

ESM

NOTES



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▶ FROM THE COMMUNITY



To my fellow Eastman community,

It's my honor to welcome you. But why me? Well, as it turns out, I'm also honored to be receiving a Distinguished Alumni Award, and I'd like to share a few reflections.

Growing up, I knew early on that I wanted a life in music. I initially imagined applying to college as a composer, but along the way, my identity as a violist took the lead, and I set my sights on Eastman.

People often say that well-rounded music schools experience waves of interest in certain areas. Sometimes students become deeply curious about historical performance. Other times, campuses overflow with bands writing, recording, and touring their own music. I've also seen programs emphasize arts administration, empowering students to build and run their own organizations. These trends unfold over decades.

When I was at Eastman, the energy seemed centered on new music. Students were hungry to work with composers. Musica Nova was a hotbed of inspiration, programming the newest and wildest repertoire imaginable. Ossia New Music had just formed, giving students the chance to produce concerts from the ground up. New music was pouring out of Eastman, and I loved it.

Looking back, I recognize an outrageous amount of personal luck: being in the right place (Eastman), at the right time (1998–2004), surrounded by extraordinary artists and doers. Eastman challenged me to pursue my musical interests earnestly and without hesitation, offering both a deep musical foundation and the tools to navigate a creative life.

With that knowledge, I learned how to build ensembles with clear artistic missions, create structures to support them, and continue evolving as an artist.

As I was finishing my degree, Ossia sent Eastman performers to a festival in Mexico. I was fortunate to be selected alongside three dear friends, and the experience was so powerful that the four of us decided to form the JACK Quartet. More than 21 years later, the quartet is still going strong and touring around the world.

I'm fairly certain I've read every issue of *NOTES* since graduating. For years, fellow alumni and I have quizzed one another Jeopardy-style: "This Eastman alum just won a Grammy." Or, "These faculty members recently performed at Carnegie Hall." And now, somehow, I find myself in these pages, alongside my fellow JACK Quartet member, Christopher Otto '06E, '06.

Eastman is where I grew into the person and artist I am today. I don't feel especially worthy of distinction from my fellow alumni, because the reputation of this school, and the journeys of its graduates, are something we've all created together.

As you read the Eastman news ahead, I invite you to think about your relationship with it. Remember the adventures you shared with friends and teachers on these pages. Connect with the experiences of today's students. Imagine new futures for Eastman. We are all part of this family, and it is my greatest honor to welcome you to cherish it.

JOHN PICKFORD RICHARDS
'02E, '04E (MM)

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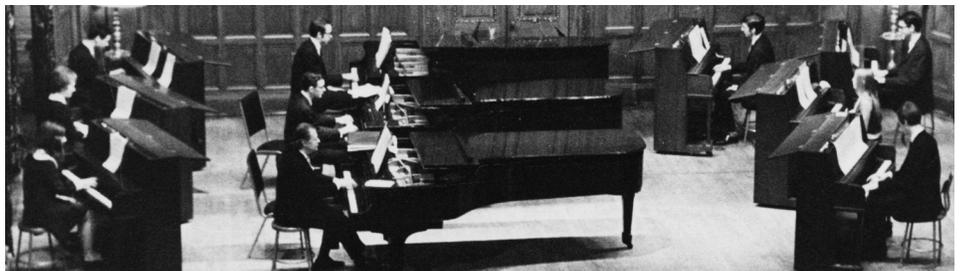
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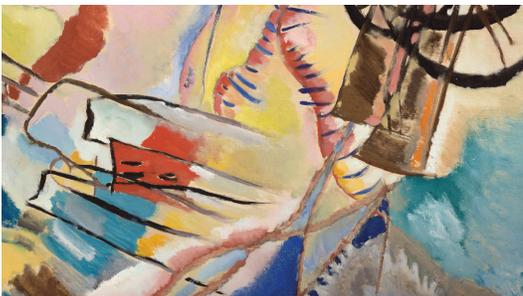


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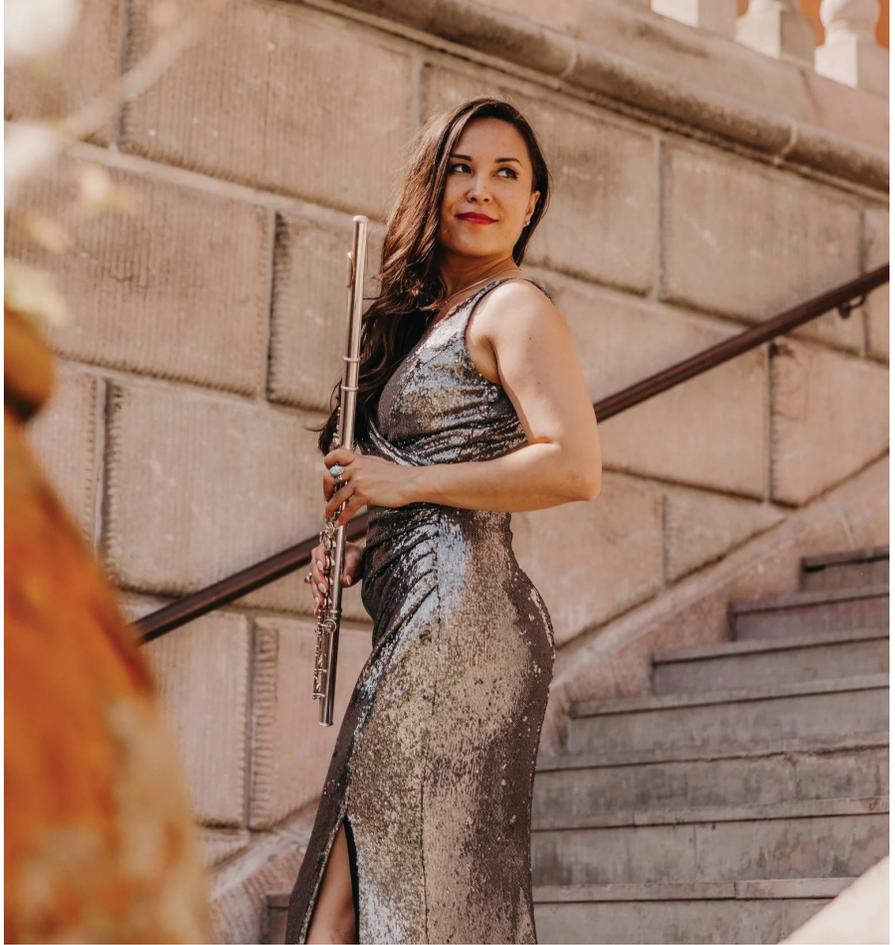
At the end of the 2025–2026 academic year, we say goodbye to more than 125 years of collective knowledge, experience, and musicianship.



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HARMONIZING HEALTH FOR MUSICIAN WELLNESS: THE UNIVERSITY OF ROCHESTER AND EASTMAN MERGE MUSIC AND MEDICINE

BY ANNA REGUERO, JESSICA KAUFMAN, AND JONATHAN HEATH

▼ For musicians, there are times when beautiful musicianship is a fight between the music and the body. Pianists contend with forearm pain from playing on weight-responsive keys; violinists suffer neck alignment issues tied to their playing position; flutists surrender the body's symmetry by holding their instrument out to one side. When pain flares, it can be more than just a physical battle.

Despite these challenges, music can also be a powerful tool for healing. Research in neuroscience and medicine shows that music can influence brain activity, emotional regulation, movement, and recovery, shaping how people experience pain, stress, and illness. For musicians, this dual reality—music as both physical demand and therapeutic force—places their art at the center of a growing body of scientific inquiry that connects music, mind, and medicine.

For the last 40 years, the University of Rochester and Eastman have been at the forefront of treating musicians similarly to elite athletes, while also recognizing the broader role music plays in mental and neurological health.



That work includes on-campus support from the University Health Service (UHS), such as physical therapy and psychological services, which helped fuel some of the earliest performing arts medicine research in the 1980s and 1990s. Over time, Eastman has expanded those efforts through courses and workshops that teach posture, alignment, injury prevention, and strategies to sustain the physical demands of intensive musical training.

In 2019, Eastman partnered with the University's Medical Center (URMC) to launch Eastman Performing Arts Medicine (EPAM), an initiative that further integrated medical professionals and services with Eastman's artists to promote health, research, and clin-

ical access. Gaelen McCormick '92E, was named as head of the program from the onset, appointed to serve as a bridge between Eastman and URMC. In 2024, EPAM was designated an official center, and University of Rochester Trustee Evans Lam '83, '84S (MBA), committed \$1 million to endow a new research position for the center called the Evans Lam Research Professor of Music and Medicine. In November 2025, Dr. David M. Greenberg was appointed to fill that role and will begin his tenure in March 2026.

Such integration is possible because Eastman is part of a major research university with a leading medical school, all within Rochester's city limits.

PROFESSOR OF MUSIC AND MEDICINE

When Dr. David M. Greenberg arrives in Rochester this March to begin his role as the inaugural Evans Lam Research Professor of Music and Medicine, he will be doing more than occupying a title. Greenberg embodies a rare duality. On one hand, he is deeply analytical: a cognitive psychologist and neuroscientist steeped in pattern recognition, artificial intelligence, and rigorous data. On the other, he is a musician—a saxophonist trained in improvisational jazz at Rutgers University’s Mason Gross School of the Arts. He often frames the connection between these two aspects of himself in philosophical terms: “My cerebral life is mainly as a scientist, but in my heart and soul, I’m a musician.” To him, the act of discovery in music and in science are the same impulse: probing, listening, revealing.

This fusion lies at the core of his appointment. As the first professor of music and medicine, Greenberg steps into a role with a beautifully simple title yet much deeper ambitions. He will serve not only as associate professor, but also as director of research. He’ll hold joint appointments in the Departments of Neuroscience and Health Humanities & Bioethics at the University of Rochester’s Delmonte Institute of Neuroscience, and in Music Theory at Eastman.

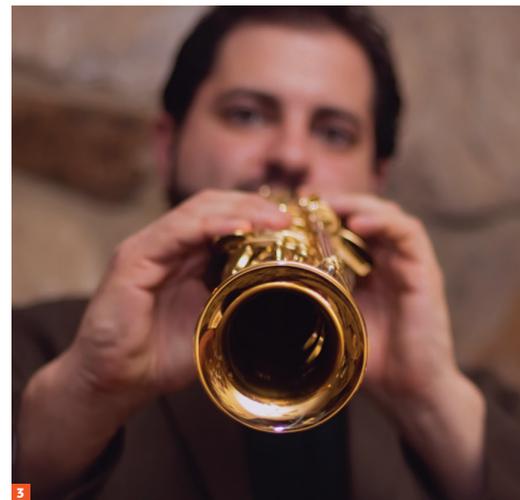
Greenberg himself expressed gratitude for Lam’s vision and support, calling the role “a rare opportunity—unimaginable just a few decades ago—to advance a truly scientific

Greenberg imagines Rochester becoming a global hub for music-and-medicine research —attracting collaborators, scholars, and clinicians who are working at this intersection.

understanding of music and its therapeutic potential, and to translate those discoveries into health innovations that will improve lives for generations to come.”

At Eastman and EPAM, Greenberg sees enormous opportunity. He talks about music not just as art or recreation, but as precision medicine—music that is tailored to the individual, their neurocognitive profile, their emotional state, even their diagnosis.

“One of my biggest challenges will be saying no to things,” he admits. “There are so many interesting types of research studies that it’s truly infinite.” With his background in machine learning, artificial intelligence,



[1] EPAM brings musicians to waiting rooms and music therapists, like Molly Pow, MT-BC, LCAT (left), directly to patients to support healing. [2] Dr. David M. Greenberg, who begins his position in Rochester in March 2026, is also a [3] saxophonist trained in improvisational jazz.

big data, and rigorous scientific methods, he’s well positioned to chart a research strategy that spans everything from mental health to social medicine—even spiritual medicine.

Greenberg likes that “music and medicine” is unambiguous. To him, it signals a clear mission. From that simplicity, he intends to stretch into many interconnected domains: mental health, brain health, social medicine, and more. He wants to understand music not just in traditional terms—genre, tempo, “happy” or “sad”—but in its microscopic acoustic details, how those shape our brain’s response, and how we can harness that knowledge therapeutically.

His arrival has the potential to deepen and

freeze. But knowing this isn’t enough—we need to understand more about how this happens. Dr. Greenberg is exactly the right person to collaborate with our incredible community of researchers, artists, and educators to grow the field of music and medicine.”

Greenberg imagines Rochester becoming a global hub for music-and-medicine research—attracting collaborators, scholars, and clinicians who are working at this intersection. He wants to lead interdisciplinary efforts, secure large-scale funding, and publish robust, high-impact studies.

But Greenberg is not just after data—he’s after meaning, memory, healing. His work is deeply humanistic. He wants to build bridges: between musician and scientist, between hospital and concert hall, between past and future. His appointment marks a milestone for Eastman, for EPAM, and for the broader field of music in health. He brings rare credentials: cutting-edge computational research, proven leadership in both industry and academia, and a deeply personal musical story.

“Dr. Greenberg is uniquely qualified with his varied experience in neuroscience, psychology, and his personal background as a musician,” shares Kate Sheeran, Joan and Martin Messinger Dean at the Eastman School of Music. “His appointment, and the incredible research it will bring, will have a deep and lasting impact on healthcare and the ways we can improve people’s lives.”

As Greenberg prepares to embark on this journey, he carries with him a simple, profound belief—that music is not just an art form, but a transformative science. And in Rochester, he may well have found the perfect place to bring those things together.

GATHERING THE DATA

If Rochester is that place, it's because of the pioneering work of those who laid the groundwork Dr. Greenberg will build on. Eastman and the University's progressive programs in musician health and wellness are due to the longtime efforts of physician Ralph Manchester, the former vice provost and director of UHS at the University of Rochester, who retired in June 2024. Manchester arrived in Rochester in 1983 after his residency training and took a position with the UHS, which combined patient care and teaching. Shortly after he started, a physician position at Eastman became available.

Like Greenberg, Manchester is also a musician—he grew up playing trumpet and euphonium in high school and remembered how he got a bloody mouth while playing in marching band with braces. He became interested in the unique challenge of treating musicians. At Eastman, he encountered students who were struggling with upper extremity (arm and hand) problems, vocal issues, and performance anxiety. And there was no standard of care to draw on when treating them.

“I realized that we had the opportunity to study a defined population. We know who an Eastman student is, we know what instrument they're majoring in, and that they have prepaid access to come into the health service for any kind of health problem they have. So, we have a good capture of what's going on.”

By reviewing Eastman patient charts, Manchester and his colleagues generated incidence data to understand injury prevalence by instrument and gender. For instance, they found that for every 100 musicians, 8.5 on average develop a performance-rated problem each academic year at a rate that is twice as high for women. And certain instrumentalists are more prone to injury, such as violinists and pianists. But organists, who press keys that aren't weight-sensitive, have a significantly lower injury rate than pianists. The instrumentalists with the highest rate of injury? Harpists. But since there are relatively few harpists, it's harder to generalize about the cause. Injury rates spike in September and April, when students return to Eastman from the summer and right before juries, respectively.

“As more data became available, it became more obvious that you can't just expect someone to keep their arm in a fairly weird position for six or eight hours a day and have the fingers do amazing things and think that everything will be fine,” he acknowledged.



PREVENTING INJURY

When a professional athlete gets hurt, they have a cadre of doctors, athletic trainers, physical therapists, psychologists, and other therapies at their disposal. They also have contracted limits on practice times to limit injury, among other preventative measures. That's why in the early 2000s, Eastman began developing injury prevention services on campus for its musician “athletes.”

In the case of musicians, “what they get is a physical therapist who sees them after the fact, when they're already at a point where they can't play,” says Susanne Callan-Harris, one of Eastman's two on-site physical therapists through UHS. Although all students can access physical therapy, thanks to the advantageously structured University health plan that covers virtually unlimited sessions and other specialist appointments for only a \$10 copay, the challenge of musician health at Eastman has consistently been in reaching the students before they get injured.

