

The Eastman **Case Studies**

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Astral Artists: Preparing Tomorrow's Musicians



INSTITUTE FOR
MUSIC LEADERSHIP



EASTMAN
SCHOOL OF MUSIC
UNIVERSITY OF ROCHESTER

Astral Artists: Preparing Tomorrow's Musicians

Astral Artists is a Philadelphia-based organization that mentors classical musicians early in their performing careers. Situated in an increasingly competitive environment for the arts, Astral is currently working to develop new audiences while training artists to succeed in today's market. In 2017, the organization launched a new series that pairs live music with specially curated dining experiences. The staff is now looking for additional ways to diversify its programming and reach new demographics, all while giving artists valuable performing and learning opportunities. This case asks readers to brainstorm nontraditional events that Astral could design for its artists. Through this process, students must consider marketing strategies and logistics as they craft programs to engage new audiences.



This case study was prepared by Myles Boothroyd, Assistant Professor of Saxophone and Music Theory at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point. *The Eastman Case Studies* are developed solely as the basis for class discussion. Cases are not intended to serve as endorsements or sources of primary data nor are they to serve as illustrations of effective or ineffective leadership or decision making.

Founding Astral Artists

In the late 1980s, Vera Wilson served on the board of the Astral Foundation in Philadelphia, which awarded grants to young musicians seeking to launch new projects and engage with the community. Her conversations with these artists inspired her to think broadly about the challenges that performers face in trying to succeed as professional musicians. When the foundation closed its doors in 1991, Wilson decided to launch her own organization that would mentor young musicians in Philadelphia and beyond. She hired a lawyer who specialized in the nonprofit sector and founded a new business early the following year called Astral Artistic Services. Her vision was clear from the outset: Astral would assemble a roster of talented emerging performers, but rather than functioning solely as a management company, it would offer more comprehensive career support for musical artists.

Wilson's aim was to help individual early-career performers become better known via concerts, outreach programs, and other creative community endeavors. These events would serve a dual role of developing artists' performing skills while benefiting the Philadelphia community. Seeing no existing organizations on which to base such a model, Wilson's first challenge was to determine how to brand Astral and how to attract artists. Simply calling oneself a "good will" enterprise for classical performers was too vague for a marketing campaign. In order for Astral to be taken seriously and achieve success with young musicians, it would need a clear mission and public message.

Wilson pursued that mission through community concerts, seeking opportunities to connect Astral's roster with Philadelphia's businesses, schools, concert presenters, and potential donors. Astral rostered just four musicians in its first year, and the earliest performances were house concerts for private audiences. When these proved successful,

the board opted to expand Astral's activity, scheduling four public concerts to fill out the remainder of the season. It was fortuitous that these latter events attracted two concert reviewers from *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, whose positive articles led to a rapid increase in the organization's exposure.

Astral expanded its board and artist roster in its second year of operation. It further assembled a dedicated panel of experts to oversee auditions and recommend new artists. The organization continued to emphasize artist development and community engagement: it added events to its season and established multiple concert series. Further, by sending musicians to schools and retirement homes, it struck a balance between traditional programming and outreach. After three and a half years, Astral hired its first administrative employee, and by its sixth year, it had the support of several grant-funding organizations. Its staff and artists had established a foothold in the Philadelphia arts community that positioned Astral for stable and continued growth.

Astral Today

More than a generation after its founding, Astral Artists—its current name, adopted in 2007—boasts a roster of 28 classical artists, which includes instrumentalists, vocalists, and chamber ensembles from around the world. While the staff does not limit eligibility to musicians of a certain age group, it does target emerging performers at or near the end of a college degree in music. Much like a management company, the organization pays its musicians for concerts and outreach events, and yet Astral prefers not to be viewed as a traditional artist manager. Its mission is ultimately one of career guidance and mentorship. Because live

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performances represent merely one opportunity to develop professional skills, artists are permitted to be on both the Astral roster and that of a separate, more conventional management company. Bonnie Slobodien, Astral's former director of education and community engagement, summarizes the organization's aim as one of helping performers transition "from the conservatory to the concert stage." Astral's seven-member staff is committed to ensuring individual care for each rostered musician's needs.

