



december 2016

# THE INNOVATORS

MUSICAL AMERICA PROFESSIONALS OF THE YEAR



musical  
america  
SPECIAL REPORTS



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## Introduction



"I think that true innovation happens by creating space for artists to dream, explore, succeed and, if necessary, fail without worry." So says Beth Morrison, new-music-theater composer/producer/imprario and one of Musical America's Top 30 Professionals for 2016. Morrison, creator of the annual Prototype Festival, is an ideal fit for this year's category: The Innovators.

With input from our readers and colleagues, we chose individuals who have generated new ideas, launched or notably advanced a business, programmed a new series, or all of the above. We received more nominations than ever this year, so it wasn't easy winnowing them down to a mere 30. Winners range from high profile to no profile, from big earners to volunteers. They are women composers who mentor teenage girls to follow in their footsteps; opera company general managers who are pushing the envelope and bringing in new audiences; a cellist who plays in neo-natal units; a conductor who leads choirs of homeless men and women; a pianist bringing back the pedal piano by commissioning new works for it; a competition in which everybody wins; a publicist who creates a press kit with origami cranes to promote a show called *Wings*.

They not only innovate, they inspire us. Their ideas and the courage to follow them through, no matter how off-the-wall, controversial, or otherwise out of the box, keep us moving forward, spur us on to stay creative and keep the field of performing arts vital and exciting. Kudos to every one.

Regards,

Susan Elliott  
Editor, Special Reports

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# The INNOVATORS

Welcome to our annual year-end Top 30 MA Professionals Special Report. This year, we asked the field to nominate the top innovators of the field; people who have recently generated new ideas, launched or notably advanced a business, programmed a new series, or all of the above. Our queries generated numerous responses, and it wasn't easy winnowing it down to a mere 30. Here they are; wish them a well-deserved, hearty congratulations!



## ZUILL BAILEY

**Artistic Director**

**El Paso Pro-Musica**

**Professor of Cello, University of Texas at El Paso**

**Artistic Director, Northwest Bach Festival**

With degrees from the Peabody Institute and the Juilliard School, cellist Zuill Bailey has performed and recorded with orchestras all over the United States, as well as in Austria, Israel, and South Africa. But he has cast a wider net, far beyond the concert hall, determined to make classical music accessible to all, even in non-traditional settings.

He performs for thousands of students in schools every year. Acknowledging the effects of music on newborn babies, he has played in local neo-natal intensive care units. In Spokane, WA, where Bailey is artistic director of the Northwest Bach Festival, and in Mesa, AZ, where he is guest artistic director for the Mesa Arts Center, he has provided music in hospices, oncology centers,

and homeless shelters. Bailey is also artistic director for the [Sitka Summer Music Festival/Series and Cello Seminar](#) in Alaska. In nearby Eagle Mountain, he gives annual performances with the women's orchestra of the [Hiland Mountain Correctional Center](#).

Whether in school districts, low-income neighborhoods, or in prisons, Bailey is committed to bringing people together through music. As he notes, "It is a great pleasure for me to be able to share the gift of music through concerts as well as help engage communities. Nothing is as powerful and as enriching as watching how classical music inspires, heals, educates, and unites us all. I am honored to continue doing my part as an ambassador for music and to share the joy that it brings to everyone." —Bruce Hodges

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## FRED BRONSTEIN

Dean  
[Peabody Institute](#)



In the two years that Fred Bronstein has been dean of Peabody Institute, he has been emphasizing the need for change in classical music education. “What I tell people is that you still have to come out of a conservatory a great player, but that’s not enough anymore,” he says. “It’s a competitive world out there. You have to be developing skills to create your own path and be successful in different ways.”

Bronstein came to Peabody, which is part of Johns Hopkins University, from the symphony orchestra world, having been CEO of the Omaha, Dallas, and St. Louis Symphonies. In St. Louis, after financial woes led to a work stoppage over the musicians’ contract, he engineered a turnaround that put the orchestra on sound footing. Parallels exist between the situation there and what the new dean faced at Peabody, whose enrollment had been declining in recent years.

Bronstein introduced a [Breakthrough Plan](#) built around four “pillars”: Excellence, Interdisciplinary Experiences, Innovation, and Community Connectivity.

“I will use an orchestra analogy,” he says. “The core business of an orchestra is the classical subscription series. But you also have to

embrace other things to create audiences and resources. Orchestras need to be educators, advocates, communicators. Music schools also need to be thinking about how to develop audiences and people’s connections with music.”

Among the Breakthrough Plans’ initiatives are a new system for faculty contracts and evaluations; a realignment of executive staffing; the use of market research analysis to inform admissions and recruitment; acoustical upgrades in the primary performance space; the addition of Baltimore Symphony Music Director Marin Alsop to the faculty; symposiums with thought leaders in the business, from *The New Yorker* music critic Alex Ross to Blair Tindall, author of the novel *Mozart in the Jungle*, to director Peter Sellars; and grants to faculty and students to foster innovative ideas.

That the Breakthrough Plan is working is borne out in the numbers: With about 560 fulltime students in 2016-17, auditions are up from the previous year to 1,526, the highest level in five years. In other good news, the Peabody Symphony Orchestra has released its first CD on Naxos, featuring the works of faculty member Kevin Puts, with Alsop conducting. —John Fleming



## JANE COVNER

Associate  
[JAG Entertainment](#)

Jane Covner oversees the classical clients of JAG Entertainment, a Los Angeles-based public relations, marketing, and celebrity booking company. In her promotions for them, she has come up with some unusually creative ways to get timely coverage in the mass media.

Violinist Joshua Bell’s famous incognito busking appearance in a Washington, D.C., subway station in 2007 came about in

part due to Covner’s efforts to persuade an initially reluctant Bell to meet with *Washington Post* writer Gene Weingarten. His article about the experiment—which Covner made sure would run the weekend before Bell received the Avery Fisher Prize—subsequently won the Pulitzer Prize for feature writing. Another time, prior to a Bell performance in San Francisco in 2015, she

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placed an item in Leah Garchik's *San Francisco Chronicle* column about entomologists at the California Academy of Sciences naming a new species of spiders after the violinist.

Knowing that violinist Rachel Barton Pine grew up in a financially strained home, Covner encouraged her to make a visit to the largest homeless shelter in Washington, D.C., the Community for Creative Non-Violence, prior to her Easter concerts last year. That resulted in a PBS feature that brought Barton Pine to the attention of a whole new audience. As in the Bell experiment, Covner's media coup was all about timing. "It may not have resonated as much if it hadn't been around Easter," she says.

For a production of *Peace on Your Wings*, a musical about a 12-year-old victim of the Hiroshima atomic bombing with an unknown cast and production team, Covner went, in her words, "organic old-school," creating a press kit in a box filled with paper cranes that flew out of the box when opened.

Says Laurie Rubin, whose company Ohana Arts produced ... *Wings*, "Jane Covner finds simplicity and innovation in the tangible things that will touch one's heart, piercing through the noise of fast moving technology and high social media traffic."  
—Richard S. Ginell

**DAVID B. DEVAN**  
General Director and President  
Opera Philadelphia



"We believe Philadelphia exists at the intersection of sophistication and grit," says David B. Devan, general director and president of Opera Philadelphia. "We are trying to embody that reality so that we are a part of this city." Since his appointment in 2011, he has changed the way Philadelphia audiences have come to think about opera.

