Illinois State University
Wonsook Kim College of Fine Arts
School of Music

ISU String Project
25th Anniversary Celebration Concert



Center for the Performing Arts
November 20, 2026
Friday Evening
7:00 p.m.

This is the eighty-fifth program of the 2026-2027 season.

Program

Please silence all electronics for the duration of the concert. Thank you.

Celebrating Our Teachers: Current and Alumni Teachers Perform our Favorite Teaching and Recruiting Pieces

Forever Joyful	Brian Balmages
Rosin Eating Zombies from Outer Space	Richard Meyer
Lullaby	William Hofeldt
Blue Fire Fiddler	Soon Hee Newbold

Current and Alumni Teacher Orchestra
Phil Rudd (MM, 2009), Conductor

Alumni Teacher Spotlight

Ballade — Jeffery S. Bishop

Parkside Junior High School 8th Grade Orchestra
Peyton Miles (BME, 2023), Orchestra Director

Strings Around the World: Brazil

from Suíte Pequenina for Two Cellos — Bianca d'Avila do Prado
III. Choro
IV. Cantiga
V. Baião

Bianca d'Avila do Prado (MM, 2020), and Joy Rattan, cellos

ISU Mariachi Club

El Son de la Negra Mariachi — Traditional Folk
Tepic, Mexico
Arr. by José Hernández

ISU Student Bluegrass Ensemble

Come Along Jody — Tex Logan

Big Spike Hammer — Bobby Osborne and Pete Goble

Brody Macias (BME, spring 2027), violin
Liam Tipple (BME, spring 2027), banjo
William Hussey (BME, spring 2027), double bass

Bollywood Fusion

Tumse Milke Dil Ka Jo Haal (2004) from the movie *Main Hoon Na* — Altaf Sabri, Sonu Nigam, Sabri Brothers
Arr. Praneeth Madoori

So Sick x Kabira (2006) from the movie *Yeh Jawaani Hai Deewani* (2013) — Ne-Yo, Arijit Singh, Harshdeep Kaur
Arr. Praneeth Madoori

Praneeth Madoori (BA, 2017), Electric Violin

Judson & Colleen from the Judson Brown Band

Use Somebody — Kings of Leon

Separate Ways (Worlds Apart) — Journey

Colleen Kuraszek (BM, 2007, MM, 2009), vocals and violin
Judson Brown, guitar

Student Alumni Showcase

Concerto for Two Violins in D minor BWV 1043 — J.S. Bach
Vivace

Seraphina Tippet and Aria Kim, violins
Samuel Chen, conductor

Special Presentation

State Representative Sharon Chung

Current Student Showcase

A Spark of Hope* — Bianca d'Avila do Prado

Samuel Chen, conductor
Combined String Project Orchestras

An Ode to Joy Festival — Ludwig van Beethoven
Arr. Todd Parrish

Bloomington Normal Youth Symphony, Combined String Project Orchestras, Parkside Junior High School Orchestra, Cornerstone Christian Academy Junior High Orchestra, String Project Alumni, Teacher Alumni, and Friends of String Project
Samuel Chen, conductor

*World premiere performance made possible through a Mirza/Arts & Culture Grant from the Illinois Prairie Community Foundation.

Featured Performer Biographies

Conductor, educator, and violinist **Philip Rudd** (ISU MM Conducting '09) has served as Director of Orchestral Activities at Denison University since 2017, after completing doctoral studies in orchestral conducting at the University of Iowa. He loves to work with musicians of all levels, from elementary school to professional orchestras, with additional teaching and research interests on diverse topics, including Victorian-era women's orchestras, the role of empathy in musical performance, and the cultural impact of Bob Dylan. Dr. Rudd thinks about all of these things while running unreasonably long distances on trails, especially in the Denison Biological Reserve.