The specific services that Astral provides include professional advising, concert planning, and community outreach. Many artists arrive with entrepreneurial ideas for creative programming, and they frequently confer with other Astral performers and staff about realizing these possibilities. Astral then helps these artists coordinate local concert opportunities while assisting them with personal branding, which increases their exposure to potential concert presenters. Meanwhile, Astral puts artists in touch with recording engineers or freelance career advisors, so that the organization's vast network of music industry professionals is readily accessible to each of its performers. Career support is tailored to musicians' individual needs: for instance, Astral recently put one of its chamber groups in contact with a record label, and that ensemble is now recording its first commercial album. In another case, the staff connected a performer with a stylist in New York City, who fitted him for designer suits to be worn for upcoming performances. Astral further provides every musician with a variety of tools for self-promotion and digital marketing, introducing artists to photographers for press shots, while helping them with website design and press materials. The organization also sponsors a Micro-Commissioning Program, which links artists with composers in the US and beyond.

Not surprisingly, much of Astral's time is devoted to planning its extensive season, which consists of various concerts, educational events, and community engagement efforts each year. Outreach performances constitute much of this output, along with solo and chamber recitals in area churches and concert halls. The organization also sponsors a Winners' Concert for musicians recently accepted onto the Astral roster; salon events in homes or other private venues; and the "Astral at Dizengoff" series, which pairs live music with specially curated hors d'oeuvres and cocktails at a local restaurant. Should artists pursue their own performance initiatives—independently from any other management company—Astral will assist them with contacting presenters, negotiating contracts, and marketing. With these varied concert experiences comes the potential to unearth new collaborative opportunities. Double bassist Xavier Foley and violinist Eunice Kim, for example, first played together at an Astral community concert, where they discovered their mutual passion for collaborative improvisation and have continued to tour together.

As Astral has enlarged its role in Philadelphia, it has simultaneously increased its national reputation among potential artists and concert presenters. Part of that effort is supported by a booking service through which interested venues can solicit a particular artist or ensemble. When requests are submitted, Astral will negotiate the contract and details of the event. Astral today organizes more than 80 concerts annually via its booking service, and Executive Director Julia Rubio is considering hiring additional staff to manage the relevant logistics, finances, and paperwork for this branch of the Astral program.

While Astral's chief goal has always been to help young artists, part of Wilson's original vision was to contribute to the artistic culture of Philadelphia. Both missions go hand-in-hand for Astral: if an artist is going to learn how to engage effectively with the

public, it follows that the organization must provide meaningful experiences that contribute positively to the surrounding community. Astral musicians make frequent visits to area schools, disability care centers, and retirement homes, where they combine live performance with commentary on their repertoire. In the retirement community alone, Astral maintains ongoing engagement events in fifteen locations. The “Classroom Classics” series, meanwhile, ensures an ongoing role for the arts in public education, connecting students with music in nine area schools. With each event comes the opportunity for artists to foster their skills as educators and communicators, expertise they can apply to future outreach and audience engagement efforts.

Despite the value these endeavors bring to the public, Astral’s primary focus remains inward, developing its roster of early-career artists. Its application process speaks to the organization’s fundamental goals of helping musicians execute innovative projects that connect their performance expertise with new audiences. When players audition, they interview with the Astral staff to discuss their own creative ideas and long-term professional aspirations. The organization seeks musicians who not only can speak articulately about their career trajectory, but can also communicate with audiences about their work. Since most artists stay on the roster for just four to five years, it is imperative that they come to Astral ready to take advantage of the numerous mentoring services the outfit provides.

To that end, Astral’s goal of fusing career guidance with high-level community concerts has only strengthened since its founding. Every event that Astral orchestrates is attended either by a staff member or a volunteer “Astral envoy” charged with monitoring the success of a given performance. At the end of the year, artists meet individually with the full Astral team for a professional development session devoted to evaluating the previous season

and to brainstorming strategies for future initiatives. By the time they leave the roster, artists are backed by an extensive network of professional contacts and numerous community engagement experiences, which positions them well for a lifelong career in the arts.

Time to Reevaluate

While Astral’s original mission remains strong, like many arts organizations, it has faced the challenge of declining popular interest in classical music. Branding remains a significant obstacle, particularly given that Astral falls somewhere between the categories of concert presenter, educational institution, community service organization, and artist representative. One of the organization’s chief goals is to present a clear and distinct public image that captures both the extent of its engagement programs and its commitment to mentoring young artists.