Under Devan's leadership, the company has established a multi-year composer-in-residence program, in collaboration with the Music-Theater Group (New York), to keep the artform infused with creativity. *Opera News* has described the company as "one of the leading instigators of new work in the country." Since Devan's arrival, the company has produced or co-produced eight new operas, including *Charlie Parker's YARDBIRD* by Daniel Schnyder and Bridgette Wimberly, *Cold Mountain* by Jennifer Higdon, and most recently, *Breaking the Waves* by Missy Mazzoli.

In September 2017, Opera Philadelphia will unveil the inaugural 017 festival, with seven productions—including

premieres by Kevin Puts, Daniel Bernard Roumain, and Lembit Beecher. The festival will use venues additional to its home base at the Academy of Music. They include the Wilma Theater, Philadelphia Museum of Art, and the Barnes Foundation.

When 017 received a \$2.5 million grant from the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, that organization's VP for Arts Victoria Rogers commented, "Opera Philadelphia has the opportunity to re-envision the discipline, curate a series relevant to today's audiences, and demonstrate that opera is an accessible, vibrant, multidimensional art form reflective of our lives."

Devan is keenly aware that opera must pursue different paths to remain vital in the 21st century. "Our company has to be audience-centered. We want to cultivate and support the widest range of artists possible—traditionally singers and musicians, but we have extended that to include directors, librettists, and others. That's how you excite and energize audiences."  
—Bruce Hodges

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## HELEN EATON

Chief Executive Officer  
[Settlement Music School](#)

Founded in 1908, the Settlement Music School has grown into one of the largest community schools for the arts in the United States, with six branches in the Philadelphia/Camden, N.J. area. Its 200 faculty and staff provide over 10,000 weekly individual lessons, classes, and activities, including the Children's Music Playshop, for ages six months to three years, the Adult Orchestra, pre- and after-school enrichment programs, teacher training, chamber music coaching, and more.

CEO Helen Eaton arrived at SMS in 2010 after serving as president of the Chicago Children's Choir from 2007 and dean of programs at the Merit School of Music from 2000. A violist by training, with degrees from The Juilliard School, the University of Pennsylvania, and the University of Chicago, Eaton made community engagement a priority from the start, introducing extensive programming in local schools as part of the SMS Education Pathways initiative, and Sounds of Young Philadelphia, which serves low-income music students. In July 2014, Settlement opened the Kardon Center for Arts Therapy, offering services to

individuals with special needs at each of the school's branches, as well as other locations in the Philadelphia area.

Eaton also spearheaded a \$25 million Centennial Campaign and increased earned revenue by over 40 percent while maintaining the school's financial aid programs, valued at \$2 million annually.

A 2014 article in *The Harvard Business Review* described how she helped transform SMS's facilities into neighborhood meeting places that could provide adults with a sense of community. After conducting a series of interviews, Settlement staffers discovered that what people in the area wanted most from the School was the opportunity to make music. The result is the [Adult Rock Band](#), a 10-week program that culminates in a public concert. After a partial success, the school did some fine-tuning and the improved program was given additional funding by the Pew Charitable Trusts. —Bruce Hodges



## ALAN FLETCHER

President and CEO  
[Aspen Music Festival and School](#)

Alan Fletcher is a strong advocate for 20th-century American symphonists, and as president and CEO of the Aspen Music Festival and School, he made his case this past summer. Call him an innovative excavator.

In a series titled "An American Musical Century," audiences heard major symphonic works by Roy Harris, Charles Ives, Peter Mennin, Walter Piston, and Roger Sessions, as performed by the Aspen Festival Orchestra and the Aspen Philharmonic.

"These sounds are not new to our ears today," Fletcher said in a statement at the time. "These figures, many of whom came to Aspen, invented the sound world we now live in. . . . But while we all rightly love 20th-century music from abroad, from Stravinsky to Ravel, for some reason we're in danger of ignoring so much of our own great music, which is to say our own cultural DNA."

In an essay for the *The Guardian*, Fletcher said he was especially happy that Mennin's "brilliant and gutsy" Fifth

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Symphony and Sessions's Violin Concerto (with Gil Shaham as soloist) were on the agenda. "Planning our marketing, phrases such as 'all but forgotten,' 'unjustly neglected' and 'unaccountably unknown' kept coming up," he wrote. "I struggled against these descriptions. I have not forgotten these composers and their magnificent music."

He further noted that Harris, Mennin, Piston, William Schuman, and Elliott Carter, who collectively wrote more than 100 symphonic works, "had in the past five years, a total of just 20 performances by U.S. orchestras."

Fletcher is a composer himself, and his distinguished teachers included Sessions, Milton Babbitt, Edward T. Cone, and Paul Lansky. The world premiere of his *On a Winter's Night a Traveler*, accompanied by a Bill Morrison film, was performed at the 2015 festival. Before coming to the Rockies in 2006, Fletcher was provost at the New England Conservatory and head of the Carnegie Mellon School of Music. In a highlight of his Aspen tenure, the festival's \$75 million Matthew and Carolyn Bucksbaum Campus was dedicated in July. —John Fleming



## ADRIAN FUNG

Vice President, Innovation

[Toronto Symphony Orchestra](#)

Cellist/Producer, [The Afiara Quartet](#)

Adrian Fung has placed himself in the vanguard of Canadian music, first as the founding cellist of the Afiara Quartet and, within the past year, as vice president of innovation at the Toronto Symphony.

Trying to make the Afiara stand out among the plethora of young, highly trained quartets in the world, Fung came up with a project called [Spin Cycle](#), an attempt to connect the tradition-encrusted ethos of the classical string quartet with the electronic sounds and culture of now.

In Stage One of Spin Cycle, the Afiara commissioned four young Canadian composers (Kevin Lau, Laura Silberberg, Rob Teehan, Dinuk Wijeratne) to write new works based upon popular themes. Stage Two had [DJ Skratch Bastid](#) remix recordings of these into altogether new pieces of music. And in Stage Three, the original composers were asked to respond to the results of Stage Two—in other words, make a remix of a remix—in the form of yet another work featuring a string quartet plus DJ,

creating what Afiara calls "a complete musical conversation." The result is engaging classical chamber music allied tightly to an insistent electronic rock beat.

With the TSO, Fung is spearheading [The Canadian Mosaic Project](#), a year-long, musically diverse celebration of Canada's Sequicentennial in 2017. Supported by the government, the project offers 16 programs focusing upon Canadian composers and artists throughout the year. It also includes commissioning 38 two-minute compositions, called "Sesquies," to be played by the TSO and orchestras from all of the provinces and the Yukon and Northwest Territories.

Fung says that he is especially proud of the Canadian Mosaic microsite and digital e-learning platform, from which TSO Mosaic performances will be streamed. The initial offering is an interactive *O Canada* as performed by the TSO and sung in 12 languages. —Richard S. Ginell

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## JAMES GINSBURG

President

[Cedille Chicago](#)



At the time James Ginsburg started Cedille Records in 1989, there had not been a significant Chicago-based classical record label since the heyday of Mercury Living Presence in the 1950s. But unlike Mercury, Cedille, which went non-profit in 1994 under the operating foundation Cedille Chicago, has remained home-grown and Chicago-centric.

Ginsburg trained to be a lawyer (it's the family profession—his mother is U.S. Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg) but dropped out of law school in order to run Cedille full-time. He hasn't looked back since. He remains committed to giving Chicago artists a platform upon which to record programs of their own choosing, often with repertoire bypassed by the majors. As a non-profit that functions on corporate, foundation, and individual support, the label can take risks in repertoire where commercial companies do not.