Peyton Miles grew up in Bloomington-Normal, Illinois, where his musical journey began as a 5th-grade cello student in Unit 5 Public Schools. He also participated in the Bloomington-Normal Youth Symphony, which helped shape his passion for music education. Peyton attended Illinois State University and worked with the ISU String Project from 2018 - 2023, continuing to teach in the ISU String Project summer camps from 2017 to the present. After spending a year substitute teaching throughout the area, he began his career as the Orchestra

Director at Parkside Junior High School in 2025, proudly serving the community where his musical journey began.

Brazilian cellist, pedagogue, and composer, **Bianca d'Avila do Prado** is cello faculty at Ithaca Suzuki Music Education. She holds a Master of Music degree in Cello Performance and String Pedagogy from Illinois State University and has completed Suzuki Teacher Training in all 10 Units plus supplemental courses. Bianca received a "Distinguished Young Teacher" award from the Suzuki Association of the Americas at the SAA/ASTA Conference in 2024 and the Music Institute of Chicago "Teacher of Note" Honoree in 2023. Her most recent publications include 25 Duetos Latinoamericanos for strings, A La Rorro Niño, Ciranda Cirandinha and Prenda Minha for string orchestra and Resonance: A Multicultural Cello Method.

Joy Rattan is a dedicated musician, performing as a cellist and frequently as a conductor. She is studying Music Performance at Illinois State University, under Dr. Cora Swenson Lee. Joy began playing cello in the Unit 5 Orchestras, joining String Project's Sinfonia in 2018 until 2020. She then joined the Bloomington-Normal Youth Symphony as Principal Cellist. Since 2024, Joy has been teaching at Hip Cat Music School and is passionate about instilling the musical, technical, and healthy aspects of music and cello playing. She looks forward to her life-long career in teaching cello to students of all ages and abilities.

ISU Mariachi is a Registered Student Organization at ISU, started in 2025 by Marie Cruz, Diego Gomez, and Ezra Tirado. The group rehearses weekly and performs across campus at events hosted by a variety of organizations such as ALAS, ISU Normal Humor, MSMA, and the Bloomington CPA. Its members include students in the School of Music, including String Project teacher Julissa Fuentes, and non-majors. The ISU Mariachi is a RSO dedicated to celebrate inclusion and diversity at Illinois State University through traditional Mexican folk music. Open to musicians and vocalists of all backgrounds, the club promotes inclusion for all through the art of Mexican culture.

Brody, Liam, and Will enjoy playing folk music together, from casually playing old time fiddle tunes on the quad to playing Bob Dylan covers in a band. Though not a performing band, they are a part of other

groups such as “Liam Tipple and the Sips.” All senior music education majors, they are passionate about the inclusion of alternative styles of music in music education.

Praneeth Madoori is a Chicago-based violinist, educator, and entrepreneur whose career spans more than two decades. As founder of Symphani Studios, he has built a thriving virtual studio, teaching violinists of all ages and levels while making high-quality instruction accessible worldwide. Beyond the studio, Praneeth serves as lead violinist for Kochuveettil Beats, blending classical technique with Bollywood, South Indian, hip-hop, pop, and fusion music. He has performed at more than 300 weddings and high-profile events, including Coachella 2025 and Netflix Tudum alongside Hanumankind. Whether teaching or performing, Praneeth brings versatility, energy, and artistry to every musical experience.

Colleen Kuraszek holds Bachelor and Master of Music degrees in viola performance from Illinois State University and first taught with String Project waaay back in 2002. Today she is a full time musician, performing across multiple genres and states. This year brought over 235 shows and landed her as finalist for Wisconsin’s Violinist of the Year. Colleen’s main project is the Judson Brown Band, a violin-driven classic rock/country band she shares with her husband, Judson. The band has several albums of original music available everywhere you stream. Live, JBB has opened for a laundry list of national acts and is known as a Summerfest, Harley-Davidson, Milwaukee Brewers, and Wisconsin State Fair band. Colleen and Judson live in Woodstock, IL with their four... cats.