For Julia Rubio, an ideal campaign would position Astral as a “leadership incubator” akin to the start-up incubators and accelerators in Silicon Valley. Many corporations offer management workshops and professional development sessions for employees in leadership roles, targeting the same entrepreneurial and communication skills that musicians need to succeed in a competitive market. Rubio wants Astral to offer similar services to young artists, cultivating their business acumen, presentation skills, and knowledge of event planning to complement their expertise as performers.

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Astral has already begun to promote these skills via professional development meetings with individual artists. During these sessions, staff and performers discuss how to develop an artistic identity based on repertoire, concert experiences, interdisciplinary collaboration, and other creative means. The discussions are always thought-provoking, but situating them in reality requires creative thinking. Astral does not have a large enough staff to develop radically different programs for every artist. Moreover, these brainstorming sessions must be matched with community engagement efforts, since Astral ultimately maintains visibility through its concert offerings and outreach initiatives. Its donor base, in particular, is likely to respond favorably to events that benefit the surrounding community.

Achieving a high degree of visibility is a major hurdle for Astral, which has not gained the broad community awareness it seeks. This is due, in part, to a core element in its business model: although Astral's roster comprises artists of the highest caliber, most of the musicians are relatively unknown when they join the organization. This makes it difficult to compete with other Philadelphia-based institutions, such as The Philadelphia Orchestra and the Curtis Institute of Music, both of which routinely present distinguished guest artists. In a city like Philadel-

phia, where more than one hundred public events and attractions take place each day, Astral is constantly considering new ways to capture public attention. The organization has deliberately maintained a relatively small roster in order to provide high-quality concerts and targeted career support for its artists, yet these factors can also present barriers to building

audiences and cultivating new donors. Further, many of Astral's current grants are nearing the end of their renewal cycles, and there is some concern among the staff about how to engage new funders for the long term. Quite often, the donors Astral seeks have already committed their support to larger musical arts organizations. Those donors do not always realize that Astral is both supporting professional artists (not students) and that Astral mentors musicians who frequently audition for—and solo with—professional orchestras.

In this competitive environment, Astral's aim is to offer more innovative and inviting programming that will help it stand out in a crowded arts market. Rubio is focusing her efforts on Astral's various concert series, acknowledging that the organization's recent 25th anniversary should inspire careful reflection on the Astral brand. She perceives this moment as an ideal opportunity to reevaluate Astral's programming in ways that harmonize with its vision of preparing young artists for tomorrow's careers. Merely expanding the organization's current series will likely not be enough, particularly if new events take the form of traditional solo and chamber recitals. Instead, Astral wants to prepare artists for changes in the music industry over the next decade, and its staff embraces the opportunity to shape those developments.

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The NextGen Series

One of Astral's most recent aims has been to help artists develop personal relationships with audiences. Whereas concerts of classical music traditionally emphasize a passive experience with listeners, many of today's concertgoers are intrigued by the chance to meet performers and to understand the processes by which their music is made. This is why Astral insists that its musicians' artistic personalities be on display for audiences, and Rubio's team is developing workshops for artists to discuss creative methods of engaging new patrons. Among the organization's

guiding principles are six “success indicators” for musicians, as outlined in its 2018–20 strategic plan (see **Appendix 1**).

To achieve these goals, Astral has begun curating events that engage demographics beyond patrons of traditional chamber recitals, and the staff hopes to expand this programming branch in the coming years. Astral initiated that expansion in late 2016 when it started to explore novel ways to appeal to young working professionals. The result was a campaign, informally titled the “NextGen” series, which targeted the next generation of concertgoers. Among the earliest event ideas was the pairing of food and music in a number of Philadelphia’s dining establishments. Despite some previously unsuccessful attempts to establish an ongoing program in restaurants, the food-with-music concept was secured—almost by accident—in 2016. Kristen Golia, Astral’s director of institutional advancement, was a regular patron of the popular Abe Fisher restaurant in downtown Philadelphia. On one of her routine visits, Golia asked the general manager, Brian Kane, if he could suggest local restaurants that would be interested in hosting live musicians. Abe Fisher shares a kitchen with the neighboring Dizengoff hummus café, and both are owned by the CookNSolo restaurant group. Kane proposed the question of live music to his supervisors and, much to Golia’s surprise, returned with an offer to allow Astral to use the space at Dizengoff.

