



Students arriving for a student matinee performance. Photo credits: Matthew Huang

Stanford Live K-12 Programs Fund 2025–26 Report

With the generous support of contributors to our K-12 Programs Fund, in 2025–26 Stanford Live created arts learning opportunities for more students than ever before and expanded our range of educational partnerships. Our programs served 30 schools and reached over 5,000 participants through a broad variety of approaches and art forms.

Performances

Our student matinee series offered students access to art forms and cultural resources from around the globe, with artists at the vanguard of their respective art forms performing for nearly 3,000 students and teachers from Silicon Valley and beyond.

We opened our matinee season with the all-women’s jazz ensemble Artemis. Three-time winners of “Group of the Year” in the prestigious Downbeat Magazine readers’ poll, and made up of artists who are all acclaimed bandleaders in their own right, the virtuoso quintet gave students a sample of contemporary jazz and a chance to learn about jazz history, mixing their own compositions with classics by Wayne Shorter and Thelonious Monk. The band also gave local high school students a unique learning experience and a glimpse into professional jazz practice. Coaching members of the Gunn and Palo Alto High School jazz bands, Artemis members taught the Miles Davis classic “Milestones” by ear, created a big band arrangement of the tune in collaboration with students, and had every student improvise a solo, all in the course of 90 minutes.



Student matinee performance by Circa. Photo Credit: Matthew Huang

We were thrilled to welcome the innovative Australian circus Circa back to our stages. Their weeklong residency at Stanford culminated in a sold-out matinee of their *Humans 2.0*. Introducing circus arts to many students for the first time, the piece wove stunning acrobatic feats into a moving theme of the need for human connection. They also brought their dazzling acrobatic skills and engaging teaching style to programs at several of our partner sites, described below.

Our fall series ended with an audience of nearly 1,000 for the multimedia dance work *Dökk*. Created by Italian digital arts collective fuse*, *Dökk* follows a single aerially suspended dancer as she moves through a digitally conjured universe, created in real time in response to sensors worn on her body. This unique meeting of art and science allowed us to support STEAM education and to immerse students in media arts, which is now one of California's state-mandated arts subjects but is challenging to achieve by schools. Belle Haven Elementary, one of our partner schools in East Palo Alto's Ravenswood district, brought their entire student body of nearly 400 to the performance. One attending teacher said of her school's visit,

"This was a gorgeous and thought-provoking piece of performance art. It got me thinking about how I want to inhabit my body and my life, and it also reminded me of how important it is to experience performances with an audience. Our school goes to a Stanford Live performance together every year and I always walk away with a sense of awe."

In February, we presented the young Chinese-American pianist Zee Zee in a matinee of music by Ravel and Debussy, linking our K-12 programming to our season-long celebration of the 150th anniversary of Ravel's birth. Performing Ravel's *Gaspard de la Nuit* and *Mother Goose Suite*,

both inspired by stories and myths, Zee Zee narrated the story behind each piece before playing it, creating an engaging format for many students' first experience of classical music.

We closed our season on a high note in April, with an electrifying performance by the John Santos Sextet and five guest Bay Area vocalists for a capacity audience at Bing Concert Hall. The program, "Unusual Standards," featured jazz standards in new Latin-tinged arrangements, with Santos introducing the repertoire and discussing elements of Afro-Latin music. The thrilling music was followed by a thoughtful Q&A with the artists addressing questions such as, "How did you overcome adversity you faced at a young age?"

Teacher Workshops

Our teacher workshop series offered high-quality training to local educators, with a roster of distinguished Bay Area artist/educators leading the sessions. Tammy Hall, former lead teaching artist with SFJAZZ and one of our area's leading jazz pianists, led a session on Women in Jazz leading up to the Artemis student matinee. Tammy shared an overview of key artists in the often-overlooked history of jazz women, took a look at leading female jazz artists today, and introduced fundamental elements of jazz such as the blues.

