

THE KLEIN COMPETITION

2026 JUNE 6 & 7

The 41st Annual Irving M. Klein
International String Competition



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On the cover:
violinist Julia Schilz, 2025 first prize winner

On this page:
cellist Miles Reed, 2025 third prize winner



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WELCOME

WELCOME



Welcome to the 41st Annual Irving M. Klein International String Competition, in person at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, and online via the Violin Channel and other platforms. Our audience here in San Francisco and throughout the world will experience the exhilarating discovery of extraordinary new musical voices performing new and established masterworks of the string repertoire, including World Premieres of our commissioned works for 2026.

This year our Jury has selected seven Semifinalists from an all-time record number of applications (over 150) representing over a dozen nationalities. This is always a difficult task, with so many superb auditions to consider. Each submitted audition (all marked

anonymously by number only) is listened to many times, by several Jury members, over three rounds. This process is invigorating for all of us, renewing our conviction that the level and artistry of the next generation of musicians is continuing to soar.

The Semifinalists will perform a wide range of musical styles - unaccompanied Bach, a major concerto of their choice, this year's new commissioned works by Suzanne Sorkin, and (in the Final Round), a sonata of their choice. This array of performances allows us all to get to know the musical personas and gifts of each player over two days.

Our Jury is the artistic soul of the Klein Competition, demonstrating their fervent commitment to the development of gifted string musicians and upholding the highest musical standards. They are: Jennifer Frautschi, Wyatt Underhill (both Klein Competition laureates), Richard Aaron, our composer Suzanne Sorkin, Daniel Stewart, Christopher Costanza, and Jory Fankuchen. You can read more about them elsewhere in this program book.

We often present our recent and established laureates in performances in the Bay Area and around the US. Look for an update on some of these events in this program book.

Our laureates have established major careers in classical music - as soloists (including Jennifer Koh, Zlatomir Fung, Vadim Gluzman, Tessa Lark, Joshua Roman and Jennifer Frautschi); concertmasters of major orchestras (New York Philharmonic, Pittsburgh Symphony, Houston Symphony, Metropolitan Opera, Buffalo Philharmonic, Danish National Opera), principal players (Philadelphia Orchestra, Boston Symphony, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Cleveland Orchestra, Toronto Symphony); members of esteemed chamber ensembles, including most recently the Takacs Quartet; and members of virtually every major orchestra in the U. S. and Canada.

It is a pleasure to collaborate with the San Francisco Conservatory once again, and to greet our engaged and enthusiastic audience at SFCM. We hope you enjoy discovering the next generation of brilliant string players this weekend. Thanks for being with us!

Sincerely,

Mitchell Sardou Klein

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Mitchell Sardou Klein".

Klein Competition
Artistic Director

Semifinals – Saturday, June 6, 10AM PDT

Caroline H. Hume Concert Hall
San Francisco Conservatory of Music

Livestream:
www.theviolinchannel.com

For the Semifinal Round, each contestant plays an uninterrupted 20–25 minute program, which must include a Bach unaccompanied work, the commissioned work by Suzanne Sorkin, and a major portion of the semifinalist's chosen concerto. Once all the semi-finalists have performed their programs, the judges will determine who will compete in the Final Round on Sunday. Finalists' names will be announced before we adjourn Saturday.

Finals – Sunday, June 7, 3PM PDT

Caroline H. Hume Concert Hall
San Francisco Conservatory of Music

Livestream:
www.theviolinchannel.com

The finalists (announced at the end of the day Saturday) will each play a 25–35 minute program containing the repertoire as described in the programs that follow. Final Round programs are required to present a portion of a major sonata, and additional movements of the performer's concerto. If time allows, finalists may also include additional Bach movements or the Sorkin commissioned work. At the conclusion of all performances, the judges will convene and determine the prizewinners. The Awards will be announced immediately afterward.

Thanks to our Media Partner The Violin Channel

THE VIOLIN CHANNEL

Classical Music's Most Trusted Platform

Irving M. Klein (1917–1984)

Virtuoso chamber musician, master cello teacher and compassionate friend, Irving M. Klein served as the primary exemplar of his own convictions about musical education. He spent a lifetime in pursuit of excellence in musical performance, and he possessed a rare gift for discerning and supporting the highest motivations in others, so that wherever he lived he was continually at the growing center of a flourishing musical community.



For 18 years he performed in this country and abroad with the Claremont String Quartet, a group he co-founded in 1954. Acclaimed as one of the finest ensembles of that era, the Claremont represented the U.S. Department of State in cultural exchange programs in Europe, Africa and South America. Klein was chairman of the String Department of the North Carolina School of the Arts and taught at Pennsylvania State University, Peabody Conservatory, University of Delaware, Goucher College and College of Notre Dame. He performed with the CBS Symphony, Pittsburgh Symphony, Leopold Stokowski's All American Youth Orchestra and the Musica Aeterna Orchestra. He founded the California Music Center in 1971 and was its director for 13 years.

Irving Klein dedicated his life to music and to humanity. It was his talent to create that very special atmosphere of inquiry, respect and love that served to activate the creative efforts of his musical colleagues, students and friends. He touched many lives gently and yet so profoundly that his spirit and example will shine on through them for generations to come.

—ANNE HERSHEY

First prize - Total value of \$18,500 includes \$5,000 cash and performance contracts with the Peninsula and Santa Cruz Symphonies, the Gualala Arts Chamber Music Series, Music in the Vineyards, Buffalo Chamber Players, San Francisco Chamber Orchestra, and others. The cash prize is given this year by Maria Shim.

Second prize - Total value of \$5,500 includes \$3,500 cash and a performance contract with the San Jose Chamber Orchestra, among others. It is given by Ruth Short in memory of Elaine H. Klein, wife of Irving M. Klein, and for 35 years, an active board member and supporter of the Klein Competition and California Music Center.

Third prize (\$2,500) is given by David and Judy Anderson, in memory of Judy's father, Milton Preves, Principal violist with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra for nearly fifty years and instrumental in developing the judging procedures for the Klein Competition.

