



**MARIAN LIEBOWITZ ARTIST MANAGEMENT**



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# Cultural Crossroads: Dvořák in America

## Artist Bios

### Alexander String Quartet

The Alexander String Quartet has performed in the major music capitals of five continents, securing its standing among the world's premier ensembles, and a major artistic presence in its home base of San Francisco, serving since 1989 as Ensemble in Residence of San Francisco Performances and Directors of The Morrison Chamber Music Center Instructional Program at San Francisco State University. Widely admired for its interpretations of Beethoven, Mozart, and Shostakovich, the quartet's recordings have won international critical acclaim. They have established themselves as important advocates of new music commissioning dozens of new works from composers including Jake Heggie, Cindy Cox, Augusta Read Thomas, Robert Greenberg, Cesar Cano, Tarik O'Regan, Paul Siskind, and Pulitzer Prize-winner Wayne Peterson. Samuel Carl Adams' Quintet with Pillars was premiered in 2018 and has been widely performed across the U.S. by the Alexander with pianist Joyce Yang. The Alexander String Quartet's annual calendar includes engagements at major halls throughout North America and Europe. They have appeared at Lincoln Center, the 92nd Street Y, and the Metropolitan Museum; Jordan Hall; the Library of Congress; and chamber music societies and universities across the North American continent including Yale, Princeton, Stanford, Lewis and Clark, Pomona, UCLA, the Krannert Center, Purdue and many more. Recent overseas tours include the U.K., the Czech Republic, the Netherlands, Italy, Germany, Spain, Portugal, Switzerland, France, Greece, the Republic of Georgia, Argentina, Panamá, and the Philippines. Their visit to Poland's Beethoven Easter Festival is beautifully captured in the 2017 award-winning documentary, *Con Moto: The Alexander String Quartet*. Distinguished musicians with whom the Alexander String Quartet has collaborated include pianists Joyce Yang, Roger Woodward, Menachem Pressler, Marc-André Hamelin, and Jeremy Menuhin; clarinetists Joan Enric Lluna, Richard Stoltzman, and Eli Eban; soprano Elly Ameling; mezzo-sopranos Joyce DiDonato and Kindra Scharich; violinist Midori; violist Toby Appel; cellists Lynn Harrell, Sadao Harada, and David Requiro; and jazz greats Branford Marsalis, David Sanchez, and Andrew Speight. The quartet has worked with many composers including Aaron Copland, George Crumb, and Elliott Carter, and enjoys a close relationship with composer-lecturer Robert Greenberg, performing

numerous lecture-concerts with him annually. Recording for the FoghornClassics label, their 2021 recording of the complete string quartet of Brahms has been praised by MusicWeb International: "The joy of this quartet's playing is immediately apparent in the ferocious opening movement of the C minor quartet: they play with all the verve, drive and passion you could wish for but never at the expense of homogeneity or intonation – and the sustained warmth and depth of their string tone are a constant delight." Fanfare lauded their 2020 release of the Mozart and Brahms clarinet quintets (with Eli Eban) as "clearly one of the Alexander Quartet's finest releases." Their release in 2019 of Dvořák's "American" quartet and piano quintet (with Joyce Yang) was selected by MusicWeb International as a featured recording of the year, praising it for interpretations performed "with the bright-eyed brilliance of first acquaintance." Also released in 2019 was a recording of the Late Quartets of Mozart, receiving critical acclaim ("Exceptionally beautiful performances of some extraordinarily beautiful music." –Fanfare), as did their 2018 release of Mozart's Piano Quartets with Joyce Yang. ("These are by far, hands down and feet up, the most amazing performances of Mozart's two piano quartets that have ever graced these ears" –Fanfare.) Other major releases have included the combined string quartet cycles of Bartók and Kodály ("If ever an album had 'Grammy nominee' written on its front cover, this is it." –Audiophile Audition); the string quintets and sextets of Brahms with violist Toby Appel and cellist David Requiro ("a uniquely detailed, transparent warmth" –Strings Magazine); the Schumann and Brahms piano quintets with Joyce Yang ("passionate, soulful readings of two pinnacles of the chamber repertory" –The New York Times); and the Beethoven cycle ("A landmark journey through the greatest of all quartet cycles" –Strings Magazine). Their catalog also includes the Shostakovich cycle, Mozart's Ten Famous Quartets, and the Mahler Song Cycles in new transcriptions by Zakarias Grafilo. The Alexander String Quartet formed in New York City in 1981, capturing international attention as the first American quartet to win the London (now Wigmore) International String Quartet Competition in 1985. The quartet has received honorary degrees from Allegheny College and Saint Lawrence University, and Presidential medals from Baruch College (CUNY). The Alexander plays on a matched set of instruments made in San Francisco by Francis Kuttner, known as the Ellen M. Egger quartet.