Occasionally Cedille records basic repertoire, but usually in tandem with rarer pieces like Rachel Barton Pine's coupling of the Brahms and Joachim Hungarian violin concertos or Jennifer Koh's

new disc of Tchaikovsky's complete music for violin and orchestra. Following the example of long-gone independents like Folkways and New World, Cedille never allows its recordings to go out of print; its CDs are distributed by Naxos.

Along with Pine and Koh, Cedille has given other musicians international visibility with projects like the Pacifica Quartet's complete Shostakovich Quartet cycle (which included couplings by the composer's Soviet contemporaries) and Eighth Blackbird's imaginative compilations of new music. Cedille has also provided exposure to Chicago's "other" noted orchestra, the [Grant Park Orchestra](#) and its enterprising Music Director Carlos Kalmar.

"Chicago musicians have a platform that few musicians in other cities can equal," says Henry Fogel, Dean of the Chicago College of Performing Arts and former CEO of the League of American Orchestras. "To me, this is innovation." —Richard S. Ginell



## ED HARSH

President and CEO

[New Music USA](#)

Merging two long-standing organizations devoted to new music and its proponents is not for the faint of heart, but that is exactly what Ed Harsh has managed to accomplish. Starting at Meet the Composer (founded 1974) as VP in 2005 and working his way up to president by 2011, he noted MTC's similarity in mission and mindset with the American Music Center (founded 1939). His

vision to combine them finally came to fruition in 2011, with the announcement of a new organization, New Music USA.

The hybrid preserves and expands upon the best qualities of its progenitors, while striking out in bold new directions. An enormous and diverse catalog of new music is available around the clock on the organization's website, via [Counterstream Radio](#),

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and the [New Music USA Online Library](#), which contains over 57,000 works by over 6,000 composers. [NewMusicBox](#), the organization's online publication, features articles by a wide range of people on subjects relevant to today's composers, performers, and listeners.

In addition, New Music USA advances the cause of new music with its granting programs, which to date have distributed over \$1.8 million to some 300 individuals and organizations. Grantees' progress is documented online, providing an overview of creative happenings around the country. A recent sample reflects the programs' diversity and imagination: [Thingamajigs](#), for ten commissions of ten composers, part of a year-long festival honoring composer Lou Harrison's centennial; the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council, for the [Dot Air Experimental Music Festival](#), "growing out of

the psychographic remains of the American Industrial Revolution"; and [Alejandro Rutty](#), for a song cycle based on audio interviews with Latina immigrants, performed by the [Lorena Guillén Tango Ensemble](#).

Most recently, Harsh and his staff implemented the [New York City New Music Impact Fund](#), which distributes general operating and residency grants to smaller ensembles, venues, and presenters (many of which are artist-led), with the goal of creating a home base, marketing their work creatively, and helping locate rehearsal and performance space.

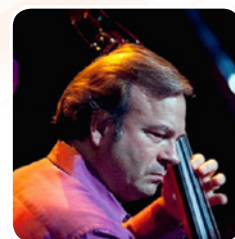
A born collaborator, Harsh is typically modest about being cited for his accomplishments, preferring to credit "my awesome New Music USA colleagues." —Bruce Hodges

## THOMAS KNIFIC

Professor of Double Bass

Head of Jazz Studies

[College of Fine Arts, Western Michigan University](#)



Thomas Knific is a charismatic teacher, composer, group leader, and side man to the greats, from Dave Brubeck and Randy Recker to Pepe Romero and André Watts. The founder and director of the school's [Western Jazz Quartet](#), he is also known for putting together diverse groups of musicians. One of his inventions is the annual String Jazz World Music Explosion at WMU, in which some of the university's string students collaborate with jazz faculty and special guest artists, such as Alon Yavnai, Jamey Haddad, and bandoneon expert J.P. Jofre.

"Sheer joy for all involved," says Knific.

"I really enjoy the results of synergy between people and institutions. I find magic often happens with these concerted efforts."

Knific's range as a composer is borne out in his commissions from a range of both jazz and contemporary classical groups from

the International Society of Bassists to OPUS 21. As a player he has premiered works by John Cage, Donald Erb, Chen Yi, Tania Leon, and dozens of others.

Knific has been at WMU since 1987 and has also taught at the Interlochen Arts Academy, Michigan State University, and the Cleveland Institute of Music. His master classes have taken him all over the world, to the China Conservatory of Music in Beijing; the Paris Conservatory; The University of the Arts, Berlin; and The Janáček Academy in the Czech Republic.

Also past president of the International Society of Bassists, he has appeared on five continents and made over 30 recordings. Knific is the recipient of the *DownBeat* magazine Achievement in Jazz Education award. Those who know his work credit him with changing the lives of student bassists worldwide. —Bruce Hodges

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## CHRISTOPHER KOELSCH

President and CEO

[Los Angeles Opera](#)

In 2012, when the Los Angeles Opera needed someone to stay home and watch the store while General Director Plácido Domingo pursued his ceaseless international schedule, it turned to one of its own, Christopher Koelsch, who first joined the company in 1997 and worked his way up.

Koelsch soon showed that he had an eagle eye for new ideas and could act fast on them. Having seen a short video clip from Barrie Kosky's wildly innovative, live-action-plus-animation production of *The Magic Flute* in Berlin in 2013, Koelsch immediately booked a flight to Germany, brought the production to L.A. only months later, and scored a big audience hit with it.

Under Koelsch's leadership, LA Opera has gone off-site with a spinoff series called [Off-Grand](#), which cultivates a new, younger, more casual audience by presenting experimental works that stretch opera into areas far beyond what Verdi or Puccini imagined. These works have been done at far-flung locales like the Broad Stage in Santa Monica (Lee Holdridge's *Dulce Rosa*, May 2013), the Barnsdall Gallery Theater near Hollywood (Vid Guerrero's *Figaro!* 90210, Jan. 2015), and The Theater at Ace Hotel, a 1927-vintage

downtown L.A. movie palace. This last hosted sold-out live-plus-film performances at Halloween time like Philip Glass's score for *Dracula* in 2015 and Matthew Aucoin's for *Nosferatu* in 2016.

As part of Off-Grand, Koelsch formed an alliance with [Beth Morrison Projects](#) that would result in a succession of productions of edgy new works by Missy Mazzoli (*Song from the Uproar*, October 2015), David Lang (*anatomy theater*, June 2016), and Ted Hearne (*The Source*, October 2016), staged in the black-box [REDCAT](#) theater underneath Disney Hall.

Already Koelsch's ventures may be having an effect out of town; this past March, San Francisco Opera opened its own similar experimental series called SF Opera Lab. And with the company's financial problems following its 2010 *Ring* cycle now in the rear-view mirror, Koelsch is remaking LA Opera's image as that of a forward-looking major opera company taking artistic risks.

"As the definition of opera grows and expands with our living composers' visions, he follows suit," says Morrison of Koelsch. "As the definition expands, so does his audience. This is the way of the future." —Richard S. Ginell

## MISSY MAZZOLI AND ELLEN REID

Founders

[Luna Composition Lab](#)



Among composers, women are still in the minority. To address the issue, in 2016 composers Missy Mazzoli and Ellen Reid launched the Luna Composition Lab. There are other opportunities for women composers in or at the cusp of the profession, but Luna is designed for the young—eighth graders through rising college freshman.

"We believe this is a problem that begins early in one's career: Young women in their teens have few female composer role models, and are, in both direct and subtle ways, discouraged from entering the field," says Mazzoli.

