



# ADJUDICATORS' BIOGRAPHIES

## 2023



### **Dr. Michael Berkovsky, piano**

Canadian-Israeli pianist, Michael Berkovsky, made his New York debut at Avery Fisher Hall and has toured as a soloist in Ireland, Costa Rica, Japan, Italy, Israel, Canada, and the United States. He has won numerous international piano competition awards and has performed under the baton of Vladimir Feltsman, Stefan Sanderling, Leon Fleisher, William Noll, among others. His recordings were featured on 96.3 Classical FM and CBC Radio. He has most recently recorded for the RCM piano syllabus due to be released in 2022. Michael maintains a competitive studio, in which numerous of his students have been awarded top prizes in national and

international piano competitions such as Van Cliburn Junior, Cleveland International, Bösendorfer-Yamaha, Canadian Chopin, Canadian Music Competition, among others. Graduates from his studio went on to study at top schools such as the Juilliard School, Yale University, New England Conservatory, among others. Michael frequently collaborates with numerous chamber groups and award-winning musicians, including Jasper string quartet and musicians from the Toronto Symphony Orchestra and Toronto Opera Company. Michael is involved in the cultural life of his community in Toronto and often performs with local groups like the Kindred Spirit Orchestra, York Symphony Orchestra and many others. In addition he is also actively engaged in piano duo recitals with his wife, Coral Berkovsky-Solomon. Michael serves as artistic advisor for the Canadian Music Competition and is regularly invited to adjudicate competitions around the country, as well as for masterclasses and teacher workshops. Most recently, he has served as president of the Canadian chapter of the George Enescu International Music Festival. He was a guest artist at numerous international festivals, including Arts Naples and Music Niagara Festival. Born in the former Soviet Union, Michael immigrated to Israel in 1990. He has studied with Nataly Litvinova and was mentored by Alexander Slobodyanik and Ilya Itin. In 2001, his family moved to Toronto, Canada. He received his Bachelor's and Master's Degrees from The Juilliard School where he studied with Yoheved Kaplinsky and Julian Martin. He was a recipient of the America Israel Cultural Foundation Scholarships from 1994-2001, and with the recommendation of Maestro Valery Gergiev, was awarded White Nights Foundation Scholarships while studying at Juilliard. In 2011, he completed his Doctoral degree at the Peabody Conservatory of the JohnHopkins University while under the tutelage of Professor Yong Hi Moon.



## **Michael Casimir, strings**

Michael Casimir was named Principal Viola of the Toronto Symphony Orchestra in 2022. Prior to that, he was appointed to the viola section of the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra in 2019. Casimir was awarded Second Place in the 2015 and 2011 international Sphinx Competitions, and winner of the Grand Prize at the Hudson Valley Philharmonic String Competition in 2013. He has guested as principal and co-principal of the London Philharmonic Orchestra. He acquired his undergraduate degree from The Juilliard School as a student of Heidi Castleman and Misha Amory, and his post-baccalaureate degree from the Curtis Institute of Music in May 2018 under the tutelage of Roberto Díaz, Hsin-Yun Huang, and Ed Gazouleas. While a

student at the Curtis Institute, Casimir performed regularly with the New York Philharmonic, The Philadelphia Orchestra, and Orpheus Chamber Orchestra. In addition to classical music, Casimir likes to explore other genres. He can be heard on the soundtracks for *The Lion King* (2019) and *Space Jam: A New Legacy*, and has composed the music for a mobile game.



## **Pearl Chen, piano**

Pearl Chen was born into a family of piano technicians and grew up surrounded by great musicians of the past and present. She began studying with Marina Geringas at the Royal Conservatory of Music in Toronto from an early age, and during those years became well known in the local competition and music festival circuit. Later, Pearl was the valedictorian graduate at the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland where she obtained a degree in performance as an ABRSM Fellow scholarship recipient. It was in Scotland that Pearl's passion for working in a collaborative environment was born. The RCS provided a rich environment in which to study accompaniment, improvisation, and piano duet/duo, which has been her focus of the past twelve years. Pearl currently maintains a teaching studio and piano ensemble club in Richmond

Hill where she lives with her partner, Carlisle. As both an accomplished soloist and collaborative musician, Pearl has a holistic approach to teaching that kindles the love of music in each of her students.