#### R.Carlos Nakai - Native flute

Of Navajo-Ute heritage, R. Carlos Nakai is the world's premier performer of the Native American flute. He began his musical studies on the trumpet, but a car accident ruined his embouchure. His musical interests took a turn when he was given a traditional cedar flute as a gift and challenged to master it. As an artist, he is an adventurer and risk taker, always giving his musical imagination free rein. Nakai is also an iconoclastic traditionalist who views his cultural heritage not only as a source and inspiration, but also a dynamic continuum of natural change, growth, and adaptation subject to the artist's expressive needs.

Nakai's first album, *Changes*, was released by Canyon Records in 1983, and since then he has released forty albums with Canyon plus additional albums and guest appearances on other labels. In addition to his educational workshops and residencies, Nakai has appeared as a soloist throughout the United States, Europe, and Japan, and has worked with guitarist/luthier William Eaton, composer James DeMars, pianist Peter Kater and "the late" Paul Horn among many others. The famed American choreographer Martha Graham used Nakai's second album,

Cycles, in her last work Night Chant. Nakai contributed music to the major motion pictures New World (New Line) and Geronimo (Columbia).

Nakai, while cognizant of the traditional use of the flute as a solo instrument, began finding new settings for it, especially in the genres of jazz and classical. He founded the ethnic jazz ensemble, the R. Carlos Nakai Quartet, to explore the intersection of ethnic and jazz idioms.

Nakai brought the flute into the concert hall, performing with over 30 symphony and chamber orchestras. He was a featured soloist on the Philip Glass composition, Piano Concerto No. 2: After Lewis & Clark, premiered by the Omaha Symphony. Nakai also works with producer and arranger Billy Williams, a two-time Grammy® winner, in composing for and performing the traditional flute in orchestral works of a lighter vein.

In a cross-cultural foray, Nakai performed extensively with the Wind Travelin' Band, a traditional Japanese ensemble from Kyoto which resulted in an album, *Island of Bows*. Additional recordings with ethnic artists include *In A Distant Place* with Tibetan flutist and chanter Nawang Khechog, and *Our Beloved Land* with famed Hawaiian slack key guitarist and singer Keola Beamer. Recently, Nakai released *Voyagers* with Philadelphia Orchestra cellist Udi Bar-David which blends Native American melodies with Jewish and Arabic songs.

Nakai has received two gold records (500,000 units sold) for *Canyon Trilogy* and *Earth Spirit* which are the first (and only) Native American recordings to earn this recognition. In 2014, *Canyon Trilogy* reached Platinum (over 1 million units sold), the first ever for a Native American artist performing traditional solo flute music. He has sold over four million albums in the course of his career. His Grammy® nominations include:

*Ancestral Voices* (1994 Best Traditional Folk Album)  
*Inner Voices* (2000 Best New Age Album)  
*Inside Monument Valley* (2000 Best New Age Album)  
*In A Distant Place* (2001 Best New Age Album)  
*Fourth World* (2002 Best New Age Album)  
*Sanctuary* (2003 Best Native American Album)  
*People of Peace* (2005 Best New Age Album)  
*Reconnections* (2008 Best Native American Album)  
*Dancing Into Silence* (2009 Best New Age Album)  
*Awakening the Fire* (2013 Best New Age Album)

A Navy veteran, Nakai earned a master's degree in American Indian Studies from the University of Arizona. He was awarded the Arizona Governor's Arts Award in 1992, and an honorary doctorate from Northern Arizona University in 1994. In 2005 Nakai was inducted into the Arizona Music & Entertainment Hall of Fame. Nakai has also authored a book with composer James DeMars, *The Art of the Native American Flute*, which is a guide to performing the traditional cedar flute.

[Michele Kennedy](#) – Soprano

Praised by *The Washington Post* as “a fine young soprano with a lovely voice” possessing “a graceful tonal clarity that is a wonder to hear” (*SF Chronicle*), SOPRANO MICHELE KENNEDY is a versatile specialist in early and new music. Her recent concert venues include Carnegie Hall, Davies Symphony Hall, Getty Museum, Lincoln Center, and Washington National Cathedral.