Working with the Kaufman Music Center's Face the Music, a well-regarded youth orchestra that focuses on new works, Luna Lab

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is a one-year, by-application program that provides opportunities for performance, recording, and one-on-one mentorship and lessons with established women composers. Mazzoli and Reid have also recruited composers Reena Esmail and Kristin Kuster, to provide additional counsel and expertise. Together, they hope to close the compositional gender gap.

Mazzoli has received wide acclaim, including that for her most recent piece [Breaking the Waves](#), based on the Lars von Trier film and given its world premiere in 2016 by Opera Philadelphia. She also directs an all-female ensemble, [Victoire](#), and is on the faculty of the [Mannes School of Music](#) at the New School.

Reid—a former teacher with a strong commitment to education—is currently artist-in-residence at [National Sawdust](#). One of her most recent projects is “Rooftops,” part of a mobile opera

called *Hopscotch*, produced in 2015 in Los Angeles by avant-garde production company [The Industry](#). In an article in *The New Yorker*, Alex Ross described it as “a combination of road trip, architecture tour, contemporary-music festival, and waking dream.”

This year’s recently announced Luna Composition Lab fellows range in age from 13 to 17 and are based in New York City, Connecticut, and Massachusetts. They are Violet Barnum (age 13), Sofia Belimova (16) and Michelle David (17). Honorable mentions went to Robin MacDonald (16) and Caroline Bragg (13). In announcing the winners, Mazzoli and Reid said in a statement, “We are fully impressed by the depth and skill conveyed through these young composers’ works. . . . [They] display both vibrant talent and compelling, singular voices.” —Bruce Hodges



**BENJAMIN MITCHELL**  
**Founder and President**  
[Kaleidoscope Chamber Orchestra](#)

Two years ago, clarinetist Benjamin Mitchell founded the Los Angeles-based Kaleidoscope Chamber Orchestra, which chooses to operate without a conductor. Nothing particularly innovative about that, as the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra and other groups have long proven. But a conductor-less orchestra did fill a gap in the burgeoning Los Angeles music scene, and Mitchell had some new ideas on how to make it work.

Believing that high ticket prices are one of the biggest roadblocks to the spread of classical music, this season Kaleidoscope is doing away with tickets, instituting a “pay what you can” policy. Audience members can pay any amount before, during, or after the concert—even when they get home.

Kaleidoscope encourages people to take photos or videos during the performances and put them on social media, as a way of building its audience. It does draw the line at flash photography, though, and still urges patrons to silence their cell phones.

The players who can perform standing up do so, period-baroque-style, and concerts are limited to one hour so as to attract younger fans and those with shorter attention spans. The repertoire bursts outside the usual province of chamber orchestras at times with Mahler’s Symphony No. 4, Prokofiev’s Symphony No. 5, or Messiaen’s *L’Ascension*. The group sponsored a competition for new works last spring and received almost 900 applications, from which 12 pieces were chosen to be played this season.

So far, Kaleidoscope has performed mostly at churches in Santa Monica, Glendale, and Palos Verdes, and in Union Station; plans are in place for extra concerts in schools, hospitals, and homeless shelters. With one of the largest pools of expert musicians in the country to choose from, Kaleidoscope has had no problem attracting players. “There are hundreds of musicians who want to be involved in Kaleidoscope right now, many times more than we can use in a given concert,” says Mitchell. —Richard S. Ginell

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## BETH MORRISON

Creative Producer

[Beth Morrison Projects](#)

"I think that true innovation happens by creating space for artists to dream, explore, succeed and, if necessary, fail without worry," says Beth Morrison, who founded Beth Morrison Projects in 2006. Though she studied vocal music with the intent of being a singer—with degrees from Boston University and Arizona State University—she found herself dissatisfied with the traditional opera world and decided to implement a bold new vision, creating unusual productions that often defy categorization.

Among her biggest achievements to date is the [Prototype Festival](#) in New York, co-produced by [HERE](#) arts center, which—like Morrison—specializes in hybrids of music, theater, dance, and other disciplines. [See [MA.com review](#), January 2016.] In January 2017 the festival, in its fifth season, will present seven cutting-edge productions by composers as diverse as Matt Marks (*Mata Hari*), Missy Mazzoli (*Breaking the Waves*), and M. Lamar & Hunter Hunt-Hendrix (*Funeral Doom Spiritual*).

Like many visionaries, Morrison is expert at forging partnerships with like-minded institutions. In 2014, the [Fort Worth](#)

[Opera](#) presented her production of David T. Little's [Dog Days](#). The [Los Angeles Opera](#) has committed to two of her stagings each season, such as David Lang's *anatomy theater* last June, and in 2017, *The Source*, an experimental installation by composer Ted Hearne. In September, Boston's Arts Emerson offered *Ouroboros Trilogy*, by composers Zhou Long, Scott Wheeler, and Paola Pres-tini, all with librettos by Cerise Lim Jacobs.

As Adam Wasserman writes in the August issue of *Opera News*, "her success in establishing the company's brand of opera-theater with both downtown audiences and mainstream opera companies testifies as much to her longtime business model as to her role as a tastemaker."

Morrison is firmly focused, even philosophical, and wants to create both a process and environment where artists are encouraged to experiment. "As producers, it is our responsibility to let the artists lead us where the art form(s) should go. It is up to us not just to follow, but to link arms and walk the path together." —Bruce Hodges



## KRISTIN OLSON AND NADIR ASLAM

Founders

[Mount Sinai Concerts for Patients](#)

Music's healing powers are well-documented, but at New York's Mount Sinai Hospital, two musicians—who both suffered from the same medical condition—combined their talents to put those powers into action. Last April, they launched Concerts for Patients, a free chamber-music series held in the hospital's atrium. Kristin Olson, an oboist, and Nadir Aslam, a violinist, met when they were

being treated at Mount Sinai for spontaneous pneumothorax, also known as collapsed lung. Now fully recovered, thanks to Dr. Andrea Wolf and Dr. Andrew Kaufman, they are back to making music, much of it for the patients (and staff) of Mount Sinai.

Aslam recalls his epiphany: "I was sitting in my hospital bed staring at the wall in misery, when all of a sudden I heard Chopin

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Etudes being played on the Steinway in the atrium seven stories down. I swore right then and there that if I got out alive I would bring music to other patients like me who were scared, depressed, and in pain."

Aslam, who has a particular interest in outreach and teaching, also plays with Olson in Grand Harmonie, a period-instrument orchestra that presents concerts in New York and Boston, and La Fiocco, a period-instrument ensemble based outside of Philadelphia.

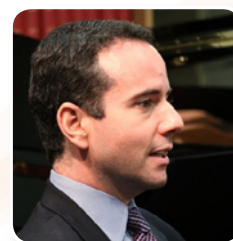
Olson plays as well with Sacro Profano, a baroque ensemble in the Seattle area focusing on 17th- and 18th-century music. She also makes and sells oboe reeds.

Aslam and Olson are acutely aware that many people are hospitalized alone, without friends or family to visit. "We've turned our potentially career-ending illnesses into a thriving musical experience for patients like they've never had before," says Olson.