Callan-Harris and Eastman's UHS team continue reimagining the school's wellness initiatives to reach more students. Callan-Harris goes into first-year colloquium classes, and guests have been brought in to discuss wellness-specific practices. Wellness activities and fairs are offered throughout the

academic year. There is a voluntary “Ergonomics Training Intensive,” a four-module workshop. Students can take Alexander Technique, a posture-focused method to alleviate strain, and yoga, which helps students move joints in new ways to help relieve tightness and increase limberness. Posted around the school are QR codes that direct students to warm-up and cool-down resources and exercises online before playing.

Additionally, EPAM, which collaborates with UHS on wellness efforts, offers free hearing screenings every month, “since it's not like a muscle, you can't recover it,” says McCormick. Special earplugs, which preserve hearing while playing or listening to music, are also available to students.

McCormick was uniquely qualified to lead as director of EPAM. An Eastman alumna, she played double bass with the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra for over 20 years before developing hearing loss and being diagnosed with Ménière's disease. She began a career shift into arts administration and nonprofit leadership and began volunteering at the hospital as a lobby musician. Her perspective on both sides of music and medicine has greatly aided in her role.

“Another way EPAM is involved in our community is serving performing artists in their wellness needs,” shares McCormick.

“Any musician with an injury which is impeding their ability to perform is able to call our hotline and be connected to one of our specialists, who will see them within 48 hours. This is quite unusual and an excellent service for musicians anywhere in the US.”

CRAFTING CUSTOM SOLUTIONS

Jack Earnhart '25E (MA), a recent graduate student in Eastman's Music Teaching and Learning department, now working towards his doctorate at the University of Rochester's School of Medicine & Dentistry, is focused on translational science—decoding performing arts medicine research into actionable advice for musicians and teachers. While at Eastman, he completed ergonomic research with support from the UR Health Lab and Dr. David Mitten's mentorship, and created ergonomic devices tailored to individual musicians' needs in collaboration with Callan-Harris.

Earnhart also brought his innovative adaptive brass mouthpiece-making business to Rochester, with a desire to extend manufacturing to custom adaptive devices, enhancing opportunities for musician wellness. Because instruments stress bodies in unnatural ways, there has been a market for devices that improve an instrument's ergonomics. Several adaptive devices for a variety of instruments are available to Eastman students through UHS's Ergonomics Lending Library.

But the devices for loan are generally one-size-fits-all, and “everyone's different,” says Earnhart. His business, The Earnhart Company, makes custom adaptive brass mouthpieces. He takes specific acoustic measurements from the player and, on computerized machinery, sculpts designer mouthpieces for his clients. Variables are isolated and controlled throughout player testing, a data-forward approach. It's a collaboration with the player since, he says, “you can theoretically make an acoustically ‘perfect’ mouthpiece-horn system, but when a player is added to the system, the equation becomes more difficult. Everybody plays the mouthpiece a little bit differently.”

The latest goal of UHS—with Earnhart's assistance—is to create custom adaptive devices for students. They already have scanning technology—called structured light scanning—a handheld device that takes measurements around the body, which are then uploaded to a computer. From there, the data can be used to prototype a device that fits “like a glove” to the patient, which is then printed on a 3D printer. The results so far have been astounding.

Eastman's investment in musician health has grown from early chart reviews and preventive workshops into an expansive network of clinical care, research, and innovation—and the arrival of Dr. Greenberg marks a new phase in that evolution. His appointment strengthens

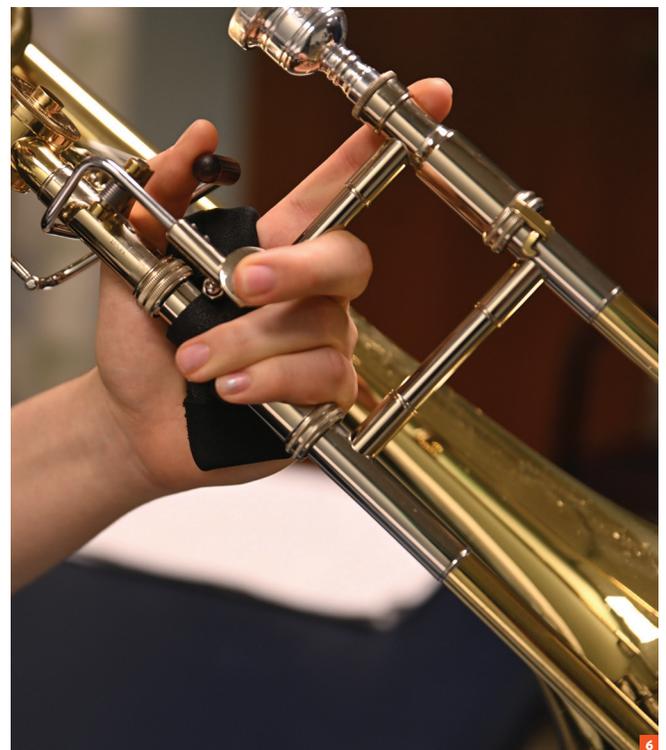
EPAM's scientific reach and deepens its connection to the lived experience of musicians, ensuring that future discoveries are rooted in rigorous data as well as practical need.

“This is an energizing moment for EPAM and for our entire community,” says Dean Kate Sheeran. “With Dr. Greenberg joining the team, we're stepping into a new era of possibility—one built on the years of thoughtful, collaborative work that have already strengthened EPAM from within. This combination provides the momentum to take significant steps in the future.”

As EPAM, UHS, and Eastman faculty continue developing tools, training, and research that support performers, Greenberg's work promises to bring new insight into how music affects the brain, the body, and well-being. Together, these efforts position Rochester as a leader not only in cultivating musical excellence, but in safeguarding the health of the artists who create it.

[4] From left to right: Ralph Manchester, MD; Susanne Callan-Harris, PT; EPAM Director Gaelen McCormick; and Jack Earnhart all spoke at the 2024 NYSSMA Conference.

[5] Jack Earnhart using a structured light scanning device to take measurements of a bass trombonist's hand. [6] A custom-made ergonomic device by Earnhart helps with weight and hand positioning on the bass trombone.



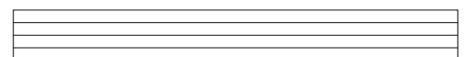


CARRYING EASTMAN FORWARD: Alumni Honored for Leadership in Music and Beyond

BY JONATHAN HEATH

At Eastman, distinction is never singular. It lives at the intersection of artistry and service, curiosity and leadership—expressed by alumni who carry the school’s values far beyond its classrooms and concert halls and translate them into impactful lives. This year’s recipients of Eastman alumni awards reflect that range, honoring graduates whose paths diverged in practice but converged in purpose.

[1] Joel Luks [2] Christopher Otto and [3] John Pickford Richards of the JACK Quartet. [4] Joel Luks engages with participants during an AI marketing conference in Houston, TX.



In June, Joel Luks '99E will receive the James S. Armstrong Alumni Service Award, established in 1990 to recognize alumni whose outstanding leadership, loyalty, and commitment have strengthened the University of Rochester in broad and lasting ways. John Pickford Richards '02E, '04E (MM) and Christopher Otto '06E, '06, founding members of the internationally acclaimed JACK Quartet, received the Distinguished Alumni Award during a presentation before their concert at the 92nd Street Y in New York City on March 20, bestowed by the dean upon alumni who embody the essence of the Eastman experience through exceptional musicianship, scholarship, and leadership in the arts.

“Presenting these awards is a moment of great pride for me,” says Kate Sheeran, Joan and Martin Messinger Dean at the Eastman School of Music. “Eastman alumni shape the musical world in extraordinary and enduring ways—as performers, educators, innovators, and leaders who understand that excellence and purpose are inseparable.”

Together, their stories offer a portrait of Eastman alumni as builders—of communities, institutions, and artistic futures.

Joel Luks '99E

Service as Creative Practice

For Joel Luks, music was the first place he ever truly felt at home. Born in Peru and raised in Canada, he found in music not only expression but connection. “Toronto became this place where I could explore different things, even though I had a little trouble with English at the time,” Luks reflects. “But music was the thing that made me feel like I belonged somewhere.”

This belief eventually led him to Eastman, a school he viewed as the summit of artistic aspiration. Before the internet made searching for information easy, Luks, an aspiring flutist, relied on the guidance of his teachers and recordings of the Eastman Wind Ensemble to determine that Eastman was right for him. Adding to that sense of possibility, one of his high school mentors was a friend of Bonita Boyd '71E, Eastman’s legendary professor of flute.

“Walking into Eastman for audition day was electric,” Luks recalls. “The nerves came in. I could see the energy in the room, so many people just hoping to get in, and honestly, at that point, I didn’t think I had a chance.”

When his acceptance letter arrived, Luks knew Eastman was where he belonged. Yet his



time in Rochester proved formative in ways that extended well beyond performance. As his interests broadened toward education, storytelling, and leadership, Luks began to imagine a creative life not defined by a single stage, but by reach. In the early days of Eastman’s arts leadership program, he was, as he puts it, “romanced by the concept of arts in education.”

“Marketing is very similar to music,” he says. “You look at the data, find the story, and interpret it in a way that connects people to something of value.” That philosophy carried him into a multifaceted career spanning arts initiatives, journalism, marketing, and higher education. Today, he is director of marketing and communications at the Hobby Center for the Performing Arts in Houston.

At the core of Luks’s career is a conviction that artistry carries responsibility. “I wish all artists would view their work as an element of community service,” he says. That ethos has guided decades of volunteer leadership, alumni advocacy, and mentorship—service rooted not in nostalgia, but in forward motion, and always with Eastman close in his thoughts.

Though Luks didn’t return to Eastman until his 20th reunion, he remains connected to so many that took the journey with him. “People often say, it’s not the school, it’s the people. I think it’s both that make you successful,” Luks affirms. “Friends from Eastman connect me to resources. I reach out to them when I need something, but I also reach out when *they* need something. There’s always a possibility to lift each other, whether it’s through our common work, our common mission, or our common struggles. Our lives in those four years unite us in this way.”

Humility and resilience, then, are key tenets of Luks’s work. Many of his strengths emerge on a personal level, where he seeks to unlock the full potential of those he works with—a skill he has developed across a diverse career. Shortly after completing his master’s degree at Rice University, Luks began his professional life as education director at Young Audiences of Houston, an arts-infused nonprofit. He later worked as a journalist for *CultureMap*, a digital publication spotlighting arts and culture throughout Texas. During this period, he deepened his expertise in marketing, became involved with the American Marketing Association and the Public Relations Society of America, and began participating in senior leadership conferences. He now draws on this broad background for his role on the University of Rochester’s Alumni Board, where he leads the marketing and communications committee.

Now reconnected to Eastman, that same ability to activate creativity and learning shows up in his commitment to the school and its graduates: teaching classes at Eastman’s Institute for Music Leadership, acting as a resource for musicians in Houston, and simply showing up—for recitals and moments that really matter. “I want to be more connected to Eastman,” he says. “I want to make a difference here.”

Receiving the James S. Armstrong Alumni Service Award, Luks notes, feels like an affirmation of Eastman’s broader imprint. “Eastman is always a part of you,” he says. “Whether you’re physically there or not.” He may have left professional performance behind, but Luks carries Eastman’s values forward in unexpected and enduring ways.

John Pickford Richards '02E, '04E (MM) and Christopher Otto '06E, '06

Building the Long Game

Violist John Pickford Richards and violinist Christopher Otto, founding members of the JACK Quartet, continue to perform on stages around the world, yet their experience aligns closely with Luks's in purpose and principle. For them, Eastman was not simply where careers began, it was where an artistic philosophy took shape. Both entered the school drawn by its intensity and possibility, and both found, within its student-driven culture, the freedom to experiment, collaborate, and take risks without guarantees.

Richards became immersed in a culture that demanded excellence and rewarded initiative, while Otto, balancing a dual degree in mathematics and music, remembers the defining permeability of the place itself. "One of the key things about my time at Eastman was the cross-pollination," Otto says. "Composers, performers, student projects—all mixing freely." That ecosystem gave rise to the JACK Quartet.

During a trip to perform at a festival in Mexico, Richards and Otto, along with violinist Ari Streisfeld '05E and cellist Kevin McFarland '04E, found themselves tackling a new work by German composer Helmut Lachenmann. "Of course, the four of us knew each other quite well, but we weren't by any means a string quartet," Richards recalls. "But at this festival, we became a string quartet and were treated like one. The experience was very powerful."

Upon their return, they took one initial from each musician to form the acronym JACK, and the name stuck. What began as a spontaneous collaboration—four students learning a new work from a handwritten manuscript—became an ensemble committed to patience, rigor, and fearless exploration.

Decades later, those principles remain central. Eastman had taught them not only how to play difficult music, but why sustained collaboration, slow development, and shared responsibility mattered. "To really investigate and develop new work takes years," Richards says; and they value that commitment more than short-lived accolades. Now structured as a nonprofit, JACK Quartet commissions new music, invests deeply in long-term collaborations, and prioritizes education and



mentorship alongside performance. For Otto, that model reflects lessons learned as a student. "The nonprofit allows us to bridge the gap between our idealistic vision and material reality," he explains.

JACK's accomplishments are remarkable. Twice nominated for a Grammy Award, the group has been awarded Musical America's 2019 Ensemble of the Year Award, New Music USA's Trailblazer Award, and an Avery Fisher Career Grant, among other honors. They serve as quartet-in-residence at the Mannes School of Music at The New School; have collaborated closely with Philip Glass, Caroline Shaw, and the Kronos Quartet; performed on major stages worldwide, including Carnegie Hall, the Sydney Opera House, and London's Wigmore Hall; and produced or appeared on numerous recordings.

But just as importantly, both Richards and Otto have remained committed to teaching and mentorship—passing forward the values first modeled at Eastman. Whether coaching student ensembles, serving as artists-in-residence, or working closely with

young composers, they view education not as an obligation but as a continuation of the collaborative culture that shaped them. In that way, Eastman is not simply their past; it is an active presence in how they work, lead, and listen today.

Along the way, Richards, Otto, and the evolving membership of the JACK Quartet (which now includes violinist Austin Wulliman and cellist Jay Campbell) have brought innovative music and theatrical performances to

[5] The JACK Quartet performing at the Music Academy of the West in Santa Barbara, CA.

[6] John Pickford Richards led a rehearsal with Musica Nova students on repertoire by Helmut Lachenmann during a visit to Eastman in 2023.

[7] Pictured from left to right: University of Rochester President Sarah Mangelsdorf, University Trustee Emerita Gwen Greene '65, University Trustee Cathy Minehan '68, Eastman Dean Kate Sheeran '02E, and University Trustee Joan Beal '84E.

stages across Australia, Europe, Asia, and South America. “Seeing the world is my favorite thing about being in the quartet. Being on stage is always an adventure, and in many ways, it’s the energy of the audience that really makes that powerful,” Richards says. Their shows involve multimedia work, choreography, animation, costumes, and sometimes even total darkness. “Every day is a completely different artistic experience,” he says.

Receiving the Distinguished Alumni Award from Eastman carries particular weight for both musicians: recognition not just of accomplishment, but of values lived consistently over time. “When I was at Eastman, what I wanted more than anything was recognition by my peers and professors,” Richards recalls. “Eastman was my whole world. So, to receive this recognition now feels extremely deep and uplifting for me.”

“It’s really meaningful to be recognized by Eastman,” Otto adds. “It’s a reminder of what the school offered me—the community, the opportunities, the collaboration.”

A Shared Throughline

Working across performance, education, and advocacy, Luks, Richards, and Otto exemplify the lasting influence of an Eastman education. Their work points beyond individual achievement toward leadership that sustains the art form and the people around it. The impact of that leadership will continue to unfold, shaped by the next generation of artists now finding their way. If one thing is true, Eastman alumni always follow their passions.

“I’m genuinely curious to see what people coming out of Eastman will create, and where they’ll go,” Otto concludes.

CATHY MINEHAN AWARDED THE EASTMAN DEAN’S MEDAL

In December 2025, Cathy Minehan ’68—educator, financier, philanthropist, and University of Rochester trustee—was awarded the Eastman Dean’s Medal, one of the highest honors the school bestows. Established in 2008, the medal recognizes extraordinary service, leadership, and generosity that strengthen Eastman and inspire others to lead. Few recipients embody that charge as fully—or as personally—as Minehan.

