

Academy Class of 2024-2025 Accolades

MAY

The spring semester ended with the Hemingway and Vermillion Quartets advancing to the quarterfinals and Caspian Quartet advancing to the semifinals of the 51st Fischhoff National Chamber Music Competition in South Bend, IN. Our students did an outstanding job, and we are extremely proud of their work, dedication, and high level of artistry this entire year. Thank you coaches Paul Zafer, Sang Mee Lee, and Rodolfo Vieira.

APRIL

The Caspian Quartet was named Silver Medal Winner and the BIPOC Prize* and Porphyriion Quartet was awarded the Bronze Medal in the Junior Division of the St. Paul String Quartet Competition on April 12, in St. Paul, MN. *BIPOC/Female Composer Round - All selected finalist quartets were required to perform DINUK WIJERATNE, Two Pop Songs on Antique Poems (2014), I. 'A Letter from the After-life'

As finalists of the 57th Annual Audrey G. Baird Stars of Tomorrow Competition, Academy students Vivian Van de Sype Cucu (Davis King), viola and Katarina Kenney (Cornelia Watkins), cello appeared as soloists with the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra at the Audrey G. Baird Stars of Tomorrow Concert on April 8th, at the Bradley Symphony Center, under the direction of MSO assistant conductor Ryan Itani. Katarina Kenney performed the Dvorak Cello Concerto in B minor, Opus 109, B. 191, 1st movement, receiving the Audrey G. Baird Scholarship as the winner of the Stars of Tomorrow Competition. Vivian Van de Sype Cucu performed the Walton Viola Concerto, 1st movement, receiving the Van Dyke Family Scholarship. Semi-finalists and honorable mentions completed the concert performing Tchaikovsky's Symphony No. 4 side-by-side with the MSO musicians, which included Academy student Magdalena Masur, violin as Principal Second Violin. <https://www.jsonline.com/picture-gallery/entertainment/arts/2025/04/09/photos-stars-of-tomorrow-teens-milwaukee-symphony/83007127007/>

March

The Hemingway Quartet (Romeo Vashishth, Elle Cho, Sebastian Manning, violins and viola, Lucy Wu, cello, coached by Paul Zafer) and Vermillion Quartet (Magdalena Masur, Emily Chen, violins, Brayden Wu, viola, Gabi Raviv, cello, coached by Sang Mee Lee) advanced to the Quarter Finals and the Caspian Quartet advanced to the Semifinals of the 51st Fischhoff National Chamber Music Competition, held in South Bend, IN each year. Founded in 1973, the Fischhoff National Chamber Music competition is the oldest and largest chamber music competition in the World. <https://www.fischhoff.org/competition/?srsltid=AfmBOoq3zeHVCXLbIP0CtGXrmlbc29Qq-AFgc3nZygztg52AnvVhAKKg>

Violinist Romeo Vashishth, student of Almita Vamos, won 3rd place and pianist Edie Park, student of Marta Aznavoorian and Winston Choi, received Honorable Mention at the Fox Valley

Orchestra Youth Concerto Competition. Both students are invited to perform with the orchestra on January 25th, 2026. <https://www.foxvalleyorchestra.org/youthconcerto.php>

The Hemingway Quartet (Romeo Vashishth, Elle Cho, Sebastian Manning, violin and viola, Lucy Wu, cello, coached by Paul Zafer) won 1st place in the Strings and Piano Division and awarded Grand Winner at the 13th Annual A.N and Pearl G. Barnett Chamber Music Competition. Hosted by the Merit School of Music, this competition hosts chamber groups of musicians under the age of 18 in 2 divisions, Strings and Piano and Winds, Brass, and Percussion. <https://meritmusic.org/barnett-chamber-music-competition/#results>

Porphyron Quartet (Mingshi Xia, Sasha Varchenko, violins, Neena Agrawal, viola, and Simon Updegraff, cello, coached by Claudia Lasareff-Mironoff) and Caspian Quartet, (Lily Sullivan, Tristan Zhu, violins, Vivian Van de Sype Cucu, viola, and Jan Vargas Nedvetsky, cello, coached by Rodolfo Vieira) advanced to the 2025 Junior Division final round of the Saint Paul String Quartet Competition on Saturday, April 12. Established in 2006, this competition is nationally recognized for its role in identifying and supporting the finest pre-college and collegiate-level string players in the United States. <https://www.spsqc.org/about>