The two say their music-making "surprises our audiences of patients, doctors, nurses, and families, . . . lifting them out of their situation and into a concert hall." —Bruce Hodges

## **BILL PALANT**

**Founder and Managing Director**  
**Étude Arts**



For nearly 20 years, Bill Palant worked for IMG Artists, one of the world's largest artist management companies, with close to 200 clients on its vocal roster alone. As a senior vice president, he represented Karita Mattila, Pavol Breslik, Measha Brueggengosman, Denyce Graves, Hei-Kuyng Hong, and other major singers. As IMG started to undergo major changes in the last several years, Palant joined the exodus of top managers from the firm (including Charlotte Lee, featured in last year's [Musical America 30: The Influencers](#).)

In 2015, Palant founded Étude Arts with a roster of 13 artists. A little over a year later, the roster has grown to 23, including well-regarded singers such as Julia Bullock, Kelley O'Connor, Paul Appleby, and Stuart Skelton, as well as two conductors.

What's the difference between a large firm like IMG and a boutique like Étude? "In a larger corporate environment, there is fundamentally and by design one currency: money," Palant says.

"The arts are a business, of course, and one cannot be blind to the value of money. However, my goal is to invest in and harvest the richness of many currencies such as artistry, creativity, connectivity, and holistic career growth (my own and the artists')."

Palant is an astute commentator on trends in opera and sits on the board of OPERA America; he notes how much has changed over his two decades in the business: "We are in the age of the stage director; no longer are we in the age of the performer." As a consequence, singers have to be more concerned about appearance. "Sadly, [opera staging] now is all about what it looks like, not what it sounds like. There are plenty of people who are having major careers because of what they look like, not because of what they sound like. Looks are more important than they used to be."

And Palant's advice for young singers is succinct: "If you can possibly do anything else, do it!" —John Fleming

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## JONATHAN PALANT

Founder/Conductor

Dallas Street Choir

Every Wednesday morning from 9:30 to 10:30 a.m., Jonathan Palant conducts rehearsals for a chorus of about 75 individuals. The agenda is typical—a few stretches, vocal warm-ups, ensemble tuning, then working on the pieces and perfecting their execution. But this is no ordinary choir: 68 percent of its members sleep in shelters, the rest live on the street.

Palant, who holds degrees in music education and choral conducting, founded the Dallas Street Choir two years ago as an outlet for the homeless and the disadvantaged, so that they might

feel a sense of structure, accomplishment, and community. No choral octavo scores here: Singers use lyric sheets and learn the music by rote. About half of them are in their 40s and 50s, most have high school diplomas. After an hour's worth of rehearsal, they get a snack and a voucher for public transportation.

The choir made its debut on January 25, 2015 at the Dallas City Performance Hall with a sold-out concert of songs like "Tomorrow" from *Annie*, Bill Withers's "Lean On Me," Bernstein's "Somewhere," and a medley of "Love Train/Put A Little Love In

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### 2016 - 2017 Artists Roster

#### Sopranos

Christine Brandes  
Julia Bullock  
Layla Claire  
Christiane Libor  
Lauren Snouffer

#### Mezzo-Soprano

Kelley O'Connor

#### Tenors

Michele Angelini  
Paul Appleby  
Joseph Kaiser  
Miles Mykkanen  
Sean Panikkar  
Stuart Skelton  
Nicky Spence  
John Tessier

#### Baritones

Alan Opie  
Sean Michael Plumb

#### Bass-Baritones

Andrew Foster-Williams  
Davóne Tines

#### Basses

Peixin Chen  
Soloman Howard  
Bastian Thomas Kohl

#### Conductors

Andrea Battistoni  
Cristian Macelaru

Roster as of November 2016

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Your Heart.” The grand finale was a 40-minute cantata about the homeless called *Street Requiem* in which the group was joined by mezzo-soprano Frederica von Stade.

Small wonder the tagline for the Dallas Street Choir is “Homeless, Not Voiceless.”

The group, a 501(c)(3) non-profit, has also performed at the Stewpot homeless shelter in downtown Dallas, the Winspear Opera House, the George W. Bush Presidential Library, and other

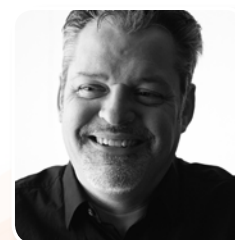
sites in the area. In June 2017, it will travel to Carnegie Hall and the Washington National Cathedral.

Palant, who teaches vocal music at Richland College, is busy helping other organizations like the Santa Fe Desert Chorale start choruses for the homeless. His website page, Start Your Own Choir!, is devoted to providing the instructions and resources to do just that, including a long list under the heading, “Things I’ve Learned Along the Way.” —Richard S. Ginell

## TROY PETERS

Music Director

Youth Orchestras of San Antonio (YOSA)



Composer/conductor Troy Peters became the music director of the Youth Orchestras of San Antonio in 2009 after spending 14 years leading youth and professional orchestras in Vermont. He brought with him the experience of collaborating with rock musicians such as Phish’s Trey Anastasio and Yes’s Jon Anderson—and as such, has been freshening the YOSA repertoire with further ventures linking rock with the classics.

Peters calls this the “Classic Albums Live” series, and he does all of the orchestrations himself in collaboration with local rock groups. “That’s a big interest of mine; how can you take music of different styles and make it work in a world of orchestra,” he said in an interview with WOAI News 4 San Antonio.

Very much aware of the recent passing of several pop luminaries, Peters in November led the YOSA Philharmonic—the most advanced of the program’s nine orchestras—in a concert at the [Tobin Center for the Performing Arts](#) honoring David Bowie. On the program, he coupled his own piece, “Remembering Bowie,”

with Philip Glass’s paraphrase of Bowie’s “V-2 Schneider” in his *Heroes* Symphony, and added works by Arvo Pärt and Britten’s transcription of Purcell’s Chaconne in G minor. Next March, Peters and the YOSA Philharmonic will perform Prince’s entire *Purple Rain* album with local rock bands as they previously have The Beatles’s *Abbey Road* and Radiohead’s *OK Computer*.

One of YOSA’s proudest boasts is that every young musician in the program will have at least one opportunity to perform in the Tobin Center, home of the San Antonio Symphony, in the 2016-17 season. Peters also leads a venture called the YOSA Pop Up Orchestra where he takes a group of players into the community, performing arrangements of pop and rock music for chamber ensemble.

“The great thing with young musicians is that you are taking them on this journey of discovery,” Peters told WOAI. “On the one hand, they’re discovering this world of music. On the other hand, they are discovering themselves, discovering what they are capable of.” —Richard S. Ginell

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## PAOLA PRESTINI

Composer

**Executive Director/Creative Director**

National Sawdust

A composer whose interests encompass much more, Paola Prestini embodies the best kind of restlessness. In 1999, when she was a student at The Juilliard School, she founded [VisionIntoArt](#) (VIA), a collective that commissions and presents new works, focusing on collaborations with choreographers, visual artists, actors, and composers. Since then, VIA creations have been seen across the country and around the world, in mainstream venues such as New York's Lincoln Center and the Brooklyn Academy of Music, and in locales as far away as Serbia and Zimbabwe. Extending its reach, VIA has released eight recordings under the VIA Records label.

Among her more [notable works](#) are the 60-minute *Oceanic Verses* (2010), commissioned by Carnegie Hall, recorded by the DeCoda Ensemble and Trinity Choir, conducted by Julian Wachner. In August 2016, *The Hubble*—according to Prestini, the first-ever live music event using virtual reality—combined music and astrophysics with cutting-edge technology, for an audience of 6,000 in Brooklyn's Prospect Park.