Two **Fourth prizes** (\$1,500) are awarded. One of the Fourth prizes is presented in memory of Jerry Lee Klein, Irving M. Klein's younger son, by Maria Klein. The other Fourth prize is presented in memory of Ron Goldman by the Tarka Quartet.

The prize for the **Best Performance of the Commissioned Work** (\$500) is named in memory of Allen R. Weiss and Susan E. Weiss. It is given this year by the Weiss family. The couple was often seen ushering together at the competition, typically wearing a dress and bowtie made from the same fabric. Tireless volunteers for musical and theatrical organizations, they spent their lives encouraging children (especially their own) to express themselves through the arts.

The Pablo Casals Prize (\$500) is for the best performance of the solo Bach work, in honor of the musical tradition of the great master.

The **Jacqueline du Pré Prize** is for the best performance of a sonata movement and has a total value of \$1800 and includes \$1000 cash and a performance contract for a solo recital in the Bay Area. It is given by William Byerley in honor of the great cellist, Jacqueline du Pré, and her legendary collaboration with her husband, Daniel Barenboim.

All performance contracts are subject to presenter cancellation or postponement due to forces beyond their control. The Klein cannot guarantee fulfillment of these performances, but makes every effort to.

If you are interested in underwriting a Klein Competition prize, please contact the Executive Director, Zoe Lin, at zoe@californiamusiccenter.org.

Submission Review

The review process is conducted by a panel of screeners. All identifying information is removed from the audio submissions so the anonymity of the applicants is guaranteed.

Once applications are closed, a remote team of 7-8 screeners begin independently listening to the submissions in three rounds. Screeners are selected for their expertise as players, conductors, or educators. We strive for a balance of instruments among them. Each submission is listened to by multiple judges.

All screening is blind. Each submission is assigned a number, and at no time does a screener know who they are listening to. This is to ensure complete anonymity of the applicants and eliminate any bias or favoritism.

2026 Klein Competition Judging Procedures

Judges are asked to refrain from discussion until the first secret ballot in each round is tallied, after which there may be discussion and re-votes only in the event of ties.

In the semifinal round the judges vote in no particular order for the three semifinalists who will typically be advanced to the final round, and then for the special prizes.

In the final round the judges vote for first place, which is determined, then proceed to vote for each remaining award, one at a time, starting with second up to the number of prizes being awarded.

Conflict of Interest Policy

Judges whose students are competing in the Competition may not vote for their own students. If a judge would otherwise have voted for his/her own student, that judge should abstain from voting for that particular prize level, to keep remaining votes properly weighted.

It is Competition policy that the judges make their decisions without regard to the age or career history of the performers: therefore, we give judges special programs without this information, and we ask panelists not to seek such information from any source either before or during the Competition.

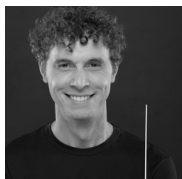
Milton Preves (1909–2000) first attended the Klein Competition in 1987 as a judge and subsequently was instrumental in developing the basis for the current judging procedures, which have been further refined over the years. Preves was a violist, conductor, teacher, soloist and a member of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra for 52 years starting in 1934. He was its Principal Violist from 1939 to 1986. He played under the batons of all the symphony's conductors from Fritz Reiner through Sir Georg Solti, except for its founder, Theodore Thomas. Preves was a founding member of the Chicago Symphony String Quartet.



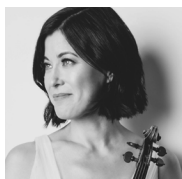
Richard Aaron is a professor of cello at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, the University of Michigan, and the Juilliard School since 2024, 2006, and 2007. Since 2003, Aaron has been on the faculty of the Aspen Music Festival. He has served on the juries of the Amsterdam Cello Biennale, Beijing International, Cassado, ISANG YUN, Paulo Cello, Schadt, and Stulberg competitions. Former students have occupied positions in orchestras such as Chicago, St. Louis, Seattle, Dallas, Portland, St. Paul, Pittsburg, San Francisco, Utah, and the Metropolitan Opera.



For four decades, cellist **Christopher Costanza**, has enjoyed an exciting career as a soloist, chamber musician, and teacher. A winner of the Young Concert Artists International Auditions, he has performed to enthusiastic critical acclaim throughout the world. Mr. Costanza teaches cello and chamber music at Stanford University, where he also directs the Stanford Cello Choir and serves as the Director of Music Programs for Stanford Medical Humanities and Arts. His chamber music and solo recordings are available on multiple music streaming platforms, and his recording of the Bach Six Suites can be found on his website, costanzacello.com.



Conductor, violinist, and composer, **Jory Fankuchen**, is the Music Director of the San Francisco Chamber Orchestra, following more than fifteen years with the ensemble as a violinist and violist. In addition to his work with the SFCO, Jory is the Resident Conductor of the Debut and Sinfonia Palo Alto Chamber Orchestras and has held leadership roles with ensembles including the San Francisco Civic Strings Orchestra. Jory is also a founding member of the Chamber Music Society of San Francisco.



Two-time GRAMMY nominee and Avery Fisher career grant recipient violinist **Jennifer Frautschi** has appeared as soloist with the Chicago Symphony, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Minnesota Orchestra, St Paul Chamber Orchestra, and more. She is an artist-member of the Boston Chamber Music Society and has appeared at Chamber Music Northwest, the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, and Music@Menlo. She performs on a 1722 Antonio Stradivarius violin known as the “ex-Cadiz,” on generous loan from a private American foundation with support from Rare Violins In Consortium. She teaches at Stony Brook University.



Suzanne Sorkin, 2026 composer.
See page 14 for Bio.