The first concerts, which took place in early 2017, were informal performances by Astral musicians. Within a year, “Astral at Dizengoff” had evolved into a full-fledged series, with three concerts featuring solo and duo performances by Astral musicians. Brian Kane, meanwhile, observed the success of these events and offered to expand the series to Abe Fisher, helping to organize more formal events in a fine-dining establishment. The collective series today shows no signs of slowing. For most events

at Dizengoff, the admission price is \$35, and Astral manages virtually every logistical detail, including scheduling, marketing, and ticketing. For more formal dinners, Abe Fisher takes on a leadership role, offering a custom-designed, multi-course menu themed after a distinct regional cuisine. The restaurant also oversees advertising and admission, while Astral appoints artists to provide suitable music. These specialty events have a higher price point of \$85 per person and offer roughly 120 attendees an opportunity to experience the culinary and musical milieu of diverse cultures. In April 2018, for instance, Abe Fisher’s Spanish-themed menu was accompanied by Spanish music from an Astral guitar and cello duo.

Another vehicle to target new concertgoers is an upcoming, open-air “block party” in collaboration with local radio station WRTI. One of the station’s hosts will play master of ceremonies while attendees enjoy performances by Astral musicians; small bites and refreshments will be provided at no charge. The program includes a sampling of contemporary music, including “beatboxing flute,” original compositions by one of Astral’s double bassists, and a new work for cello and electronics funded by the organization’s Micro-Commissioning Program. Astral’s goal in hosting the “Midtown Village Block Party,” as well as the Astral at Dizengoff series, is to change the paradigm of conventional concert music. Artistic Director Dan Visconti hopes that, by marketing an “experience” rather than a single artist or ensemble, Astral will be better positioned to attract contemporary audiences and to provide its musicians with novel performing opportunities. Visconti believes that artists today need to rethink the concept of live music, and the budding NextGen series is one means of accomplishing this.

Evaluating New Initiatives

In order to move forward with its vision of innovative programming, Astral must determine ways to measure the success of its pilot events. While there is no one-

size-fits-all approach to evaluation, every concert has the potential to benefit audiences and artists in different ways. For Visconti, the most important

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outcome is that artists acquire something meaningful from the performances they give. This can happen when artists present repertoire in creative ways or get to know audiences in more intimate venues. Additional possibilities may come from collaboration with non-musicians, including opportunities to connect

music with visual art, dance, or food. Still, Astral must keep a close eye on audience engagement and attendance numbers. To that end, staff members routinely administer surveys on-site to gather audience ideas for improvement.

These evaluations have shown that the most successful projects involve smaller venues that permit face-to-face interaction between musicians and attendees. Within this framework, each offering must be carefully tailored to a particular venue and clientele. One of Astral's other initiatives in the NextGen program, for example, has been a series of concerts in high-rise apartment complexes. The performances carry no admission charge, and residents are free to come and go at any time. While these events have furthered Astral's expansion into nontraditional spaces, the setting has not proven to be ideal for public engagement. Merely setting up chairs in a common area does not guarantee that passersby will sit down for a performance; residents often view this type of event as background music. Since concerts are provided exclusively for tenants, they are unlikely to grow future audiences or generate "buzz" in the Philadelphia community.

In contrast, the Dizengoff and Abe Fisher events have thrived because many of the patrons who enjoy fine dining are also regular concert attendees, and matching cuisine with music based on nationality or culture tends to be an attractive pairing at Abe Fisher. Nonetheless, challenges do arise, and some of Astral's earliest Abe Fisher events did not go as smoothly as planned: the kitchen was backed up on multiple evenings, while guests talked loudly throughout the performance on other occasions. The latter problem is especially difficult to remedy, and Astral is currently determining whether it can restructure the Abe Fisher experience to minimize audience interruptions. Should attendees be expected to limit their conversation while musicians are performing, or would that be incompatible with the dining experience? The Astral staff acknowledges that curating nontraditional events might call for a change in old models of concert hall decorum. As the Abe Fisher program expands, Astral's staff and artists must continue to examine the degree to which the series can and should align with conventional conceptions of live music.

Looking Ahead

With the Dizengoff and Abe Fisher concerts now a popular fixture in the season, Astral is looking to expand its programming. The leadership is especially concerned about how to brand new events most effectively, including the question of whether future initiatives should be given a special title. Within the organization, staff members refer to the Dizengoff and high-rise events as part of the NextGen series, designed to target a more youthful crowd. Yet, that name has not been used in publicity because the "NextGen" label might ultimately limit the demographic

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makeup of the audience. Astral knows that using too many headings to describe its concert series makes its mission appear diffuse. Visconti further recognizes the risk of giving innovative concerts a distinct title: if the initiative is unsuccessful, it will appear like a failed attempt at a new concert series. He prefers simply to fold new events into the upcoming season, introducing moderate changes that foster organic development over time.

