



LIU Post Chamber Music Festival 2017 Alumni Newsletter

Edited and Compiled by:

Ashley L. Akl, Festival Summer Intern

Michael Roberts, Administrative Assistant to the Directors



Sho Omagari (Violin) was the winner of the 6th International Music Competition Mühlacker, Germany and 17th International Youth Music Competition, Bulgaria among others was born in Hamburg, Germany. As a graduate of the Julliard school and sole receiver of Bachelor of Science degree from Mannes, he appeared in the Titanic's 100th anniversary memorial ceremony over the Atlantic Ocean, which was broadcast on major Medias worldwide. Sho has collaborated with Tony Awards Winner Lea Salonga who is also known for her appearance as Princess Jasmine in the Disney's film "Aladdin." He performed in one of the worst stricken areas of the Japan Quake by the invitation of the former Senior Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs of Japan. His solo can also be heard in the soundtracks of Kingdom Hearts and Final Fantasy XV. Sho was invited by the ambassador of Japan

to perform at the Asian Society Awards Ceremony given to the leading Asian professionals including the Nobel Prize Winner in Physics, Shuji Nakamura, and the world boxing champion as well as member of the house of representative of Philippine, Manny Pacquiao. He has served as a member of the jury in the New York International Folk Music Competition, held by the United Nations and the Chinese Ministry of Culture. He is an Alumnus of LIU Post Chamber Music Festival 2003 on both Violin and Conducting.



Gemma Hinson (Violin)

Has been part of the Manhattan School of Music Precollege faculty since 2016, is an active teacher and performer in New York City. She completed both her Bachelor of Music and Master of Music degrees in violin performance at Manhattan School of Music, where she studied with Lucie Robert and Grigory Kalinovsky. Prior to college, Gemma studied at Manhattan School of Music Precollege under the instruction of Julie Artzt Becker and Grigory Kalinovsky.

As a member of the Salome Chamber Ensemble for the 2009–10 season, Ms. Hinson performed concerts at Brooklyn’s Bargemusic and the Metropolitan Museum of Art. She attended the C.W. Post Summer Chamber Music Festival from 1998 until 2003. During the summers of 2011 and 2012 she was an Orchestra Fellow at the Texas Music Festival, an intensive four-week program utilizing the talents of eminent conductors, including Carl St. Clair and Mei Ann Chen. Ms. Hinson’s professional development includes registered Suzuki Violin training with the Suzuki Association of the Americas through the Suzuki Institutes at Ithaca College and the Hartt School of Music. After completing Northwestern’s course “Teaching the Violin and Viola: Creating a Healthy Foundation,” she became a community mentor to help guide other teachers. In addition to her teaching at Manhattan School of Music Precollege and at The Browning School Ms. Hinson maintains an active private studio with students of all ages in the New York City area.



Gregory K. Williams (Viola)

is the Acting Principal Violist of the Hudson Valley Philharmonic. He is Principal violist with the Berkshire Opera Festival, Assistant Principal violist of the Washington Heights Chamber Players, and is a founding violist with Rhymes With Opera, as well as the Long Island-based Red Door Chamber Players. Mr. Williams has also performed with the Albany Symphony, the Syracuse Symphony, Symphony in C, the LIU Post Chamber Music Festival, and the Aspen Music Festival. His recent performances include recitals in the Netherlands, Germany, the Czech Republic, and a throughout the United States. He recently presented a Lecture-Recital on the unaccompanied viola works of Günter Raphael at the American Viola Society Festival in Oberlin, Ohio. He is a candidate for the Doctorate in Viola

Performance under the direction of Karen Ritscher and Linda Sinanian. Mr. Williams has previously studied at Boston University, where he received his Bachelor’s Degree in Viola Performance, and at the Eastman School of Music, receiving his Master’s Degree in Viola Performance and Literature. Mr. Williams is on the viola faculty at the Aaron Copland School of Music at CUNY Queens College. He has taught at the Metropolitan Youth Orchestra, LIU Post Festival, and Southampton String Festival.