Violinist Tristan Zhu, student of Almita Vamos, competed in the finals of the MTNA Nationals Competition in Minnesota. The MTNA National Student Competitions are the most successful and prestigious student competitions in the country. Each year, thousands of students compete for top prizes and national recognition. The purpose of the Music Teachers National Association Performance competitions is to provide educational experiences for students and teachers and to recognize exceptionally talented young artists and their teachers in their pursuit of musical excellence. <https://www.mtna.org/MTNA/Home/MTNA/Default.aspx?hkey=91963004-fbe4-4711-a192-b6293aedc31c>

The three-tiered competitions begin with live state competitions. The winners/representatives of each state's competitions advance to a video-only division competition. Division winners compete in the national finals at the annual MTNA National Conference. The state competitions are considered the primary educational level with the division and national levels showcasing outstanding performance and honoring significant pedagogical achievement.

FEBRUARY

The Caspian Quartet (Lily Sullivan and Tristan Zhu, violins, Vivian Van de Sype Cucu, viola, and Jan Vargas Nedvetsky, cello) was named the Open Division Overall Winner and Strings and Piano Category Winner of the 2025 MYA Chicago National Chamber Music Competition, at the MYCA Campus in Highwood. The quartet performed excerpts from Bartok, Mendelssohn, and Haydn. The group is coached by Rodolfo Vieira. This annual event is designed to provide an educational and competitive experience for young chamber ensembles. The competition is open to chamber ensembles in 12th grade and younger and consists of two divisions (Open and MYAC). Contestants compete for over \$5,000 in cash prizes and scholarships and the winner of each category in each division performed in a Winners Recital on March 9.

The 57th Annual Stars of Tomorrow Competition highlights the great musical talent of teens from across the state of Wisconsin. Cellist Katarina Kenney, student of Cornelia Watkins, and violist Vivian Van de Sype Cucu, student of Davis King, are two of the three finalists in the Annual Audrey G. Baird Stars of Tomorrow Competition.

The 2025 Audrey G. Baird Stars of Tomorrow Auditions took place on Saturday, February 15, 2025 at the First Congregational Church of Wauwatosa. The three finalists will have the honor of appearing as soloists with the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra at the Audrey G. Baird Stars of Tomorrow Concert on April 8, 2025. In addition to the honor of performing as a soloist with the Milwaukee Symphony, winners are eligible to receive up to \$2,000 in awards. MSO musicians serve as judges for all rounds of the competition. Semi-finalists and honorable mentions will be given the opportunity to play side-by-side with Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra musicians.

The Caspian Quartet (Lily Sullivan and Tristan Zhu, violins, Vivian Van de Sype Cucu, viola, and Jan Vargas Nedvetsky, cello) won first place at the 30th Annual Rembrandt Chamber Musicians High School Chamber Music Competition. Founded in 1995, this competition brings participants from Chicago area schools and music institutions together to compete for cash prizes and performance opportunities. <https://www.rembrandtchambermusicians.org/>

Cellist Jan Vargas Nedvetsky, student of Oleksa Mycyk and Hans Jensen, won the West Suburban Symphony Orchestra's 2025 Solo Competition for high school musician.

Cellist Lucy Wu, student of Stefan Kartman, and violist Vivian Van de Sype Cucu, student of Davis King, have both advanced from the semifinals to the Final Forte of the Bolz Young Artist Competition! The final round is on March 5th. PBS Wisconsin visited the Academy to record interviews with Lucy and Vivian. The Bolz Young Artist Competition is a highly regarded statewide competition in which Wisconsin's young musicians compete for scholarships and the opportunity to perform as soloists with the Madison Symphony Orchestra (MSO). Four finalists will compete in The Final Forte, which will be broadcast on PBS Wisconsin and Wisconsin Public Radio.

Neena Agrawal, viola student of Sang Mee Lee, as winner of the Symphony of Oak Park & River Forest's Annual Concerto Competition 2024-2025, performed on the SOP concert Sunday, February 16, 2025, and will also receive a cash prize. She performed Stamitz Viola Concerto in D major, first movement.

Violinist Elle Cho, student of Almita Vamos, was named the 2nd place winner at the 69th Annual DuPage Symphony Orchestra Young Artists Auditions, on Sunday, February 2, 2025, in Wentz Concert Hall, Naperville, IL. "Elle delivered an exceptional performance of Tchaikovsky's Violin Concerto in D Major, first mvt., impressing the judges with her artistry and technical command."