Daniel Stewart, music director of the Santa Cruz Symphony, has conducted leading orchestras around the world, including the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra, Boston Symphony Orchestra, San Francisco Symphony, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Houston Symphony, St. Louis Symphony Orchestra, Hessischer Rundfunk Orchester, Frankfurt Opern Orchestra, Boston Ballet, New World Symphony, Bohuslav Martinů Philharmonic Orchestra, and the Opera companies of the Juilliard School, Curtis Institute, and Aspen Festival. In 2021, at the invitation of Esa-Pekka Salonen, he made his subscription debut with the San Francisco Symphony in a program featuring Beethoven’s 9th Symphony.



Violinist **Wyatt Underhill** joined the San Francisco Symphony as Assistant Concertmaster in 2018. He was previously assistant concertmaster of the Baltimore Symphony, substitute concertmaster with the New Haven Symphony, and associate concertmaster of Symphony in C. His concerto appearances include the San Francisco Philharmonic, Concord Chamber Orchestra and the Oberlin Orchestra and is founding first violinist of the Blue Hill String Quartet. He is a laureate of the 2013 Klein Competition.

The Mentor



Praised for her “beautiful tone, effortless precision, and musical maturity beyond her years,” Chinese-American violinist **Alina Ming Kobialka** joined the New York Philharmonic in 2022. Hailed as “jaw-droppingly assured” (San Francisco Classical Voice), Kobialka brings sensitive artistry and wide-ranging projects that bridge tradition and innovation.

Kobialka has collaborated with artists such as Hilary Hahn, Yo-Yo Ma, Emanuel Ax, and performed in the Philharmonic’s Merkin Hall Chamber Series and on international tours. A three-time Marlboro

Music Festival artist, she has shared the stage with Dame Mitsuko Uchida, Jonathan Biss, and Kim Kashkashian. Beyond classical circles, she has worked with Jacob Collier, Chris Thile, and Esperanza Spalding in cross-genre performances.

Winner of second prize at the 2017 Elmar Oliveira International Violin Competition, Kobialka is also a laureate of the Irving M. Klein Competition and a Grand Prize winner of the Mondavi Center National Young Artists Competition.

A San Francisco native, she made her solo debut at age fourteen with the San Francisco Symphony. She studied with Li Lin, Wei He, Robert Lipsett, Danielle Belen, and earned her master’s from the Cleveland Institute of Music under Ilya Kaler.

Thanks to the 2026 Production Team

Mitchell Sardou Klein, co-host
 Alina Kobialka, co-host
 Zoe Lin, producer
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Allegra Chapman

Pianist Allegra Chapman is an omnivorous soloist, chamber musician, and curator with a wide ranging repertoire of music from Bach to Ligeti and a passion for connecting audiences with historically overlooked and living composers. Her performances have been described as “fervid but impeccably controlled” by the San Francisco Chronicle and “brilliant” by the San Francisco Classical Voice. A graduate of The Juilliard School and the Bard Conservatory of Music, she is a member of Left Coast Chamber Ensemble, San Francisco Contemporary Music Players, and Chordless duo with soprano Sara LeMesh.

In 2023, Chordless won First Prize in the Federation of the Art Song Fellowship competition in New York and gave recitals at the Zimmerli Art Museum of Rutgers University and the San Francisco Contemporary Jewish Museum where they held a residency. Other recent performance highlights include Rhapsody in Blue with the Ukiah Symphony Orchestra, Cal Performances with Eco Ensemble, and a concert of two triple concertos with Delphi Trio and the San Jose Chamber Orchestra—Beethoven’s Triple Concerto and the world premiere of Clarice Assad’s A Story of Mermaids. Allegra has performed internationally at venues including Alice Tully Hall, San Francisco Jazz Center, and Xi’an Concert Hall. From 2020-2023, Allegra was the pianist of the Delphi Trio with violinist Liana Bérubé and cellist Tanya Tomkins.

As a curator, Allegra was the founding co-artistic director and executive director of the critically acclaimed festival Bard Music West from 2017-2020. Described as “a brilliant San Francisco festival” by the San Francisco Chronicle and “stunning and moving” by the San Francisco Classical Voice, Bard West presented three multi-disciplinary festivals exploring the works of composers from the past 100 years, and a concert series featuring the music and influences of emerging composers. A passionate new music advocate, Allegra has worked with some of the leading American composers including Gabriella Smith, Joan Tower, Melinda Wagner, and Charles Wuorinen.

Allegra is on faculty at the San Francisco Conservatory’s Pre-College division. She makes her home in San Francisco with her family and an ever-growing library of over 1000 books.



Elizabeth Dorman

Praised by Joshua Kosman of the San Francisco Chronicle for her “elegance and verve,” pianist Elizabeth Dorman enjoys performing music both new and old as a soloist and chamber musician.

A finalist of the 2018 Leipzig International Bach Competition, Elizabeth has been widely recognized as a leading performer for her inquisitive interpretations of Bach’s music on the modern piano. Elizabeth has appeared as soloist with orchestras including the Louisville Orchestra, the Leipzig Mendelssohn Chamber Orchestra, the Santa Rosa Symphony, the California Symphony, the Vallejo Symphony, the San Francisco Symphony Youth Orchestra, the Folsom Lake Symphony, the Stanford Summer Symphony, Symphony Parnassus, as a soloist for interdisciplinary projects at New World Symphony, and as a keyboardist at the San Francisco Symphony. She can be heard on Delos records as a concerto soloist with Santa Rosa Symphony’s new album celebrating the music of Ellen Taaffe Zwilich, and has also recorded for Navona.

She has been presented as a soloist and chamber musician at venues including the Kennedy Center, Davies Symphony Hall, Herbst Theater, Merkin Hall, Carnegie’s Weill Hall, Leipzig’s Hochschule für Musik, and her live solo performances have been nationally broadcast on NPR and public radio. Elizabeth is Artistic Director of the San Francisco Chamber Players and also serves as Assistant Artistic Director for Archipelago Collective, a chamber music festival in the San Juan Islands. She has appeared at other festivals including Tanglewood, Britt, Sarasota, Aspen, Toronto Summer Music, Icicle Creek, and the Banff Centre.