### **Jill Diane Filion, voice**

Jill has had an extensive career on the music theatre, concert and opera stages. She appeared in her first musical “Oklahoma” at the age of 13 in a featured dance role. Favourite roles include Signora Naccarelli in *The Light in the Piazza*, Miss Stacy and Rachel Lynde in *Anne of Green Gables*, Eliza in *my Fair Lady*, Marion in *The Music Man*, Frenchie/2<sup>nd</sup> keyboard in *Cabaret*, Graziella in *West Side Story* and the Baroness in *The Sound of Music*. She has enjoyed 3 seasons with the Charlottetown Festival, 7 with Drayton Entertainment, 2 with Theatre by the Bay. For Bruce County Playhouse she played the role of Connie in *The Ladies Foursome* in 2017 and in 2019 was the Music Director/performance pianist for *Nunsense*. Before moving to Toronto, Jill toured for 3 years with the Vancouver Opera Ensemble singing the roles of Musetta in *La Boheme*, Gretel in *Hansel and Gretel* and Josephine in *Pinafore*. She was the co-founder of both Kaspar Productions and Westcoast Concert Opera. She was a cast member of both the Toronto and International Touring companies of *Phantom of the Opera* and was in the original cast of *Ragtime*. Jill has been employed as a voice teacher and vocal coach at Sheridan College in the Musical Theatre Degree Program and at the Randolph Academy for Performing Arts as a choreographer and musical director as well. Jill is an active pianist, accompanying singers and musicians at concerts, cabarets and church services. She maintains a private voice and piano studio, continues Flamenco and Classical Spanish dance classes and started organ lessons 2 years ago. The learning never ends!



### **Joseph Johnson, strings**

Principal cellist of the Toronto Symphony Orchestra since 2009, Joseph Johnson previously held the same position with the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra. He also serves as principal cellist of the Santa Fe Opera. Prior to his Milwaukee appointment, Joseph Johnson was a member of the Minnesota Orchestra cello section for 11 years. He was a founding member of both the Prospect Park Players and the Minneapolis Quartet, the latter of which was honoured with The McKnight Foundation Award in 2005. Mr. Johnson has been heard throughout the world as a soloist, chamber musician, and educator. His festival appearances include performances in all classical genres at the American festivals of Santa Fe, Bach Dancing and Dynamite Society,



Bard, Cactus Pear, Grand Teton, and Music in the Vineyards as well as the Pacific Music Festival in Sapporo, Japan, and the Virtuosi Festival in Brazil. Recent highlights include the Canadian Première of the Unsuk Chin Cello Concerto with the Esprit Orchestra, as well as Tchaikovsky's *Rococo Variations* with the Kingston Symphony and Etobicoke Philharmonic. Upcoming concerts include concerto engagements with the Niagara Symphony and Symphony Nova Scotia. A gifted and inspiring teacher, Mr. Johnson is Assistant Professor of Cello at the University of Toronto, as well as the cello coach for the Toronto Symphony Youth Orchestra and the New World Symphony in Miami Beach, FL. He conducts numerous masterclasses for a wide range of institutions and ensembles. A graduate of the Eastman School of Music, Joseph Johnson earned his master's degree from Northwestern University. Awards and honours include a performer's certificate from the Eastman School of Music and first prize from the American String Teachers Association National Solo Competition. Mr. Johnson performs on a magnificent Paolo Castello cello crafted in Genoa in 1780.



## **Elaine Lau, piano**

Versatile as both a soloist and collaborative artist, Elaine Lau has performed as keyboardist and soloist with numerous orchestras, and broadcast on CBC Radio 2, National Public Radio (USA), and Rondo Classic (Finland). She has performed with ensembles including the Canadian Chamber Ensemble, Contact Contemporary Music, and the Kitchener-Waterloo Symphony. As a solo recitalist, she has been featured on the Canadian Opera Company's Piano Virtuoso concert series, Arts and Letters Series, the Canadian Music Centre's *On the 13th!* Piano Series and at the McMichael Canadian Art Collection. Her live performances of Canadian piano