Craig Mehler (Cello) is a versatile cellist who is currently a Graduate Assistant at Ithaca College, studying Cello with Elisabeth Simkin. Craig graduates from SUNY Fredonia in 2013, where he received his Bachelor's degrees in Music Performance and Music Education. A love of chamber music, fostered at the LIU Post Chamber Music Festival, inspired him to establish the Fredonia Cello Choir, a group that performed for Yo-Yo-Ma. He has also played in numerous chamber music groups, most recently in the Ithaca College Graduate Assistant String Quartet. An avid supporter of new music, Craig has worked with the ETHOS New Music Society as well as with many other living composers to perform many world premieres. Craig is currently working with Dominican composer Emmanuel Berrido on his cello concerto, which will be performed in the Dominican Republic in the winter. He frequently performs with cellist

Joshua Epstein playing many styles of music including pop, classical, rock, jazz, and even video game music. Craig's cello teachers include Frederick Zlotkin, Elisabeth Simkin, Natasha Farny and Gail Renaldo. Craig is originally from Hicksville, NY.

(Violinists Sho Omagari, and Gemma Hinson, Violist Greg Williams and Cellist Craig Mehler will be performing together as Alumni from the LIU Post Chamber Music Festival on "Summer Music for Kids" sponsored by the Quote Chamber Music Inc. on Wednesday, August 9th at 3:30 p.m.)



Timothy Diovanni (Clarinet) is a musician and musicology student at Columbia University who writes a music column for The Columbia Lion and program notes for The North Shore Symphony Orchestra. In the past, Timothy has written for The Eye, a magazine of The Columbia Spectator (as a music critic and as the Arts Editor).

Timothy attended the LIU Post Chamber Music Festival from 2009 -- 2011. He returned to work as an intern in 2015, and considers his years of learning at the Festival as "invaluable" to his overall development as a musician.

Timothy is currently working on a project involving the analyzation and reception of Franz Schubert in Paris in the 1830s and 1840s. In the past, He has researched and written on Germaine Tailleferre, who was neglected by music critics and historians.

Timothy claims that if he is not in the music library, he can be found in the cluttered writing classroom adjacent to Dodge 404 — practicing scales and long tones, always in search of the perfect reed.



Roger Kalia (Conductor) was recently awarded a 2017 Solti Foundation U.S. Career Assistance Award, and is currently the Assistant Conductor of Pacific Symphony and the Music Director of Pacific Symphony Youth Orchestra. He began his tenure in 2015, and was recently awarded a two-year contract extension, becoming only the second assistant conductor in Pacific Symphony’s history to receive this honor. Kalia also serves as Co-Founder and Music Director of the Lake George Music festival in upstate New York, the premier music festival in the region. Previously, he served for two seasons as Assistant Conductor of the Charlotte Symphony, where he conducted the orchestra in a variety of performances

and invigorated the orchestra’s engagement with the community. Kalia has also held Music Director positions with both the Young Musicians Foundation (YMF) Debut Orchestra and Columbus (IN) Symphony Orchestra, the oldest orchestra in the state and only its fourth music director. Kalia recently led the Pacific Symphony Youth Orchestra on a highly successful tour of China, which marked the orchestra’s second international tour and its first to Asia. In addition to his current positions, Kalia is in consistent demand as a guest conductor. Recent and upcoming engagements include the National Symphony at the Kennedy Center, Chicago Sunfonietta at Symphony Hall, Long Beach Symphony, Great Falls Symphony, Owensboro Symphony, Boise Philharmonic, Adrian Symphony, and Bakersfield Symphony, among others. He has collaborated with such artists as Glenn Dicterow, David Kim, Randy Newman, Dan Dunn, Fei-Fei Dong, and Misha Dichter, and has served as cover conductor for the Los Angeles Philharmonic, St. Louis Symphony and Indianapolis Symphony. Kalia has worked in various capacities with the New York Philharmonic, Pittsburgh Symphony, Seattle Symphony, Utah Symphony, Fort Worth Symphony, Danish National Symphony, and Royal Scottish National Orchestra, among others. Kalia conducted the Memphis Symphony in 2011 after winning Second Prize in their International Conducting Competition, which led to his debut the following season and launched his professional career.