Bay Area circus artist Calvin Kai Ku, a member of Circus Bella and co-founder of the Medical Clown Project, led a wonderful session on Circus Arts in the Classroom. A virtuosic juggler, acrobat and magician, Calvin introduced many elements of the circus and shared easy circus-inspired activities that emphasized social emotional learning goals including community building, mutual support, teamwork, and trust. Calvin's training also noted the ways in which circus activities support the habits of mind that are crucial to 21st century learning, such as creative problem solving, the ability to collaborate, and resilience.



John Santos leading the Afro-Caribbean Musical Roots teacher workshop. Photo Credit: Ben Frandzel

John Santos concluded the workshop series with “Afro-Caribbean Musical Roots,” which drew 25 educators, our highest workshop attendance of the season. John deftly shared the historic processes that produced the unique cultures of the Caribbean and led to styles such as Latin jazz, and gave an overview of the origins of Latin percussion instruments and their techniques. Participating teachers shared comments such as,

“Thank you so much for the amazing workshop. I learned a great deal about the history of Afro-Caribbean musical traditions. What an incredible opportunity to learn from John Santos.”

We extended our professional development for teachers beyond our campus workshop series, serving as a partner for the San Mateo County Office of Education’s Arts Education Conference in October 2025. The daylong event featured 19 presenters, including several teaching artists who have led our campus workshops, and drew over 100 attendees from throughout San Mateo County for a day of in-depth professional learning and community building.

Circa Residency

A key program this season was a one-week residency by Circa. Along with their student matinee performance, they brought their dazzling acrobatic skills and wonderful touch with young people to programs at several of our partner sites. Their visit to Garfield Community School in Redwood City included an assembly performance for the school’s full student body that drew screams of awe and delight in response to the company’s feats. They also led a workshop for two PE classes that moved from elementary tumbling to a three-high pyramid with over two dozen students. The district PE Director expressed how pleased he was with an athletic experience that modeled cooperation over competition.



Left: Students watching a school assembly by Circa. Photo Credit: Ben Frandzel. **Right:** Students participating in an EPACENTER workshop led by Circa. Photo Credit: Matthew Huang.

Circa also visited Costaño School of the Arts, one of our partners in East Palo Alto’s Ravenswood District, for two assembly performances that again reached the full student body. They concluded their K-12 engagement work with a workshop at East Palo Alto community youth arts center EPACENTER for the school’s dance team, imparting more advanced skills and sharing experiences and advice from their life as touring artists.

New Partnership with the Redwood City School District

A key initiative of our season was the development of a deeper partnership with the Redwood City School District. We focused on Hoover Community School and Garfield Community School, both of which face significant socioeconomic challenges—95% of students are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch—and have the fewest arts resources in the district, with only one art subject taught at each campus. Teachers from both schools increased their participation in our on-campus programs, attending all of our teacher workshops and the majority of our student matinees, with Hoover now among our most frequent attendees.

We expanded in-school programming at both sites with our resident teaching artists, Quinteto Latino, building on a pilot program from the previous two years. At Garfield, they worked primarily with special education teachers, embodying our focus on inclusive arts education. At Hoover, Quinteto Latino worked primarily with the site’s music teacher, culminating in our signature composer commission project.



Quinteto Latino’s QL Fellows, music teacher Karen Linford, and composer Juan Sebastián Cardona-Ospina rehearse Cardona-Ospina’s “La Lleva” with music students at Hoover Community School in Redwood City. Photo credit: Ben Frandzel

At each school, we collaborated to develop additional programs tailored to the school's population and interests. Circa's day at Garfield, encompassing their assembly and workshops, was the first exposure to the circus for nearly all the school's students, and was welcomed by the principal and teaching staff as a special infusion of the arts at a site without a performing arts teacher on staff.

We placed our annual composer commission for student ensembles, which has previously taken place at Ravenswood district schools, at Hoover. Composer Juan Sebastián Cardona-Ospina created an engaging piece titled "La Lleva," blending student parts for Hoover's 8th-grade band with professional-level parts for Quinteto Latino. This lively composition evoked a childhood running game from the composer's native Colombia, and featured playful exchanges between the students and Quinteto Latino's musicians. It received a rousing premiere at the school's year-end music assembly, delighting the appreciative student audience. Following the model we had developed in Ravenswood, the composer visited music classes, listening to students to assess, and then challenge, their playing abilities, and also requested their input to help shape the piece. By treating the students as collaborators and fellow artists, the process gives students a feeling of being heard and seen and a sense of investment in their own learning.