For most composers, the act of creating music is all-consuming, but Prestini seems to have other strains of innovation coursing through her veins. *The New York Times* has accurately

described her as a “human resources alchemist,” and indeed she has a remarkable ability to assemble and nurture artists and other professionals, and to create intriguing collaborations.

The culmination of her skills came in October 2015, when after years of planning, fundraising, and consulting with architects, designers, and musicians, she and her team opened National Sawdust in the Williamsburg neighborhood of Brooklyn. Housed in a turn-of-the-century sawdust factory, the venue is “a home for curious artists and listeners,” according to Prestini, an intimate, state-of-the-art performance space, notable not only for the striking visual appeal of its interior, but for the clarity of its acoustics.

“I want to give other composers and artists the kinds of opportunities that would have helped me when I was in my 20s,” she says. “I believe that by giving artists the reins to program the space and by lending support to their projects in the early phases of development, we will make a unique contribution to New York City's musical ecosystem.” —Bruce Hodges



## ROBERTO PROSSEDA

Pianist

Roberto Prosseda is an Italian pianist headed in several directions at once. Looking to his instrument's past, he is busy trying to bring the ancient, little-known pedal piano—which allows its practitioners to play bass notes with their feet, much like an organist would—back into use. Mozart owned one, and the instrument was once a vehicle for Schumann (Six *Etuden*

Op. 56, Four *Skizzen*, Op. 58), Gounod (Suite Concertante, *Danse Roumaine*, Concerto in E-Flat for Pedal Piano and Orchestra), Saint-Saëns (Concerto for Pedal Piano and Orchestra, which later became his Second Piano Concerto), Charles Alkan (11 *Grands Préludes et un transcription du Messiah du Handel*), and others well into the 19th century.

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Though the pedal piano has long been out of favor, at least since the 19th century, Prosseda has been exploring its possibilities for the last decade or so. He made his first public appearance with it in the Cathedral of Forlì in northern Italy, September 13, 2011, performing the modern premiere of Gounod's Pedal Piano Concerto with La Filarmonica Arturo Toscanini conducted by Jan-Latham Koenig.

He subsequently commissioned several new works for the instrument from composers like Ennio Morricone (*Studio IV Bis* from 2011) and Andrea Morricone (*Hommage à JSB*), and organists like Cameron Carpenter and Olivier Petry are increasingly trying their hands—and feet—on the instrument.

To help facilitate that, Prosseda is involved in the design of the 37-pedal [Pinchi Pedalpiano System](#), which works as an attachment between two grand pianos.

Call that looking to his instrument's future.

"What I hope is to give a new creative tool to composers and artists," Prosseda told *The Wall Street Journal* in an interview. "Because the idea of extending the piano, of having a piano that can do more things, has to be for artistic reasons—not just showmanship."

Also in 2012, Prosseda started using [TeoTronico](#), a system that controls via MIDI a grand piano onstage. With this setup, he gives lecture-concerts showing young audiences the differences between reproduction and interpretation. First, the TeoTronico acts like a robot that plays the music as written, following all indications in the score. Then Prosseda plays the same piece on the piano and adds his own interpretative touches like rubato, giving the music a "human" feeling. Later on in the concert, the TeoTronico is programmed to imitate the styles of great pianists of the past like Rachmaninoff, Busoni, and Hofmann, as heard on their piano rolls.

Clearly this is a pianist who isn't content to merely recirculate the repertoire. — Richard S. Ginell



## **WILLIAM RANSOM**

**Artistic Director**

**[Emory Chamber Music Society of Atlanta](#)**

When the Emory Chamber Music Society of Atlanta opened its 24th season in September with a concert by the Vega String Quartet, its quartet-in-residence since 2006, the society's founding Artistic Director William Ransom announced an important milestone. Seeded by a \$1 million matching grant from the Abraham J. and Phyllis Katz Foundation, the Society had established the Rebecca Katz-Doft Chamber Music Endowment, designed to keep a string quartet in residence at Emory University in perpetuity.

"The idea that we could start from nothing in 2006 to having a permanent string quartet in residence at Emory, forever, and that I could be part of establishing that, is incredibly fulfilling," Ransom says. "I would like for the chamber music society and the quartet-in-residence program here to be the leading chamber music organization in the Southeast. I think that's a very reachable goal."

ECMSA presents more than 25 free public programs this season in noontime, family, and evening concert series. Several feature the Vega, which also participates in classes across the university curriculum in chemistry, history, theology, neuroscience, math, and other disciplines. In a presentation to a freshman seminar called "The Art of Conversation in Jane Austen's World," for instance, the quartet plays music of Haydn, Mozart, and Shostakovich. "And we discuss how a string quartet is like, as Goethe said, 'a stimulating conversation between four intelligent people' that listeners can observe and enjoy," says Ransom.

"We put out a call and whatever professor is interested in tying their class in with some musical discussion, we make the music fit the subject," he says.

Ransom is a pianist and director of piano studies at Emory,

*continued on p. 20*

and this year his *Listening to Memories*, a solo CD of Bach, Chopin, Brahms, and Scott Joplin, was released on the ACA label. He also is artistic director of the Highland-Cashiers Chamber Music Festival

in North Carolina during the summer, and in September he was named artistic director designate of the Juneau Jazz & Classics Festival in Alaska. —John Fleming

## RICHARD SCERBO

Director

[National Orchestral Institute + Festival](#)



Richard Scerbo worked in various capacities with the National Orchestral Institute + Festival for more than a decade before being appointed director last year. Founded in 1988, NOI+F offers intensive study for orchestral musicians on the threshold of professional careers. Alumni have positions in virtually every major U.S. orchestra, including the New York Philharmonic, the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, the Seattle Symphony, and the Boston Symphony Orchestra.

“Our work is to be responsive to the changing demands being placed on orchestral musicians today,” Scerbo says. “The next generation of orchestral musicians not only needs to be master artists but knowledgeable entrepreneurs and advocates for their art.”

NOI+F is based at the Clarice Smith Performing Arts Center on the campus of the University of Maryland, College Park. Conductors at the month-long institute and festival last summer included Teddy Abrams (Mahler’s Symphony No. 1) and Osmo

Vänkä (Sibelius’s Symphony No. 2). One of Scerbo’s innovations is the [SPARK!](#) lobby lounge, where musicians and audience members can connect before and after concerts.

In July, the festival orchestra had a CD released by Naxos, the first in a multiyear partnership. From a program of American music conducted by David Alan Miller, it features John Corigliano’s Symphony No. 1, Michael Torke’s *Bright Blue Music*, and Copland’s *Appalachian Spring*. “Our musicians walk away from this experience with a professional recording credit,” Scerbo says. “For launching their careers, it’s a really nice step.”

In another innovation, Scerbo created the [Orchestral Futurist Fellowship](#) in collaboration with the Sphinx Organization. Each fellow is involved with operations of the institute and festival, combining skills in orchestral performance, administration, programming, and community engagement.

Scerbo, a bassoonist and conductor, also is founding artistic director of the [Inscape Chamber Orchestra](#). —John Fleming

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## PAUL SCHWENDENER

Executive Director

[All-Star Orchestra](#)

"Jerry and I have been inseparable," says Paul Schwendener, referring to Gerard Schwarz, music director and conductor of the All-Star Orchestra, the acclaimed ensemble of 95 of the top musicians from major orchestras around the United States. Since 2011, Schwendener has served as the group's executive director, raising the funds and overseeing the requisite steps to fulfill Schwarz's vision of a top quality, all-encompassing, accessible music education program.