Working with the Bridge Arts Ensemble, Stony Brook University, and as a board member of the Ross McKee Foundation, Elizabeth has produced concerts, lectures, and workshops for music students and was honored with the Father Merlet Award from Pro Musicis for her work training high school music students in community engagement.

Elizabeth was awarded a Doctor of Musical Arts from Stony Brook University in 2019 where she studied with Gilbert Kalish and lives in the San Francisco Bay Area. She is currently on faculty at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music Pre-College.



Jung-Eun Kim

Originally from South Korea, pianist Jung-Eun Kim made her solo debut at the age of 11 with the Changwon Philharmonic Orchestra. Since then, she has won numerous prizes in South Korea and the United States, leading to performances as a soloist, chamber musician, and collaborative artist throughout Asia, North America, and Europe. Her performances have been broadcast on national radio programs, including From the Top, WUSF National Public Radio, and Hawaii Public Radio.

Deeply passionate about chamber music and artistic collaboration, Jung-Eun has worked with many distinguished artists, including Tessa Lark, David McCarroll, Ian Swensen, Matthew Zalkind, Brian Manker, Jean-Michel Fonteneau, and Norman Fischer. She is also the founder of L’arc Trio, a San Francisco-based ensemble that commissioned Ominous Machine, an electrifying work by composer Vivian Fung. In conjunction with its world premiere in 2023, the trio held an intense week-long chamber music residency at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, working closely with graduate chamber music students. Currently based in Canada, Jung-Eun joined the faculty of the Conservatoire de musique de Québec in fall 2025. Before relocating, she served on the faculty of the pre-college division of the San Francisco Conservatory of Music.



Suzanne Sorkin's music “spoke in emphatic oratorical terms” (New York Times) and its “darting lines unfolded alluringly” (New York Times). She enjoys working closely and collaboratively with performers to craft works that are virtuosic, personal, and deeply expressive. She has received awards and commissions from the Fromm Music Foundation at Harvard University, Chamber Music America, Jasper Chamber Concerts, Chamber Music Quad Cities, Chamber Music Now, Violin Futura, Third Millennium Ensemble, (counter)induction, American Composers Forum, ASCAP, Meet the Composer, and others.

Her compositions have been performed throughout the United States and abroad in a number of prominent festivals and concerts, including Music on the Edge, Piano Spheres (Los Angeles), Washington Square Contemporary Music Society, Mendelssohn-Gesellschaft Berlin, Denison University New Music Festival, Chamber Music Quad Cities, Florida State University Festival of New Music, and Vassar Modfest. She has written for ensembles and soloists including Mannes Trio, Lang-Rainwater Project, Jasper String Quartet, and Play, pianist Thomas Sauer, pianist Elizabeth Morgan, Cleveland Chamber Symphony, Melomanie, Third Angle, and Aspen Contemporary Ensemble. Residencies awarded to her include Millay Colony for the Arts, Virginia Center for the Creative Arts, Ragdale Foundation, Artists' Enclave at I-Park, ART342, Brush Creek Foundation for the Arts, Kimmel Harding Nelson Center, and Atlantic Center for the Arts.

She received her Ph.D. in music composition from the University of Chicago through the support of a four-year Century Fellowship in the Humanities. Her principal composition teachers have included Shulamit Ran, Marta Ptaszynska, John Eaton, and Justin Dello Joio.

A passionate and dedicated educator, Suzanne Sorkin taught composition, music theory, and music history at Vassar College. She is currently an Associate Professor of Music at Saint Joseph's University in Philadelphia, where she teaches composition and music theory, co-directs the music industry program, and holds the Dirk Warren '50 Sesquicentennial Endowed Chair (Humanities and Performing Arts).

Mending Threads of Light (2026) for solo violin

Unfold, Billow, Blaze (2026) for solo viola

Fused (2026) for solo cello

Two Lake Letters (2026) for solo double bass

Mending Threads of Light for solo violin

The opening unfolds from a single note that expands into a rising double stop, answered by a mirrored descending gesture. This dialogue becomes more expressive and insistent, building intensity and expanding in range. From this accumulation, a soaring melody is unleashed. A virtuosic middle section intensifies the texture with trills, double stops, and cascading thirty-second-note runs driving the music forward. Here, the line becomes increasingly urgent, as if the threads are stretched to their limits. In the closing passage, the opening double-stop figure returns, transformed into a melody in artificial harmonics -- delicate and radiant, like a beautiful memory dissolved into light.

Unfold, Billow, Blaze for solo viola

As the title suggests, *Unfold, Billow, Blaze* traces an organic transformation over the course of the piece. In the first section, *Unfold*, a short, expressive melody gradually extends and expands, growing more ornate and dramatic, culminating in double stops and accented gestures. *Billow* explores expansive, breathing melodic phrases and surging figures that rise and recede, enriched by open strings and left hand pizzicato. This motion builds and ignites into *Blaze*, where the piece intensifies with strong accents, heightened register, and driving rhythm.

Fused for solo cello

Throughout *Fused*, left-hand pizzicato functions as both accompaniment and rhythmic foundation, underpinning an expressive, soaring melodic line that gradually unfolds and expands. As the music develops, these contrasting roles—pulsing and sustained, rhythmic and lyrical—begin to draw closer together. In the final section, they align and merge into double stops, fusing melody and accompaniment into a single, integrated texture. What began as two distinct strands ultimately fuses into one continuous voice.

Why include Commissioned Works?

We have always believed that musicians (and especially young ones) need to know the language of the music of their own time. Music continues to evolve and progress by absorbing the history, culture, and sensibilities of the world around the composers and performers. Music exists, in part, to express the experiences of the present moment.

For these reasons, the Klein Competition requires applicants to perform 20th/21st century works, to demonstrate facility in performing music of the present. In addition, we commission excellent composers to create new works to challenge the imagination and technique of our performers at the Competition.