“Presenting this award to Cathy Minehan was both an honor and a celebration of what principled leadership looks like in action,” said Kate Sheeran, Joan and Martin Messinger Dean at Eastman. “Cathy embodies our deepest values and shares a belief in the transformative power of music. Her devotion to this school has strengthened generations of musicians and scholars and will continue to do so well into the future.”

Minehan’s relationship with Eastman began long before boardrooms and campaign committees. As a child, she studied at the Eastman Community Music School, planting a connection to music that would shape her life and career. That bond has been reinforced across generations: her father, son, and daughter-in-law are also University of Rochester graduates, each drawn to—and enriched by—the proximity of extraordinary music at Eastman. These many experiences have grown into a far-reaching commitment to the school’s future.

A steadfast champion of education and the arts, Minehan has served the University of Rochester in leadership roles since 1995. She

currently chairs the Academic Affairs Committee and serves on the Executive, Facilities and Campus Planning, and Joint Health Affairs committees. Her past leadership includes chairing the Audit and Risk Assessment Committee and contributing to institutional strategy through work on Financial Planning and Research and Innovation. For Eastman, she was a longtime member of the School’s Board of Managers and a trusted voice in moments of ambition and change.

As co-chair of the Eastman Centennial Campaign, Minehan helped marshal support in celebration of the school’s first 100 years—and in preparation for the next. Her own historic philanthropic commitment, exceeding \$5 million, established two Minehan Family Professorships and the Minehan Family Scholarship. The professorships have supported faculty leaders in music theory, organ performance, and musicology, while the scholarship has provided vital support for 19 undergraduates to date, several of whom have received sustained aid throughout their studies.

Joan Beal ’84E, a fellow trustee and Centennial Campaign co-chair (and recipient of the Eastman Dean’s Medal in 2024), points to Minehan’s example as both galvanizing and grounded in genuine care. “Cathy is someone I look up to on the URochester Board of Trustees—for her institutional knowledge, her acumen, and most especially, her graciousness,” Beal said. “Cathy has modeled true leadership by pledging to Eastman, and in urging other trustees to follow her example. We are so fortunate to have her commitment to Eastman, and I am honored to call her a dear friend.”

Her service to Eastman mirrors a distinguished professional life: president and CEO of the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston, dean of the School of Management at Simmons College, and a leader across nonprofit and corporate boards. Across every role, a belief in the arts as a public good has remained constant.

“Cathy’s extraordinary contributions as a leader and supporter of the University of Rochester and our Eastman School of Music are helping shape the future of music education and performance,” said University President Sarah Mangelsdorf. “Above all, Cathy leads with judgment, integrity, and compassion, elevating those around her to be champions of music, education, and excellence. She is fully deserving of the school’s highest honor.”



CULTURAL EXCHANGE AND MUSICAL COLLABORATION: A GROWING BOND BETWEEN EASTMAN AND CUBAN MUSICIANS

EASTMAN STUDENTS AND FACULTY ARE USING MUSIC TO TRANSCEND LANGUAGE AND DISTANCE, JOINING HANDS WITH THE CUBAN AMERICAN YOUTH ORCHESTRA.

BY JONATHAN HEATH

The Republic of Cuba, just 150 miles off the coast of Key West, FL, is a Caribbean citadel of contrasts—dense rainforest, mountains rising from a turquoise sea, and towns alive with history, tradition, and music. For Eastman students, it feels worlds away, yet the chance to unlock the island’s mysteries and connect with young musician counterparts is an opportunity few could imagine turning down.



When Associate Professor of Viola Masumi Per Rostad boarded a plane to Havana with four of his students last October, they carried more than cameras and sheet music. They brought curiosity, and the hope that Eastman’s second visit to Cuba might strengthen a growing relationship with CAYO, the Cuban American Youth Orchestra. Still, Rostad was unsure what to expect. “I think we all have this fantasy idea of what life in Cuba is like,” he says. “But in the days leading up to the trip, I had more questions than answers.”

Those questions are exactly what CAYO aims to answer. A Minneapolis-based nonprofit founded in 2016 by Executive Director Rena Kraut, CAYO fosters cultural exchange and musical collaboration between young musicians in the United States and Cuba, supporting students and teachers through workshops, rehearsals, and performances.

Kraut’s vision grew from her experience touring Cuba in 2015 as a clarinetist with the Minnesota Orchestra. The atmosphere then was one of optimism. “It made me wonder what the arts could possibly do to help grow a relationship between our two countries,” she recalls, imagining an organization that could soften political divides through musical exchange. Sitting beside Cuban peers, she saw the potential immediately. “This is about the interaction between people,” she says, “and using music as this tool of connection.”

Modeling CAYO loosely on the American Russian Youth Orchestra, Kraut began forming partnerships with Cuban performing arts schools—places where students balance rigorous academic study with intense mu-

sical training. She then carried the idea to American institutions, including Eastman, through Senior Associate Dean John Hain '02E (MM), '07E (DMA), a longtime friend from their undergraduate years at Northwestern University. That connection paved the way for Eastman's inaugural trip in May 2025, when Professor of Clarinet Michael Wayne brought four of his students to Havana for "Woodwind Week."

Five months later, Rostad and his students found themselves following that same path—and quickly discovered why the first group returned so inspired. From their first day, they were immersed in performing arts schools buzzing with energy, ingenuity, and a profound respect for music. "Cuban musicians often have to recycle strings," Rostad says. "Things that we might normally discard, they find a way to extract life from." He saw where they learned to be so resourceful, noticing the classic 1950s and '60s cars still cruising Havana's streets. "The cars are beautiful," Rostad notes, "but basically held together by duct tape."

In response to these needs, Kraut encouraged the Eastman group to bring donations. Their luggage held first aid kits, vitamins, hygiene products, and essential musical supplies—including strings Rostad brought through his D'Addario sponsorship. On their first night, Kraut organized a "donation party," where everything was sorted into piles for each partner school. "Every day, we bring something in exchange for the school's hospitality," she says.

As rehearsals and classes unfolded, the Eastman students found themselves navigating a musical ecosystem both familiar and entirely distinct. "It was an extraordinary experience for me," says third-year viola student Vivienne Lucier. "The students we worked with had inspiring determination and creativity. Whenever I catch myself not fully engaged in orchestra or music theory, I



remind myself of them and think of how they would act if they were in my place."

Rostad watched his students rise to the occasion. Thrown into rooms full of young musicians, often with a translator at their side, they were asked to lead, respond, and create meaning on the spot. "It was great to see my students being thoughtful and engaging, offering their ideas and experiences," he says.

For CAYO teaching artist and Director of Operations Lauren Rios, the mutual impact was unmistakable. "The Eastman students arrived with a great willingness to share and learn," she says. "They immersed themselves in the richness of Cuban music... while offering their own academic perspective." Cuban students, she adds, "brought passion and expressive freedom to their practice despite material limitations," while Eastman's faculty "demonstrated incredible openness to mutual learning and guided students with profound respect." The week culminated in a joint performance where visiting and local students stood side by side—a symbolic moment of collaboration made real.

The week reinforced something simple and true for Rostad and began to answer some of those lingering questions. "Music is the universal language," he says. "We share that commonality despite the borders." He hopes the exchange will one day run in both directions. "It would be wonderful if some of those talented Cuban musicians could come to Eastman."

Lucier shared that hope as she reflected



on the week. "As we flew home, I already missed the generous people who made our stay comfortable; the genuine kids we met at local schools and shared stories with; the delicious food; the lively streets filled with performers, merchants, and cats; and the dedicated students our age, with whom we played chamber music, salsa danced, and bonded with each evening."

Kraut, who visited Eastman last summer, sees limitless potential in the continued collaboration. "I now have a sense of what kind of students are attracted to go to Eastman, and why," she says. Spending time on campus gave her a deeper appreciation for the school's mission—and the alignment between the two organizations.

Eastman's Dean Kate Sheeran sees this unfolding partnership as emblematic of the school's purpose. "At its heart, Eastman is committed to creating musicians who engage meaningfully with the world," she says. "Our collaboration with CAYO shows what can happen when students step beyond the familiar and use their artistry to build understanding, compassion, and community. That's the kind of learning that lasts a lifetime."

With a jazz-focused exchange already in development, and long-term hopes of hosting Eastman ensembles in Cuba, momentum continues to build. "Now," Kraut says with a smile, "I feel like I can tell when someone's from Eastman. There's just something about them."

RENA KRAUT AND CLARA SMALLWOOD



[1] Professor Rostad and his four viola students arrive in Cuba, from left to right: Liliana Mahave, Professor Rostad, Clara Smallwood, Vivienne Lucier, and Cristian Yohannes. **[2]** Eastman students enjoyed hanging out and befriending the Cuban students. **[3]** Rena Kraut, center, and Vivienne Lucier begin to organize the donation supplies. **[4]** Professor Rostad teaches to a class of Cuban musicians. **[5]** In May 2025, Professor Wayne and four clarinet students landed in Cuba, from left to right: Professor Wayne, Eric Butler, Kevin Jin, Audrey Bray, and Adam Kolers.

HANDS ON KEYS: THE PIANO DEPARTMENT'S LEGACY

BY JONATHAN HEATH



▼ For more than a century, the Eastman School of Music piano department has lived at the meeting point of discipline and imagination—where fingers meet ivory and ideas become sound. The result has been a lineage of pianists and pedagogues whose influence reaches far beyond Rochester. From Cécile Genhart and Barry Snyder to Nelita True, Alexander Kobrin, and the thriving faculty of today, Eastman's legacy is carried forward by generations of students who go on to teach, perform, and shape musical life around the world.

Pillars of the Early Years

The foundations of Eastman’s piano legacy were laid by a remarkable group of early faculty whose personalities, convictions, and artistry defined the department for decades. One of the very first members to join the piano faculty was Raymond Wilson in 1921—the year of the school’s founding. He played a crucial role in Eastman’s formative years, serving briefly as acting director before Howard Hanson’s appointment in 1924. Wilson then went on to lead the Preparatory Department, which would become the Eastman Community Music School, extending the institution’s reach well beyond its degree programs. Notably, Wilson also performed the first piano recital to be broadcast live on the newly formed WHAM radio station, then operated from the top floor of the school.

In the years that followed, many illustrious names joined the ranks. Among them was Max Landow. Born in Germany and hired in 1922 by George Eastman himself, Landow possessed an international reputation as a virtuosic recitalist and a formidable teacher. He remained on the faculty until his death, embodying the continuity and devotion that became hallmarks of the department.

Another was Hungarian Sándor Vas, who joined a year later. A frequent soloist with the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra, Vas helped introduce audiences in the region to the music of Béla Bartók. His legacy endures not only in performance history, but in the rich archival record preserved in the Sibley Music Library, containing personal and professional papers, photographs, sheet music, concert programs, and press clippings.

And then there was Cécile Staub Genhart—arguably the most influential piano teacher in Eastman’s history. Born in Switzerland into a musical household—her father was both a professor and a pianist—Genhart’s path to Eastman was shaped by pedagogy from the start. She met her future husband, Hermann Genhart, when he was a student of her father in Zurich. When Hermann was invited by Hanson to join Eastman’s faculty in 1924, he soon asked Cécile to join him in Rochester, where she arrived as his wife and, in 1926, as a member of the piano faculty. Genhart taught until her retirement in 1971, then returned again in 1973 for another decade at the invitation of Director Robert Freeman, himself a pianist.

Though a gifted performer, Genhart found her deepest fulfillment in the studio, where



[1] Barry Snyder '66E, '68E (MM) taught at Eastman for almost 50 years, from 1970 to 2017. **[2]** Raymond Wilson was among the first to join the piano faculty in 1921. **[3]** Max Landow was hired by George Eastman himself. **[4]** Cécile Genhart (center) at the unveiling of her retirement portrait, alongside some of her students; from left to right: Stephen Wogaman '82E, Brian Preston '77E, '79E (MM), Jean Lee '82E, Barry Snyder, and Randall Fusco '81E, '83E (MM).

her intensity, precision, and unwavering dedication shaped generations of pianists. She did not seek the spotlight; instead, she cultivated artistry one student at a time. “She would encourage us to perfect our pieces to the most minute details,” recalls alumna Aiko Onishi '53E. “She could sense how to treat each one of us differently, some with utmost tender care, some more sternly. When I teach, I often say ‘Mrs. Genhart used to say...’ In this way, her teaching has been carried over to the next generation and so on to the present.”

These early leaders were formidable figures—pillars who dominated the scene and, at times, sparked rivalry or friction. Yet it was precisely that intensity, that healthy compe-

dition of ideas and ideals, that forged Eastman’s distinctive piano culture.

At this time, the Eastman faculty (including members of the piano department) operated without academic rank, creating a faculty of equals. Until the 1960s, every teacher—regardless of reputation or resume—was simply a member of the piano faculty. Although specific duties differed, all were united by a shared commitment to students. That egalitarian structure reflected the priorities of founding director Howard Hanson, who believed Eastman’s strength lay not in individual celebrity. Collectively, the faculty shaped young students into the very best musicians, one lesson at a time.

A Tradition of Pedagogy

By mid-century, Eastman's reputation rested not only on individual teachers, but on the success of its alumni. The department became known for producing pianists who themselves went on to teach at major conservatories and universities nationwide. Genhart's students alone—including John Perry '56E, '58E (MM), Stewart Gordon '65E (DMA), and Neil Rutman '77E (MM)—helped disseminate Eastman's pedagogical DNA across the country.

Faculty such as José Echániz, who joined Eastman in 1944 after an already astonishing career that began with a professorship at age 14 in Havana, Cuba, reinforced the department's rigor. Echániz insisted on deep immersion in the classical repertoire; students might tackle the entire *Well-Tempered Clavier* or, collectively, all 27 Mozart piano concertos.

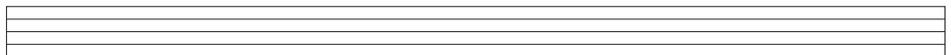
This emphasis on teaching excellence found institutional expression in 1953–54, when Eastman became the first school in the United States to offer the Doctor of Musical Arts (DMA) degree—a professional doctorate centered on performance and pedagogy. From the beginning, Eastman positioned piano not merely as a performing art, but as a scholarly and educational pursuit.

The years surrounding Howard Hanson's retirement marked a further turning point. Hanson famously discouraged extensive touring—Eastman historian Vincent Lenti '60E, '62E (MA), himself a full-time member of the piano faculty for 57 years and one of Hanson's last hires, recalls Hanson's firm insistence that faculty be present for the first day of teaching. Faculty like Orazio Frugoni, for example, who taught at Eastman from 1952 to 1967, recorded frequently and held a busy performance schedule. Once, whilst touring South America, Frugoni had the opportunity to extend his trip by three weeks. "He sent a telegram to Hanson and said something like, 'Will be 10 days late, but be assured I'll make up all the lessons,'" Lenti recalls. "Hansen fired back with a telegram that said, 'You WILL be at school on the first day of teaching.' So, it was not just the fact that Hansen didn't encourage his faculty to get out to perform, but he, in a subtle way, discouraged them." Lenti confirms that Frugoni was indeed at school on the first day.

In the years that followed Hanson's retirement, the school gradually began to embrace a new model. As pianists with international careers, recording profiles, and global reputations joined the faculty, their professional



[5] Staff Sergeant Eugene List (right) with President Harry S. Truman in 1946. [6] Cuban-born José Echániz (center) with Dean Howard Hanson and Spanish pianist Amparo Iturbi. [7] Nelita True chaired the piano department following David Burge. [8] Professor Emerita Rebecca Penneys remained on faculty for more than 35 years.



activity was seen as an asset to prospective students and the community.

Figures such as Frank Glazer, a student of Artur Schnabel and Arnold Schoenberg; Eugene List, once dubbed the "Pianist of the Presidents" following a performance before President Harry S. Truman, Joseph Stalin, and Winston Churchill in Germany shortly after the Nazis' surrender in 1945; and Barry Snyder '66E, '68E (MM), a former pupil of Genhart and triple prize winner in the 1966 Van Cliburn International Competition, further expanded Eastman's artistic reach. Snyder taught at Eastman from 1970 until his retirement in 2017 and, among many accolades, was included in the

book *The Most Wanted Piano Teachers in the United States*.

