Daniel Eby (Voice '66) has organized a classical voice competition in Toronto for young singers to celebrate his 40th year of teaching classical voice.

Mary Lou Falcone (Voice '66) was an executive producer, along with Renée Fleming, Suzie and Bruce

Viano Quartet Wins a Fisher Grant



The **Viano Quartet** (String Quartet '23) in March was named one of three recipients of a 2025 Avery Fisher Career Grant. Awarded by the Avery Fisher Artist Program, the grants support exceptional instrumentalists and chamber groups who are citizens or permanent residents of the U.S. Formed in 2015 at the Colburn School, the Viano Quartet is currently a resident ensemble in the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center's Bowers Program, for up-and-coming artists, a post it will hold through 2027.

"When we got the call, we were just awestruck," said cellist Tate Zawadiuk at an awards reception and performance at the Jerome L. Greene Performance Space in New York. "There are so many incredible artists who we look up to that have won this award. To be a part of that group is really special."

Kovner, Yo-Yo Ma, and David Hyde Pierce on *Facing the Wind*, a documentary film directed by Deirdre Fishel that tells the stories of caregivers for their spouses with

Lewy body dementia. Ms. Falcone previously explored the topic in her 2023 memoir, *I Didn't See It Coming: Scenes of Love, Loss and Lewy Body Dementia*.

1990s

Mezzo-soprano **Misoon Ghim** (Opera '95) was a soloist in performances of Bach's *St. John's Passion* at Lotte Concert Hall in Seoul, South Korea, in Han-

del's *Messiah* at the Seoul Arts Center, and Lili Boulanger's *Pie Jesu* at the Saint-Philippe-du-Roule Church in Paris.

2000s

Karen Slack (Opera '02) and **Michelle Cann** (Piano '13) in February won a Grammy Award for Best Classical Solo Vocal Album for *Beyond the Years: Unpublished Songs of Florence Price*. It features 19 unpublished songs by Price, including 16 world premiere recordings.

Charles Suk Chul Kim (Opera '02) presented Schubert's *Winterreise* with pianist Kyungsook Lee at the Seoul Art Center in a concert celebrating Curtis' centennial.

Students

Soprano **Sarah Fleiss** (Voice '23, Opera '25) is the first-ever vocalist to win the 2025 Arthur W. Foote Award from the Harvard Musical Association. Along with the \$3,500 prize, she will present a concert in Boston with her recital partner and fellow Curtis student, pianist Delvan Lin.



Bass-baritone **Evan Gray** (Voice '23, Opera '25) has joined the roster of IMG Artists for general management. He will be represented by Matthew Horner and Noah Sesling.



Cellist **Jiayin He** ('23) in March was appointed to the cello section of the Philadelphia Orchestra. The master's student has served as principal cello of the Curtis Symphony Orchestra.



Violinist **Himari Yoshimura** was named one of Classic FM's Rising Stars, the broadcaster's annual listing of 30 musicians under age 30 to watch. The 13-year-old violinist, who is known professionally as Himari, in March signed with Decca Classics, becoming the youngest-ever female artist to join the British label.

Faculty/Staff

Yannick Nézet-Séguin in February won a Grammy for Best Compilation Soundtrack for Visual Media for *Maestro: Music by Leonard Bernstein*. He shares the award with producer Bradley Cooper and the London Symphony Orchestra.



Blair Bollinger (Trombone '86) presented an all-star trombone concert at the Glencairn Museum in Bryn Athyn, Pa. in honor of former faculty member Glenn Dodson (Trombone '53). Several of his former trombone students performed, including Joseph Alessi ('81), Achilles Liarmakopoulos ('08), Joseph McEttrick ('00), and Darrin Milling ('90), as well as current Curtis faculty member Matthew Vaughn.