Pianist Noah Kim, student of Christopher Guzman, was named runner up at the 56th Annual Elmhurst Symphony Orchestra Stanger Competition Division Round. If the winner is not available to perform at the finals in May, the runner up will compete in the May final round. Noah performed the first movement of the Grieg Piano Concerto in A minor. The Elmhurst

Symphony Association, through its Stanger Competition, encourages serious study and high standards among young musicians. It is the Association's intention that the Competition be both educational and rewarding to each entrant. <https://elmhurstsymphony.org/stanger>

Cellist Lucy Wu, student of Stefan Kartman, performed with the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra as their featured soloist in the Rhythm Rhapsody Youth Concert Series due to winning the 2024 MSO Stars of Tomorrow. She played in four concerts for children from local schools in the Bradley Symphony Center Hall. In addition, Lucy, a winner in the Civic Music Milwaukee High School Competition, was selected as one of ten instrumentalists and vocalists from the 'winners' round to perform in a Showcase Recital on Saturday, February 16. Lucy won the top scholarship award (1st prize) at the competition and was one of four classical musicians to receive a Young Artist Scholarship. The competition is a well-regarded Milwaukee competition for accomplished high school age musicians. High School Music Competition | Civic Music Association of Milwaukee <https://www.civictimilwaukee.org/highschoolcompetition-1>

Violinist Lily Sullivan and cellist Jan Vargas Nedvetsky appeared on From the Top. From the Top is America's largest national platform celebrating young classically-trained musicians. Through NPR broadcasts and digital content, and the Learning and Media Lab Fellowship, From the Top empowers young musicians to use their music and stories to engage and inspire audiences of all ages. <https://fromthetop.org/show/show-459/>

Jan Vargas Nedvetsky, 18, cello, from Wilmette, Illinois (student Hans Jorgen Jensen and Oleksa Mycyk) - Sonata in D Major, III. Minuetto by Pietro Locatelli (1695-1764)

Lily Sullivan, 16, violin, from Bloomington, Indiana (student of Grigory Kalinovsky) - Sonata for Piano and Violin, No. 4 in A minor, Op. 23, III. Allegro Molto by Ludwig van Beethoven (1770-1827)

January

The Caspian Quartet (Lily Sullivan and Tristan Zhu, violins, Vivian Van de Sype Cucu, viola, and Jan Nedvetsky, cello), coached by Rodolfo Vieira, was named winner at the 2025 Rembrandt Chamber Musicians Annual High School Chamber Music Competition, on Sunday, February 9, 2025, at North Park University's Anderson Chapel. The quartet played the last movement of Bartok String Quartet No. 4. Founded in 1995, it is widely regarded as one of the premier competitions of its kind in the Midwest, drawing participants from the Music Institute of Chicago, Chicago Youth Symphony Orchestras, Midwest Young Artists, Merit School of Music, and a variety of public and private schools. Competition winners have gone on to prestigious careers in music with some holding positions in the Cleveland, Pittsburgh, Los Angeles, and San Diego Symphony Orchestras as well as the New York Philharmonic.

<https://www.rembrandtchambermusicians.org/young-artists> PERFORMANCE VIDEO: <https://youtu.be/StlXWLh2yfk?si=uB1iJMKpXK6WdzAX>

The Caspian Quartet also advanced to the Junior Division - String & Piano category live semi-final round of the 12th Annual Coltman Chamber Music Competition at the University of Texas at Austin - Butler School of Music Austin, TX, in March.

Since 2003, the DePaul National Concerto Competition has given students from the Midwest the opportunity to compete and receive performance evaluations from well renowned judges. The competition attracts nearly 150 musicians performing on different instruments, and now in a new duo string category. Winners perform a movement of a concerto with the Oistrakh Symphony of Chicago later in the spring.