With the appointment of David Burge '56E (DMA) in 1975, the school responded to further changes in the musical world. "Burge brought with him a big interest in contemporary music that certainly was not here before," Lenti says. As the job market began to adapt, so, too, did the focus of what should be taught and how.

Later, Rebecca Penneys and Nelita True brought expansive musical experience into Eastman's studios. Penneys, who joined the faculty in 1980, had made her recital debut at age nine and performed as soloist with the Los Angeles Philharmonic Orchestra when

she was 11. At 17, after winning many young artist competitions in the United States, she was awarded the unprecedented Special Critics' Prize at the Seventh International Chopin Piano Competition in Warsaw, Poland. She remains a professor emerita of piano at Eastman.

Nelita True became a central figure in this next chapter of Eastman's piano legacy, serving on the faculty from 1987 to 2018 and chairing the department for many years after Burge. "She showed great wisdom in the way she ran the department and the way she treated her colleagues," says Lenti. "I can't say enough good things about her." True was a constant presence at student recitals and a tireless advocate for pedagogy as a living, shared practice. During her career, True trav-

eled extensively around the world to play and teach and performed in all 50 states in the United States. She was joined on the piano faculty by her husband Fernando Lares until his retirement in 2004.

Yet even as the department evolved, the underlying value remained unchanged: performance mattered, but teaching mattered more.

The Department Today

Today's piano faculty, chaired by Alan Chow, reflects what Lenti calls "the world of piano as it is now." Professionally active, pedagogically engaged, and stylistically diverse, the current roster includes Douglas Humpherys '95E (DMA); Joseph Rackers '01E (MM), '05E (DMA); Marina Lomazov

'93E, '00E (DMA); Alexander Kobrin; Elinor Freer; Ran Dank; and Tony Caramia, who concludes a 35-year Eastman career this academic year.

Chow, who joined the faculty in 2017 alongside Kobrin during True's final year as chair, describes that moment as transformative. "Nelita was an incredibly well-known pedagogue," he said. "She had this special gift of communication—not just with students, but with teachers about how to teach."

The department's present also carries resonant echoes of its past. Kobrin, like Snyder before him, is a winner of the Van Cliburn International Piano Competition, taking home the gold medal in Fort Worth, TX, in 2005. "That performer profile is a unique asset for any faculty," Chow says. "And besides that, he is a really remarkable teacher."

Lomazov is a former student of Barry Snyder and Natalya Antonova, while Rackers traces his pedagogical lineage back through Antonova and Eastman alumni via Raymond Herbert '62E, '64E (MM) who was in turn a student of José Echániz. Lomazov and Rackers now perform internationally as a duo, while continuing Eastman's tradition of producing competition winners and artist-teachers.

Carrying the Sound Forward

For more than a century, Eastman's piano faculty have taught students not only how to play, but how to listen and how to think. Each generation has balanced artistry with pedagogy, individuality with lineage. "The strength of Eastman will continue in its graduates," Chow reflected. "We do our work here, but it's the students who carry on that legacy."

From its earliest studios to today's concert stages, the piano department's story is one of continuity and renewal—hands on keys, minds engaged, and a shared belief that the truest measure of excellence is what endures long after the final note fades.



[9] Alan Chow has served as chair of the piano department for the past five years. **[10]** Alexander Kobrin joined the faculty in 2017. **[11]** Joseph Rackers and Marina Lomazov met at Eastman and have performed as a duo for many years. **[12]** Elinor Freer also serves as director of ROC City concerts, bringing live music to underserved communities across the greater Rochester area.

FREER, LAUREN SAGEER



LEARN MORE

This article offers only a glimpse into Eastman's rich piano legacy. To learn more about faculty members who have shaped the school over the years, follow this link.



A SHARED STANDARD OF EXCELLENCE: FOUR FACULTY SAYING GOODBYE IN 2026

BY JONATHAN HEATH

At the end of the 2025–2026 academic year, Eastman will say goodbye to more than 125 years of collective knowledge, experience, mentorship, and musicianship with the retirement of four faculty members: Professor of Piano and Director of Piano Pedagogy Studies Tony Caramia, Professor of Bassoon George Sakakeeny, Professor of Conducting & Ensembles and Director of Choral Activities William Weinert, and Professor of Double Bass James VanDemark.

Their areas of expertise span the musical map—keyboard pedagogy, orchestral woodwinds, choral artistry, and the low-string world of bass performance—but each of them speaks about Eastman with the same mixture of affection, respect, and gratitude. Taken together, their reflections form a portrait of a school that shaped them as much as they shaped it.

Tony Caramia is the only Rochester native of the group, and he laughs when he remembers how people assumed his path must have started on Gibbs Street. “When people found out I was from Rochester, they’d ask me if I went to Eastman as a student,” he says. “I’d have to say, ‘No, just as a patron.’” In fact, even as he attended concerts in Kodak Hall, teaching here never crossed his mind. So, when the position opened in 1990, the idea of joining the faculty felt almost surreal. “It was like being hired by the Buffalo Bills,” he says. “I knew I’d better be really good.”

His early memories are filled with flashes of wonder—and a little disbelief. Yet even back then, he felt the warmth of colleagues who recognized the unique niche he brought to the school: a blend of classical technique, jazz fluency (seen in his affiliate faculty role in the Jazz Studies and Contemporary Media department), and a pedagogy grounded in curiosity. Over three and a half decades, Caramia became known for presenting thematic, often playful recitals, from “Evening

of Études” to his exploration of obscure composers with irresistible backstories. “No one ever said, ‘You played well, but could you do some Chopin?’” he says. “Instead, they encouraged what floated my boat.”

“Telling is not teaching,” Caramia often says, preferring instead to demonstrate, ask questions, and lead by example—an approach shaped by decades in the studio and reinforced by his belief that the most lasting learning happens when students are guided to discover answers for themselves.

For **George Sakakeeny ’78E**, returning to Eastman as a faculty member in 2016, almost four decades after he graduated, was like walking into a familiar dream. The hallways, practice rooms, and “nooks and crannies” he’d loved as a student were still there, even some of the professors. “My first and most vivid memory was performing in the opening convocation in Kilbourn Hall with Barry Snyder,” he says. “Professor Snyder was a young faculty member when I was a student, but 2016–17 would be his final year on the faculty. I felt like I was experiencing a sustained *déjà vu*.”

Sakakeeny has witnessed an evolving landscape in musical education over the years, and yet, the fundamental artistry required of a bassoonist is essentially unchanged since the early 20th century. The instrument still demands the same blend of craft, curiosity, and sheer patience.





When challenged to recount a highlight from his career, he resists. “There are remarkable moments being created almost daily,” he says instead. But if pressed, he mentions a few standouts: premiering a new concerto written for him in Vienna’s Musikverein, recording Villa-Lobos with Alex Klein, performing Beethoven’s Ninth under Seiji Ozawa. “See what I mean?” he adds.

More than the stages and the tours, though, Sakakeeny treasures the students themselves. “Working with students keeps you thinking young,” he says. “The bonds that are created between a teacher and their students over four years can last a lifetime. My best friends are almost all former students.”

William Weinert’s memories also begin with people—specifically the people who helped usher him into Eastman’s choral tradition when he first arrived. “I remember being struck by the incredible support from the legendary Associate Dean Jon Engberg, as well as many faculty and students,” he says. “The abundance of wonderful talent was stunning.”

For three decades, Weinert has shaped Eastman’s choral sound: its warmth, its clarity, its historic depth. And he’s watched the choral field change alongside it. “More and more students show such a strong love for choral music,” he said. “The opportunities for professional choral singing in America have grown tremendously.”

What he’ll miss most mirrors what he loves: the students’ curiosity and the way they cheer one another on with full-throated joy. “I love hearing their clear progress from year to year as they study with our wonderful voice faculty,” he says. “I also love hearing their incredible, and vocal, support for each other at recitals, masterclasses, and operas.”

Choral music is that rare gift that brings singers into contact with “absolutely the greatest masterpieces created in any art

- [1] Tony Caramia plays during a Context Conference lunchtime concert in Sproull Atrium in 2023.
- [2] James VanDemark gives a solo performance in Kilbourn Hall during convocation in 2021.
- [3] William Weinert conducts *Dona Nobis Pacem* in Lowry Hall during his final Holiday Sing in 2025.
- [4] Eastman graduate George Sakakeeny took a sabbatical for the 2025-2026 academic year to play with the Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra.



form,” Weinert says, listing off the Bach *Passions* and *B-minor Mass*, the Beethoven *Missa solemnis*, the Brahms *Requiem*, Stravinsky’s *Symphony of Psalms*, Handel’s *Messiah*, and many other works. “At the same time, it offers normal humans without expensive instruments or decades of training, or even outstanding natural vocal talent, to live inside these works by simply using their breath,” he says. As conductor, he has set the stage for so many of those rewarding experiences. “What a privilege,” he concludes.

James VanDemark’s legacy at Eastman is unmistakable—when he joined the Eastman faculty at the age of 23, he became the youngest person ever to hold such a position at a major music school. For the next 50 years he elevated the double bass as both a solo and ensemble instrument, championed student artistry, and shaped generations of musicians who now hold orchestral, chamber, and teaching positions around the world.

“Arriving as a newly minted assistant professor in September 1976 was an instant immersion into a congenial storm of energy, creativity, purpose, and imagination,” he recalls. But there were some hilarious misunderstandings along the way too, as older colleagues mistook him for a student while his own students were often his peers. But VanDemark remembers a school unified by ambition. “We cheerfully followed Director Robert Freeman as he led us to shape the school into one of the most dynamic, innovative, and esteemed institutions in America.”

Growing up in a family of pianists, VanDemark carved his own route when he became “smitten” with the double bass at a high school orchestra concert. “I was soon practicing three to four hours a day, and 18 months later made my solo debut with the Minnesota Orchestra at age 15,” he says. He has since enjoyed performances with many of the world’s greatest artists including Zubin Mehta, Pinchas Zukerman, Jean-Pierre Rampal, Yehudi Menuhin, and Andre Watts.

Across their reflections, a common thread emerges: Eastman’s magic lies in its people. Caramia captures it beautifully when he recalls walking down his corridor and hearing world-class colleagues and gifted young students. “It’s a pretty good school right here,” he says with a grin. Sakakeeny calls the faculty “the unsung heroes of Eastman, the musical elites.” And Weinert echoes both sentiments: “The wealth of talent and commitment to excellence among students and faculty here continues to be unmatched.” For VanDemark, simply walking the Cominsky Promenade, where so many of his friends and heroes adorn the walls, is enough. “How lucky have I been,” he says.

As we prepare to celebrate the careers of these four remarkable musicians, their words offer not just memories, but a reminder of why Eastman has mattered to so many for more than a century. Their impact—felt in lessons, rehearsals, performances, and all the moments in between—will resound long after they take their final bows as faculty members.



Eastman Earns Repeat Honors in Two ‘Best Of’ Lists for 2025

For the third year in a row, *Billboard* has named the University of Rochester’s Eastman School of Music as a Top Music Business School in 2025 for its Institute for Music Leadership and Beal Institute for Film and Contemporary Media programs! Through industry recommendations and alumni information, along with nearly a decade of reporting on college programs, *Billboard* provides an annual list of options for students seeking an education in the business of music, anywhere in the world.

Additionally, *The Hollywood Reporter* once again recognized Eastman as one of the top music schools in the world in their annual list of the 20 schools shaping the next generation

of musicians. Members of Hollywood’s Society of Composers and Lyricists, the Composers Diversity Collective, and the music branches of both the Motion Picture Academy and Television Academy were polled to compile this year’s rankings.

Dean Sheeran shared that our esteemed faculty is one of our greatest strengths: “We have 110 full-time faculty who really care for our students and who are excellent musicians and teachers, performers and scholars. We’re also part of a research university, and so we have opportunities to address challenges that have long plagued our field, both in terms of technology and how we work with neuroscientists to prove the impact of music on the brain.”

- [1] Programs like the Beal Institute have helped establish Eastman as a top destination for students looking to compose for film and other contemporary media.
- [2] Lisa Seischab rejoined Eastman on October 20, 2025. [3] Lisa Bielawa kicked off her Howard Hanson residency with a Musica Nova performance in December 2025.
- [4] ROCVETs instructors, from left to right: Lukas Wilson, Pedro Tiorba, Marcia Bornhurst Parkes, Roy Ernst, and Alden Snell.

Eastman Welcomes New Executive Director of Advancement

In October, Eastman’s Office of Advancement and Alumni Relations welcomed Lisa Seischab ’90E as executive director of advancement. A seasoned leader in higher education and the arts, Seischab returns to Eastman after serving in multiple advancement roles at the University of Rochester—including a four-year term in the same position at Eastman from 2009 to 2013.



A Rochester native, Seischab earned her Bachelor of Music in Applied Bassoon from Eastman and graduated with honors from the Preparatory Department (now the Eastman Community Music School). She also holds a certificate in nonprofit studies from Johns Hopkins University.

Respected nationally in music and philanthropy circles, Seischab remains deeply connected to the Eastman community—as a volunteer, mentor, and advocate. Her leadership and vision position her to strengthen Eastman’s advancement efforts.

“Returning to Eastman is like coming home,” Seischab says. “I’m thrilled to join Dean Sheeran and our exceptional faculty and staff in advancing Eastman’s mission through the University of Rochester’s *For Ever Better Campaign* and inspiring philanthropic support that will shape our school’s future.”

Shostakovich Honored with Weeklong Celebration

From September 22 through 27, 2025, Eastman marked the 50th anniversary of Dmitri Shostakovich's death with a weeklong celebration of symphonies, sonatas, and chamber works—each performance reflecting the composer's enduring influence.

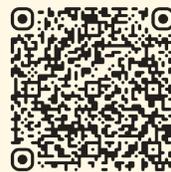
The week included two orchestral highlights in Kodak Hall: the Eastman Philharmonia in a stirring performance of Shostakovich's Fifth Symphony and, two days later, the Eastman School Symphony Orchestra in the spirited and complex Ninth Symphony. Between these major concerts, Associate Professor of Piano Alexander Kobrin invited colleagues to his Faculty Artist Series (FAS) concert for an intimate evening of sonatas, including the composer's final work completed just weeks before his death.

On September 25, Shostakovich's birthday, Professor of Violin Mikhail Kopelman, joined by fellow faculty members, used his

FAS to revive a tradition he began in Moscow with the Borodin String Quartet: honoring the composer through performance. The week concluded with Eastman Virtuosi in Kilbourn Hall, featuring works by Shostakovich and one of his favorite students, Galina Ustvol'skaya.

Over five evenings, Eastman faculty and students celebrated a towering figure of 20th-century music whose works still speak with urgency and humanity today.

Follow the QR code for a more in-depth look at the Shostakovich Celebration and the many Eastman faculty and students that participated.



ROCVETs Provides Free Musical Education for Veterans



For three months last fall, a new initiative led by Eastman faculty, alumni, and students combined to bring music classes to veterans in Rochester. On Saturday mornings at The Marketplace Mall in Henrietta, you could hear the familiar sounds of "The Marines' Hymn" and "Anchors Aweigh" as veterans from all walks of life and levels of experience came together to sing, play, and share their stories.

ROCVETs is the new Rochester-based branch of the Music for Veterans National Association, an initiative founded by Roy Ernst, professor emeritus of music education at Eastman. "The mission is to create a feeling of belonging among veterans," Ernst said. "For veterans who may have PTSD, there are new friendships replacing a feeling of loneliness, there is a sense of accomplishment in the present and goals in the future."

ROCVETs offers five ways for former military members and their immediate family to start or continue their musical journeys—two bands (one for beginners and one for those with experience on wind, brass, and percussion instruments), two group guitar classes, and a chorus. Participants can enroll in as few or as many of these offerings as they would like, and receive instruments, instruction, and materials all at no cost. More than 73 students were enrolled in the fall 2025 semester with a growing waitlist in place for the winter. The teaching faculty at ROCVETs includes three other Eastman connections in addition to Ernst: Marcia Bornhurst Parkes '78E (MM), '88E (PhD); Associate Professor of Music Teaching and Learning, and department chair, Alden Snell '06E (MA), '13E (PhD), and doctoral student Pedro Tiorba.