Rubio shares similar concerns when launching any new program. She prefers to start with small, one-off events that are less costly and that can be easily restructured based on audience feedback. For instance, when the Dizengoff series began, its first attendees were invited directly by Astral employees and artists. This allowed the organization

"We have to start with something that is bite-sized, then see if we can scale it."

- Julia Rubio

to match its audience to the venue and to improve the likelihood of positive reception. If the event did not go well, it would be easy to modify the next attempt or cancel the initiative entirely, without impacting Astral's broader public image. Rubio likened

these pilot events to a "beta testing phase" that permits innovation and risk-taking. This aspect is particularly appealing to both donors and the Astral board, she explained, since launching new projects on a smaller scale—often in a more intimate venue—minimizes the financial impact if the event is unsuccessful. "We have to start with something that is bite-sized," Rubio explained, "then see if we can scale it."

There are disadvantages to the "pilot" approach, however, when one considers Astral's hopes to increase its average audience size, public image, and donor base in the coming years. Although concerts in small settings have the benefit of connecting

artists more closely with attendees, it is difficult to publicize the Astral brand—a necessary component to recruiting future musicians—with concerts that cater to only a handful of patrons at a time. Vera Wilson is particularly aware that specialized events like those at Dizengoff rarely translate into long-term audience growth, since these concerts cater to select patrons who may not otherwise choose to attend a chamber recital. Furthermore, Astral's management has learned that donors are more likely to support performances that have a significant impact on the community, which makes it increasingly necessary to engage larger audiences.

That is one reason why Astral's upcoming season includes the highly advertised and much anticipated "block party," and the organization is currently planning collaborations with other renowned performers and ensembles. Several artists have already suggested projects that will unite contemporary music with visual art and dance. Matched to the proper venue, these programs have the potential to target new demographics, develop artists' competency with audience engagement, broaden Astral's impact in the Philadelphia community, and enhance the organization's public image.

Given the right circumstances, Rubio believes that such projects might lead to more significant changes for Astral as a whole. Virtually no idea is off-limits—in fact, the Astral staff is exploring a crucial question of whether the organization needs to maintain a full season of traditional concerts at all. Rubio expressed that, given its role as a mentoring institution for 21st-century artists, Astral is poised to lead the way in innovative arts programming. Would Astral be best served by "sunsetting" traditional concert programs altogether and focusing on programming ideas geared toward nontraditional venues?

There are various obstacles that Astral must acknowledge when designing new programs. In many cases, Rubio pointed out, convincing the board to support a particularly inventive idea poses its own challenge, since there is always the risk that a given event will lose money or fail to attract attendees. At the same time, boards are typically eager for new ideas. It is essential, therefore, that the leadership produce an explanation for why an endeavor is worthwhile, what kind of audience it will reach, how it will benefit artists, and how it will be funded. This is one reason that small pilot events are appealing, since Astral can test a new idea without committing significant financial and staff resources.

Adopting another perspective, Leslie Johnson, Astral's director of concerts and artist services, is particularly attentive to the scope and balance of the organization's activities on the whole. In Johnson's view, if artists only cater to small

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venues, young audiences, or wealthier clientele, the organization will limit opportunities to grow its reputation. Astral aims to present concert experiences with a diverse mix of chamber and solo music, instrumentation, and artist representation, which means the staff must weigh any new programs against the trajectory of its full concert season. Today, a typical season includes eight chamber and solo

recitals; six "salon" concerts, hosted in private homes, with cocktails and food; three performances on the Dizengoff series (along with several concerts at Abe Fisher); and a limited number of ad hoc events, like the upcoming block party. Johnson

routinely assesses whether Astral is offering too many traditional recitals and if it is providing ample opportunities for audiences to meet artists face-to-face. Do musicians have sufficient outlets to share their own perspectives and identities, and are they able to act on creative ideas? For Johnson, there is an ongoing and delicate negotiation at Astral between inventive programming, artist growth, audience diversification, and community engagement.

Ultimately, any new initiative must promote Astral's mission of advancing young artists' professional growth via creative performing opportunities, outreach, and entrepreneurship. The organization's primary focus is not simply to increase concert attendance, but to give artists the proper tools to connect with 21st-century communities. Almost daily, staff members are reimagining how they can help artists navigate the modern landscape for professional musicians, all while catering to audiences with wide-ranging preferences and expectations.