Cello: Winner: Jan Vargas Nedvetsky, 18, Wilmette, IL, Hans Jensen

String Duo: Winner: Gabriel Raviv, 16, Chicago, IL, Tanya Carey and Cecilia O'Malley

Viola: Honorable Mention with Distinction Brayden Wu, 16, Wilmette, IL, Sang Mee Lee

Violin: Honorable Mention with Distinction: Sylvia Pine, 13, Chicago, IL, Davis King and Almita and Roland Vamos / Honorable Mention: Matthew Kim, 16, Chicago, IL, Sang Mee Lee / Honorable Mention: Sebastian Manning, 16, Quincy, IL, Almita Vamos

Celebrating Cellist Jan Vargas Nedvetsky -- 2025 Nominee for the 2025 U.S. Presidential Scholars in the Arts

Cellist Jan Vargas Nedvetsky, was a nominee for the 2025 U.S. Presidential Scholars in the Arts, one of the nation's highest honors for high school students. YoungArts is the sole nominating agency for this prestigious award, and the 60 candidates—representing 22 and 10 artistic disciplines—are all YoungArts award winners with distinction. In May, the White House Commission on Presidential Scholars will announce the final 20 high school seniors to be recognized as U.S. Presidential Scholars in the Arts for their academic and artistic accomplishments, demonstrated leadership, community service and outreach initiatives, and overall creativity.

Jan has been a Merit Fellow Scholarship recipient in the Academy since 2019, when he began a remarkable career of solo and chamber music performances, competition awards, a proven track record for significant community service, and a host of extraordinary life experiences. A student of Hans Jorgen Jensen and Oleksa Mycyk, Jan is also a Cello Fellow at the Chicago Musical Pathways Initiative. During his Academy tenure, he has performed as a soloist with numerous orchestras, including a recent performance Dvořák's entire cello concerto with the Northbrook Symphony under the baton of Mina Zikri. Last April, Jan took center stage for his performance of the difficult Variations on a Rococo Theme by Pyotr I. Tchaikovsky, at the Athenaeum Theater in Chicago. Last year, Jan performed in Lake Placid NY; Detroit, MI; Washington, DC; Miami, FL, Boise ID, Salmon, ID, and soloed with Central Oregon Symphony Orchestra in Bend, Oregon.

He has won numerous awards with chamber ensembles like the Omaggio String Quartet; performed live on WFMT Introductions and From the Top; has performed and attended master classes across Europe; received the Liechtenstein Music Academy scholarship and participated in the esteemed Gstaad Menuhin String Academy in 2024. Now, as a Young Arts 2024 Winner with Distinction, he is a US Presidential Scholar nominee. <https://janvargasnedvetsky.com/>

Violinist Lily Sullivan, student Grigory Kalinovsky, and violinist Emily Chen, student of Almita Vamos and Injoo Choi, were named semifinalists for the 2025 International Young Artist Concerto Competition. Sixteen competitors have been selected to move to the semi-final round, including one student under the age of 13. Competitors that move to the semi-final and final rounds will be invited to perform with a professional orchestra in January 2025. Four competitors will proceed to the final round with one ultimate winner. Performing January 25, 2025 with SEEN Worldwide Orchestra at Buntrock Hall, Symphony Center - Chicago Illinois.

Lily Sullivan - (Academy student of Grigory Kalinovsky) Brahms, Violin Concerto in D Major, Op. 77: Movement 1, Allegro non troppo

Emily Chen - (Academy student of Injoo Choi and Almita Vamos) Korngold, Violin Concerto in D major, op.35: Movement 1, Moderato mobile

Pianists Edie Park and Noah Kim were named semi-finalists in the preliminary round of the Crain-Maling Foundation CSO Young Artists Competition in Buntrock Hall Center, a big honor for first year students in the program. Edie Park is a student of Marta Aznavoorian and Winston Choi, and Noah Kim is a student of Dr. Christopher Guzman.

Violinist Lily Sullivan, student of Indiana University Jacobs School of Music faculty member, Grigory Kalinovsky was named a semifinalist in the Johansen International String Competition for Young String Players, ages 13–17, established in 1997, takes place once every 3 years in Washington, DC. Lily will compete March 18–20, 2025. Lily was named first-place winner of the Central Oregon Symphony Young Artist Competition. Tune in to watch Lily's winning performance of Brahms Violin Concerto in D major, Op. 77, I. Allegro non troppo <https://youtu.be/b5ePr1j23TA>

Violinist Elle Cho, student of Almita Vamos, was a runner up in the 2025 KSO's Arthur D. Montzka's Young Artists Concerto Competition in DeKalb, IL at Northern Illinois University.