Lisa Bielawa Named the Howard Hanson Visiting Professor for 2025-26

New York City-based composer and vocalist Lisa Bielawa has been named the Howard Hanson Visiting Professor for the 2025-26 academic year. The announcement preceded her concert with Musica Nova in Kilbourn Hall on December 4, 2025, where she performed her vocal chamber work *Incessabili Voce* (2013) alongside conductor Brad Lubman.

"I can think of no more fulfilling way to enter into the Eastman community than to jump onstage with students to perform a work created expressly to maximize collaboration and spontaneity between the performers," Bielawa said.

Bielawa's residency will include further performances and masterclasses during the spring semester and culminate with *Rochester Broadcast* on April 18, 2026, a large-scale, site-specific "spatial symphony" that will celebrate the diversity of artistic life in Rochester and bring together professional, student, and amateur artists for a unique musical experience.

"I'm so happy that Rochester will join the list of Broadcast cities, which already includes



Berlin, San Francisco, Louisville, Knoxville, and more!" she said. "Eastman is a perfect partner for this next adventure in a famously musical city."

► SCHOOL NEWS

Group Drumming Expert John R. Beck Inspires EPAM Study



Eastman alumnus John R. Beck '83E (MM) returned to campus in the fall to share the healing power of group drumming with students, faculty, and community members. The session marked the latest chapter in Beck's long-standing collaboration with Gaelen McCormick '92E, director of the Eastman Performing Arts Medicine Center (EPAM). Their shared commitment to music in healthcare settings inspired a research initiative at the Pluta Integrative Oncology Center in Henrietta.

A certified HealthRHYTHMS facilitator, Beck has led drumming circles nationwide, helping stem cell transplant recipients and cancer survivors experience the restorative effects of rhythm and community. McCor-

mick introduced Beck's concept to Dr. Gary Morrow, a leading researcher in behavioral oncology at the University of Rochester Medical Center, sparking a pilot study—one of EPAM's first major research efforts—supported by the National Cancer Institute Community Oncology Research Program (NCORP).

The project gained momentum in 2024 with the addition of research coordinator Dana Benoit, a board-certified music therapist whose background bridges clinical work, healthcare administration, and the arts. Nearly 30 participants have completed the four-week drumming sessions, with findings expected to inform future studies exploring how music-making can promote recovery, cognition, and emotional health.

Eastman Alumnus Michael Frazier Returns for Concerto Premiere

In October, The Eastman School Symphony Orchestra premiered *los quetzales*, a new viola concerto by Eastman alumnus Michael Frazier

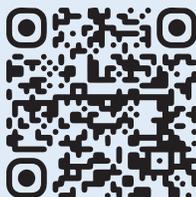


'16E (MA), '21E (PhD). The work was commissioned through a consortium including Eastman, the American Composers Orchestra (ACO), Sphinx Organization, and Concert Artists Guild. Violist Jordan Bak, an internationally acclaimed performer and longtime collaborator of ACO Artistic Director Curtis Stewart '08E, '08, soloed the piece under guest conductor Joshua Gersen.

Frazier, now on the composition faculty at the Oberlin Conservatory, drew inspiration for the concerto from the resplendent quetzal, weaving rhythmic energy and lyrical passages into the music. Workshops with the composer and soloist gave students insight into the creative process. "Being a teacher, working with others, and guiding one's artistic growth is of monumental importance to me, and being able to work with musicians in such a capacity regularly reaffirms how special it is to share musical experiences together," Frazier said.

Eastman Presents: Fall Look Ahead

Get excited for fall with a first look at Eastman Presents concerts coming later this year! With acts ranging from Alarm Will Sound to Chanticleer and the Mivos Quartet, the 2026-2027 lineup has something for everyone.



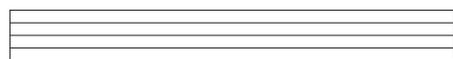


Two Luminary Award Winners Grace the Soundtrax Stage

During the inaugural Soundtrax Film Music Festival in October, Eastman honored two special guests with the Eastman Luminary Award, which recognizes “extraordinary service to music and the arts at the national and local levels.”

Dean Kate Sheeran first presented the award to Terence Blanchard, the Grammy Award-winning musician, composer, conductor, and arranger. The presentation preceded his performance with the E-Collective and the Gateways Festival Orchestra, a joint concert between Soundtrax and the Gateways Music Festival.

The following evening, Dean Sheeran returned to the stage with composer Jeff Beal '85E and Mark Watters, director of the Beal Institute for Film Music and Contemporary Media, to present the second award to composer John Corigliano, whose six-decade career includes a Pulitzer Prize and an Academy Award. Corigliano's visit culminated in a live-to-picture performance of his score for *The Red Violin*, conducted by Beal with Eastman's Assistant Professor of Violin YooJin Jang and the Eastman Philharmonia.



[5] John R. Beck leads a drum circle at Eastman to build community, reduce stress, and tap into a sense of connection. [6] Founded at Eastman, Alarm Will Sound returns to Kodak Hall in October 2026. [7] Michael Frazier premiered *los quetzales* in Kodak Hall at Eastman Theatre on October 22, 2025. [8] John Corigliano was joined by Mark Watters, Jeff Beal, and Dean Kate Sheeran to receive his Luminary Award.

CORIGLIANO: JOHN SCHILIA

GRAMMY NOMINATIONS AND WINS

Several Eastman graduates and faculty members received nominations for the National Academy of Recording Arts & Sciences, Inc.'s 68th Grammy Awards, which took place on February 1, 2026.

BEST CLASSICAL SOLO VOCAL ALBUM

- *Schubert Beatles* | Theo Hoffman with **Julia Bullock '09E**, soprano
- *Telemann: Ino—Opera Arias for Soprano* | Boston Early Music Festival Orchestra with conductor **Paul O'Dette**, professor of lute **WINNER**
- *ALiKE—My Mother's Dream* | Allison Charney, soprano; featuring soloist **Kelly Hall-Tompkins '93E**, violin

BEST ARRANGEMENT, INSTRUMENTS AND VOCALS

- *Big Fish* | Nate Smith & **säje** including vocalist and arranger **Sara Gazarek**, associate professor of jazz voice **WINNER**

BEST LARGE JAZZ ENSEMBLE ALBUM

- *Orchestrator Emulator* | **The 8-Bit Big Band** including **Jared Schonig '05E**, drums
- *Basie Rocks!* | Deborah Silver & **The Count Basie Orchestra** including **Isrea Butler '04E, '06E (MM)**, trombone; **Shawn Edmonds '87E**, trumpet; **Dave Glasser '84E, '86E (MM)**, saxophone

BEST CHAMBER MUSIC/SMALL ENSEMBLE PERFORMANCE

- *Standard Stoppages* | **Third Coast Percussion** including current DMA student **Sean Connors '04E**
- *Dennehy: Land Of Winter* | **Alarm Will Sound** including **Alan Pierson '06E (DMA)**, artistic director and conductor; **Gavin Chuck '96E (MA), '04E (PhD)**, executive director; **Peter Ferry '13E**, assistant director of artistic planning; and more. **WINNER**
- *Slavic Sessions* | Co-produced by **David Veslocki '05E**

BEST CLASSICAL INSTRUMENTAL SOLO

- *Coleridge-Taylor: 3 Selections from 24 Negro Melodies* | **National Philharmonic** featuring soloist **Curtis Stewart '08E, '08**, violin

BEST ARRANGEMENT, INSTRUMENTAL OR A CAPPELLA

- *Super Mario Praise Break* | Performed by **The 8-Bit Big Band** including **Jared Schonig '05E**, drums **WINNER**

BEST CLASSICAL COMPENDIUM

- Cerrone: *Don't Look Down* | Sandbox Percussion including **Jonathan Allen '11E**, percussion

BEST CONTEMPORARY CLASSICAL COMPOSITION

- Okpebholo: *Songs In Flight* | Featuring a performance by **Paul Sánchez '09E (MM), '13E (DMA)**, piano
- Dennehy: *Land Of Winter* | Featuring a performance by **Alan Pierson '06E (DMA)**, conductor, and **Alarm Will Sound** (members listed online)
- Cerrone: *Don't Look Down* | Sandbox Percussion including **Jonathan Allen '11E**, percussion

BEST ENGINEERED ALBUM, CLASSICAL

- *Standard Stoppages* | **Third Coast Percussion** including current DMA student **Sean Connors '04E**, mastering engineer
- Cerrone: *Don't Look Down* | Sandbox Percussion including **Jonathan Allen '11E**, percussion **WINNER**

BEST OPERA RECORDING

- Kouyoumdjian: *Adoration* | Including **Alan Pierson '06E (DMA)**, conductor, and **Karim Sulayman '98E**, tenor
- Heggie: *Intelligence* (world premiere recording) | **Houston Grand Opera** including **Elizabeth Priestly Siffert '02E**, principal oboe; libretto by **Gene Scheer '81E, '82E (MM)** **WINNER**

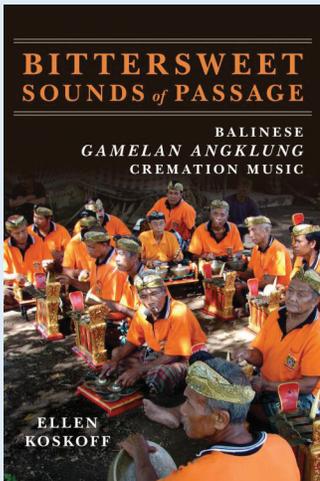
BEST ORCHESTRAL PERFORMANCE

- Messiaen: *Turangalila-Symphonie* | **Boston Symphony Orchestra** including **Christine Lee '15E (MM)**, cello; **Thomas Martin '83E**, clarinet **WINNER**

Eastman also has several alumni in the following ensembles that played on nominated albums: the National Philharmonic, the Philadelphia Orchestra, and the San Francisco Symphony.

For a full list of nominees, please use this QR code or visit esm.rochester.edu/news.





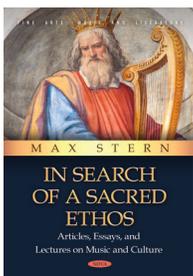
ELLEN KOSKOFF

BITTERSWEET SOUNDS OF PASSAGE

University of Illinois Press

In *Bittersweet Sounds of Passage: Balinese Gamelan Angklung Cremation Music*, Professor Emerita of Ethnomusicology Ellen Koskoff examines the history, cultural significance, and musical structures of contemporary gamelan angklung cremation music. An important presence through centuries of musical and social change, gamelan angklung is a small, four-tone bronze-keyed

ensemble that remains ubiquitous at cremations across the island. Koskoff offers a compelling portrait of these seldom-studied orchestras and their members—rice farmers, eatery owners, and other locals who neither see themselves as musicians nor regard their work as music. The book’s publication was supported by a grant from the Bruno Nettl Endowment for Ethnomusicology.

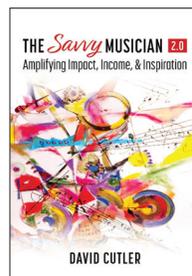


MAX STERN '69E
IN SEARCH OF A SACRED ETHOS

Nova

A collection of articles, essays, and lectures tracing Stern’s study of music as a form of sacred cultural expression. Many pieces draw on his own experiences and compositions in America, Europe, and Israel.

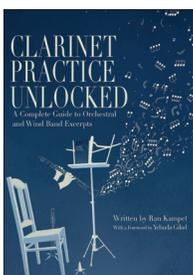
Together they consider the creative impulse toward the sacred—touching on inspiration, creativity, education, and art—often, though not exclusively, through the lens of Jewish history, identity, ethnic influence, and contemporary cultural issues. Supplementary musical examples and embedded YouTube links connect broader themes with original compositions and biblical subjects.



DAVID CUTLER '96E (MM)
THE SAVVY MUSICIAN 2.0

Oxford University Press

In this follow-up to his groundbreaking book *The Savvy Musician*, *The Savvy Musician 2.0: Amplifying Impact, Income, and Inspiration* explores new realms of possibility, helping musicians build careers, lead organizations, launch ventures, strengthen their viability, and make a difference. Industry challenges are highlighted but not dwelled upon. Instead, the book brims with flexible, actionable success strategies that address a comprehensive collection of issues for professionals of all stripes. Become inspired to balance tradition with innovation, insist upon relevance, but most importantly, get things done. Become a savvy musician.

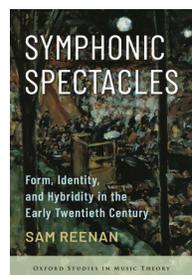


RAN KAMPEL '09E
CLARINET PRACTICE UNLOCKED

Conway Publications

A Complete Guide to Orchestral and Wind Band Excerpts is a comprehensive guide designed for clarinet students and teachers at all levels. The book presents 26 practice methods specifically designed to assist students in the practice room. Using 80 standard

excerpts from orchestral, opera, and wind band literature, it addresses key areas such as technique, phrasing, intonation, articulation, breathing, and rhythm. Readers will find tools for self-evaluating their progress and strategies for achieving their playing goals while mastering their music.



SAM REENAN '18E (MA), '21E (PHD)
SYMPHONIC SPECTACLES

Oxford University Press

Symphonic Spectacles: Form, Identity, and Hybridity in the Early Twentieth Century investigates large-scale formal mixture through six case studies that juxtapose works of the Austro-German symphonic canon with lesser-studied pieces by composers such as Strauss, Beach, Ellington, and Mahler. Reenan proposes an analytical framework based on an analogy between formal hybridity and intersectional identity, which opens new interpretive pathways integrating formal analysis with critical consideration of compositional design, reception history, and subjectivity.

▶ RECORDINGS



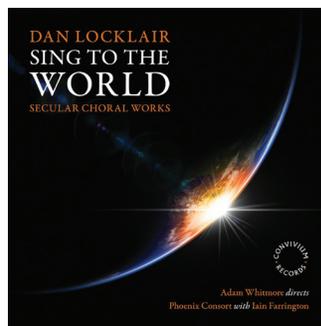
BRAD LUBMAN

GLASS: ITAIPÚ

Münchner Philharmoniker GBR

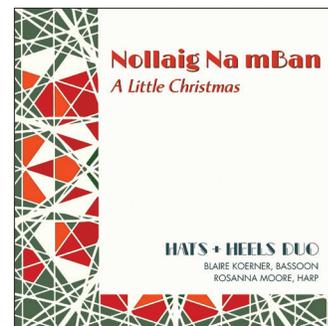
Philip Glass's *Itaipú*, a cantata-like work for chorus and orchestra, is named for a hydroelectric dam on the border between Brazil and Paraguay that the composer visited in 1988. The album's four movements offer a symphonic "portrait of nature," composed in the tradition of minimal music. Conducted by Professor of Conducting & Ensembles Brad Lubman, a renowned specialist in new music and director of Eastman's Musica Nova, together with the Munich Philharmonic, this monumental work unfolds its full effect, creating "a pull from which there is no escape, one blissfully surrenders to the effect" (*Süddeutsche Zeitung*). Lubman's recording was featured in a recent *New York Times* article, 'Five Classical Albums You Can Listen to Right Now.'

"Making my debut with the Munich Philharmonic was an enormous pleasure, as was working with the Philharmonic Choir. They gave such moving and thrilling performances of this stirring work by Philip Glass," Lubman says.



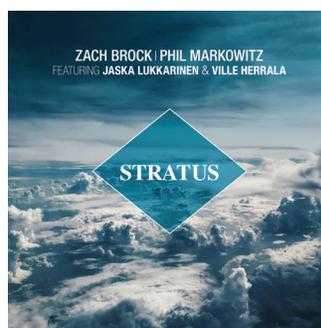
DAN LOCKLAIR '81E (DMA) SING TO THE WORLD *Convivium Records*

Featuring the award-winning British vocal ensemble Phoenix Consort and conductor Adam Whitmore, this album brings together a remarkable collection of secular choral works by the eminent American composer Dan Locklair, celebrated for his gift of weaving words with rich, expansive, harmonious, and lyrical music. Drawing on texts by poets as diverse as Robert Frost, Walt Whitman, W.B. Yeats, Phillis Wheatley, Rabindranath Tagore, and others, these pieces explore themes of love and loss, nature and freedom, moments of intimate reflection, and events of world-shaking resonance, always with a voice deeply rooted in American culture.