The Commissioned Works ask that each perform an individual concept of a previously unperformed composition and make this new piece their own expressive vehicle. Hearing how each individual interprets this new music enables the listeners to learn a great deal about the contestant's abilities and expressive inclinations.

For over 41 years, we have nurtured exceptional young string musicians from around the world by fostering the development of their performance and professional skills and providing them with performance opportunities and monetary support.

California Music Center (CMC), the sponsoring organization of the Klein, was founded in 1974 by Irving M. Klein, a virtuoso chamber musician and master cello teacher, as the home for a summer music institute and chamber music series for young artists. Following Mr. Klein's passing in 1985, CMC inaugurated the Irving M. Klein International String Competition (The Klein) in the summer of 1986 in his memory.

The Klein has enjoyed international acclaim as one of the most prestigious classical music competitions. It is recognized for the high caliber of the contestants, its unique, nurturing environment, and its commitment to commissioning new works.

Now in its 41st year, the Klein has helped to develop the careers of hundreds of players who have gone on to become renowned soloists, chamber musicians, teachers, and members of the world's finest orchestras. They include notable soloists Jennifer Koh (1993), Vadim Gluzman (1993), Tessa Lark (2008), Francesca dePasquale (2010), Nikki Chooi (2009), Jennifer Frautschi (1991), and Zlatomir Fung (2014); principals and members of U.S. orchestras (Cleveland, Philadelphia, Boston, Buffalo, Chicago, New York, Los Angeles, Seattle); and members of the San Francisco Symphony: Wyatt Underhill (2013), David Kim (2004), Melissa Kleinbart (1999), Charles Chandler (1986), and Davis You (2018; 2020). Competition prizewinners perform with our presenting partners, Santa Cruz Symphony, Gualala Arts, Peninsula Symphony, San Francisco Chamber Orchestra, San Jose Chamber Orchestra, Music in the Vineyards, Musical Masterworks (Connecticut), and Buffalo Chamber Players. Laureates also perform at intimate concerts in Northern California.

We are proud to support these exceptional players early in their careers through the gateway of the Klein, sustaining a long and warm relationship. Laureates return as mentors, clinicians, jury panelists and board directors, coming full circle in service of the next generation of classical string players.

Angela Sun, cello

Semifinal Round

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)	Suite No. 3 in C Major BWV 1009 <i>I. Prelude</i> <i>IV. Sarabande</i>
Joseph Haydn (1732-1809)	Cello Concerto No. 2 in D Major <i>I. Allegro moderato</i>
Suzanne Sorkin (1977-)	<i>Fused</i> <i>for Solo Cello</i>

Final Round

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)	Suite No. 3 in C Major BWV 1009 <i>II. Allemande</i> <i>VII. Gigue</i>
Joseph Haydn (1732-1809)	Cello Concerto No. 2 in D Major <i>II. Adagio</i> <i>III. Allegro</i>
Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)	Cello Sonata No. 1 in E Minor Opus 38 <i>I. Allegro non troppo</i>

Elliot Sloss, cello

Semifinal Round

Suzanne Sorkin (1977-)	<i>Fused</i> <i>for Solo Cello</i>
Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)	Suite No. 6 in D Major BWV 1012 <i>I. Prélude</i>
Edward Elgar (1857-1934)	Cello Concerto in E Minor, Opus 85, <i>IV. Allegro - Moderato - Allegro, ma non troppo -</i> <i>Poco più lento</i>

Final Round

Edward Elgar (1857-1934)	Cello Concerto in E Minor, Opus 85, <i>I. Adagio-Moderato</i> <i>II. Lento-Allegro molto</i> <i>III. Adagio</i>
Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)	Suite No. 6 in D Major BWV 1012 <i>III. Courante</i>
Samuel Barber (1910-1981)	Cello Sonata in C Minor, Opus 6 <i>II. Adagio-Presto-Adagio</i> <i>III. Allegro appassionato</i>

James Birch, violin**Semifinal Round**

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)	Sonata No. 1 in G minor, BWV 1001 <i>I. Adagio</i>
Suzanne Sorkin (1977-)	<i>Mending Threads of Light</i> <i>for Solo Violin</i>
Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)	Violin Concerto in D major, Op. 77 <i>II. Adagio</i> <i>III. Allegro giocoso, ma non troppo vivace</i>

Final Round

Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)	Violin Sonata No. 7 in C minor, Op. 30 No. 2 <i>II. Adagio</i>
Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)	Violin Concerto in D major, Op. 77 <i>I. Allegro non troppo</i>

Jones Lau, viola**Semifinal Round**

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)	Suite No.2 in D Minor, BWV 1008 <i>I. Prelude</i> <i>III. Courante</i>
Suzanne Sorkin (1977-)	<i>Unfold, Billow, Blaze</i> <i>for solo viola</i>
Paul Hindemith (1895-1963)	<i>Der Schwanendreher</i> <i>I. "Zwischen Berg und tiefem Tal":</i> <i>Langsam – Mäßig bewegt, mit Kraft</i>

Final Round

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)	Suite No.2 in D Minor, BWV 1008 <i>VI. Gigue</i>
Henri Vieuxtemps (1820-1881)	Viola Sonata in B-Flat Major, Op.36 <i>I. Maestoso</i>
Paul Hindemith (1895-1963)	<i>Der Schwanendreher</i> <i>II. "Nun laube, Lindlein laube": Sehr ruhig – Fugato:</i> <i>"Der Gutzgauch auf dem Zaune sass"</i> <i>III. Variationen: "Seid ihr nicht der Schwanendreher":</i> <i>Mäßig schnell</i>

Juyeon Diana Lee, violin**Semifinal Round**

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)	Sonata No. 3 in C Major, BWV 1005 <i>III. Largo</i>
Suzanne Sorkin (1977-)	<i>Mending Threads of Light</i> <i>for Solo Violin</i>
Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)	Violin Concerto in D major, Op. 77 <i>II. Adagio</i> <i>III. Allegro giocoso, ma non troppo vivace</i>