Curtis Symphony Orchestra's performance at David Geffen Hall was generously underwritten by the alumni of the Curtis Institute of Music, including:

Teddy Abrams ('08)	Young Uck Kim ('70)
Benjamin Beilman ('12)	Kyu Yeon Kim ('09)
Blair Bollinger ('86)	Kyung Sook Lee ('67)
J'Nai Bridges ('12)	Michele Levin ('65)
Michelle Cann ('13)	Daniel Matsukawa ('92)
Dukju Kim Chang ('67)	Robert McDonald ('76)
Elissa Koljonen ('94) and Roberto Díaz ('84)	Anthony McGill ('00)
Mary Lou Falcone ('66)	Demarre McGill ('96)
Avery Gaglano ('24)	Sandra Miller ('72)
Richard Goode ('64)	Alan Morrison ('93)
Daniel Heifetz ('71) and Janne Heifetz	Zina Schiff ('69)
William A. Horn, M.D. ('70)	Jane Shaulis ('75) and Joseph Gasperec
Bella Hristova ('08) and David Serkin Ludwig ('01)	David Shifrin ('71)
Marsha Hunter ('77)	Robert Spano ('85)
Andrew Jacobs ('93)	Lawrence Tarlow ('74)
Erin Keefe ('03)	Yuja Wang ('08)
	Peter Wiley ('74)
	Amy Yang ('06)

October 13, 2025 Founder's Day

Join us as we celebrate Founder's Day with a special Giving Day for Curtis. This is a unique opportunity to honor our past, support our present, and invest in the future of Curtis.

Visit curtis.edu/give for more details on how you can make an impact!



THOSE WE HAVE LOST



Longtime trustee **Peter Benoliel** died on February 17 at his home in St. Davids, Pa. at age 93. He served on Curtis' board of trustees from 1982 to 1996 and was then named a trustee emeritus.

A chemist, Mr. Benoliel was the longtime president and CEO of Quaker Chemical Corporation, a Conshohocken, Pa.-based chemicals company built by his father and uncle in the 1930s.

In addition to his Curtis service, Mr. Benoliel was board chair of the Philadelphia Orchestra from 1995 to 2000 and was involved for nearly seven decades with the Settlement

Music School, joining its board in 1957. Last year, the school renamed its Germantown Avenue site the Peter A. Benoliel Germantown Branch.

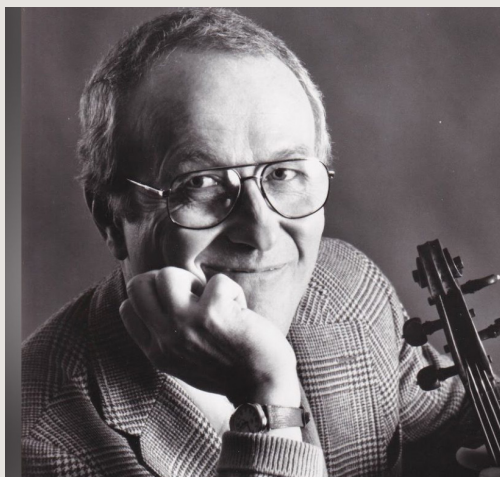
As board chair of the Philadelphia Orchestra, he led the institution through a difficult period that included a 64-day musicians' strike. He identified Sidney Kimmel as a prospective donor for what would become the Kimmel Center, and he was instrumental in securing a \$10 million gift in 2000 from Walter and Leonore Annenberg to endow the music director position. An amateur violinist himself, Mr.

Benoliel endowed three second violin positions.

Mr. Benoliel was born in Philadelphia in 1932 and raised by parents who were themselves patrons of the city's cultural organizations. He graduated from Princeton University in 1953 with a degree in philosophy and a minor in chemistry before serving as a naval officer during the Korean War. He joined the family business in 1957 as a chemist. From 1966 to 1992, he was president and CEO of Quaker Chemical. In 2019, the company became Quaker Houghton in a \$1.6 billion merger.

Mr. Benoliel sat on over a dozen corporate and nonprofit boards and served as chair of the Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia board from 1989 to 1992. With an inquisitive zeal, he nurtured interests in literature, philosophy, Japanese history and art, and astrophysics. He loved to play chamber music, including as part of a pickup string quartet. "Music," Mr. Benoliel once wrote, "is the deepest source of my spiritual life."

Mr. Benoliel is survived by his third wife, Willo Carey, along with his sister, children, and grandchildren.



Scott Nickrenz ('58), a violist and impresario who directed chamber music series at several prominent festivals and institutions, died at his home in Boston on March 17. He was 87 years old.