Michele has been a featured soloist in Bach’s *St. John Passion* with The San Francisco Symphony Chorus & Voices of Music, Handel’s *Messiah* with Trinity Wall Street Choir, Poulenc’s *Gloria* with The Bach Society of Saint Louis, Undine Smith Moore’s *MLK Oratorio* at U.C. Berkeley, in the ‘Summer Fireworks’ of Handel & Purcell with Portland Baroque Orchestra, and in her Carnegie Hall debut with The Hollywood Film Orchestra. This spring, she’ll sing *Messiah* (St. Louis Bach Society), a Monteverdi program with DC’s Folger Consort, and Bach’s *B Minor Mass* with SF Bach Choir. She is thrilled for upcoming debuts with Washington Bach Consort and Seraphic Fire next season. Her singing is highlighted on two new albums: *Monteverdi’s Vespers of 1610* with The Thirteen and Dark Horse Consort (listen [here!](#)), and *In Her Hands* with AGAVE, a compilation of works by trailblazing female composers from over the ages.

A lifelong advocate of new works, Michele has sung premieres with Experiments in Opera, Harlem Stage Opera, Mimesis Ensemble, Five Boroughs Music Festival, and The New York Philharmonic. This season, she is part of a world premiere tour of Julia Wolfe’s *Her Story* - a celebration of women’s civil rights - with Lorelei Ensemble and the Nashville, Chicago, Boston, and San Francisco Symphony Orchestras. She is also a member of Kaleidoscope Vocal Ensemble: a group of early and contemporary music specialists that champions the voices of women and artists of color on the stage, and in the field at large.

A graduate of Yale University and NYU, Michele is committed to working toward greater equity and representation for BIPOC, LGBTQ, and female voices. A lifelong lover of Redwoods and Bay vistas, Michele lives in Oakland with her husband, visual artist Benjamin Thorpe, and their daughter, Audra May.

[Pamela Freund-Striplen](#) - Viola/Narrator

Pamela Freund-Striplen served as Artistic Director and violist of the Gold Coast Chamber Players based in the San Francisco Bay Area for 35 years. As such, she developed over 150 unique concert programs and three educational outreach programs. At the final Gold Coast Chamber Players performance, the local mayor proclaimed that day as Pamela Freund-Striplen Day for her community contributions. Motivated by the social impact of her special projects like **\*Cultural Crossroads: Dvořák in America** Pamela is now focusing on taking these programs to national and international audiences.

A passionate chamber musician, Pamela has collaborated with leading chamber musicians throughout the world. She has performed with members of the St. Lawrence, Alexander, Escher and Verona String Quartets and has been a frequent guest artist with the Amati Ensemble, performing in the Netherlands and Germany. Performances with the Amati Ensemble have included chamber music concerts for “Berlin Enescu Days” and a concert tour of all the Mozart viola quintets. Pamela performed in Vienna, Strasbourg, and throughout Germany with the New

European Strings under the direction of Dmitry Sitkovetsky, and later performed with the ensemble at the Seattle International Music Festival.

Pamela performed with San Diego Symphony and as Principal Violist with San Diego Opera and San Francisco Opera's touring arm, Western Opera Theater. She performed regularly with San Francisco Opera Orchestra, the San Francisco Symphony, and on the San Francisco Symphony chamber music series, Chamber Music Sundaes.

Having attended Pomona College and Oberlin Conservatory of Music, she continued her studies with the Curtis Quartet in Philadelphia, where she received the Young Musician's Award in chamber music two consecutive years. Her late viola teacher, Max Aronoff, continues to be a great source of inspiration to her.

Pamela maintained a private teaching studio for over 30 years and was a violin/viola instructor at Occidental College and Saint Mary's College of California. She was a chamber music coach at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music pre-college for eight years.

### Will Clipman, World Percussion

**Will Clipman** is a poet, percussionist, maskmaker, storyteller, performing & recording artist and educator with over thirty-five years of experience as a teaching artist. He is a seven-time GRAMMY nominee, a three-time Native American Music Awards winner and a two-time Arizona Governor's Arts Award Nominee. Will has recorded over sixty albums, over thirty of those for the Native American music label Canyon Records, and he has toured regionally, nationally, and internationally for twenty-five years. His publications include a book of poetry, **Dog Light** (Wesleyan University Press) and numerous anthologies and periodicals. Will's **Myths & Masks, Planet of Percussion** and **In a Word** workshops have been presented in libraries, assisted living centers, juvenile detention facilities, adult prisons, hospitals, art galleries, parks, resorts and retreat centers, most recently under the auspices of the **Lifetime Arts Creative Aging** initiative, and he has provided over two hundred Artist-in-Residency programs to elementary, middle and high schools as well as to colleges and universities. Will served as a Roster Artist-in-Education with the Arizona Commission on the Arts from 1980-2010 and continues to work in the field as a freelance arts educator. He has taught at the University of Arizona, Pima Community College, the Arizona State Prison, and Kino Psychiatric Hospital. Will holds a Bachelor of Arts degree from Syracuse University and a Master of Fine Arts degree from the University of Arizona.