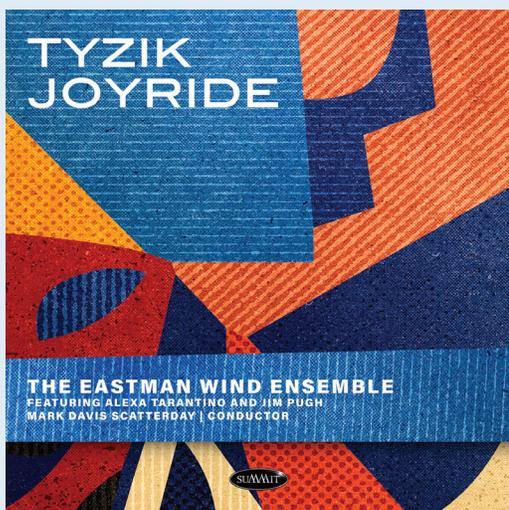
HATS + HEELS DUO NOLLAIG NA MBAN: A LITTLE CHRISTMAS

Hats + Heels Duo is made up of **Dr. Rosanna Moore '14E (MM), '19E (DMA)** and **Dr. Blaire Koerner '15E (MM), '19E (DMA)**. Their new album, *Nollaig Na mBan: A Little Christmas*, is a collection of festive arrangements in true quirky Hats + Heels style. Nollaig na mBan, also known as "Women's Christmas," is a cherished Irish tradition celebrated on January 6 that honors women for all the work they do throughout the festive season. Now a celebration of resilience, friendship, and creativity, the CD is a tribute to that spirit. Blending carols and contemporary interpretations, *Nollaig na mBan* invites you to step into a space of joy.



PHIL MARKOWITZ '74E STRATUS *Double Moon Records*

Stratus is the new quartet album from Markowitz and violinist Zach Brock, joined by Finnish jazz standouts Jaska Lukkarinen and Ville Herrala. Recorded in Sipoo, Finland, the album blends lyrical improvisation, intricate composition, and intuitive interplay into a cohesive, deeply expressive whole. From lush ballads to dynamic rhythmic journeys, *Stratus* showcases the quartet's chamber-like sensitivity and jazz-rooted spontaneity. A rich, genre-blurring project, the album is both intimate and expansive—an exploration of sound grounded in trust, nuance, and shared vision.



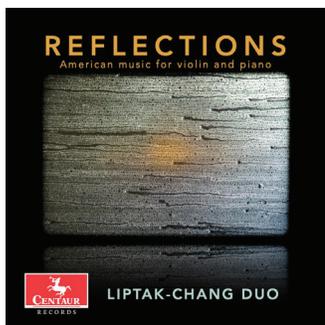
THE EASTMAN WIND ENSEMBLE

TYZIK JOYRIDE: THE MUSIC OF JEFF TYZIK

Summit Records

Under the direction of Eastman’s Professor of Conducting **Mark Davis Scatterday ’89E (DMA)**, America’s leading wind ensemble delivers a powerful display of musicianship on impressive, diverse compositions by Grammy winner and Eastman alumnus **Jeff Tyzik ’73E, ’77E (MM)**. Tyzik

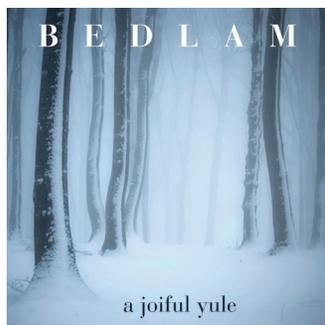
considers his reconnection with the Eastman Wind Ensemble to be one of the most important and meaningful parts of his musical life. The classical and jazz crossover album features soprano saxophonist **Alexa Tarantino ’14E** and legendary trombonist **Jim Pugh ’72E, ’75E (MM)**.



PIA LIPTAK ’89E (MM), ’92E (DMA) AND YI-WEN CHANG ’14E (DMA)

REFLECTIONS
Centaur Records

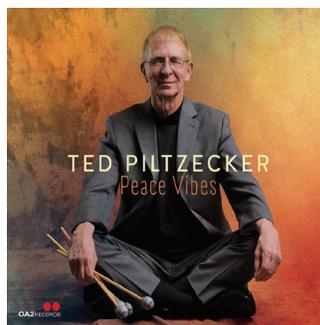
Violinist Liptak unites with pianist Chang for the release of *Reflections: American Music for Violin and Piano*, an album of contemporary American works. Featuring Charles Ives, **David Liptak ’75E (MM), ’76E (DMA)**, **Baljinder Sekhon ’08E (MA), ’13E (PhD)**, and an original piece by Pia Liptak, the album contemplates how external impressions can transform into inner experience.



BEDLAM A JOIFUL YULE

Imaginary Animals

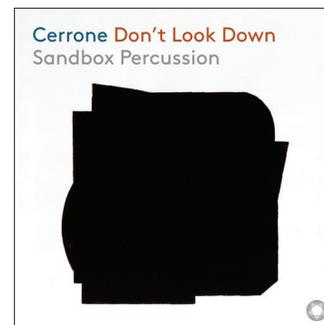
The duo Bedlam, comprised of lutenist **Laudon Schuett ’10E (MM), ’14E (DMA)** and soprano **Kayleen Sánchez ’10E, ’12E (MM)**, brings their unique and exciting approach to music-making to their third album, *a joiful yule*. From the contemplative and ethereal to the jubilant and bawdy, this Christmas album is meant for a cold winter’s night by a warm fire. Bringing together traditional songs, folk melodies, and original compositions, Bedlam revels in performing some of their favorite music for the holiday season.



TED PILTZECKER ’72E PEACE VIBES

Origin Records

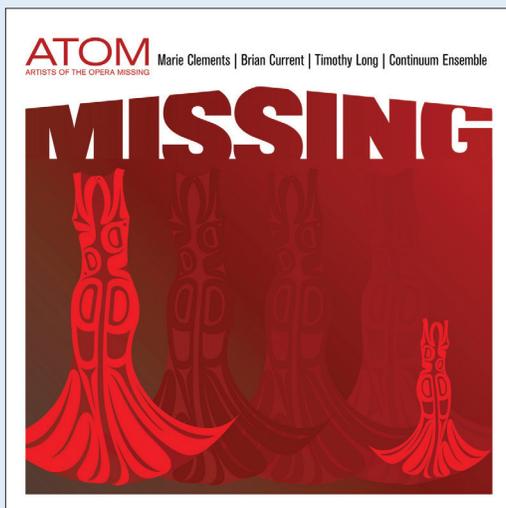
Influenced by several trips to Brazil and Peru, this collection of jazz standards and originals is delivered with Piltzecker’s distinctive arranging style. Although he graduated as a trumpet major, it is his vibraphone playing and composing that have taken him around the world during a long and distinguished career. His work transports listeners to an alluring musical world where every note is infused with a personal touch.



JONATHAN ALLEN ’11E DON'T LOOK DOWN

Pentatone

Jonathan Allen and Sandbox Percussion join forces with composer Christopher Cerrone on *Don't Look Down*, nominated for three Grammy Awards in 2025. Written during the pandemic in 2020, the album blends traditional percussion with found objects and prepared piano. It closes with a bittersweet celebration of New York City, filled with whistles, harmonicas, and stomping rhythms—each unique sound meticulously crafted. *Don't Look Down* is a bold exploration of the endless possibilities of percussion and a testament to the evolving power of music and collaboration.



* Nominated for a 2026 Juno Award—Classical Album of the Year: Small Ensemble

TIMOTHY LONG '92E (MM)

MISSING

Bright Shiny Things

Missing is a powerful opera confronting the crisis of missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls. With music composed by Brian Current and a libretto by Marie Clements, it follows Ava, a young woman whose encounter with the spirit of a lost Indigenous girl changes her forever. The

Artists of The Opera MISSING (ATOM) and Continuum Ensemble, conducted by Professor of Opera Timothy Long, weave contemporary classical music with Gitksan language and cultural traditions, moving through grief, memory, and justice and ensuring these voices continue to be heard.



SUEN-KAM GUITAR DUO BETWEEN STRINGS

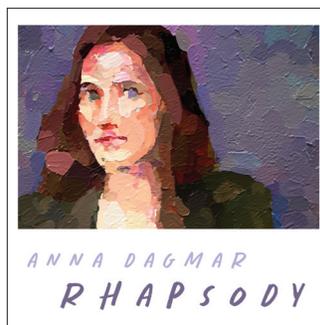
Shiuen-Huang Suen '00E (MM), '04E (DMA) and Kenneth Kam '20E (MM), '25E (DMA) formed the Suen-Kam Guitar Duo in 2019 and *Between Strings* is their debut album. A collection of duo and solo works spanning the 17th to 20th centuries, the album features composers such as Enrique Granados, Jean-Philippe Rameau, Franz Schubert, and Stanley Myers. The recording reflects the duo's shared artistic collaboration and Eastman training under **Professor of Guitar Nicholas Goluses**.



NANCY BRAITHWAITE '75E WONDERINGS AND OTHER REVELATIONS

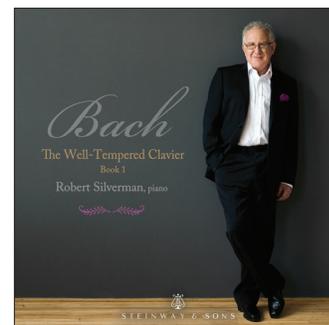
Etcetera Records

Braithwaite's latest CD reflects her dedication to performing music by living composers. A personal connection to the five remarkable composers—hailing from the United States and the Netherlands, her two national homes—inspired her to bring their extraordinary works to a wider audience. Featuring clarinet works written especially for Braithwaite and her ensembles, the album is the culmination of years of collaboration and friendship. She is joined by fellow Eastman alumni, soprano **Claron McFadden '82E** and pianist **Vaughan Schlepp '77E, '79E (MM)**.



ANNA DAGMAR '00E RHAPSODY

Pianist, composer, and conductor Anna Dagmar celebrates the release of her fifth album, *Rhapsody*. The word “rhapsody,” based on its Greek origins, means to “stitch a song.” On this 11-track CD, Dagmar is joined by Eastman alumni **Beth Meyers '00E, '00, '02E (MM)**, viola, and soprano **Misty Castleberry '00E, '03E (MM)**. Also appearing on the album as a vocalist is Dagmar's 11-year-old daughter, Eloise.



ROBERT SILVERMAN '65E (MM), '70E (DMA)

BACH: THE WELL-TEMPERED CLAVIER, BOOK 1

Steinway & Sons

Renowned Canadian pianist Silverman debuts on the Steinway & Sons label with a superb performance of Bach's 1722 *Well-Tempered Clavier*, one of the earliest enduring monuments of keyboard literature. The 24 preludes and fugues that make up the collection appear on his two-CD album. Accompanying the release is Silverman's monograph on the cycle, *Bach's Sonic Tapestry*, available through major online booksellers.

▶ ALUMNI NOTES



1950s

The Kirkland Rotary Club in Washington State has honored **Jocelyn Reiter Ellison '59E** with its Rotarian of the Year award, recognizing her outstanding service and dedication to the community. Also recently named the club's president-elect, Ellison has been an active and inspiring force within the organization. In addition to her Rotary contributions, she serves as president of the Lake Washington Chapter of Music4Life, a nonprofit dedicated to donating musical instruments to students.

Bernard Rubenstein '58E continues to serve as an advisor and guest conductor of the Vermont Youth Symphony and is regularly invited to lead rehearsals and offer professional guidance to its musicians. He is also frequently recommended as a mentor for emerging conductors and most recently worked via Zoom with a young Swedish conductor, helping her prepare for an audition at the Royal Academy in London, which she successfully completed.

1960s

Ann Labounsky '61E received the American Guild of Organists' Endowment Fund Distinguished Artist Award for her illustrious career as an inspiring educator and church musician, an internationally acclaimed recitalist, and the pre-eminent scholar of the life and music of Jean Langlais.

Eastman Professor Emeritus of Composition **Robert Morris '65E** was conferred the Lifetime

Achievement Award by the Melharmony Foundation in Middleton, WI, in recognition of his outstanding artistic excellence and his pioneering work on integrating harmony and melody in south Indian Classical (Carnatic) Music.

1980s

Paul Brantley '88E (MM) was awarded his seventh MacDowell (Colony) Composer's Fellowship in Fall 2025. Fellows are accepted based on the artistic excellence of their work, as evaluated by independent panels of discipline-specific experts.

Richard Cohn '87E (PhD) has been appointed to a five-year term as European area research chair at the University of Coimbra in Portugal. Cohn, a specialist in music theory, will explore interdisciplinary approaches to musical time and examine the relationships among music, mathematics, computing, anthropology, and neuroscience for the MusicAnalytica project. Joining Cohn as a collaborator on the project is former Eastman Assistant Professor of Theory José Oliveira Martins.

Dan Locklair '81E (DMA) was named the winner of the 2025 American Prize Ernst Bacon Memorial Award for the Performance of American Music in the Professional Composers Category for his *Requiem* for SATB chorus (divisi),

The Maple Quartet placed second in the 2025 Frances Walton Competition that took place in Seattle, WA, last May. As one of three chamber ensemble finalists, each member of the quartet received an award of \$250 and professional photography and video of their competition performance. Violinists **Isabel Chen '25E** and **Magali Pellety**; violist **John Crowley '25E**; and cellist **Gabriel Hennebury '25E** formed The Maple Quartet in 2022 while students at Eastman.

SATB soloists, string orchestra, and organ. The nine-movement, 45-minute work is set in English and uses elements of the Latin Mass, along with non-traditional solo movements featuring additional Biblical texts. The American Prize in Composition recognizes and rewards the best composers in America of works for orchestra, chorus, concert band, chamber ensemble, theater, opera, dance or film that have been publicly performed, or read and recorded.

After three decades of executive leadership serving nonprofits and educational institutions large and small, cellist **Laurie Reinhardt '85E (MA)** launched ClearView Fundraising Solutions, her own

Maestro **Bruce Hangen '70E** presided over a performance of the Vista Philharmonic Orchestra at Groton Hill Music Center in November which united several Eastman alumni now living throughout New England, including **Stephen Lamb '00E**, tuba; **Nikki Payne '91E**, '91, violin; **Sandy Halberstadt '93E**, clarinet; **Kevin Ann Green '82E (MM)**, principal double bass; **Don Robinson '81E**, bass trombone; **Stanley Silverman '77E**, principal second violin; **Lauren Nelson '06E**, viola; and **Amelia Hollander Ames '01E** and **Peter Sulski '90E**, co-principal violas.



consulting practice. “I’m excited to share my experience more widely and would love to connect with fellow ESM alumni working in the nonprofit sector,” she says.

The Merel Quartet, which includes alumna **Mary Ellen Woodside ’86E** on violin, was awarded the 2025 Swiss “Golden Bow” Prize by Festival Meiringen and the Brienzer School of Violin-Making.

1990s

Ingrid Gordon ’92E and **Julia Gaines-Montage ’93E (MM)** both performed in the Musser Marimba Festival Orchestra in Manheim, PA, organized by Heartland Marimba and the Lancaster Marimba Ensemble. Celebrating the legacy of composer Clair Omar Musser, the festival was a unique opportunity to perform in a 46-piece strong marimba orchestra.

Maestro **Robert Moody ’93E (MM)**, music director for the Memphis Symphony Orchestra, Baltimore Chamber Orchestra, and Arizona Musicfest, recently had conducting debuts with the Cincinnati Symphony, San Francisco Symphony, Philadelphia Orchestra, and Hong Kong Philharmonic.

In October 2025, **Vanessa Rose ’98E** began a new role as president and chief executive officer of New Music USA, a national nonprofit organization dedicated to advancing new music in all its forms.

Several alumni were named award recipients by the Society for Music Theory in 2025.

Chris Stover ’02E (MA) was awarded the Citation of Special Merit, **Guy Capuzzo ’00E (PhD)** received the Public-Facing Scholarship Award, **Michael Dodds ’91E (MA)**, **’99E (PhD)** the Wallace Berry Award, and **Gilad Rabinovitch ’13E (MA)**, **’15E (PhD)** the Outstanding Publication Award.