Nicholas Graham (Clarinet) is passionate about sustaining arts communities. Nicholas attended the LIU Post Chamber Music Festival in 2009. Nicholas was also the 2009 Concerto Competition Winner in which he performed Mozart's Clarinet Concerto with the Festival Orchestra. After receiving a Bachelor of Music Performance degree from the Harrt School in 2011, Nicholas attended Dartmouth College, where he received a Master's degree in Cultural Studies. During his time at Dartmouth, he continued performing in ensembles and competitions in the area, earning Grand Prizes

in the 2014 and 2015 Culley Concert Competition. Nicholas wrote his thesis on the adaptation of instrumental performers to advancements in digital technology. After studying economic opportunities of technology for artists and communities. Nicholas launched a consulting business providing marketing strategy and solutions to tech startups and non-profits. His work led him to San Francisco, where he currently serves as Marketing Event Manager for Honor, a comprehensive home care solution connecting older adults to professional caregivers. Outside his work in the tech community, Nicholas is currently focusing on utilizing his interests in business and technology to help arts organizations make an impact. He occasionally consults with arts organizations and performing artists, and seeks to integrate his career with the industry. through discovering new opportunities to bring awareness for the arts, Nicholas hopes to serve as an advocate for a community that raised and nurtured his talents.



Candace Crawford (Oboe) is the owner and founder of Spreading the Music Schools in New Orleans, L.A, private music teacher and professional oboist. She graduated with her bachelors in Music Education and Oboe Performance at Ithaca College, Ithaca, N.Y in 2014 studying under Paige Morgan. She specializes in teaching oboe/English horn, violin and piano and has an extensive and expanding private music studio. In season, she manages 23 teachers with approximately 108 students ages 5 years old and up. Hailing from Long Island, N.Y., Ms. Crawford has a wide range of experience in teaching large bands and orchestras, chamber music, instrument specific sectionals and group lessons, All-County and All-State preparation, conducting, instrumental repair and reed making.

Her goal is to continue to dynamically spread the music (www.spreadingthemusic.com). Her deep passion for a high quality teaching, deepening the student teacher relationship keeps her on her journey to build up to 30 schools nationally and internationally and ultimately create a Conservatory of Music.



Francisco Alejandro Salazar (Cello) has studied under the tutelage of Susan Lehr, Peter Tarsoly and George Ginovker, former principal cellist of the Leningrad Philharmonic in Russia. He was a member of the Hofstra Symphony Orchestra, Hofstra String Orchestra and Hofstra Opera where he served as principal cellist. Additionally, he has performed in Tilles Center, Alice Tully Hall, David Geffen Hall and Carnegie Hall and was a member of Kammermusik, an orchestra created by Dale Stuckenbruck. He also performed with the New York Virtuosi and the American Symphony Orchestra. Francisco attended the LIU Post Chamber Music Festival for five years where he was the winner of the Nassau Music Educators Association Scholarship in 2005, the Tilles Scholar Award in 2004 and the Concerto Competition in 2006. Most recently Francisco

world premiered a string quartet written by Bryon Wysocki and a Piano Trio that by renown Costa Rican composer Andres Soto. He is set to premiere a piece for Cello and percussion next year. Francisco also performed alongside the Hardwick Trio and is a founder of the Tenuto String Quartet. He is currently a member of the North Shore Symphony Orchestra and he enjoys performing chamber music with his brother David Salazar. Outside of his work as a musician, Francisco is a co-founder of Operawire.com, a site dedicated to covering opera and which has garnered a following all over the world. His work as a journalist has led him to London, Prague, Washington, Honolulu, and Atlanta and he has been able to interview some of the greatest opera singers in the world. He has also worked as a filmmaker collaborating with OperaRox Productions, BMW and many other companies. He holds a Masters from the New School and a bachelor's graduate from Hofstra University, where he studied Music, Film, and Italian.