Our partnership with the Redwood City schools also led to collaboration with the John W. Gardner Center for Youth and Their Communities, a Stanford education institute that has worked closely with the district for two decades. The Gardner Center conducted an in-depth evaluation of our initiatives and helped us develop new evaluation protocols for all our programs to use in future seasons. Their study offered many valuable insights on our work and a deeper understanding of our partner schools' needs.

Among the Gardner Center's most compelling findings, they learned that participating teachers valued the way our programs facilitate connections: between students and artists; between students and adults; between artists and educators; and between Stanford and a local school district. They also found that the programs foster a sense of welcome, belonging, mattering, and joy, for students and teachers. As one teacher noted,

"It's these kinds of experiences that they will remember. It makes them want to come to school and connects them to music."

Artists-In-Schools

Along with our expanded in-school programs in Redwood City, 2025–26 brought a milestone in our collaboration with the Ravenswood City School District and our resident teaching artists Quinteto Latino, as we completed a full decade of this joint partnership. Since 2016–17, we have partnered to bring Quinteto Latino to work with the district's music teachers, as they co-teach classes, coach students, develop creative music projects with students, and perform interactive assembly concerts that introduce a variety of musical and cultural traditions. With

this range of approaches, we reach almost every student in the Ravenswood schools each year, and have become a trusted long-term partner to the district. We also bring added dimensions to the partnership such as Circa's performances at Costaño School of the Arts, and Ravenswood schools are avid participants in our student matinees and teacher workshops, accounting for nearly 30% of this year's matinee attendance.

For the third year, the QL Fellows, Quinteto Latino's next generation group of teaching artists, taught and performed in our partner schools. Made up of Masters Degree students or recent graduates from the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, the Fellows have crafted their own energetic version of Quinteto Latino's signature assembly program, Raices de Nuestra Música/ Our Musical Roots, engaging students at all of our partner schools. The group's founder and Artistic Director, Armando Castellano, continues to teach, lead program design, and mentor the Fellows.



The QL Fellows meet with students and music teacher Dominic Samuels at Costaño School of the Arts in East Palo Alto. Photo credit: Ben Frandzel

Across our programs, our work reflected our commitment to increasing access to the arts. For the 2nd year in a row and thank to our valuable funders, we donated 50% of matinee tickets to Title 1 schools and covered their bus costs. This figure has increased from 38% in 2022–23 and 44% in 2023–24, attesting to the vital and growing needs our programs help to meet. We provide our in-school programs at no cost to our partner districts, helping to ensure the arts will have a place at underserved schools.

One teacher from a Title 1 partner school said of her students' visit to Stanford,

"It's just incredible. They are able to get out of their own environment and get into a different place where they can experience something they've never seen before. There was an audible gasp when my students walked in the theater, and it was such a cool experience for them to do that. It's amazing that this is offered for free, because so often these experiences cost money which makes it more challenging."

Program Metrics and Evaluation

Our program metrics demonstrated many positive results, including our baseline measures:

- Total participants: 5,130
- Total program hours: 54
- Net promoter score: When participants were asked "With 10 being 'extremely likely' and 1 being 'not at all likely,' how likely are you to recommend Stanford Live's K-12 programs to fellow educators?" the average response was 9.8 for teacher workshops, 9.5 for student matinees.
- Average score on "How likely are you to use this training in your teaching" from teacher workshop surveys: 76% were very likely (highest rating).
- 90% of teachers participating in workshops rated their overall experience as excellent.

To learn more about how you can support Stanford Live's work, please contact Laurel Skehen at lskehen@stanford.edu or 650.498.9365. For inquiries about participation in our K-12 programs, please contact Ben Frandzel at bfrandzel@stanford.edu.



Students eagerly awaiting the start of a student matinee performance in Bing Concert Hall. Photo Credit: Matthew Huang