Final Round

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791)	Violin Sonata No. 35 in A major K. 526 <i>I. Allegro molto</i> <i>II. Andante</i>
Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)	Violin Concerto in D major, Op. 77 <i>I. Allegro non troppo</i>

Rachael Kim, violin**Semifinal Round**

Julius Conus (1869-1942)	Violin Concerto in E minor Op.1 <i>I. Allegro molto</i>
Suzanne Sorkin (1977-)	<i>Mending Threads of Light</i> <i>for Solo Violin</i>
Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)	Sonata No. 1 in G minor for Solo Violin, BWV 1001 <i>I. Adagio</i>

Final Round

Julius Conus (1869-1942)	Violin Concerto in E minor Op.1 <i>II. Adagio</i> <i>III. Cadenza-Allegro subito</i>
Francis Poulenc (1899-1963)	Sonata for Violin and Piano, FP 119 (12:00) <i>I. Allegro con fuoco</i> <i>II. Intermezzo</i>
Suzanne Sorkin (1977-)	<i>Mending Threads of Light</i> <i>for Solo Violin</i>

Starla Breshears, cello

Semifinal Round

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)	Partita in A minor BWV 1013 (originally for flute) <i>I. Allemande</i> <i>II. Courante</i>
William Walton (1902-1983)	Cello Concerto <i>I. Moderato</i> <i>II. Allegro Appassionato</i>
Suzanne Sorkin (1977-)	<i>Fused</i> <i>for Solo Cello</i>

Final Round

Suzanne Sorkin (1977-)	<i>Fused</i> <i>for Solo Cello</i>
William Walton (1902-1983)	Cello Concerto <i>III. Tema ed improvvisazioni</i>
Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)	Cello Sonata No. 2 in F major, Op. 99 <i>I. Allegro vivace</i> <i>II. Adagio affetuoso</i>

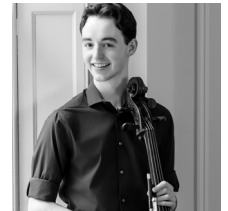
Angela Yining Sun

Cellist Angela Yining Sun, 21, began playing the cello at the age of eight and is currently pursuing her undergraduate studies at the New England Conservatory of Music on a Dean's Scholarship, where she studies with Lluís Claret. Her awards include first place in the string division of the Music Teachers Association of California VOCE State Competition, as well as the Alan M. Keys Instrumental Award at the Pacific Musical Society Competition. She has served as principal cellist of the San Francisco Symphony Youth Orchestra and was invited to perform in the New York String Orchestra Seminar at Carnegie Hall. This summer, she will be performing at the Pacific Music Festival in Sapporo. Additional festival appearances include the Boston University Tanglewood Institute, Boulder Cello Festival, Vivace Music Festival, Pacific Crest Music Festival, Montecito Music Festival as a fellow, and the Yellow Barn Young Artists Program. Her previous teachers include Adelle Akiko Kearns and Yoshika Masuda.



Elliot Sloss

Elliot Sloss started playing the cello when he was four years old, and in the 19 years since, his love for the cello and music has taken him many places. Elliot attends the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia where he studies with Peter Wiley, Gary Hoffman, Nick Canellakis, Yumi Kendall, and Christine Lee. Previously, he studied with Paul Widner and Joe Johnson at the Royal Conservatory of Music in Toronto, Canada where he participated in the Phil and Eli Taylor Performance Academy for Young Artists for many years. Elliot is a three-time first place winner in the national round for strings in the Canadian Music Competition. Elliot won three concerto competitions in 2019. He won the North York Music Festival Competition and performed with the Etobicoke Philharmonic Orchestra. He won the Taylor Academy Chamber Orchestra Concerto Competition and the Toronto Symphony Youth Orchestra Concerto Competition. Elliot is also a finalist at the 2025 Shean Strings Competition in Edmonton. Outside of Canada, Elliot recently participated in the 2025 Isang-Yun Competition in South Korea. Elliot plays on a 1706 Giuseppe Guarneri 'filius Andreae' cello made in Cremona, and a 1925 Victor Fetique bow made in Paris.





James Birch

James Birch is an Australian–British violinist born in Sydney who has emerged as one of the most compelling young artists of his generation, recognized for his artistry and stage presence. He began studying the violin at age five and is currently pursuing a Bachelor of Music at the Juilliard School as a Kovner Fellow with Itzhak Perlman and Catherine Cho. Previously, James studied at the Colburn School with Robert Lipsett as a Kohl Scholar. He received training in the United Kingdom with David Takeno and So-Ock Kim, in Australia with Evgeny Sorkin, and has received mentorship from Nicola Benedetti, Shlomo Mintz, Rachel Podger, and Simon James. As a soloist, James has appeared with the Juilliard Orchestra, SoCalPhil, Valley Symphony Orchestra, MUSE/IQUE, Los Angeles Virtuosi Orchestra and has performed recitals throughout the United States, United Kingdom, and Australia. An avid chamber musician, James has participated in programs at Colburn, Juilliard, the Perlman Music Program, and the Aspen Music Festival. His ensemble, the Willow Quartet, won the International Busan Maru Chamber Music Competition. His honors include the Salon de Virtuosi Career Grant, the Arkady Fomin Scholarship, the Hattori Foundation Award, and fellowships from the Aspen Music Festival and the Perlman Music Program.



Jones Lau

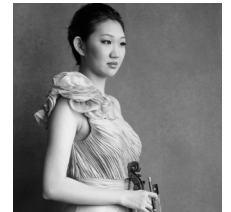
Born in Hong Kong, 19-year-old violist Jones Lau began playing the viola at the age of five, and is currently pursuing his bachelor's degree at The Juilliard School where he continues to refine his artistry under the tutelage of Samuel Rhodes. A recipient of the prestigious Hong Kong Jockey Club Music and Dance Fund Scholarship, he was also awarded third prize at the Hong Kong School Music Festival Open Class of Stringed Instrument, and was a finalist in the Virtuoso & BelCanto Concerto Competition. His recent appearances include the Virtuoso & BelCanto Music Festival and the New York String Orchestra Seminar. As an orchestral musician, he served as viola principal of both the Diocesan Boys' School String Orchestra and Hong Kong Children's Symphony Orchestra. He currently performs on a 1973 Horacio Pineiro viola on loan from The Juilliard School.