Hyunju Ji (Violin) has moved audiences in her native South Korea, Canada and the United States with her violin performances. An avid collaborator, Ms. Ji has played with numerous orchestras and chamber groups. She served as the concertmistress at the LIU Post Orchestra. She regularly performs with the North Shore Symphony Orchestra and One World Symphony Orchestra. Her recordings include Nick Chapman's Symphony No. 1 and Majid Khaliq's Sound of Flower. She just played at NJPAC with Mr. Khaliq for 4 sold-out shows. In 2016, she joined Traumerei Piano Trio. They performed several concerts in their inaugural season, including a performance at the Queensborough Community College Performing Arts Center, and a sold out concert at the DiMenna Center for Classical Music. Ms. Ji received both her Bachelor of Music (with Summa Cum Laude) and Masters of Art degrees in violin performance and music history/ literature from LIU Post. She was awarded scholarships from Dong-A University, Tongbaek Rotary Club (Korea) and LIU Post. Ms. Ji has also participated in masterclasses, where

notable musicians from the Emerson String Quartet, NY Philharmonic, Metropolitan Opera and Orpheus Chamber Orchestra residency taught. She currently teaches violin at Waldorf School of Garden City, Love Violin for Children USA, Inc. and serves as a mentor with Kammermusik. She attended the LIU Post Chamber Music Festival from 2011 to 2016 and was awarded a fellowship in 2012 and 2014. She was awarded the Erick Friedman award in 2014.



Meet the Festival Alumni of Long Island University. Each of these students are avid performers and love to collaborate in chamber ensembles together during the course of the school year.

Jenna Witterman (Clarinet) has been a clarinetist for the past 17 years. Her career as a dedicated player began as far back as her attendance at the All-State Festival in 2008, when she was a student at Farmingdale High School. Jenna continues to push herself as a clarinetist and pursue new challenges, which can be seen in her recent success of winning the Concerto Competition Collegiate division during last summer's Chamber Music Festival of 2016. She is currently living her dream as an Elementary School Band Director in Oceanside UFSD, and will be completing her MA in Music History this December of 2017 through LIU Post University.

Sarah Bogen (Violin) began playing the violin at the age of 11 under the tutelage of Nicole DeCecco. She is a founding member of her school orchestra and was concertmistress for 6 years. Sarah was also an active member of the Long Island Youth Orchestra, NYIME and NSSO. She has attended the LIU Post Chamber Music Festival for the past 6 years. Sarah loves performing with her younger sister, Laura, a cellist, and her group consisting of two violins and piano. Besides performing, Sarah devotes her free time to teaching in her Melville Studio. She is a junior at LIU Post and is currently pursuing a degree in Instrumental Performance. Sarah is also a participating member of the LIU Merriweather Consort, String Ensemble, Chorus, Chamber Singers, and Chamber Ensemble. She is principal violinist in the LIU Post Orchestra. Additionally, Sarah has had the opportunity to perform in Masterclasses held by members of ETHEL String Quartet, Shanghai String Quartet, Lawrence Dutton of the Emerson String Quartet and members of the New York Philharmonic. Outside of music, Sarah is an avid tennis and volleyball player. She is currently studying violin with Dr. Dale Stuckenbruck and Anton Polezhayev, viola with Dr. Veronica Salas and piano with Professor Stephanie Watt.