2024

DECEMBER

Violinist Emily Chen, student of Injoo Choi and Almita Vamos, was named a 2025 Cooper International Competition for Violin Participant. The Thomas and Evon Cooper International Competition brings some of the world's most talented young musicians to the campus of Oberlin College and Conservatory. Alternating years feature a competition for violinists and a competition for pianists. The "Cooper Competition" is open to musicians between the ages of 13 and 18, the competition culminates in a final round where the top three competitors perform a full concerto with orchestra. <https://www.oberlin.edu/cooper.../violin-2025/participants>

The O'Malley Foundation National Concerto Competition (formerly Walgreens) has a reputation for excellence, featuring various categories and divisions to ensure a wide range of talented young musicians can participate. This year's event only offered a live round of participation, and

was held on December 29 and 30 at the MYAC Center in Highwood, IL. The competition provides both monetary awards and performance opportunities for winners.

Open Senior Division: String Category Winner: Emily Chen, 16, violin, Almita Vamos and Injoo Choi, Arlington Heights, IL Piano Category Honorable Mention: Noah Kim, 18, piano, Christopher Guzman, Vernon Hills, IL

NOVEMBER

Violinist Tristan Zhu, student of Almita Vamos, was named the winner in the Illinois MTNA Competition. Tristan won the state senior string division and will be moving on to the Division round this winter. He performed at Millikin University in Decatur last Sunday.

Winners/Representatives will advance to the East Central Division Online-only Video Competitions. The three-tiered Junior Performance Competitions begin with State Competitions. The winners/representatives of each state's competitions advance to a video-only division competition. All videos will receive comments from the judges. Division winners/representatives will compete in person at the National Finals during the annual MTNA National Conference. https://www.mtna.org/MTNA/Engage/Competitions/Junior_Performance_Competitions.aspx

Tristan went on to be named winner of the East Central Division of Music Teachers National Association (MTNA) Senior String Competition. He will be competing as a national finalist at the MTNA National Conference in MN, in March. The three-tiered Performance Competitions begin with State Competitions. States have the option to hold live or video competitions. The winners/representatives of each state's competitions advance to a video-only Division Competition. All videos at that level will receive comments from the judges. Division winners/representatives will compete in person at the National Finals during the annual MTNA National Conference. The state competitions are considered the primary educational level with the division and national levels showcasing outstanding performance and honoring significant pedagogical achievement. The two-tiered MTNA competitions begin with video-only nationwide competitions. Seven finalists then proceed to the in-person National Competition Finals.

Tristan's program: Bach: Partita No. 2 in D Minor, V. Chaconne; Sibelius: Violin Concerto In D minor, I. Allegro Moderato; Roumain: FILTER for solo violin

OCTOBER

Midori Master Class – Esteemed artist Midori visits the Academy for a fifth inspiring master class. Academy students Lauren Kim performed Jean Sibelius: violin concerto, movement one: Allegro moderato; Sasha Varchenko – Maurice Ravel: Tzigane; and Emily Chen – Erich Wolfgang Korngold: violin concerto, movement one: Moderato nobile

We thank Midori for returning to the Academy each year with insightful classes.

Pianist Edie Park performed Beethoven Concerto No. 3, I. Allegro con brio, on her orchestra debut with the Northeastern Illinois University Orchestra, conducted by Dr. Benjamin Firer. As a winner of the 10th Annual 2024 Chicago Chamber Music Festival Concerto Competition for

pianists and string players, Edie performed with the orchestra on Friday, Oct 25th at 7:30pm (location: NEIU Auditorium.) Edie studies with faculty member Marta Aznavoorian and Winston Choi.

2024 Sejong Music Competition - The goals of the Sejong Music Competition are to discover talented young musicians and encourage them in their studies, and to also introduce traditional Korean music expressed through Western media. Through this competition they hope to increase the awareness and understanding of Korea's cultural heritage amongst the younger generations growing up in the United States so as to promote harmony among people of various ethnic backgrounds and bridge Asian and Western cultures.