repertoire can be found online at the Canadian Music Centre. In addition to her interest in the standard literature, Elaine also regularly premieres new works for toy, solo and duo piano, and is a founding member of *junctQín*, an award-winning Toronto-based contemporary keyboard collective. Recent highlights include performances at the Open Ears Festival (Kitchener-Waterloo), the International Electro-acoustic Symposium, and the Colours of Music Festival in Barrie. As duo pianist with Joseph Ferretti, Elaine has performed across North America and recorded for Capstone Records. Recent recording releases include *reTHiNK*, a well-received recording of contemporary piano music for six hands (2020, Redshift Records), funded by FACTOR and the Canada Council for the Arts; Elaine is also featured on composer Alex Eddington's album, "A Present from a Small Distant World" (2021, Redshift Records), with soprano Kristin Mueller-Heaslip. Elaine was coach and repetiteur for the Opera Theatre of Lucca (Italy) and for several years, collaborative pianist/instructor for the Pennsylvania Governor's School for the Arts (USA). In addition to performing, Elaine is active nationally as an adjudicator and Senior RCM Examiner, and has served as course facilitator and reviewer as well for online pedagogy courses at the Royal Conservatory. As a Senior Teacher Advisor, Elaine happily contributed to MEDA (Music Education in the Digital Age), a multi-institutional project that produced educational learning tools, including the Music Tool Suite. A member of the piano faculty at Wilfrid Laurier University since 2003, teaching studio piano and chamber music, Ms. Lau was the recipient of the Contribution to Teaching Award from the Ontario Registered Music Teachers' Association in 2018 and has also served as keyboard faculty at the National Youth Orchestra of Canada.



## Catherine Molina, strings

Catherine Molina is an RCM Certified Teacher of all levels of piano, violin and theory (history, harmony, counterpoint, analysis) and a member of the Royal Conservatory's College of Examiners. Her students range in age from four year olds to senior citizens; beginners, to ARCT level. Catherine strives to provide a nurturing approach, incorporating a varied curriculum, to ensure that students develop the skills necessary to realize their musical dreams! Catherine is the principal violist of the Guelph Symphony Orchestra and serves as its General Manager. In addition to maintaining a busy teaching studio, she is the violist of the Artelli String Quartet. Catherine Molina is a performance graduate of both the University of Toronto

and the Royal Conservatory of Music. She has also completed advanced chamber music studies at the Mozarteum in Salzburg, Austria and in Assisi Italy at the Academia Ottorino Respighi. Catherine has been a member of the Thunder Bay Symphony and the Toronto Sinfonietta and has performed with the Kitchener Symphony.



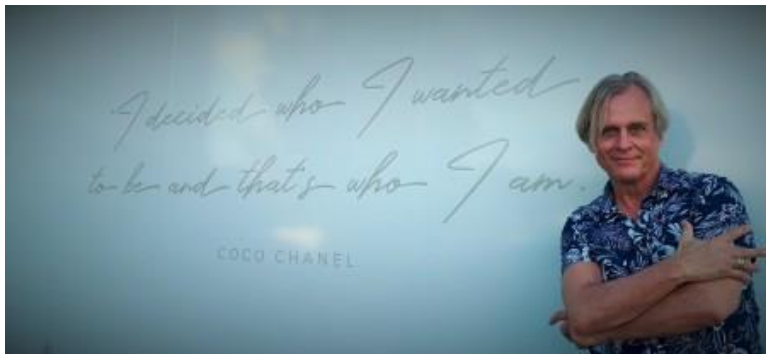
## Alexander Panizza, piano

Alexander Panizza was born in Toronto and started his musical education at the Royal Conservatory of Music. As a teenager, he moved to Argentina with his family and was soon recognized as one of the most talented young musicians of his generation. He won several first prizes in competitions and received scholarships to further his studies in Geneva, Barcelona, Paris and London. He completed a Postgraduate Diploma in Advanced Performance at the Royal College of Music in London, in the class of Irina Zaritskaya, where he was awarded the Esther Fisher Prize to the best performance of French music, the Frank Heneghan Prize for his version of Chopin, Rachmaninov and Scriabin's studies, the Cyril Smith Prize for his rendering of Rachmaninov's Third Piano Concerto and the Hopkinson Gold Medal and Shimmin Prize, in the College's main piano competition.