Two seasons of All-Star shows have been broadcast on PBS so far, starting in 2013 with eight segments and continuing through 2015 with four. The next group will launch in fall 2017. Featured alongside Beethoven, Brahms, and Stravinsky is repertoire from Philip Glass, Augusta Read Thomas, Ellen Taaffe Zwilich, and other living masters. The programs also offer interviews with the players, and commentary and analysis by Schwarz. So far they have won four Emmy Awards and the ASCAP Foundation Deems Taylor Television Broadcast Award. The shows have been broadcast hundreds of times, both in major markets (New York, Philadelphia, Boston, etc.) and dozens of smaller ones, many

without access to a professional orchestra. All shows are available on DVD and Instant Video.

It is Schwendener who has overseen this vast array of distribution channels. Most recently, he finessed the All-Stars' partnership with the [Khan Academy](#), the world's leading free education website, exposing some four million students to serious orchestral music.

Schwendener's passion for classical music began decades ago. In the late 1980s, he supervised Philips Classics' popular Complete Mozart Edition, a 1991 *Gramophone* award winner. He has also served as a consultant to the Seattle Symphony for concerts and recording projects (2008-13), and is currently a consultant to the Milken Archive of Jewish Music, involved in producing concerts, recordings, and a radio series with the late Leonard Nimoy.

Over the years, Schwendener has been instrumental in amplifying classical music's reach—sharing its spirit and the joy of learning about it to millions. He is grateful, he says, "to help bring classical music to people who wouldn't have it otherwise."  
—Bruce Hodges



## JOSH SHAW

Artistic Director

[Pacific Opera Project](#)

Josh Shaw is a protean force of do-it-yourself opera in Los Angeles, acting at one time or another as a director, librettist, singer, set and lighting designer, producer, promoter, photographer—you name it. Although working with a number of opera companies in an equal number of capacities, his primary vehicle is Pacific Opera Project, which he started from scratch in 2011 with Music Director

Stephen Karr and has since taken it, as one of his productions might be described, "where no man has gone before."

Shaw's concept of opera embraces the word "entertainment," be it a *Star Trek* version of *The Abduction from the Seraglio*, *The Merry Widow* set in the Gold Rush (retitled *Merry Widder*), *Falstaff* as performed at Forest Lawn Memorial Park cemetery, *The Marriage*

*continued on p. 22*



of *Figaro* as seen through the film *Scarface*, or the company's most enduring hit, *La Bohème aka The Hipsters* at the Ebell Club in Highland Park.

Shaw adapts and updates the librettos himself, ticket prices are reasonable, starting at \$30, and for some productions, you can sit at a table and enjoy wine and snacks. Sometimes, POP even makes a little local history. In September at LA's Occidental College, it mounted Stravinsky's *The Rake's Progress* in what was the terribly overdue first professional performance of the opera in the city where Stravinsky wrote it.



**CHAD SMITH**  
Chief Operating Officer  
[Los Angeles Philharmonic](#)

The Los Angeles Philharmonic's current position as one of the most innovative orchestras in the country is due in large part to the imagination of Chad Smith, its youthful-looking chief operating officer. As conductor James Gaffigan has described him, "Chad is a thoughtful and intelligent programmer who knows the repertoire inside out, and that is so exciting to me as a conductor."

Not only has Smith kept the orchestra's long-running Green Umbrella new-music series going, he has helped to inject more contemporary programming into the regular Philharmonic season and overseen dozens of festivals. Among those that he has worked on are the Minimalist Jukebox, West Coast Left Coast, and Next on Grand. Also, Smith has consistently championed the confrontational Dutch composer Louis Andriessen, offering him a platform that has resulted in several premieres over the last decade, including the first U.S. performances of *Racconto dall'Inferno* (2006), *La Commedia* (2010), and *Mysterien* (2015), and the world premieres of the double piano concerto *The Hague Hacking* (2009) and *Theatre of the World* (2016).

Working with limited funds, POP has managed to attract a loyal audience and, lately, some attention from the [mainstream press](#). *The Star Trek Abduction* sold out the 1,200-seat John Anson Ford Amphitheater in Hollywood in September and has traveled to various venues around the country. It's regietheater for Americans, and POP claims that it is now second in the city only to the mighty Los Angeles Opera—albeit, they puckishly admit, by a margin of several million dollars. — Richard S. Ginell

Having earned an MM in vocal performance from the New England Conservatory, Smith began his orchestra administration career in 2000 with another innovative team, Michael Tilson Thomas and the New World Symphony. He arrived at the LA Phil in 2002 as artistic administrator, overseeing Green Umbrella; after three years, he went to work briefly for the New York Philharmonic, only to return to LA in 2006 as VP of artistic planning. He was [promoted to COO in 2015](#).

In October, Smith had the idea to launch the Green Umbrella season with a "[Noon to Midnight](#)" marathon, during which the LA Phil played host to a plethora of new music groups performing inside and outside Disney Hall. The jamboree attracted hordes of young people in their 20s and 30s, an indication that new music in unusual settings may well be a viable way to reel in those long-sought demographics.

In April 2017, the LA Phil plays host to a [Reykjavik Festival](#), a U.S. first, with performances of Icelandic music that promise to cross boundaries between classical and pop. Credit Smith with thinking outside the symphonic box. — Richard S. Ginell

*continued on p. 23*



**NICK SQUIRE**  
Recording Engineer  
Boston Symphony Orchestra

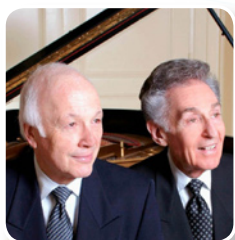
The Boston Symphony Orchestra has a rich legacy of recordings, but it did not have a full-time recording engineer on staff until last year when Nick Squire arrived. Squire already has major engineering credits with the BSO, including its Grammy-winning *Shostakovich: Under Stalin's Shadow* for Deutsche Grammophon, a concert performance of Shostakovich's Symphony No. 10 with Music Director Andris Nelsons. The first installment of a projected Shostakovich symphony cycle for the German label, it was also *Gramophone's* orchestral recording of the year. (The two-CD followup, released in May, features the Fifth, Eighth, and Ninth Symphonies.)

Squire, who has a bachelor's degree in percussion performance from the University of Nebraska at Omaha, and a master's in sound recording from McGill University, presides over the BSO's recently renovated recording control room in the Symphony Hall basement. Such an in-house recording setup is rare for American orchestras.

The 400-square-foot control room features split-wood panels, a custom ceiling cloud, Bowers and Wilkins speakers, four new producer work stations, and other state-of-the-art equipment. It was designed by Walters-Storyk Design Group, whose clients range from Jay-Z to Jazz at Lincoln Center to the Chicago Symphony Orchestra.

The Shostakovich CDs are drawn from live performances, which include the inevitable minor flubs by musicians and audience noise like coughing. Editing software to the rescue. "It's kind of like being a surgeon," Squire says of excising coughs. "You select certain areas and the technology processes them."

Still, Squire seeks to retain the audience's presence in the recording. "There are moments where it's very tense—and finally the music releases—and you hear 2,600 people breathe at once, you know, as they're moved by this beautiful music. I think that's what makes some of these recordings so magical."  
—John Fleming



**MELVIN STECHER AND NORMAN HOROWITZ**  
Executive Directors  
New York International Piano Competition

Melvin Stecher and Norman Horowitz have brought a refreshing concept to the often cutthroat arena of music competitions: Everybody wins.