Emily Chen, First Place and Best interpretation of Korean piece, Violin Senior Division, student of Injoo Choi and Almita Vamos

Finalist: Violin Senior Division - Elle Cho, student of Almita Vamos

Edie Park, First Place and Best Interpretation of a Korean piece, Piano Senior Division, student of Winston Choi and Marta Aznavoorian

AUGUST

Violinist Lily Sullivan, student of Grigory Kalinovsky, one of 55 participants, advanced to the second round of the prestigious Kloster Schöntal Competition. The 20th International Competition for Violin in Kloster Schöntal concluded on 31 August at the monastery's ballroom in Baden-Württemberg, Germany. The competition was open to violinists of all nationalities up to the age of 21. <https://www.violinwettbewerb.de/en/competition/>

JULY

Violinist Emily Chen, student of Almita Vamos and Injoo Choi, and cellist Lucy Wu, student of Stefan Kartman, competed in the Chicago International Music Competition Rising Star Category, held in July. Emily received first grand prize and Lucy tied for second grand prize. The competition is sponsored by the International Institute of Piano Artistry and co-organized by Wheaton College and aims to find and cultivate a new generation of music talents in the world and to promote the development of classical music and cultural exchange. Thousands of dollars in cash prizes, master classes, and recording opportunities are provided to the winners. Chicago International Music Competition <https://www.cimcusa.org/page/AboutUS.html>

REMARKABLE ACADEMY ALUMNI NEWS

On Tuesday, March 18, 2025, violinist **Joshua Brown**, was announced as a recipient of a 2025 Avery Fisher Career Grant. The 2025 Career Grants award ceremony continues a tradition established over five decades ago by Avery Fisher. The Avery Fisher Prize is awarded in recognition of musicians who represent the highest level of excellence and whose vision and

leadership have taken classical music to an expanded level. Since 1975, Avery Fisher Prize awardees have included Emanuel Ax, Emerson String Quartet, Yo-Yo Ma, Midori, Murray Perahia, André Watts, and many more.

Academy grads performed on SNL and NFL Games alongside stars Beyoncé and Shaboozey - Academy alumni, violinist **Hannah White** (former student of Almita Vamos) and violist **Kayla Cabrera** (former student of Roland Vamos), performed on the NFL 2024 Christmas Day Halftime Show. Dubbed the Beyoncé Bowl. Beyoncé performed selections from her album "Cowboy Carter" on Netflix December 25, 2024, at the NRG Stadium in Houston, Texas during the Baltimore Ravens vs. Houston Texans game. Hannah and Kayla were members of a small orchestra performing alongside the grammy award-winning artist.

They also appeared on the Super Bowl Halftime Show. Earlier in December, violinist **Clayton Penrose Whitmore** (former student of Almita Vamos) performed with singer-songwriter and record producer Shaboozey, whose music combines country, rock, and Americana, at the NFL Thanksgiving Halftime Show between the Chicago Bears and Detroit Lions, and then again on Saturday Night Live, December 7, 2024. Clayton also performed on the Super Bowl Halftime Show. Clayton continued to tour with Shaboozey in 2025.

Cellist **Gabriel Cabezas**, student of Hans Jensen, named one of “23 Composers and Performers to Watch in ’23” by the Washington Post, is a sought-after soloist. Gabriel has appeared with America’s finest symphony orchestras, including the Philadelphia Orchestra, Chicago Symphony, Cleveland Orchestra, and the New York Philharmonic, and has premiered dozens of new works by acclaimed composers working today. His *Lost Coast*, an album of original music composed by Gabriella Smith, inspired by her reflections on climate change, which she has seen devastate her home state of California. The album was named one of NPR Music’s “Favorite Albums Of 2021” and a “Classical Album to Hear Right Now” by The New York Times. Gabriel premiered the concerto *Lost Coast*, reimagined by the composer for solo cello and orchestra, with the Los Angeles Philharmonic and Gustavo Dudamel in May 2023.

In 2016, Gabriel received the Sphinx Medal of Excellence, a career grant awarded to extraordinary classical Black and Latinx musicians, who, early in their professional career, demonstrate artistic excellence, outstanding work ethic, a spirit of determination, and ongoing commitment to leadership. Gabriel studied at the Curtis Institute of Music under Carter Brey, and was a member of the award-winning Polaris Quartet at the Academy with violist Matthew Lipman, and violinists Andrea Jarrett and Vincent Meklis, and coached by Hans Jensen.

MIC Alumna **Isabella Brown**, student of Almita Vamos, Joins LA Philharmonic - At just 21, Academy alumna Isabella Brown has reached a remarkable milestone in her career, joining the LA Philharmonic as Assistant Principal Violinist under the baton of Gustavo Dudamel. Academy violinist Isabella Brown joined the Academy in September 2015. Izzy, as we warmly know her, moved with her family from the East Coast to Chicago, with her brothers Nicholas and Joshua, who are also violinists—to study with esteemed violin faculty members Almita and Roland Vamos and join the Academy, MIC’s pre-college conservatory program. For six years, Izzy played a vital role in the program, evolving into a confident, eloquent, and expressive performer.