With a career supported by excellent press reviews and recognized by prestigious awards like the Konex Prize, Alexander Panizza performs regularly in Europe and the Americas, both as a recitalist and as a soloist. His orchestral repertoire includes over thirty piano concerti. Alexander Panizza's live recording of the Beethoven Piano Sonatas Cycle inspired a documentary by Pablo Romano. *Alexander Panizza. Just Piano* (2013) received awards in many independent film festivals and portrays Alexander's quest for "the perfect sound, the right silence".

Alexander has performed with orchestra and in solo and chamber recitals in Richelieu Amphitheatre in Paris, Palas Theatre in Athens, Nanning's Guangxi Concert Hall in China, National Theatre in Panama City, Solis Theatre in Montevideo, and Prince Mahidol Hall in Bangkok, among other prestigious halls in over twenty-five countries worldwide. With a special interest in collaborative piano, Alexander performs regularly in chamber music series. He has

appeared at Soesterberg (Holland) and Long Island Mozart Festival (USA), and integrates the distinguished faculty of Seven Lakes Festival (Patagonia) and Vancouver Island Music Academy. Alexander's discography includes Alberto Ginastera's complete piano works (Tradition), and works by David Winkler (Naxos, American composers' series), Muzio Clementi (Cascade) and Carlos Guastavino (Espacio Santafesino). His most recent album is dedicated to Ravel's music for piano. Alexander Panizza enjoys collaborating with composers. He was the soloist at the world premiere of Luis Mucillo's Piano Concerto at Teatro Colón with Buenos Aires Philharmonic and is the dedicatee of works by Ezequiel Diz (Argentina) and Elizabeth Raum (Canada). Alexander Panizza is a dedicated mentor, adjudicator, and pedagogue. He integrates juries in competitions in Canada, Chile, and Argentina, including the CCC Toronto International Music Festival. Alexander is a faculty member at the Catholic University in Buenos Aires, holds a piano studio in Toronto, and offers masterclasses at higher education institutions in the Americas, Europe and Asia. Since 2020, he has served as the Artist-in-Residence for the Scarborough Philharmonic Orchestra (Canada). In 2021, he opened the International Piano Series at Bogotá's Teatro Mayor (Colombia). During the pandemic, Alexander pivoted towards the digital realm, producing video works that combine music with visual arts, literature, and film. Based now in Toronto, Alexander has an intense activity as recitalist and soloist with orchestra, participating regularly in chamber music festivals and offering master classes throughout the Americas. He also collaborates regularly with non-profit institutions and government agencies projects such as the United Nations Blue Heart Campaign. Since 2020, he has served as the Artist-in-Residence for the Scarborough Philharmonic Orchestra (Canada). Alexander is now developing his activities in the digital realm. His video works combine music with visual arts, literature, and film.



## Joe Ringhofer, piano

Mr. Ringhofer has established an impressive, broad-spectrum music career. He is a nationally recognized pedagogue, the founder/director of the Phoenix Conservatory of Music, and the Chief Examiner *Emeritus of the Royal Conservatory of Music*. He has also authored and co-authored

over twenty books on music history, harmony, rudiments and musicianship, including the current textbooks for the RCM's advanced History, Harmony Counterpoint and Analysis ("Explorations" and "Celebrate Theory") courses. Joe is also featured as the narrator /spokesperson for *Perspectives Piano Series* (10 CDs) and *Sound Advice* (online digital recordings for 8 volumes).

In demand as a festival adjudicator, author and education innovator, Mr. Ringhofer has presented workshops on music theory to teacher groups across Canada. Since 2009 he has championed the Teacher Mentorship Program, offering theory teachers the opportunity to audit his online classes from a pedagogical viewpoint.

Mr. Ringhofer is a leading pioneer of online learning and in 2008, as a specialist in music theory and keyboard harmony, he launched *Music Without Borders: Music Theory Online with Joe Ringhofer*, hosting live lectures /webinars for students of all ages from across Canada, United States, Europe, and Asia.