Stecher and Horowitz met in 1951, and during the next five decades they toured the world as a celebrated duo-piano team, while also devoting themselves to nurturing talented young pianists. For 40 years, they had a music school in Cedarhurst, N.Y., and when that closed, they created the Stecher Horowitz

Foundation, which supports the biennial New York International Piano Competition.

In June, the competition drew 22 pianists ages 16 to 21 to the Manhattan School of Music. They played solo works, concerto movements, a commissioned piece by Lowell Liebermann (titled *Two Impromptus*) and, in a nod to the founders' legacy, piano four-hands repertoire. First prize and \$10,000 went to Aristo Sham, 20, born in Hong Kong and now attending Harvard College.

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Unlike most piano competitions, Stecher and Horowitz's has a no-elimination policy. Each contestant takes part in all four rounds, which are weighted equally, rather than winnowing the field down to a few at the end. "We feel it would be an injustice to accept applicants from all over the world, only to send them home after being eliminated after the first or second round," the pair state on the website. "Nothing could be more devastating to a young, ambitious musician." Even those who don't win prizes are awarded \$1,000.

What also sets NYIPC apart is that nobody may serve on the jury if he or she has taught one of the contestants, a conflict of interest that is not uncommon at other piano competitions. Stecher and Horowitz provide winners with concert and recital appearances throughout the year. "When the two of us started out, there were about 3,000 outlets for recitals," Stecher says. "Today, there are only about 300. Competitions are important for these young people to have the opportunity to play in." —John Fleming

## CHRISTIAN THOMPSON

Artistic Advisor

[Orchestre National de Lyon](#)

Director, [Verbier Festival Academy](#)



For 12 years, Christian Thompson was director of the Academy at the Verbier Festival, which brings elite young musicians to a village in the Swiss Alps to perform with and learn from world-renowned artists. The 23rd annual festival last summer featured a starry artist roster that ranged from Michael Tilson Thomas conducting Mahler to Bryn Terfel singing *Falstaff* to [Musical America 2017 Artist of the Year](#) Yuja Wang giving a recital of Brahms, Schumann, and Beethoven.

Under Thompson's direction, the Academy has mentored scores of musicians who have gone on to major solo careers. Perhaps his proudest innovation is a program called [Reaching Out](#) that he created for alumni of the festival's learning programs. It is designed to help young musicians develop the skills to broaden the reach of classical music.

"The one thing I really feel is important for the future is young musicians learning how to create events and be entrepreneurs and

be creative outside the concert hall," Thompson says. "We have young musicians who are learning how to fundraise, how to talk from the stage, how to be a resource in their communities. How to dream up events so that they can find new publics and get people excited about live music."

Thompson regards achieving the goals of Reaching Out as urgent. "The problem is that live music is a secret that's not shared widely enough," he says. "Audiences are getting older and we have to find a way for younger people and different parts of society to understand what it means to share live music."

In September, Thompson stepped down as director of the Academy to work full-time at the Orchestre National de Lyon, where he has been artistic advisor since 2014. His successor at the Verbier Festival is [Stephen McHolm](#), former artistic director of the [Honens International Piano Competition](#). —John Fleming

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## STEPHEN WADSWORTH

Director of Opera Studies, Artist Diploma in Opera Studies, Vocal Arts

The Juilliard School

Head of Dramatic Studies, Metropolitan Opera Lindemann Young Artist Development Program

Since 2008, noted opera director Stephen Wadsworth has been teaching acting to Juilliard's voice students. A man of many musical trades, one of his key jobs is heading the school's Artist Diploma in Opera Studies program, a two-year post-graduate training for eight to 10 singers designed to achieve "the seamless melding of vocal and acting techniques." Top-level career placement is part of the program, and recent alumni include up-and-coming singer-actors such as Julia Bullock, Ying Fang, and Aubrey Allcock.

Wadsworth brings extensive stage experience to the classroom, going back to his authorship of the libretto of Leonard Bernstein's 1983 opera *A Quiet Place*. As a director, he divides his time between opera and theater, with credits ranging from three Metropolitan Opera productions (*Rodelinda*, *Boris Godunov*, and *Iphigénie en Tauride*, all simulcast in HD to movie theaters) to *Master Class*, starring Tyne Daley, on Broadway.

His hugely popular production of Wagner's *Ring* cycle for Seattle Opera, performed in 2001, 2005, 2009, and 2013, was

notable for the acting demands on singers. "I do think that the way I work is unusual in opera and that it surprises some singers who may not be used to being perceived as actors, but 99.9 percent of them seem to enjoy it," he says. "I'm very rigorous with certain elements of craft, and very watchful, and I ask a great deal of them."

Wadsworth is also an excellent translator, a talent that serves his opera work well. His adaptations of the Beaumarchais *Figaro* plays, for the McCarter Theater in Princeton, informed his direction of Juilliard Opera's 2015 production of the Mozart-Da Ponte *Le nozze di Figaro*. "I've spent most of my career working to understand text in its historical context, and presenting plays and operas with an ever-keener sense of how history and aesthetics merge in them," he says. "The art of the 18th-century documents the emotional life of that time, nowhere more pointedly than in Beaumarchais's *Marriage of Figaro*." —John Fleming

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**KATIE WYATT**

Executive Director

KidznotesExecutive Director, El Sistema USA

Katie Wyatt is on a mission to spread the gospel of El Sistema, the music and social justice program that originated in Venezuela and has since spread like wildfire, not least because of its proudest alumnus, Gustavo Dudamel. A product of the program herself, Wyatt cofounded Kidznotes in Durham, N.C., in 2010. Under her direction, it has become a model for El Sistema-inspired orchestra training programs around the country. In July, she was named executive director of El Sistema USA, and she will head both it and Kidznotes in a transition planned to continue until next summer. She won't have to relocate, because El Sistema USA has entered into partnership with Duke University in Durham and will be based at the school. "It's an exciting time, and I'm happy to stay in my own community," she says.

Kidznotes has grown rapidly, its budget rising from \$150,000 in the first year, when there were 60 kids learning an instrument, to \$1 million in 2016. It now serves 400 Pre-K through 12 students from low-income areas of Durham and Raleigh. About 85 percent

of the students are Latino and African-American, and they rehearse six or 10 hours a week, depending on age and skill level. Students in the music program have fewer absences from school and outperform their peers academically.

Wyatt studied political science and viola at Indiana University, earned a masters in viola performance at the Cleveland Institute of Music, and was a member of the New World Symphony. She learned firsthand about El Sistema when she played in the Youth Orchestra of the Americas, which toured with Dudamel and the Simón Bolívar Youth Orchestra. That experience led her to go into arts administration, and she received a fellowship with El Sistema USA in 2009 that included time in Venezuela.

"In El Sistema, I saw what music could do for massive numbers of people in setting them up for success," Wyatt says. "What we do in a youth orchestra is a perfect metaphor for community. I feel that we're putting Brahms and Beethoven and Mozart in the ears and hands and language of everybody, so that it's the people's music." —John Fleming

# About THE AUTHORS

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John Fleming writes for *Classical Voice North America*, *Opera News*, and other publications. For 22 years, he covered the Florida music scene as performing arts critic of the *Tampa Bay Times*.



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Bruce Hodges is a regular reviewer for *The Strad* and serves as North American editor for *Seen & Heard International*. He has written articles for *Playbill* and *Strings* magazines and program notes for London's Southbank Centre. From 2007 to 2015, he wrote a monthly recordings column for *The Juilliard Journal*.

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