In a career that spanned more than five decades, Mr. Nickrenz was especially prolific as a presenter, serving as the director of chamber music at the Brooklyn Academy of Music (1975–88) and director of chamber music for the Spoleto Festivals in both Spoleto, Italy, and Charleston, S.C. (a role he shared with his wife, flutist Paula Robison, starting in 1978).

His longest affiliation was with the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum in Boston, whose music series he curated for 26 years. During that time, he oversaw the construction of the museum's acclaimed Calderwood Hall, a "sonic cube" designed by architect Renzo Piano and acoustician Yasuhisa Toyota that placed musicians at the center with listeners on all four sides.

Beyond managerial roles, Mr. Nickrenz performed with several ensembles. He co-founded the Lenox String Quartet, the Orpheus Trio, and the Vermeer Quartet, and

was a near-annual guest artist with the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center during the 1970s and '80s. As an educator, he served on the faculty of the New England Conservatory (NEC) and was the chamber music director for the New World Symphony in Miami. Mr. Nickrenz considered teaching his life's most consistent purpose.

Born in Buffalo, N.Y., Roy Scott Nickrenz studied piano and violin before switching to viola on the recommendation of his teacher, the noted violinist Alexander Schneider. Years later, Mr. Nickrenz studied at Curtis with Max Aronoff (Viola and Chamber Music '24), and following graduation, he became a fellow at Tanglewood, where he worked with musicians including Elliott Carter, Leon Kirchner, Gunther Schuller, John Cage, and Aaron Copland.

Mr. Nickrenz enjoyed cigars, martinis, and poker, and in high school held the title of New York State tennis champion. He is survived by his wife, his daughters—pianist Erika Nickrenz and psychologist and singer-songwriter Elizabeth Nickrenz Fein—along with extended family.



Allison Nelson Loebbaka (Piano '49), a pianist and educator who was a member of the duo piano team Nelson and Neal, died on March 31. She was 97 years old.

For nearly two decades, Ms. Loebbaka performed extensively as a member of the piano duo with her first husband, Harry L. Neal ('48). After his sudden death from an apparent heart attack in 1968, she focused on a second career as a university professor and author of several method books.

Born Allison Nelson in Adelaide, Australia, her musical talents were recognized at age seven, and by age ten, she was performing in public and on Australian radio. After conductor Eugene Ormandy heard her on a tour of Australia in 1944, she was admitted to Curtis, where she studied with Rudolf Serkin. During this time, she met Mr. Neal, and the two formed the Nelson and Neal piano duo in 1949. Together, the couple toured

North America in a custom-built motor home, which carried eight people and two grand pianos. They logged as many as 40,000 miles a year. With their three children, they appeared on the TV show *This Is Your Life* in 1959.

After Mr. Neal's death in 1968, at age 40, Ms. Loebbaka began a second career as artist-in-residence and professor at the University of Tennessee at Martin (UTM). There, she helped to set up the Bachelor of Music in piano performance program and founded the UTM Piano Ensemble, before retiring in 1989. Ms. Loebbaka wrote a series of instruction books for beginner- and intermediate-level pianists, which are still in use today. In 2018, UTM introduced the Allison Nelson Guest Artist Series.

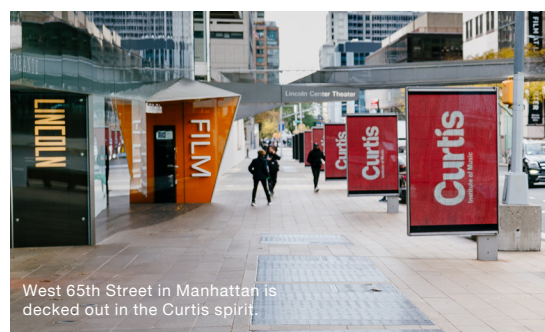
Ms. Loebbaka is survived by her second husband, Dr. David Loebbaka, three children, and extended family.

Centennial Celebrations

With the 2024–25 season, Curtis ushered in a new century while celebrating its past. Check out these photo highlights of the past year.



Curtis Symphony Orchestra members gather on the plaza



West 65th Street in Manhattan is decked out in the Curtis spirit.