She graduated in May 2021 and matriculated to the Colburn Conservatory of Music in Los Angeles to study with violin and chamber music faculty member Martin Beaver.

In May, while still a student at Colburn, Izzy auditioned for the position of Assistant Principal at just 21 years old (and her first orchestral audition). Remarkably, she was offered the job at this young age. She assumed the position earlier this month and, under the leadership of Music & Artistic Director Gustavo Dudamel, will work alongside some of the finest musicians in the world. Read her story: <https://www.musicinst.org/news/mic-alumna-isabella-brown-joins-la-philharmonic>

Violin soloist **Maya Anjali Buchanan**, former student of Almita Vamos, who performed Tchaikovsky's Violin Concerto with the Evanston Symphony Orchestra two years ago, will play Erich Wolfgang Korngold's Violin Concerto on November 3, 2:30pm. Buchanan studied violin with Almita and Roland Vamos before attending The Curtis Institute. The program also includes Jessie Montgomery's penetrating and stirring Soul Force, Ludwig van Beethoven's Overture to King Stephen and is anchored by Edward Elgar's "Enigma Variations."

Cellist James Baik, First Prize Winner of the 2023 Young Concert Artists Susan Wadsworth International Auditions and recipient of the Paul A. Fish Memorial Prize and the Bridgehampton Chamber Music Prize has advanced to the Final Round of the 2024 YCA Susan Wadsworth International Auditions on Sunday, October 27, 2024. James was also a finalist at the 2019 Stulberg International String Competition and would go on to receive the first prize at the prestigious Irving M. Klein International Competition. Raised in Houston, Texas, James' early education included studies with Houston Symphony Associate Principal Christopher French and with esteemed pedagogue Hans Jørgen Jensen in Chicago at the Academy. James holds a Bachelor of Music degree from Colburn Conservatory of Music where he studied with Clive Greensmith.

Cellist Johannes Gray won second prize in the XXIV International Johann Sebastian Bach Competition 2024 in Leipzig, Germany. He also received the GENUIN Special Prize for CD production. Gray studied with Hans Jensen and Gilda Barston while enrolled in the Academy. Though currently based in Paris, cellist Johannes Gray started his musical career in Chicago and has become an award-winning instrumentalist. His solo engagements have taken him across four continents, including performances at the Berlin Philharmonie, the festivals of Ravinia and Verbier, Lincoln Center, SuperCello (Beijing), and the Cello Biennale Amsterdam. Johannes is passionate about performing contemporary works and plans to showcase a collection of new Parisian compositions along with Poulenc's cello sonata on his proposed album with Cedille. <https://www.cedillerecords.org/emerging-artist-spotlight-johannes-gray/>

Violinist Julian Rhee received a 2024 Avery Fisher Career Grant, which recognizes instrumentalists and chamber ensembles with a \$25,000 cash prize. Rhee studied with Hye-Sun Lee and Almita Vamos at the Music Institute of Chicago Academy and received his bachelor's degree and master's degree as teaching assistant of Miriam Fried at the New England Conservatory. Rhee came to international prominence following his prize-winning performances at the 2024 Queen Elisabeth International Violin Competition and Silver Medal finish at the 11th Quadrennial International Violin Competition of Indianapolis. Rhee joins accomplished

Academy alumni Benjamin Beilman, Matthew Lipman, and the Calidore String Quartet (with the Academy's Ryan Meehan), as Avery Fisher Career Grant recipients.

<https://www.julianrhee.com/full-bio-2>

Academy alumna cellist Luka Coetzee, former student of Horacio Contreras, won the Paulo International Cello Competition in 2023. In July 2024, she performed her 1st prize-winning performance of Penderecki's Cello Concerto No. 2, with Conductor Rumon Gamba and the Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra. Luka received numerous awards including First Prize in 2023 at the eminent 7th International Paulo Cello Competition. In November 2022, she was recognized as the First Prize Winner at the Pablo Casals International Award, and in September, she received the Frans Helmerson Promotional Award at the Kronberg Academy, as well as First Prize in the 2022 Johansen International Competition in Washington, DC, garnering further attention for her exciting introduction as an international soloist. <https://youtu.be/h-shH2WKzJ4?si=fZmNWiy7Ku92pcWS>