Fueled by this vision, Astral is discussing how to expand its offering of creative events, in the service of goals vital to the organization's sustainability. These objectives include:

1. maximizing value for artists by giving them entrepreneurial experiences and opportunities to oversee creative programming;
2. increasing public visibility as an organization that fosters imaginative music-making and provides thoughtful, engaging events;
3. establishing new audiences in nontraditional places without losing support from more conservative concertgoers; and
4. funneling activities into a clear brand that will allow Astral to compete with—and stand apart from—other professional music organizations.

Help Astral design the programming—as well as appropriate marketing language—for its next season of nontraditional musical offerings. Begin your planning process by reviewing Astral's current season in **Appendix 2**. Then, brainstorm two or three categories of nontraditional concert experiences, which Astral should consider in order to achieve the organizational goals outlined above. You do not need to identify specific venues in Philadelphia; instead, focus your discussion on general categories of performing spaces and types of concert experiences. Choose one of these events and prepare a proposal that could be given to Executive Director Rubio, which addresses these questions:

- What differentiates your event from a traditional recital or concert? Is it similar to any events in Astral's current season?
- In what type of venue would it take place? How many performers would it require?
- Who is your target demographic? Would you seek a large or small audience? Does the setting promote personal interaction with the artists?
- How would you market the event to the target audience? Consider an appropriate title and advertising strategy.
- How would you convince your venue to host this event? What would the ticket price be (if any)? What is the benefit to the venue?
- How would you measure and evaluate the success of the event? What would a successful outcome look like?
- How would the event advance both artists and the community?
- Outline any significant logistical concerns and discuss how to prepare for those challenges. Would you begin with a small-scale “pilot” event that minimized financial risks?
- How would you explain your idea to more “conservative” supporters of classical music,

including defenders of the traditional concert season (these might include concertgoers, board members, and potential donors)?

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APPENDIX 1

Astral Artists' Success Indicators for 21st-Century Artistic Leaders and Touring Musicians



APPENDIX 2

Astral Artists' 2018–19 Concert Season

CENTER CITY CONCERTS

Center City Concerts feature Astral's brilliant artists in recital and chamber music performances. Be the first to hear classical music's rising stars.

2018 National Auditions Winners' Concert

Tuesday, October 9, 2018, 7:00pm

Perelman Theater, Kimmel Center for the Performing Arts

300 S. Broad Street, Philadelphia

The capstone of the 2018 National Auditions. Astral's newest artists debut at the Winners' Concert in a showcase of masterful artistry. Be the first to discover the finest rising-star classical musicians of their generation in the splendid surroundings of the Kimmel Center for the Performing Arts.

Zhenni Li, piano: "Debussy on the Orient Express"

Sunday, October 28, 2018, 3:00pm

American Philosophical Society, Benjamin Franklin Hall

427 Chestnut Street, Philadelphia

PERFORMING ARTISTS

Zhenni Li, piano

Matthew Cohen, viola

PROGRAM

Ludwig van Beethoven, *32 Variations in C minor*, WoO 80

Claude Debussy, *Selections from Préludes, Book II*

York Bowen, *Phantasy for Viola & Piano*, Op. 54

Issac Albéniz, *Navarra*

Samuel Syman, *World Premiere* (made possible by Astral's Micro-Commissioning program)

Modest Mussorgsky, *Pictures at an Exhibition*

Rolston String Quartet

Saturday, December 8, 2018, 7:30pm

Church of the Holy Trinity, Rittenhouse Square

1904 Walnut Street, Philadelphia

PROGRAM

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, *String Quartet No. 18 in A Major*, K. 464

György Ligeti, *String Quartet No. 1*

Ludwig van Beethoven, *String Quartet No. 13 in B-flat Major*, Op. 130

Danbi Um, violin

Sunday, January 27, 2019, 3:00pm

American Philosophical Society, Benjamin Franklin Hall

427 Chestnut Street, Philadelphia

PERFORMING ARTISTS

Danbi Um, violin
Orion Weiss, piano

PROGRAM

Erich Wolfgang Korngold, *Much Ado About Nothing Suite*, Op. 11
George Enescu, *Violin Sonata No. 3 in A Major*, Op. 25
Richard Strauss, *Violin Sonata in E-flat Major*, Op. 18
Ernest Bloch, *Avodah*
Jenő Hubay, *Scènes de la Csárda*, No. 3, Op. 18
Fritz Kreisler, *Viennese Rhapsodic Fantasetta*