Aria Kim is currently a senior at University High School. She began playing the violin at age 9 when she joined the String Project through ISU and started private lessons with Dr. Katherine Lewis at age 11. Aria has qualified for ILMEA District and All-State Honors orchestra as a violist and has earned several Division 1 ratings and "Best of Day" awards on violin and viola for IHSA Solo & Ensemble Contest. In spring of 2026, she placed 2nd in the Illinois Symphony Orchestra's Scholarship Competition and also performed the Forsyth Viola Concerto with the Bloomington-Normal Youth Symphony as the 2026 Concerto Competition winner.

Seraphina Tippet is a homeschooled high school senior who began learning the violin through Illinois State University String project at the age of 8. After completing String Project in 2023, Seraphina joined the Bloomington-Normal Youth Symphony, where she currently serves as Concertmaster. In the spring of 2026, she was awarded First Prize in the Illinois Symphony Orchestra Guild Scholarship Competition. Seraphina has a passion for making music with others, particularly with her siblings and through her church, where she plays the violin weekly. She also enjoys volunteering at the local nursing home, where she performs for the residents. Following graduation, Seraphina plans to attend Providence Baptist College in Elgin, Illinois, where she will pursue a degree in Church Music Education. She hopes to continue using her musical abilities to serve others and contribute to her church and community.

Dr. Samuel Chen serves as the Director of Orchestras and Instructional Assistant Professor at Illinois State University (ISU) where he directs and conducts the Symphony Orchestra and Philharmonia String Orchestra. He also serves as the Master Teacher for the ISU String Project Vivace and Sinfonia classes, and mentors undergraduate and graduate student teachers. Samuel holds degrees in orchestral conducting and piano performance and has performed internationally. He has also conducted opera productions of Mozart's *Così fan tutte* and Mascagni's *L'amico Fritz*. Samuel's doctoral recording project consists of commissions inspired by places of nature, incorporating extended techniques for small ensemble.

Illinois State University String Project

ISU String Project Faculty
Dr. Samuel Chen, Master Teacher
Dr. Katherine Lewis, Director and Master Teacher^
Dr. Cora Swenson Lee, Master Teacher

Graduate Assistants
Elizabeth Coffin^
Nicole Herrera^
Jayce Milburn^

Interns
Katelynn Lesinski
Kate Orozco
Celeste Price

Teaching Assistants
Julissa Fuentes
Andrew Guidry
William Hussey
Ryan Kempker
Abby Leatherman^
Elijah Luthardt^
Brody Macias
Gianna Nardella
William Noe^
Celeste Price
Dalia Volkart
Lisa Wanchartcharoen^
Averil Wyble
Julianna Yocheva

Dolce
Violin
Adrianna Buenrostro
Ditya Chaudhari
Edrick Ding
Addison Forney
Benson Grant
Riley Haas
Mila Haywood
Caroline Herr
Ellie Hughes
Sylvia Rose Julian
Grace Kim
Alexis Knuth
Zoe Lau
Vedanth Ranjith Menon
Everly Plevka
Emily Roethle
Josephine Rush
Aksel Taylor-Manomai
Jersie Thomas
Sloane Wallace
Isaiah Williams
Owen Witte
Ryan Zuniga

Viola
Aarik AJ
Dhimahi Chaudhari
Jesenia Herrarte
Bennett Iannucci
Charvi Konkati
Esther Laskai
Ishaan Moorthy
Nash Phelps
Evan Polanco
Samuel Powell
Santana Sandoval
Isabelle Smith
Ethan Vu

Cello
Sistine Boonsuk

Nithya Gandikota
Inara Held
Anayra Jayakrishnan
Logan Lau
Addison McHone
Luke Roberge
Audrey Wise

Double Bass
Ruby Morton

Allegro
Violin
Aadhya Arun
Travaye Clayton
Jayne Cox
Blain Forsythe-Daily
Charlotte Murphy
Ellie Schenk
Logan Sereno
Annabelle Taylor
Amruthavalli Goodalur Venkipuram
Brielle Amore Villafuerte