Juyeon Diana Lee

22-year-old Korean violinist Juyeon Diana Lee has built her musical career through extensive performance and competition experience. She won Third Prize and the Audience Prize at the Schadt International Violin Competition and has received prizes at the Yokohama International Violin Competition, Ewha & Kyunghyang Competition, Chunchu Competition, Korea Herald Competition, and Segye Times Competition. She has performed at major venues including Alice Tully Hall, Carnegie Hall, Seoul Arts Center Concert Hall, and Lotte Concert Hall. She has participated in leading festivals and training programs such as Juilliard Chamber Fest, Kneisel Hall, and the New York String Orchestra Seminar, further developing her orchestral and chamber music experience. Her artistic growth has been shaped through masterclasses with Peter Schuhmayer, Pavel Vernikov, Namyoon Kim, Chiyoko Noguchi, Kazuki Sawa, Min Kim, and Stella Chan. In addition to her performance activities, she has received numerous merit-based scholarships, including the Frances I. Cheyne Scholarship and the Lee Dae-Woong Scholarship. Juyeon Diana Lee is currently a third-year undergraduate student at The Juilliard School, where she studies with Laurie Smukler. She is a member of the Juilliard Orchestra principal pool, having served as concertmaster and principal second violin, and was recently named a finalist in the Juilliard Concerto Competition.

Rachael Kim

Rachael Kim is a 21-year-old classical violinist currently studying at the Colburn Conservatory of Music, where she works with renowned pedagogue Robert Lipsett. She previously attended the Colburn Academy and graduated from the Crossroads School of Arts and Sciences in Santa Monica, where she served as concertmaster of the EMMI Orchestra. Rachael has received top honors at several national competitions, including the 45th Edith Knox Young Artist Competition, the ASTA Competition, and most recently, the Pasadena Young Artist Competition. She has participated in leading summer programs such as the Aspen Music Festival and School, Meadowmount School of Music, and Sounding Point Academy. In the winter of 2025, she attended the New York String Orchestra Seminar. She has performed in masterclasses for distinguished artists including Gil Shaham, Robert McDuffie, Midori Goto, Glenn Dicterow, and Dennis Kim. Outside of her musical studies, Rachael maintains a strong interest in classic literature and enjoys following new and emerging films, as well as Pilates and traveling.



ARTIST BIOGRAPHIES



Starla Breshears

Starla Breshears will join the San Francisco Symphony cello section for the 2026–27 season. A Kohl Scholar, she studies at the Colburn Academy with Clive Greensmith. She previously attended the San Francisco Conservatory of Music Pre-College as a Joseph Chan Full-Scholarship recipient, studying with Richard Aaron and Jean Michel Fonteneau. She began cello at age three with Yoshie Muratani and has received additional coaching from Christine Walevska and Sergei Riabtchenko. A prizewinner at both the Stulberg International String Competition and the Johansen International Competition, Starla has appeared as a soloist with 18 orchestras since age six. Her former ensemble, the Breshears String Quartet, has been featured twice as the Violin Channel's Rising Star of the Week and on NPR's From the Top. The quartet won First Prize at the 2023 Piero Farulli International Competition, toured Italy, and earned the silver medal at the 2024 Fischhoff National Chamber Music Competition. Starla served as Principal Cellist of the San Francisco Symphony Youth Orchestra (2025–2026) and Assistant Principal Cellist of the San Francisco Choral Society. She has attended Yellow Barn, Greenwood, and Accademia Musicale Chigiana, and is a YoungArts Winner with Distinction.

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Wendy Kang

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by Klein Competition Winners with our presenting partners

September 26, 2026 - 2:00 pm
A String Soirée - Klein Benefit Gala
Cocktails, silent auction, and
performances by Klein laureates
Forest Hill Clubhouse

January 2027
Julia Schilz, violin - 1st prize 2025
Peninsula Symphony
peninsulasymphony.org

January 2027
TBD Laureate
Maybeck Studio
maybeckstudio.org

February 2027
Julia Schilz, violin - 1st prize 2025
Gualala Chamber Series
gualalaarts.org

April 2027
Pearl de la Motte, viola - 1st prize 2024
Santa Cruz Symphony
santacruzsymphony.org

May 2027
2026 First Prize Winner
San Francisco Chamber Orchestra
thesfco.org

May 2027
2026 Second Prize Winner
San José Chamber Orchestra
sjco.org

June 5-6, 2027
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San Francisco Conservatory of Music

PAST WINNERS

2025

1 Julia Schilz, violin
2 Noam Ginsparg, cello
3 Miles Reed, cello
4 Elizabeth Poppy Song, violin
4 Joshua Kováč, cello

2024

1 Pearl de la Motte, viola
2 Amelia Zitoun, cello
3 Francis Tsai, violin
4 Yeji Lim, violin
4 Hannah Jeong, cello

2023

1 Emad Zolfaghari, viola
2 Audrey Goodner, violin
3 Ray Ushikubo, violin
4 Blaire Kim, violin
4 Vincent Garcia-Hettinger, cello

2022

1 Gaeun Kim, cello
2 Jaewon Wee, violin
3 Andromeda Kepecs, violin
4 Hayoung Choi, violin
4 Jacques Forestier, violin

2021

1 Yuchen Lu, viola
2 Grace Huh, violin
3 William Tan, cello
4 Ria Honda, violin
4 Serin Park, violin

2020

1 Gabrielle Després, violin
2 Jiaxun Yao, cello
3 Masha Lakisova, violin
4 Dongyoung Shim, violin
4 Caroline Durham, violin