Timotheos Petrin, cello

Sunday, February 24, 2019, 3:00pm
American Philosophical Society, Benjamin Franklin Hall
427 Chestnut Street, Philadelphia

PERFORMING ARTISTS

Timotheos Petrin, cello
Maria Ioudenitch, violin
Chelsea Wang, piano

PROGRAM

Claude Debussy, *Cello Sonata in D minor*, L. 135
Johann Sebastian Bach, *Sonata in G minor for Viola da Gamba & Harpsichord*, BWV 1029
Riho Esko Maimets, *World premiere for piano trio* (made possible by Astral's Micro-Commissioning program)
Igor Stravinsky, *Suite Italienne* from "Pulcinella"
Olivier Messiaen, *Louange à l'Éternité de Jésus*
Sergei Prokofiev, *Cello Sonata in C Major*, Op. 119

Viktor Valkov, piano

Sunday, March 24, 2019, 3:00pm
American Philosophical Society, Benjamin Franklin Hall
427 Chestnut Street, Philadelphia

PROGRAM

Claude Debussy, *Selections from Préludes, Books I & II*
Dimitar Nenov, *Miniatures*
Béla Bartók, *Out of Doors*, Sz. 81
Arnold Schoenberg, *Six Little Piano Pieces*, Op. 19
Sergei Prokofiev, *Piano Sonata No. 8 in B-flat Major*, Op. 84

String Consort: Brahms, Sibelius & Mustonen

Saturday, May 4, 2019, 7:30pm
Church of the Holy Trinity, Rittenhouse Square
1904 Walnut Street, Philadelphia

This exploration of strings in varying numbers begins with the String Sextet No. 2, characterized by a richness of sonority unrivaled in Brahms's chamber music writing. Sibelius's "Voces Intimae" string quartet is just that—an intimate exchange of the string voices. The concert culminates with Olli Mustonen's second *Nonet* (two quartets and double bass), a thrilling work that brings the season to a close in an explosive *vivacissimo*!

PERFORMING ARTISTS

Katie Hyun, violin

Ayane Kozasa, viola

Zlatomir Fung, cello

Thomas Mesa, cello

Xavier Foley, double bass

2018 National Audition Winners

PROGRAM

Johannes Brahms, *String Sextet No. 2 in G Major*, Op. 36

Jean Sibelius, *String Quartet "Voces Intimae,"* Op. 56

Olli Mustonen, *Nonet for Strings No. 2*

ASTRAL CIRCLE

A distinct classical music experience in Philadelphia, the Astral Circle is a series of elegant salon performances in beautiful homes and venues in and around the city. Enjoy drinks and hors d'oeuvres before the concerts, then share a delectable dinner with fellow music lovers, and be among the first to meet the newest members of the Astral roster. Enjoy one or all six—each Circle is a one-of-a-kind experience.

Beomjae Kim, flute & Sejoon Park, piano

October 13, 2018

Vera Quartet

November 17, 2018

Eric Huckins, horn & Rachel Lee Hall, harp

December 1, 2018

Ronaldo Rolim, piano

March 2, 2019

Natalia Kazaryan, piano

April 13, 2019

Antonina Styczén, flute

May 11, 2019

Space is limited at the Astral Circle, with priority given to Grand Subscription holders. \$90 per person, per Astral Circle evening.

ASTRAL AT DIZENGOFF

Join Astral as we slip out of the concert hall for a cozy evening of classics and cocktails. Astral artists curate this contemporary listening experience side-by-side with the celebrated cuisine of Dizengoff and Abe Fisher.

Eric Huckins, horn & Rachel Lee Hall, harp

November 29, 2018

Nikki & Timothy Chooi, violins

March 28, 2019

Antonina Styczén

May 9, 2019

ASTRAL AND WRTI BLOCK PARTY

Saturday, September 15, 2018, 3:00-5:00pm

1213 Walnut Street, Philadelphia

Astral and WRTI team up for a block party in Midtown Village, emceed by WRTI host Debra Lew Harder. Enjoy picnic fare and performances by Astral artists including the Philadelphia premier of Vivian Fung's *Humanoid* for cello and electronics.

PERFORMING ARTISTS

Annie Wu, flute

Christine Lamprea, cello

Xavier Foley, double bass

Debra Lew Harder, emcee



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