Viola
Sreevarsha Atyam
Addelyn Childs
Kavish Karthikeyan
Felix Maney-Magnuson
Emily Moews
Elise Tracy

Cello
Leo Carter
Hannah Green
Emalee Scearce

Double Bass
Tori Jones
Frederick Packard

Vivace
Violin
Juniper Anthony-Kenney
Evangeline Berglund
Delaney Clark
Cordelia Clark
Akshara Ghantasala
Gemma Henson
Ellie Kim
Emma Leahy
Nadya McGriff
Linden Miller
Madison Murphy
Celine Nkrumah-Boateng
Ruthvik Arun Raj
Milena Ramirez
Elijah Sanborn
Aaditha Simon
Mayrah Singh
Kensley Smith
Corrigan Whitman

Viola
Isaak Gordon
Aarna Inti
Ananda Taylor Manomai
Kenna McDougald
Akshaya Senthilkumar

Cello
Sara Ofelia Hernandez Aguilera
Dylan Blessent
Finn Morgan

Double Basses
Rafael A Ramos

Sinfonia

Violin
Gwendolyn Babbitt
Eileen Hyeram Chung
Raelynn Kessinger
Yumi Lee
Bomi Lee
Avery McGirr
George Schenk
Aibhilin Braionna Sujin

Viola
Elliott Franklin
Emily Simpson

Cello
Elayne Carlson
Caleb Chupp
Kian Dunsmore
Marty Henson
Braxton Iliff
Annabelle Lin
Allison Ramos
Abram Thompson

Bass
Simone Boerger
Gregory Lin
Emmet Moyer

String Project Student Alumni

Violin
Spencer Ehrich
Crystal Harmony Vazquez

Viola
Kay Cook
Jiovani Herrarte

Cello
Rex Rowley
Valentina Gonzalez

Bass
Theresa Burras
Santiago Ramirez

String Project Teacher Alumni

Violin
Carrie (Schrader) Anselmo (BME, 2012)
Maria Emmons (MM, Performance, 2023)
Aliana Kottabi (BME, 2022)
Jordy Blitz Novak (Music Therapy, 2011)
Praneeth Madoori (BA Music, 2017)
Katie Miller (Music Therapy, 2022)
Rose Ortega (BME, 2022)
Rhoda Roberts (BM performance, 2020)
Philip Rudd (MM Conducting, 2009)

Viola
Alex Anlas (BME, 2011)
Grace Eom (MM, collaborative piano and viola performance, 2021)
Shelby Fick (BME, 2024)
Daniel Haan (MM, Pedagogy/ Performance, 2025)
Colleen Kuraszek (BM, Performance, 2007, MM, Performance, 2009)
Sam Meade (MME, 2021)
Regina Vendetti (BME/Performance, 2018)
Rachael Tatar (BME, 2015)

Cello
Brandon Campos (BME/ Performance /Composition, 2026)
Alex Hibbard-Brown (BME, 2022)
Peyton Miles (BME, 2023)
Bianca d'Avila do Prado (MM Performance/Pedagogy, 2020)

Bass
Andrew Viveros (BME, 2022)
Anna (Von Ohlen) Benge (BME, 2012)
Grant Souder (BME, 2003)

ISU Faculty and Community Supporters
Sharon Chung, viola
Mrs. Sara Garrett, cello
Dr. Igor Kalnin, violin^
Dr. Adriana Ransom, cello

Parkside Junior High School 8th Grade Orchestra
Peyton Miles, (BME, 2023), Orchestra Director

Violin 1
Shivangi Chatterjee
Mert Ener
Grace Geelhart
Maddie Hemelau

Violin 2
Ayden Delagrande-Soliz
Salem Fish
Sheba Hampton
Raelynn Kessinger

Viola
David Armstrong
Calvin Compton
Caoilainn Farley
Paige White

Cello
Loreli Dominguez
Sean Dong
Adrian Jasso
Allison Ramos
Jayleen Williams

Bass
Isaac Baird
Blaise Bunge

Cornerstone Christian Academy Junior High Orchestra
Rhoda Roberts (BM, 2020), Orchestra Director