→ On November 24, the Curtis Symphony Orchestra gave its first-ever concert at Lincoln Center's David Geffen Hall in New York. Yannick Nézet-Séguin, who serves on the faculty as mentor conductor, led Dvořák's Symphony No. 8 and Price's Symphony No. 1. Benoît Gauthier, a Rita E. Hauser Conducting Fellow, led the opening work, Samuel Coleridge-Taylor's *Ballade in A minor*.



→ At a post-concert reception at Lincoln Center, Mr. Nézet-Séguin joined President Roberto Díaz in a toast to the centennial season.

Front row (L-R): Roberto Díaz ('84), Katie Jordan ('12), Claudine Nézet, Serge P. Séguin, Yannick Nézet-Séguin, Jane Shaulis ('75), Nina Kennedy ('79), Osceola Davis ('72). Second row: Andrew Jacobs ('93), Seung-Hee Hyun ('85), Solomiya Ivakhiv ('03), James Adler ('73, '76), Avner Arad ('89), Anthony McGill ('00). Back row: Alan J. Stepansky ('81), Joel Noyes ('01), William Short ('10), Adam Glaser ('00), Demarre McGill ('96), Ed Gazouleas ('84), Nick DiBerardino ('18, '19), Ying Li ('19), Shea Scruggs ('04), Nathan Vickery ('13).

→ On December 13, Ray Chen (Violin '10) and Teddy Abrams (Conducting '08) joined the Curtis Symphony Orchestra at the Kimmel Center for Samuel Barber's (Composition '34) Violin Concerto. The program opened with *Death of the Poet* by TJ Cole (Composition '17).

The Curtis New Music Ensemble presented George Crumb's *Black Angels* on February 15 in Gould Rehearsal Hall. The Vietnam-era landmark featured the Erinys Quartet, Curtis' Nina von Maltzahn String Quartet-in-Residence.



→ Curtis Opera Theatre and the Curtis Symphony Orchestra presented Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro* at the Kimmel Center (February 27–March 2). The Marcus Shields production featured Nicholas McGegan conducting two casts. Top: Yulin Yan (Don Bartolo), Judy Zhuo (Marcellina), and Robert Frazier (Figaro, seated). Bottom: Emilio Vasquez (Count Almaviva) and fellow cast members.



Create your Legacy

Many Curtis alumni and friends feel a personal calling to make a difference, to have a lasting impact on the people and places we care about. You can create your legacy at the Curtis Institute of Music by including the school in your estate plans and become a member of the Founder's Society.

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.

Centennial Crossword

Look out for some familiar names from Curtis' history in the circled entries.