Joe has served as a concert lecturer/children's presenter for the Guelph Symphony Orchestra as well as the host/presenter for Music Niagara Festival's At-Home Concert series (available on *YouTube*). He is a former Canadian champion of the classical accordion for which he went on to represent Canada in the Coupe Mondiale (1978) in Lodz, Poland.





## **R. BRUCE REDSTONE, Winds and Brass**

BRUCE REDSTONE was conferred with the degree of Bachelor of Arts in Music Education, Magna Cum Laude, and on the Dean's List of Scholars, from Central Washington University. He received the degree of Master of Music in Saxophone Performance from the University of Toronto, where he received the mark of A+ for one of the required recitals. He has had advanced level master class and/or private instruction from Eugene Rousseau, Frederick Hemke, and Pat Labarbara, among others. As a saxophonist, he has performed with the Mississauga Symphony, North York Symphony, Toronto Symphony, Hamilton Philharmonic, and Oshawa Durham orchestras, as well as the Toronto Wind Orchestra, which performed to a sold-out audience at the National Arts Centre in Ottawa. He has

performed in recitals in Canada, U.S.A., and the UK. As a jazz soloist, he has performed in the Montreal Jazz Festival (GM Stage), Toronto Downtown Jazz Festival, the CNE, Toronto Beaches Jazz Festival and Calgary International Jazz Festival, the latter where his group opened for the legendary Sun Ra; as well as performing in many local clubs and venues. He is a featured soloist on the cd's "Out In Front" by The Larry Bond Quartet, "Walkin' Easy", by The Don Bowes Big Band, "Tornado Magico" by Eduardo Lis and Latino Jazz Project, "Afterward" with George Thurgood, and the eponymously titled "The Kalais Trio". He has performed extensively and done workshops in contemporary/classical music as a member of the Kalais Trio, with Jamie Thompson, flute, and Petris Zarins, piano, and is a current member of the Larry Bond Jazz Quartet, The Hurricanes Dance Band, and Project Phoenix, a Toronto based R&B band, and maintains an active performing schedule. As an educator, Bruce directed ensembles at the Royal Conservatory of Music from 1994 to 2009, taught for five years at the University of Lethbridge, three years at George Brown College, one year at York University, and for nine years was a high school music director. He has twice been the conductor of the Wind Ensemble and Jazz Ensemble at the Independent Schools Music Festival at Roy Thompson Hall in Toronto. He has been an instructor at music camps for the Toronto Board Of Education (1992-98, 2000-01), the University of Lethbridge, and CAMMAC Ontario Summer Music Centre, for which he was Music Director in 1998, 1999, and 2004. He has adjudicated for the University of Toronto; at numerous music festivals, including Musicfest London, North York Music Festival, Windsor, Peel, St. Thomas, Timmons, Ontario Place, and Canada's Wonderland, the latter of which was one of the largest in North America. He has traveled throughout Canada and the US as a Senior Examiner for the Royal Conservatory of Music and was on the Council of Examiners from 2006 to 2009.

Bruce was on the faculty of the Royal Conservatory of Music in Toronto from 1991 to 2009, teaching saxophone, ensembles and jazz history, and was the chairman of the Department of Woodwinds, Brass and Percussion from 1998-2001. He was responsible for creating and/or implementing several new programs at the RCM, including the Jazz Ensemble, History of Jazz, and Small Ensembles programs, and served on numerous committees, including Academic Council and the Executive of the Faculty Association. He currently teaches at his home studio, and also maintains an active professional interest in photography.