Violin
Isaiah Willis
Olivia Scheid
Aibhilin Sujin
Levi Exner
Ariel Washington
Anna Drake

Viola
Annabelle McDaniel
Saanvi Silarpuria

Bloomington Normal Youth Symphony

Violin I
Seraphina Tippet*^
Aria Kim*^
Julia Min*
Ella Bloomfield

Violin II
Eliya Kim*^
Ainsley Chen*
Leo Dougherty*
Lakkiah McDougald*
Isaiah Willis*

Viola
Celvin Junez
Charlotte Bainter*
Easton Boonsuk*

Cello
Nora Kirchner
Audrey Kirchner*
Audrey Lorelei Dominguez*
Kenley Brockman
Aidan Wiechmann*

Bass
Charan Bodavula*

Flute
Joanne Jo
Addison Waters

Oboe
Angela Rattan

Clarinet
Grayson Borders

Bassoon
Gabriel Pabst

Tenor Saxophone
Prakalya Krishnamurthi

Horn
Tyler Henrikson

Percussion
Thomas Wise
Breanna German, intern

ISU Brass/Percussion Students

Horn
Quinton Hess

Trumpet
Liam Tipple
Griffin Gund

Trombone
Alyssa Greer
Keaton Empey
Connor Franke

Timpani
Alex Harper

*Denotes String Project Graduate

^Denotes Bach Chamber Orchestra

Selected Alumni Impact Statements

"String Project gave me a space to grow my professional confidence in a way no clinical experience could ever come close to matching. My time as a TA showed me, without a doubt, that I had what it takes to be an impactful educator. I will forever be thankful for the confidence I gained and the advantage it gave me early in my career." -Eileen Wronkiewicz (BME, 2015)

"String Project was an invaluable part of shaping me into the teacher I am today. As an undergraduate student, I was given the rare opportunity to teach in a real-world setting. That meant allowing to make mistakes, reflect on them, and become better because of them. I learned practical teaching tools, how to communicate thoughtfully with students and parents, and how to recognize what was truly in a student's best interest." -Praneeth Madoori (BA Music, 2017)

"String Project is the reason I attended Illinois State, the reason I fell in love with teaching orchestra, and the reason I left my undergrad prepared and ready to go." -Alex Hibbard-Brown (BME, 2022)

"String Project gave me the opportunities to grow my confidence in leading a group through pods and small group sectionals. Even though I don't teach music, String Project helped me develop my therapeutic leading style that I use every day in my music therapy sessions." -Katie Miller (Music Therapy, 2022)

"String project has helped shape me into the teacher I am today. I would not be the same teacher today without it! This opportunity that ISU provides a unique experience not found elsewhere that prepares you for such a wonderful career." -Andrew Viveros (BME, 2022)

"After being a String Project GA, it's like I can do anything: Learn a new teaching method? Of course. Plan a concert? Easy. Develop a curriculum? Why not? I learned how to serve in so many roles and how to do each of them well. Now, as a cello studio teacher and classroom teacher, I know what it takes to support a thriving musical community from the bottom up." -Ender Loya (MM, 2025)

"I am indebted to my work with String Project. I felt so comfortable when I went out to student-teach and had practical experience. I learned a lot about child development, modifying instruction, working as a collaborative team, and preparing for a performance. Most importantly, String Project taught me the joy of working with younger students and how they are very capable of making music! Thank you for the amazing opportunities through String Project during my four years in undergrad :)" -Brian Hershey (BME 2024)

“When I first came to ISU I did not want to teach music. Being part of String Project showed me that teaching is something that I love. I grew tremendously as a person and teacher during my time spent in String Project.” -Stacey Turner (BME, 2011)

“When I became a Graduate Assistant with the String Project, I had already been teaching in the Philippines for many years. My experience with the String Project gave me a valuable opportunity to broaden my perspective as a teacher, learn different approaches to teaching, and be part of a community of educators and fellow Graduate Assistants who share the same passion for music and education.” -Chona Noble (MM String Pedagogy, 2025)