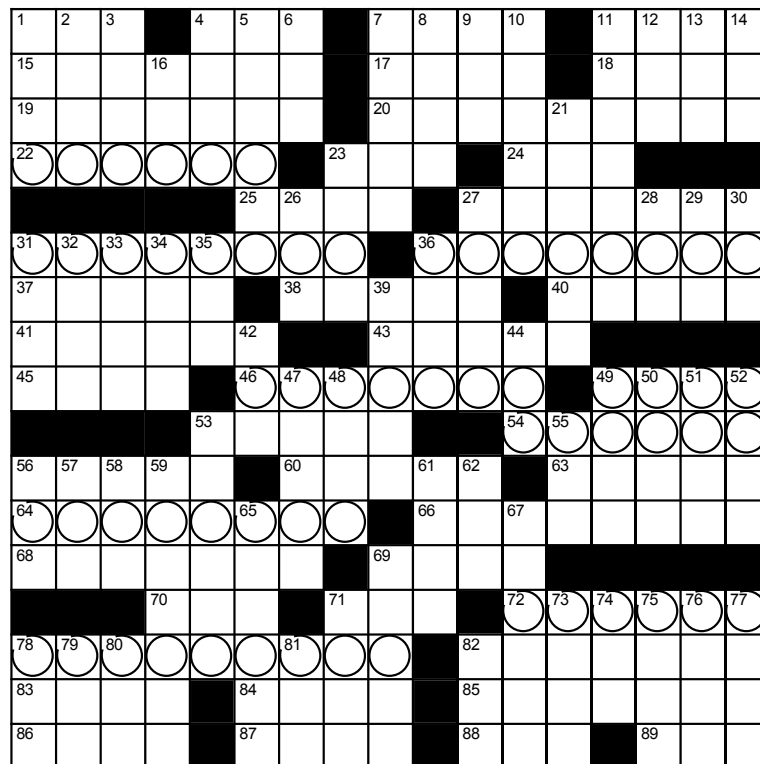
BY LEAH AMORY

Across

- 1 Freudian topic
- 4 Footnote abbr.
- 7 Carry with effort
- 11 Outside the box?
- 15 Starch found in boba tea
- 17 Upscale hotel chain
- 18 "Aida" backdrop
- 19 Essayist who probably never asked for help
- 20 Conductor after which a Curtis library collection is named
- 22 1968–1977
- 23 Liszt's "___ Preludes"
- 24 Musician's asset
- 25 Like some tea
- 27 "Spectacular ___, " 2023 Curtis Symphony Orchestra concert
- 31 1977–1986
- 36 1938–1941
- 37 Clear the board
- 38 Violinist Steinhardt, to friends
- 40 Taqueria option
- 41 Non-LGBTQ, in slang
- 43 "___ a million"
- 45 Child support?
- 46 1927–1938
- 49 2006–present
- 53 Flat-topped formations
- 54 1924–1925
- 56 Peninsula near Hong Kong
- 60 Prop for Groucho
- 63 Key chains?
- 64 1986–2006
- 66 It's seen in a scene
- 68 Neighborhood in London's West End
- 69 Bread loaf part
- 70 Silent speech syst.
- 71 ___ mater (brain membrane)
- 72 1925–1927
- 78 1941–1968
- 82 Type of pasta
- 83 Military no-show
- 84 Grandson of Abraham
- 85 Driver's license prerequisite
- 86 Vamoosed
- 87 Speak like Don Corleone
- 88 Pre-1991 map abbr.
- 89 "Didn't I tell you?"

Down

- 1 When the French fry?
- 2 Checkers or chess, e.g.
- 3 "Fidelio," to Beethoven
- 4 Mozart's "___ fan Tutte"
- 5 Like some Byzantine art
- 6 Soak up some rays
- 7 Bamboozled
- 8 Quantities: abbr.



- 9 Classic card game
- 10 "I ___ eat, eat, eat apples and bananas" (Children's song)
- 11 Takes off, as a mummy costume
- 12 Bro's counterpart
- 13 Antlered animal
- 14 Fauré's "Agnus ___"
- 16 Rub the wrong way
- 21 Canoe rower
- 23 Impolite look
- 26 Espionage org.
- 27 Surface luster
- 28 World Cup cheer
- 29 Cover some ground?
- 30 ___-cone
- 31 Dealer's handful
- 32 Curtis violin teacher Keefe
- 33 Use a surgical beam on
- 34 1975 Wimbledon champ
- 35 Word before a maiden name
- 36 Fey of "30 Rock"
- 39 Unlikely claim on an instant ramen cup
- 42 Start of many titles
- 44 Like Brahms' second string sextet
- 47 "Sesame Street" grouch
- 48 Gladly, in olden times
- 49 Two caplets, say
- 50 Escapees from Pandora's box
- 51 Nautical side
- 52 Piquancy
- 53 Simba's sire
- 55 Big finish?
- 56 Palindromic film studio
- 57 Constellation next to Scorpius
- 58 Coral formation
- 59 Simpatico
- 61 In between ports
- 62 GPS calculation: abbr.
- 65 "Death of a Salesman" writer
- 67 Never never
- 69 Approach for money
- 71 Anti-drug ads, e.g.
- 73 Declare openly
- 74 English course, for short
- 75 Web site?
- 76 Ultimatum word
- 77 "The ___ of Spring"
- 78 Veer erratically
- 79 "Sands of ___ Jima"
- 80 Many a fed. holiday
- 81 Rose-rose connector
- 82 Some solfège notes

View the crossword answer key at:
curtis.edu/overtones



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INSIDE THIS ISSUE

“I think we cannot stay
in the old times where
people are used to just
sitting still for two hours,
watching nothing and
only listening. I think
that time is just gone.”

—JENNY Q CHAI (PIANO '04),
PIANIST, LECTURER, AND EDUCATOR