Zachary Mezzo (Violin) has been a participant of the LIU Post Chamber Music Festival for over five years. He has been playing the violin since he was a young child and is also a student of Dr. Dale Stuckenbruck. As a recent graduate of Long Island Lutheran High School, Zach was awarded the Music Department Award and will continue his studies of Music Theory and Composition at New York University in the fall. Zach has studied composition with Professor Herbert Deutsch of Hofstra University for the past two years. As a participant in the Long Island Composers' Alliance Call for Composers, Zach was awarded an Arline Diamond Memorial Award for an original composition in 2016. Zach has also participated in the Long Island University Orchestra, NMEA All County, Long Island String Festival, and Kammermusik programs. In addition to being a violinist and composer, Zach also plays the piano, guitar and drums.

David Elyaho (Viola) was inspired by his late grandfather and began to play the violin at the age of 6 and the viola at 15. David has made multiple appearances at the Isaac Stern Memorial Hall and the Weill Recital Hall.

He is also an alumni of the Oyster Bay Music Festival, the LIU Post Chamber Music Festival, the Midsummer Dream Music Festival in Canada, and the Perugia Music Festival, which consisted of many orchestral, chamber, and solo performances. Along with his colleagues, David has led many visits to local nursing homes and Atria's to perform for the elderly. In 2015, David was the recipient of the New York State Council of Administrators of Music Educators Leadership Award, as well as the Earl Higgins instrumentalist award. He is also the Principal Violist of the LIU Post Orchestra. David's goal is to inspire a passion and love for music in others through teaching and performing, and play his role in keeping music alive. Entering his junior year at LIU Post, David studies violin with Dr. Dale Stuckenbruck and viola with Dr. Veronica Salas.

Vincent Basileo (Cello) began studying the cello in 11th grade with no prior musical experience. Some may say that Vincent Basileo got a very late start into musical performance. However, he only thinks of this hindrance as a minor setback in his love for the instrument. Studying with cellists such as Maureen Hynes, Julian Langford, Lauren Posey, and Arnold Choi, Vincent quickly began to progress in his studies and adopted each teacher's unique outlook on his repertoire. Now a sophomore at LIU Post majoring in Musical Performance, Vincent has served as the principal cellist of the LIU Post Orchestra, and the MALI Youth Orchestra, as well as being a former member of the Merriweather Consort at LIU Post. In early 2016, he was awarded the Half Hollow Hills High School West Orchestral Director's Award. Aside from his musical studies, Vincent enjoys hobbies such as performing in chamber groups, vigorous practicing, painting and making puns.

Ashley L. Akl (Piano) is a senior at LIU Post and will be graduating with her B.M. degree in Instrumental Performance in the spring of 2018. She is currently studying classical piano with Professor Stephanie Watt, and will be continuing her fourth year as the pianist for the LIU Post Orchestra. Ashley loves to perform and has had the privilege of performing with a few Long Island based orchestras including the Long Island Youth Orchestra (LIYO), and the North Shore Symphony Orchestra (NSSO). Ashley is an alumni of the LIU Post Chamber Music Festival, and helped to coordinate this summer's Festival Alumni Concert. She also helped assist in the department of Festival Alumni Relations, and was also an editor for the Festival concert booklet. This past spring, Ashley volunteered to help to run the piano NYSSMA Festival which was held at the LIU Post Fine Arts Center. Through the course of her career, Ashley has had the privilege to perform in selected master classes coached by artists including Shanghai String Quartet, Imani Winds, ETHEL Quartet, Lawrence Dutton of the Emerson String Quartet, and Louis Hanzlik who is a member of the Grammy Award-winning Orpheus Chamber Orchestra and American Brass Quintet. This past November, Ashley was the winner of the LIU Post Concerto Competition, and performed with the LIU Post Orchestra at the Tilles Center this past April. Currently, Ashley is working on her thesis presentation in which she will be researching the role of the piano in Chamber repertoire which she will be presenting in the spring of 2018 with her senior recital to follow.