2019

1 James Baik, cello
2 Dakota Cotugno, cello
3 Julia Mirzoev, violin
4 Gabriel Polinsky, bass
5 James Hettinga, cello

2018

1 Alex Zhou, violin
2 Julian Rhee, violin
3 Isabelle Ai Durrenberger, violin
4 Sophia Su, violin
4 Jean Kim, cello

2017

1 Jeremy Tai, cello
2 Zhanbo Zheng, viola
3 Kyumin Park, violin
4 Peter Eom, cello
4 Karisa Chiu, violin

2016

1 William Langlie-Miletich, bass
2 Coleman Itzkoff, cello
3 Alina Kobialka, violin
4 Evin Blomberg, violin
5 Sarah Hall, violin

2015

1 Oliver Herbert, cello
2 Isabella Perron, violin
3 Emily Shehi, violin
4 Erika Gray, viola
4 Ariel Horowitz, violin

2014

1 Zlatomir Fung, cello
2 Charles Seo, cello
3 Angela Wee, violin
4 Luke Hsu, violin
4 Kyumin Park, violin

2013

1 Youjin Lee, violin
2 Wyatt Underhill, violin
3 Dana Kelley, viola
4 Brannon Cho, cello
4 Kevin Lin, violin

2012

1 Austin Huntington, cello
2 Emma Steele, violin
3 Alexandra Switala, violin
4 Jean Kim, cello
4 Natalie Lin, violin

2011

1 Mayumi Kanagawa, violin
2 Matthew Allen, cello
3 Ji-Won Song, violin
4 Daniel Cho, violin
4 Mindy Park, cello

2010

1 Francesca dePasquale, violin
2 Angelo Xiang Yu, violin
3 Taeguk Mun, cello
4 Fabiola Kim, violin
4 Philip Kramp, viola

2009

1 Nikki Chooi, violin
2 So Jin Kim, violin
3 Meta Weiss, cello
4 Jacquelin Choi, cello
4 Sujin Lee, cello

2008

1 Tessa Lark, violin
2 Robin Scott, violin
3 Ying Xue, violin
4 Emily Deans, viola
4 Char Prescott, cello

2007

1 Jing Wang, violin
2 David McCarroll, violin
3 Madeleine Kabat, cello
4 Lydia Hong, violin
4 Alice Yoo, cello

2006

1 David Requiro, cello
2 Yu Jin, violin
3 Celeste Golden, violin
4 Song-le Do, cello
5 Natalia Szadkowski, violin

2005

1 Mihai Marica, cello
2 Tee-Khoon Tang, violin
3 Ilana Setapen, violin
4 Kathryn Eberle, violin
5 Rachel Harding, violin

2004

1 Jung-Min Amy Lee, violin
2 David Kim, viola
3 D. Joshua Roman, cello
3 Yves Dharamraj, cello
5 Clara Lyon, violin

2003

1 Eric Nowlin, viola
2 Tao Ni, cello
3 D. Joshua Roman, cello
4 Katie Hyun, violin
5 Ayane Kozasa, violin

2002

1 Min-Ji Kim, cello
2 Teng Li, viola
3 Caroline Campbell, violin
4 Kathryn Eberle, violin
5 Adam Barnett-Hart, violin

2001

1 Howard Zhang, violin
2 Teng Li, viola
3 Eunice Keem, violin
4 Yvonne Lam, violin
5 Adam Barnett-Hart, violin

2000

1 Angela Fuller, violin
2 Yoon-Jung Cho, violin
3 Jun Jensen, cello
4 Yang Xu, violin
5 Hannah Jin, violin

1999

1 Frank Huang, violin
2 Madeline Adkins, violin
3 Lucia Micarelli, violin
4 Ceceilia Sang-Kyung Lee, cello
5 Jon Keigwin, bass

1998

1 Denise Djokic, cello
2 Patrick Jee, cello
3 Christina Castelli, violin
4 Yon Joo Lee, violin
5 Hee-Guen Song, violin

1997

1 Kirsten Johnson, viola
2 Amy Schwartz, violin
3 Vivek Kamath, viola
4 Amir Eldan, cello
5 Boris Tonkov, viola

1996

1 Lisa Kim, violin
2 Lukasz Szyrner, cello
3 Alberto Parrini, cello
4 Jenny Oaks, violin
5 Margo Tatgenhorst, cello

1995

1 Cathy Basrak, viola
2 Pavel Sporcl, violin
3 Ani Aznavoorian, cello
4 Kirsten Johnson, viola
5 Esther Noh, violin

1994

1 François Salque, cello
2 Nurit Pacht, violin
3 Serge Oskotsky, cello
3 Ayako Yoshida, violin

1993

1 Jennifer Koh, violin
2 Vadim Gluzman, violin
3 Julia Tom, cello
4 Lara St. John, violin
5 Joanna Kurkovicz, violin

1992

1 Mark Kosower, cello
2 Qi-Xin Pu, violin
3 Lisa Lee, violin
4 Owen Lee, bass
5 Annie Chang, viola

1991

1 Jennifer Frautschi, violin
2 Alexis Gerlach, cello
3 Brent Samuel, cello
4 Carol Ou, cello
5 David Park, violin

1990

1 Robert deMaine, cello
2 Jian-Wen Tong, cello
3 Joan Kwuon, violin
4 Misha Keylin, violin

1989

1 Alyssa Park, violin
2 Wendy Warner, cello
3 Alban Gerhardt, cello
4 Cornelius Chiu, violin

1988

1 Sang Mee Lee, violin
2 Gianna Abondolo, cello
3 Richard Hirschl, cello
4 Eileen Moon, cello
4 Annie Chalex, violin

1987

1 Molly Mo-Lin Fung, violin
1 Gloria Justen, violin
3 Hai-Ye Ni, cello
4 Robin Sharp, violin

1986

1 Stephanie Arado, violin
2 Sandra Park, violin
3 Sara Parkins, violin
4 Charles Chandler, bass
4 Timothy Landauer, cello



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