Several alumni from Eastman’s composition programs were appointed to tenure-track academic positions for the 2025/26 academic year, including **Nicolas Chuaqui ’21E (DMA)**, assistant professor of composition and electronic music at Ithaca College; **Igor Santos ’12E (MA)**, assistant professor of music at Cornell University; **Ania Yu ’17E**, assistant professor of music at Pomona College in Claremont, CA; and PhD candidate **Paul Coleman**, assistant professor of composition and audio arts at Penn State University.

2000s

4 Mike Chiavaro ’05E surprised everyone when he appeared as legendary E Street Band bassist Garry Tallent in the Bruce Springsteen biopic, *Springsteen: Deliver Me from Nowhere*, released in theatres in October 2025. Chiavaro met Springsteen on set and filmed many of the singer’s greatest hits. “As a lifelong bassist who grew up a stone’s throw from the Jersey Shore, getting the call to play Garry Tallent was the ultimate surreal dream gig,” Chiavaro said.

5 Dr. Beata Golec ’05E (MM), **’12E (DMA)** appeared on the cover of the December issue of *Rochester Woman Magazine* and was featured extensively in an article celebrating her journey from early musical training to



international performance and community leadership, establishing her as an influential force in the Rochester music scene.

6 Kasumi Leonard ’09E, ’22E (MM) won the second flute/piccolo position in the Sarasota Opera in Sarasota, FL.

Internationally renowned solo and collaborative pianist **Futaba Niekawa ’05E, ’13E (DMA)** joined the University of Maryland School of Music as assistant professor of collaborative piano in September 2025. As the primary mentor for students, Niekawa will help shape how the program

works with other divisions within the school.

A collaborative research team from the University of Rochester’s Eastman School of Music, Warner School of Education, and Hajim School of Engineering, along with Northwestern University’s McCormick School of Engineering, including Institute for Music Leadership Director **Rachel Roberts ’03E** and Associate Director **Blaire Koerner ’15E (MM)**, **’19E (DMA)**, have published their first research paper in *AI & Society* to support their National Science Foundation research grant. The research examines how musicians perceive and engage with the rapidly changing music production landscape shaped by generative artificial intelligence. The article shares perspectives on musicians’ ethical concerns related to creative practices and emerging AI technologies.

Zoë Johnstone Stewart ’01E, ’01 has been appointed executive director of the Guitar Foundation of America, where she had served on the Board of Trustees for the past five years.

▶ ALUMNI NOTES



Eastman alumni united at Spoleto Festival USA in Charleston, SC, for the final performance of Jules Massenet's opera *Thais*. **Emily Skilling '25E (DMA)** sang the role of Myrtaie, **Alexandra (Ali) Hotz '20E (MM), '23E (DMA)** sang the role of Crobyle, and **Troy Cook '10E (MM)** sang the role of Athanaël. More Eastman alumna joined in the chorus, including **Mary Fetterman '24E (MM), Ella Torres '22E**, and current master's student **Leah Rosenman**.

Nikola Tomić '09E (MM), '13E (DMA) has been appointed assistant professor of trumpet at the State University of New York at Fredonia.

2010s

Lydia Becker '18E, '21E (MM) recently performed with Les Arts Florissants at the Menuhin Festival in Gstaad, Switzerland. She is also recording an album of Bruhns Cantatas with Japanese organist Masaaki Suzuki.

Lien Boon-Hua '18E (DMA) has been appointed associate conductor of the Singapore Chinese Orchestra, an ensemble of traditional Chinese instruments. This follows Boon-Hua's appointment as conductor of the Singapore National Youth Chinese Orchestra in 2024, a role that has been renewed until 2027.

Rosanna Egge '17 (MM) now Sister Regina Therese of the Transfiguration, OP, is the assistant organist at St. Dominic's Monastery in Linden, VA, where she recently made her profession of solemn vows as a nun of the Order of Preachers (Dominicans).

Anthony LaLena '19E (MA), '19E (DMA), '25E (PhD) accepted a tenure-track position as assistant professor of musical-



ogy at SUNY Geneseo, teaching courses on western classical music, jazz, and American popular music from the 1960s to present. He is also co-directing the continuo ensemble at Geneseo, a group that performs early music while exploring contemporary improvisation-based compositions.

Sam Reenan '18E (MA), '21E (PhD) was appointed assistant professor of music theory at



the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music in August 2025.

Erik Stabnau '14E performs over 200 shows around the United States and abroad annually with the Glenn Miller Orchestra. Stabnau joined the orchestra as tenor saxophone in 2017 and was appointed its music director and featured vocalist in 2021. The current Glenn Miller Orchestra is a direct continuation of the original band formed by Glenn Miller in 1938 and the group still performs the same music over 80 years later.

Beginning with the 2025–26 season, **Tyler Taylor '17E (MM)** has been appointed as the next Daniel R. Lewis Composer Fellow with the Cleveland Orchestra. The appointment includes the performance of his dissertation piece "Permissions." Over the next three seasons, Taylor will work closely with both The Cleveland Orchestra and The Cleveland Orchestra Youth Orchestra.

Chris Wong '18E has been appointed as first flutist of the Sapporo Symphony in Hokkaido, Japan. This prestigious appointment is a tenured position.

2020s

Staff Sergeant Evan Curatolo '22E has been appointed as flute and piccolo with the West Point



Band at the United States Military Academy, where he performs regularly with the premiere military band in concerts and ceremonies while also playing in various chamber ensembles.

In July 2025, **David Falterman '24E (PhD)** began a new position as a teaching assistant professor in music theory at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.



Horn player, author, artist, and singer/songwriter **Erin Futterer '20E (DMA)** has been appointed the new interim professor of music at Arkansas Tech University. Futterer has also been very active on the local and national jazz scene with her duo Erin & Ross.

Cecilia Hoyt '23E has been awarded the cello fellowship position in the Netherlands Residentie Orchestra, where she is currently pursuing graduate studies at the Koninklijk Conservatorium of Den Haag (The Royal Conservatory of The Hague).

Alexandra Rose Hotz '20E (MM), '23E (DMA) and **Andrew Hammond '20E (MM)** got married in 2025. Hotz and Hammond met on their first day at Eastman in 2018 and have been together ever since. Eastman's Associate Professor of Opera **Timothy Long '92E (MM)** officiated the ceremony having been ordained for the occasion, and the newlyweds were joined by several Eastman alumni on the big day.



Good news from the studio of Professor of Flute **Bonita Boyd '71E**, who has had several former students undertake new appointments or win competitions. **Evan Pengra Sult '17E** won two awards at the National Flute Association: First Prize in the Orchestral Excerpt Competition and Third Prize in the Young Artist Competition, both in August. **Emily Bieker '21E (MM)** will be acting 2nd flutist with the Detroit Symphony Orchestra for their 2025-26 Season and principal flutist with the Des Moines Opera. **Alexandra Stokes '24E** is acting 2nd flutist/piccolist with the Sarasota Opera. **Elise Kim '23E (MM)** is acting solo piccolo with the Dallas/Ft. Worth Symphony Orchestra. **Andrea Velasquez '22E** is 2nd flute/piccolo with the Detroit Opera. And **Jarrett May '22E** is solo piccolo with the Phoenix Symphony Orchestra.

William Jae '24E, '24 premiered his first piece for piano and orchestra, entitled *Echoes from Journey's End*, with the newly formed San Gabriel Valley Symphony Orchestra during the Mid-Autumn Festival Concert last October.

James Julian '25E (MM) accepted the principal clarinet position with the Opera Australia Orchestra where he will be performing at the Sydney Opera House. His one-year appointment began in December.

Eleanor Price '21E (MA), '25E (PhD) is undertaking a postdoctoral research fellowship at Katholieke Universiteit Leuven in Belgium sponsored by the Belgian American Educational Foundation. There she will pursue a research project entitled "*Sang in Song: Wine, Students, and Violence in Motets on Par verité*" which examines Franco-Flemish student identity and musicking at the thirteenth-century University of Paris.

Alexander Straus-Fausto '25E (Advanced Diploma in Performance) has been appointed principal organist and associate director of music at the Church of the

Epiphany in Miami, FL, and artistic director of the Miami International Organ Competition, a prestigious triennial event recognizing young organists from around the world.

Pianist and vocal coach **Alexa Sowers '22E (DMA)** has been appointed the new assistant artistic director of the Wiener Festspiele (Vienna Opera Festival and Academy) in Vienna, Austria, and served as a jury panelist for the international Vienna Opera Competition 2025 at the Mozarthaus in Vienna.

Johnny Wang '24E (MM) joined the Toronto Symphony Orchestra (TSO) last fall as associate principal and Eb clarinet. Prior to this appointment, he was acting assistant principal clarinet with the North Carolina Symphony and performed with both TSO and the Buffalo Philharmonic.

Lauren Wilson '23E (PhD) has been named associate professor of law at the University at Buffalo. As both a teacher and writer in the areas of intellectual property and law, her work focuses on the interactions between social and legal conceptions of ownership and authority in creative media.

At the 57th International Horn Symposium, held at James Madison University, several Eastman horn alumni performed with the US Joint Service Horn Ensemble. US Army Field Band horn section leader **J. G. Miller '06E** had two of his arrangements featured on the program and was joined by **Ava Conway '20E, Emma Shaw '21E, Claire Bradley '20E, and Ted Price '97E.**



▶ ALUMNI NOTES IN MEMORIAM



1 CHUCK MANGIONE

Charles “Chuck” Mangione ’63E, ’85 (Honorary), the Grammy-winning jazz musician whose warm flugelhorn sound brought jazz into the mainstream, passed away at his Rochester home on Monday, July 21, 2025. He was 84.

A proud Rochester native, Mangione studied at the Eastman School of Music from 1958 to 1963, launching a career that would span more than six decades. In the 1960s, he performed with Art Blakey’s Jazz Messengers, honing his voice as both a trumpeter and composer. By 1968, he had returned to Eastman as the first director of the Eastman Jazz Ensemble, guiding the next generation of jazz musicians while continuing to carve his own path.

In 1970, Mangione recorded *Friends & Love... A Chuck Mangione Concert* live in Kodak Hall at Eastman Theatre, conducting the Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra and performing on flugelhorn. The groundbreaking album earned a Grammy nomination and paved the way for his 1977 hit *Feels So Good*, one of the best-selling jazz albums of all time. Mangione’s melodic crossover appeal earned him 13 Grammy nominations and two wins. He composed music for both the 1976 Summer Olympics in Montreal and

the 1980 Winter Olympics in Lake Placid, NY, where he performed his theme “Give It All You Got” at the closing ceremony.

Throughout his life, Mangione maintained strong ties to his hometown and alma mater, returning often to perform. He earned an honorary doctorate from the University of Rochester in 1985, received Eastman’s Alumni Achievement Award in 2007, and was inducted into the Rochester Music Hall of Fame in 2012.

“Chuck was a larger-than-life composer, flugelhorn and trumpet player, bandleader, recording artist, and mentor,” said Bob Sneider ’93, bandmate of Mangione and associate professor of jazz studies and contemporary media at Eastman.

2 ELIZABETH OEHRLE

Dr. Elizabeth “Betsy” Oehrle ’65E, a revered and pioneering activist in the field of music education, died peacefully in her home in Durban, South Africa, on April 21, 2025. She was 92.

The American-born academic settled in Durban shortly after graduating from Eastman and became one of South Africa’s most influential advocates for decolonial music education. She dedicated her life to creating educational frameworks that used scholarly rigor and artistic practice to empower marginalized



communities. As senior lecturer in music education at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (formerly the University of Natal) from 1975 until her retirement in 1997, Oehrle reshaped music pedagogy across Africa and helped dismantle apartheid’s cultural barriers through institutional innovation. Her career was defined by confronting systemic exclusion. Discovering that music educators were segregated into racial associations, she resolved to create spaces for shared scholarship.

Oehrle directed the University Choir for 20 years, pioneering collaborative concerts with the University of Zululand; founded the South African Music Educators Society in 1985; and contributed to the founding of the Pan-African Society for Music Educators.

Oehrle earned a bachelor’s degree in history from Hood College in Frederick, MD, and a master’s in education at Syracuse University before attending Eastman. She then continued her education in South Africa, undertaking her third bachelor’s—in music history—at the University of South Africa and finally her PhD at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. Among her most important publications was the book *A New Direction for South African Music Education* (1989).

3 PORTER POINDEXTER

Porter Poindexter ’57E, who passed away on September 15, 2025, at the age of 91, was an esteemed and sought-after New York City freelance trombonist. Known for his perfect pitch and the high standards he set for himself and others in music, Poindexter was also a grammarian, political thinker, and possessed cooking skills on par with his musical talents.



During his time at Eastman, Poindexter premiered composer George Walker’s Concerto for Trombone and Orchestra, which Walker had written specifically for him. Shortly after receiving his bachelor’s degree, Poindexter was drafted into the US Army and was a member of the 7th Army Symphony, supporting America’s cultural diplomacy initiatives in Europe after World War II. Upon his return, he married his high school love Jeanne in 1964, and they moved to NYC a few years later.

Poindexter’s career included playing with the New York Philharmonic and American Symphony Orchestra; for Alvin Ailey, Joffrey Ballet, Twyla Tharp Dance, New York City Ballet, and Dance Theatre of Harlem; numerous Broadway shows such as *Fiddler on the Roof* and *Cabaret*; as well as multiple engagements with critically acclaimed orchestras in the Mostly Mozart Festival at Lincoln Center. He even performed at the White House.

From 1968 to 1999, Poindexter was a devoted member of the American Federation of Musicians Local 802, the largest local union of professional musicians in the world, and said that leading New York City’s Labor Day parade with his union in the 1980s remained among his proudest memories.

4 DAVID STRINGHAM

Dr. David Stringham '03E, '07E (MM), '11E (PhD), the newly appointed dean of the College of Music, Theatre, and Dance at SUNY Fredonia, passed away from complications of a stroke. He was 44 and is survived by his wife, Monica, and their three sons.

A native of Corfu, NY, Stringham began his career as an instrumental music teacher in schools across the Rochester-Buffalo region. He joined the State University of New York at Fredonia in May 2023 after 13 years at James Madison Uni-

versity (JMU), where he served in a range of faculty and administrative roles. At JMU, he served as pianist and conductor for university musicals, led the JMU Jazz Band, and taught courses in music learning and teaching, music technology, and research methods. Most recently, he served as executive director of the Office of Creative Propulsion and professor of music in JMU's College of Visual and Performing Arts. He also co-founded JMU's Center for Inclusive Music Engagement and served as its first director. His work was supported

by grants from prestigious institutions including the National Endowment for the Arts.

Stringham was an active scholar who presented work in state, national, and international venues and whose research appeared in leading music education journals. He co-edited two volumes in the *Musicianship* series (GIA Publications) and contributed chapters to books from Oxford University Press and other academic publishers.

He was widely admired for his communication skills, forward-looking leadership,



and dedication to expanding access to music education. He was also a banjo player who brought joy to students and colleagues alike.