“I believe there is no better way to prepare aspiring string educators for student teaching and a successful career than through String Project, and I am endlessly grateful for the opportunities I had with both the Illinois State University and University of Georgia String Projects. My time with the ISU String Project equipped me with so many practical skills: providing effective instruction to students of all ages; collaborating with colleagues to create engaging lessons with the guidance and support of our master teacher; and communicating professionally with colleagues, superiors, and families. I started to truly find my confidence on podium and explore what became my eclectic, high energy teaching style. I also had so much fun and made deep connections with colleagues who are some of my dearest friends today. I feel like I have a String Project family all over the country!” -Patricia Cleaton (MM, 2013)

“The ISU String Project was the single most transformative experience of my undergraduate degree. It served as a safe, supportive teaching and learning space where I could take creative risks, experiment with new ideas, and discover my identity as an educator. Under the incredible mentorship of Dr. Lewis and Dr. Ransom, I observed world-class best practices and learned firsthand how to run a program and truly care for students while maintaining pedagogical excellence. Beyond classroom management, String Project taught me the critical art of balance: how to keep teaching fun, joyful, and sustainable, even when the demands of the profession feel overwhelming. The deep collaboration with my peers and mentors built my professional confidence and gave me true 'Day 1' readiness. Now more than a decade into my career as an orchestra director, I know for a fact that the teacher I am today, and the thriving, supportive environment I build for my own students, exists because of the foundation, community, and inspiration I received during my time in the ISU String Project.” Matt White (2015 BME)

Alumni Teachers by the Numbers (as far as we know!)

Total number of alumni teachers: 125
International student teachers: 19
Teachers currently teaching in public schools and private studios: 84
Golden Apple Excellence in Teaching & Leadership Award winners: 1
IL ASTA and IMEC Young Teacher Award winners: 3
Student alumni who have become ISU Music Majors: 4
Number of US states where alumni teachers are currently teaching: 21
Number of students around the world taught by String Project teachers: 1000's!

Special Thanks to:

Peggy Dehaven, School of Music Staff
Tim Schachtschneider, Stage Manager
Kaitlyn Tossie, Wonsook Kim College of Fine Arts Staff
Dr. Adriana Ransom, Director, School of Music
Dr. Scott Irelan, Dean, Wonsook Kim College of Fine Arts
Town of Normal Harmon Arts Grant
Illinois Prairie Community Foundation Mirza Arts and Culture Grant
The National String Project Consortium
The Music Shoppe
Share the Music

2026-2027 T-Shirt Design Winners

Anayra Jayakrishnanm, Dolce (back design)
Sreevarsha Atyam, Allegro (front design)
Aarna Inti, Vivace (program cover)

Support String Project:

About the ISU String Project…

The Illinois State University String Project began in 2001 with the support of the College of Fine Arts, the School of Music, and a major grant from the American String Teachers Association. ISU's String Project is one of many programs modeled after the University of South Carolina-Columbia String Project, founded in 1974. There are currently forty String Project programs across the United States; ISU's String Project is the only one in Illinois. String Project is dedicated to providing low-cost instruction on stringed instruments to children in the community while providing hands-on teacher training for the college assistants who work in the program. The ISU String Project was named the "2013 String Project of the Year" by the American String Teachers Association. Our students come from over thirty area grade and middle schools, representing seven school districts.

Upcoming Events…

25th Anniversary Alumni String Pedagogy Workshops
Saturday, November 21, 2026, 9:30 a.m. - Noon, Julian Hall

String Project Solo Recital (for students enrolled in String Project lessons)
Wednesday, December 9, 6:30 p.m. in Cook Hall Room 305

Combined Classes Winter Concert
Friday, December 11, 7:00 p.m., Center for Performing Arts

String Project Spring 2027 Classes
Sinfonia and new to String Project Auditions, January 20th
Returning Classes resume the week of January 25