## **Dr. Benjamin Smith, piano**

Described as having “scintillating technique” (Barrie Examiner), pianist Benjamin Smith has performed both as soloist and chamber musician across Canada and the United States. He has been a laureate of numerous competitions, including the Dublin International Piano Competition, the Virginia Waring International Piano Competition, and the CMC Stepping Stone Competition. Guest appearances include the Stony Brook Symphony Orchestra, the New Juilliard Ensemble, the Las Vegas Young Artists Orchestra, the Ontario Philharmonic, Orchestra London, the Burlington Symphony, the Windsor Symphony, and the University of Toronto’s Hart House Orchestra. As soloist, he has performed under esteemed conductors Rossen Milanov, Marco Parisotto, and Yuniior Lopez, with concertos including rarities such as the Schoenberg Piano Concerto. Summer festival performances include repeat appearances at Toronto, Stratford, Niagara, Port Milford, and New Park (Ithaca, NY). American performances include recitals for the Texas Chopin Society and Chicago’s Landowska Harpsichord Society. Recent seasons have seen two concerts in Carnegie Hall: once as soloist in Gershwin’s Rhapsody In Blue with the Hart House Orchestra, and previously in recital with Canadian cellist Dongkyun An. A disc with Mr. An of Saint-Saens, Schumann, and Beethoven was released in December 2016. Other commercial recordings available include a disc of Canadian chamber music (Aboriginal Inspirations, 2017) and extensive recordings for the 2022 Royal Conservatory Celebration piano series. Devoting considerable time to chamber music, Ben has been heard nationally across Canada on CBC Music, as well as radio broadcasts in the UK. He has partnered in recital with a myriad of renowned artists including Martin Beaver, Timothy Chooi, Colin Carr, Narek Hakhnazaryan, Jacques Israelievitch, Jinjoo Cho, Stanislav Pronin, Gábor Tarkövi, Øystein Baadsvik, and William VerMeulen, as well as with ensembles such as the Penderecki, Cecilia, Annex, and Tokai string quartets. For two seasons he performed as one-third of the Israelievitch-Smith-Ahn piano trio. Involved with music of our time as well, he is regularly found playing keyboards with the Esprit Orchestra in Toronto, and has worked with composers John Corigliano, Reinaldo Moya, and Chandler Carter. Increasingly in demand as a teacher, Ben has been active as an adjudicator and juror for festivals and competitions for many years, and has adjudicated many of the largest music festivals in Canada. His students have had success in this realm as well, including the CFMTA National festival. He has also served on panels for competitions internationally, most recently for the OPUS competition in the US. Dr. Smith currently resides in Toronto, maintaining a concert schedule and serving on the faculties of both the Glenn Gould School (GGS) and the Taylor Young Artist Academy at the Royal Conservatory. Previously, he held a position on the piano faculty at Western University. His principal teachers included Andrea Battista, James Anagnoson, Julian Martin, and Christina Dahl. Along with a DMA from Stony Brook University, he holds a Bachelors degree from the University of Toronto, an Artist Diploma from the GGS, and a Masters from Juilliard.





## **Douglas Von Edelmann, piano and voice**

Canadian Lyric Tenor, Douglas Von Edelmann, is known for his shimmering, velvety vocal timbre, and artistic, interpretive style from baroque to modern repertoire.

His debonair, charismatic, and youthful magnetism on stage is reflected in his performances illuminated with a clarion tone that illustrates innate beauty, elegance and intelligence. Coupled with his vocal artistry and flexibility are acting abilities that bring an outstanding, instinctive naturalness to his appearances in operatic roles.

He has made extensive concert appearances with conductors including Sir Roger Norrington, Christoph Spering, Rolf Beck, Vincent La Selva, Peter Oundjian and Krzysztof Penderecki. Combined with his performance experience are his studies in vocal pedagogy and diagnostic work in the physiology of the human voice as he continues his extensive studies in Canada, USA, England, and Germany. He teaches both voice and piano, adjudicates for music competitions, and

is also an accomplished pianist, composer and former international Irish dancing champion. Please visit his website at: [www.douglasvonedelmann.com](http://www.douglasvonedelmann.com)



## **Peteris Zarins, piano**

Peteris Zarins is a respected studio teacher and instructor of piano, piano pedagogy, and Music History at The Oscar Peterson School of Music, The Phil and Eli Taylor Performance Academy for Young Artists, and The Glenn Gould School. He is a frequent adjudicator, clinician, and lecturer and performs regularly as both a soloist and collaborative artist.

Peteris is a Senior Examiner, Practical and Theoretical subjects, for The Royal Conservatory Certificate Program and has served as Chief Examiner, Training and Development for The Royal Conservatory, Chair of the theory department at the Oscar Peterson School of Music, and Program Specialist for The Certificate Program in the U.S. Mr. Zarins is co-author of the three-volume music history series, *Explorations*. Peteris teaches [private lessons](#) as well as [Theory and History](#) at the Oscar Peterson School of Music.