► ALUMNI NOTES DEATHS

As of December 2, 2025

1940s

Doris (Felde)

Avshalomov
'46E*, November 2020

Douglas G. Campbell

'46E (MA), '57E (PhD);
October 2025

George W. Guest

'44E*; October 2009

Gloria (Hibbeian)

Mikialian
'45E; November 2025

Nicholas A. Poccia

'47E, '48E (MM); March 2022

1950s

Melvin H. Berger

'51E; July 2025

Eleanor V. (Saabel) Boda

'56E; June 2025

Ellen (Axon) Brogren

'57E (MM); August 2020

Harriet R. Chase

'54E (MM); May 2025

Shirley (Hirst) Cohoe

'52E*; May 2019

Robert L. Gaudin†

'56E (MM), '59E (PhD);
September 2025

Ann R. (Myers) Green

'57E, '59E (MM); June 2000

Dorothy (Hatch) Keating

'54E (MM); June 2025

Jack E. Lamb

'59E*; December 2018

Joan W. Mey

'52E; November 2018

Rufus R. Nutting

'51E (MA); September 2025

Shirley M. (Willis)

Plummer '53E; July 2025

Porter R. Poindexter

'57E; September 2025

Rosamond W. (Waldron)

Wadsworth '56E (MM);
November 2024

L. Deloyce (Harrington)

Watkins '56E; '59E (MM);
August 2025

Jeanne S. (Sterner)

Wolfanger
'59E; November 2025

Edward M. Wolpert

'59E, '60E (MA); September 2025

1960s

Herbert M. Ausman

'68E; July 2025

Cherry N. Beauregard†

'63E (MM), '70E (DMA);
September 2025

Thomas C. Fay

'65E; June 2025

Frances M. Fox

'61E; August 2025

George E. Giroux

'61E (MA); November 2025

Alan R. Gregory

'60E; July 2025

Rigmor J. Johannessen

'64E; April 2020

Daniel H. Johnston

'62E; June 2025

Charles F. Mangione†

'63E, '85 (Honorary);
July 2025

Linda (Finney) Nemeth

'66E; November 2025

Elizabeth D. Oehrle

'65E; April 2025

Judith L. Ross

'63E, '70E (MA); September 2025

Robert E. Sheldon

'60E; August 2025

Jewel (Taylor) Thompson

'60E (MM), '82E (PhD);
June 2025

Jean M. (Anderson)

Wuensch
'69E (MM); May 2025

1970s

R. Gary Deavel

'70E (PhD); July 2025

Thomas A. Indiano

'78E; June 2025

Julian P. Kozicki

'70E; February 2023

Elizabeth L. (Brown)

Paddack
'72E; October 2025

Karen L. Ritscher

'74E, '79E (MM); July 2025

David C. Stabler

'79E (MM); September 2025

Orma F. (Shwachman)

Sullivan
'78E; December 2023

Cheryl (Favier) Toyama

'78E; July 2025

1980s

Peter G. Shoun

'80E; September 2025

1990s

John A. Bailey '92E,
'93E (MM); March 2018

Mary A. Vacher-Weill

'90E (MM); June 2025

2000s

David A. Stringham

'03E, '07E (MM), '11E (PhD);
November 2025

2010s

Isaac Jin-Ray Li

'20E; September 2025

Former Faculty

David Beach, professor of music theory at Eastman and dean of graduate studies at the University of Rochester, June 20, 2025

* degree not conferred † former faculty

▶ STUDENT NOTES

Musicology PhD candidate **Nick Anderson '22E (MA)** presented his paper “Animating the Audiovisual Biwa: Sound and the Performance of Narrative in Naoko Yamada’s Adaptation of Heike Monogatari” at the New York Conference on Asian Studies at SUNY Brockport in early October.

Two PhD students in Music Theory recently accepted full-time jobs: **Jerome Bell** has been appointed guest lecturer at the Cleveland Institute of Music and **Jacob Eichhorn** has been appointed assistant professor of practice in music theory at the University of Texas at San Antonio.

In November, many Eastman students won prizes in their classical voice divisions in the annual National Association of Teachers of Singing (NATS) district auditions at Ithaca College. First Year Collegiate Treble Second Place: **Lal Besir**, student of Katherine Ciesinski '18 (MS). First Year Collegiate TBB First place: **Carter Greeson**, student of Joshua Conyers. Sophomore Collegiate Treble First Place: **Remington Collins**, student of Katherine Ciesinski. Junior Collegiate TBB Second Place: **Elijah Gebers**, and Honorable Mention: **Daniel Perez**, students of Joshua Conyers. Adult Divisions First Place: **Zachary Thompson**, student of Joshua Conyers, and Second Place:



Xi Huang '23 (MM), student of Katherine Ciesinski.

DMA student **Veniamin Blokh**, from the studio of Alan Chow, was recently awarded the Gold Medal in the Professional Category of the Manhattan International Music Competition and was the Second Prize winner in the Professional Category of the Pacific Stars International Piano Competition (Online Division), winning a certificate diploma along with an invitation to the 2026 Piano Concerto Festival & Piano Island Festival, and the opportunity to perform in the winners recital at the Lake Forest Performing Arts Center.

Music Teaching and Learning graduate students, **Kelton Burnside**, **Jonathan Fleischman '21E (MA)**, **Qingqing Kong**, **Kimia**



Peykarzadeh, Rachael Sanguinetti '15E, Samantha Webber, and **Zhilin Zhang**—along with URMC doctoral student **Jack Earnhart '25E (MA)** and faculty members Dr. Lisa Caravan '07E (MM), '12E (DMA) and Dr. Sangmi Kang—presented at the Society for Music Teacher Education Symposium, held October 23-25 at Butler University in Indiana.

Huiping Cai, DMA piano student from the studio of Alan Chow, won the Vancouver Piano Sessions Concerto Competition and performed with the Vancouver Metropolitan Orchestra.

Doctoral student **Estel Vivó Casanovas '24E (MM)** was named a winner at the Young Concert Artists Susan Wadsworth International Auditions, becoming only the

second saxophonist ever to win in the competition’s 65-year history.

The Office for Student Activities is proud to announce the official recognition of the Asian Students’ International Association (ASIA). The club’s founding executive board members include **Dominic Fiacco**, **Viviane Kim**, **Sarah Cao**, **Gu Hong Wu**, and **Pengling Zhu**. ASIA’s mission is to foster an inclusive environment that celebrates, promotes, and encourages appreciation for the cultures of the Asian diaspora.

Matthew Figel '19E, '22E (MM), a DMA candidate in the studio of Joseph Rackers '01E (MM), '05E (DMA) and Marina Lomazov '93E, '00E (DMA), earned an Honorable Mention award in the Rosalyn Tureck International Bach Competition in July.



Three students from the studios of Joseph Rackers and Marina Lomazov were recognized at this year’s New York State Music Teachers Association MTNA Competition. DMA candidate **Matthew Figel '19E, '22E (MM)** won first place in the Young Artist Performance Piano competition, while master’s student **Ashley Lee** placed second and master’s student **Jiaxi Li '24E** received honorable mention.

Musicology PhD candidate **Paul David Flood** was named the Honorable Mention for the 2025 Conference Presentation Prize from the Gender and Sexuality Studies Section of the Society for Ethnomusicology (SEM). He was awarded for his paper read at last year's SEM conference: "Crying at the Euro-Club: Rainbow Europe, Queer Diasporas, and the Politics of Escapism at the 2024 Eurovision Song Contest." Additionally, Flood published his article "Everybody Wanna Move Like Us!: Performing Afro-Sweden in the Eurovision Song Contest" in the September 2025 issue of the *Journal of Popular Music Studies*.

Alex Gagne, first year horn dual-degree student in the studio of Peter Kurau '74E, recently won first place in the Junior Division of the Nico Toscano Young Musician Competition, while **Austin Shilling**, fifth year saxophone performance major in the studio of Chien-Kwan Lin '07E (DMA), won the Senior Division. In addition to a financial prize, Gagne and Shilling will appear as soloists with the Cordancia Chamber Orchestra in performances in 2026.

Beal Institute for Film and Contemporary Media master's student **Joel Hoo** won an award at the Midwest Film Festival in November for his score to *Wind Walker* directed by Daniel Zhang.

Congratulations to **Abbey Jemison**, a second-year master's student in the studio of Peter Kurau, who has won a horn position within the US Navy Fleet Band program, commencing in May 2026. She will be stationed in one of the nine Navy Fleet Bands (six in the US and three abroad).

Congratulations to DMA candidate **Andrew Johnson**, from the studio of David Higgs, for recently winning the Alaska Pipe Organ Composition Competition, organized by Sitka Lutheran Church in Sitka, AK. Johnson's composition, *Fantasy on FINLANDIA*, was awarded first place along with a \$1,000 cash prize.

It was premiered during a celebration concert at Sitka Lutheran in October and performed on the church's 1844 Kessler pipe organ, the oldest organ west of the Mississippi River.

Nathanael Kumar, a composition student of Elizabeth Ogonek and a euphonium student of Justin Benavidez, had his composition *Monody on the Call of an Owl* published by Pinnacle Brass. The piece explores the sounds and behaviors of owls over a series of miniatures for unaccompanied euphonium. Kumar also won the Gold Medal in the Artist Euphonium Division at the 2025 Leonard Falcone International Tuba and Euphonium Festival and Competition. In addition to a cash prize, he has been invited to present a featured recital at the 2026 United States Army Band Tuba and Euphonium Workshop.

The Institute for Music Leadership awarded three grants to students in the fall. **Nathanael Kumar** won the AMP Up Grant and **Connor Higley** and **Ted Ekstrand** both won the IML Mentorship Grant.

DMA and Artists' Certificate student **Alexander Little** won First Prize at the Albert Schweitzer International Organ Competition, a prestigious competition in Saarbrücken, Germany. The First Prize award was 15,000 euros.

Doctoral student and cellist **Isaac Moorman '24E (MM)** was named the winner of the Jack Heller Young



Artist Competition in Tampa, FL, with pianist and fellow DMA candidate **Veniamin Blokh** accompanying. Moorman received a cash prize of \$3,000 and will be the featured soloist in three performances with the Tampa Bay Symphony in May 2026.

Matt Nastro, a Music Teaching and Learning master's student, has been appointed as the representative of the National Association for Music Education Guitar Council.

Master's student **Victor Ni '24E** won the clarinet position in the Albany Symphony Orchestra where he will join master's clarinet student **Daniel Ketter** who currently serves as principal clarinet.

Media Composition master's student **Joe Osterstock** won second place in The American Society of Music Arrangers and Composers (ASMCA) Student Composition Competition. Created in 1938, ASMCA promotes the art of music arranging, composition, and orchestration within the commercial arts community and the public by educating and informing both about the roles their members play in the creation of music, past and present.

The Eastman horn studio was well-represented at the International Women's Brass Conference, which took place at the University of Hartford's Hart School of Music. Current Eastman undergraduate student **Danica Tuohy** placed second in the Susan Slaughter Solo Competition, Category 1 (ages 23 or younger) while Eastman alumni **Cristina Vieyetz '24E** placed first and **Dylan Kingdom '24E** third.

Saxophonist **Allison Young**, a Jazz Studies and Contemporary Media master's student, was awarded the 2025 Hal Leonard Scholarship from the Jazz Education Network (JEN). She was selected based on outstanding artistic accomplishments and received a \$1,000 scholarship to support her studies at Eastman. Young was also



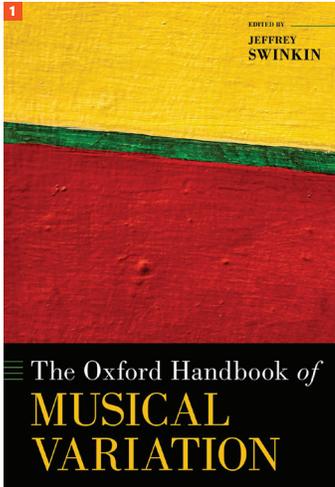
selected as one of the winners for the Jazz Education Network 2026 Sisters in Jazz Competition. She later attended the JEN Conference in New Orleans to perform, directed by world-renowned drummer Terri Lyne Carrington.

Xiaolu Zhang, a master's student from the studio of Joseph Rackers, won Third Prize at the Thousand Islands International Piano Competition. Meanwhile, **Lillian Feng**, a second-year undergraduate student from the studio of Marina Lomazov, received Honorable Mention and won the Audience Prize.

Ray Zheng, from the studio of Bonita Boyd '71E, has won a flute position in the Canadian Armed Forces Band, beginning 2026.



▶ FACULTY NOTES



1 Congratulations to three faculty members from the Music Theory Department, whose essays appear in *The Oxford Handbook of Musical Variation*: Assistant Professor of Music Theory **Ben Baker '18E (MA), '21E (PhD)**, “Themes and (Improvised) Variations in Modern Jazz Palimpsests;” Professor of Music Theory **Jonathan Dunsby**, “Glosses on Variation Techniques;” and Assistant Professor of Music Theory **Sarah Marlowe '13E (PhD)**, “Varied Repetition as a Unifying Element in Select Works by Isabella Leonarda.”

Professor Emeritus of Jazz Studies and Contemporary Media **Bill Dobbins** arranged and conducted the string arrangements for the George Coleman CD *George Coleman with Strings*. The album was recently released on the HighNote

label, and features pianist David Hazeltine, bassist John Webber, and drummer Joe Farnsworth.

At the district meeting of the National Association of Teachers and Singing in Ithaca, NY, in November, Assistant Professor of Voice **Joshua Conyers** was elected Chapter Vice President.

Three members of the Musicology Department presented at the Society for Ethnomusicology Annual Meeting in Atlanta, GA, in October: Associate Professor of Ethnomusicology **Jennifer Kyker**, “Makwa: Rhythm and Improvisation in Zimbabwian Handclapping;” Visiting Assistant Professor of Global Musicology **Jesse Freedman**, “Sounding Across and Against Borders at the East German Festival of Political Songs in the Global Cold War;” and PhD candidate **Paul David Flood**, “Music, our Empire: Skopje 2014 and the Politicization of Roma.”

Congratulations to Assistant Professor of Music Theory **Nathan Lam**, whose “Pentatonic Xuangong 旋宮 Transformations in Chinese Music” was a winner of both a Society for Music Theory Emerging Scholar Award and a publication award from the Post-1945 Music Analysis Interest Group.

Professor of Saxophone **2 Chien-Kwan Lin '07E (DMA)** performed

in August as soloist with the Singapore Symphony Orchestra on the country’s National Day Concert, celebrating the nation’s 60th year of independence. He shared the stage with fellow Singaporean Eastman alumni **Joshua Kang Ming Tan '01E**, conductor, and **Jonathan Ong '07E**, violin.

Congratulations to Associate Professor of Musicology **Darren Mueller**, whose book *At the Vanguard of Vinyl: A Cultural History of the Long-Playing Record in Jazz* (Duke University Press, 2024) has been named the winner of the 2025 Award for Excellence in Best Historical Research in Recorded Jazz, given by the Association for Recorded Sound Collections.

3 In November, Associate Professor of Jazz Studies and Contemporary Media **Dave Rivello '89E (MM)** and Assistant Professor of Jazz Saxophone **Charles Pillow '84E (MM)** held a reading session for their Manhattan Jazz Alliance—an organization whose mission is to nurture new jazz arrangements and compositions in the NYC area. Among those invited was their colleague, Professor of Jazz Studies and Contemporary Media **Clay Jenkins**, and several Eastman alumni: **Peter Haensel '25E (MM)**, **Ethan Helm '12E**, **Aidan O'Connor '19E**, **Sarah Navratil '24E**, **Josh Gagnon**

'20E (MM), **Zach McRary '22E (MM)**, and **Oliver Gomez '24E**.

Associate Professor of Composition **Evis Sammoutis** has been awarded a Fulbright Research Flex Grant for work at the Liszt Ferenc Academy of Music in Budapest, Hungary. The award supports research trips to Hungary in the summers of 2026 and 2027 and the creation of a new work featuring Hungarian traditional instruments and electronics. Sammoutis also won the 2025 Roy Minoff Composition and was named a recipient of the highly competitive New Music USA Creator Fund.

In August 2025, Professor of Double Bass **James VanDemark** celebrated his 50th anniversary at the Eastman School of Music by hosting a series of masterclasses and performing a gala concert at the Weiwuying National Center for the Arts in Kaohsiung, Taiwan, alongside his former student **Yung-Chiao Wei '96E** celebrating her own milestone—25 years at Louisiana State University.

Members of the Musicology and Music Theory Departments presented at the joint annual meeting of the American Musicological Society and the Society for Music Theory in Minneapolis, MN, in November. In total, 22 faculty members and students were in attendance as presenters or had papers presented.





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On January 17–18, 2026, the Eastman Jazz Orchestra, led by Director Christine Jensen, was invited alongside nine other ensembles from university jazz programs across the country to compete in the 2026 National Collegiate Jazz Championship at Jazz at Lincoln Center. Launched in 2020, the two-day competition celebrates the excellence and achievements of the next generation of jazz musicians. Participating bands were judged by a panel of leading jazz performers, composers, and educators, including acclaimed saxophonist and Eastman alumna Alexa Tarantino '14E.

The Eastman Jazz Combo received honorable mention in Combo Performance, while several Eastman students earned individual awards, including Dan Atkinson, Camilo Baracaldo, Reyna Machado, Brendan Nie, Ian Oliver, Eric Paige, and Felix Schneider.

“Performing the music I love will always be a privilege,” Brendan Nie said, “but being able to stand on the same stage as one of the best jazz orchestras in the world, alongside many of my dear friends at this school, will be an opportunity I will never forget.”

Photo provided by Gilberto Tadday/Jazz at Lincoln Center.