

*Strings Con Brio &
Manasota Chess Center Present...*

Sound Moves

*Chess Concert & Grandmaster Simul
October 29, 2023*

Concert | 1:30 PM

Kenneth Bowermeister, Conductor

Simul | 3:00 PM

Nikola Mitkov, Grandmaster

**The Potter Building
2896 Ringling Boulevard
Sarasota, FL 34237**



WELCOME

Dear Friends,

On behalf of Strings Con Brio and the Board of Directors for Manasota Chess Center, I welcome you to *Sound Moves*, a unique concert experience and event opening our 2023-2024 season.

I would like to thank the Community Foundation of Sarasota County and The Patterson Foundation for presenting the 2022 Giving Challenge, through which the funds for this collaboration were raised.

Special thanks to Manasota Chess Center founding member and Strings Con Brio board member Daniel Hersey for his support, center staff Nicholas Lewis, Bob Bernstein, and Jason Boskey, and each of the donors who contributed to our 2022 Giving Challenge fundraiser.

We hope you enjoy this afternoon of music and chess!

Musically yours,

Monica Sirocchi

Monica Sirocchi, MNM ,BS
Founder and Executive Director, Strings Con Brio



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Kenneth Bowermesiter
Conductor, Strings Con Brio

Monica Sirocchi
Executive Director, Strings Con Brio

Strings Con Brio Musicians

Board of Directors, Strings Con Brio

Strings Con Brio & Manasota Chess Center Volunteers

John Jones, *JonesInPhoto*
Photographer, Strings Con Brio

Samuel Gold, *Sam Gold Video*
Videographer, Strings Con Brio

Strings Con Brio & Manasota Chess Center Donors

Nicholas Lewis
Executive Director, Manasota Chess Center

Grandmaster Nikola Mitkov

Rory Martin
President, Sarasota County Agricultural Fair Association

Saint Andrew United Church of Christ

Rick Knowlton, Guest Pianist

Carolyn Suda, Guest Cellist

Tirza Kosche-Pineda
Florida violins

PROGRAM

Bold Venture.....Daniels

The Clock Symphony.....Haydn, Arr. Isaac
Movement II

The Queen's Gambit.....Rivera, Arr. Longfield
Beth's Story
Jolene!
Main Title

Piano Solo by Guest Artist, Rick Knowlton

Alice In Wonderland.....Elfman, Arr. Kazik
Alice's Theme
Proposal
Bandersnatched
Alice Returns

Waltz No. 2.....Shostakovich, Arr. Lavender

Anthem from "Chess".....Andersson, Rice, and Ulvaeus, Arr. O'Loughlin

The Best of ABBA.....Arr. Ricketts
Overture/Prologue
Mamma Mia
I Have A Dream
Dancing Queen

STRINGS CON BRIO

Strings Con Brio is a community string orchestra under the artistic direction of Kenneth Bowermeister and management of Monica Sirocchi. The organization engages over 60 musicians from student through the professional level.

The mission of Strings Con Brio is to provide a venue for musicians of varying ages and abilities to share their gifts and love of music with the community, thereby enriching the lives of both performers and audience members alike.

Strings Con Brio was incorporated in 2015, and received 501(c)(3) designation in 2016. The organization began with providing collaborative performances for events in the community, and now performs as a conducted ensemble.



Kenneth Bowermeister Auditorium, Pine View School, Spring 2023

PERSONNEL

Violin I

*Arlene Locola
**Nancy Eldridge
Armida Lawter
Maria Ginés
Nicholas Lewis
Georgene Zechman
Linda Brucksieker
Diana Labrador
George Tapia
Piilani Edwards
Donna Smith
Alexzandra Mattia
Sumiko Chipman
Marge Knoblock
Mario Santana
Andrii Padkovskyi

Violin II

*Jaime Del Castillo
**Michaeline Spencer
Carol Sandborn
Carol Koehler
Shane Sharkey
Ralph Liebstein
Maria Fullam
Henry Abraham
Jack Liang
Lynne Richman

Alexandra Merton
Rebecca May
Patricia Pearce
Monica Sirocchi

Viola

*Karen Mamel
**Joann Magner
Susan Oliveri
Arnie Jochums
Claire Stone

Cello

*Nicholas Ungarelli
**+Carolyn Suda
Ann Krause
Andi Zdrava
Gail Gold
Roberta Simon
Leon Friedberg
Paula Rothman
Carmen Troyer
Norma Wanegar
Fredda Buxton
Donald Buxton

Bass

*Amanda Bauman
Martin Fullam

Piano

Bonnie Wolfgram

Percussion

*Scott Blum
Dorothy Blum

**Denotes Section Leader*

***Denotes Associate Section Leader*

+Denotes Guest

MANASOTA CHESS CENTER

Our mission is to provide a destination for chess enthusiasts to **learn, compete,** and **connect,** thereby creating a growing and connected community of players.



Our unique dedicated location at the Crossings at Siesta Key mall, coupled with the scope of our chess offerings, allows us to serve as a community hub for Sarasota, Manatee, Charlotte, and DeSoto counties. The Manasota Chess Center has more than 100 members, and continues to grow. We are the only active US Chess Federation affiliate in the Sarasota metro area and one of only seventeen US Chess Federation Gold-level affiliates nationwide.

Hours of Operation

Friday: 5 PM - 7:30 PM

Member-only Chess Ladder with food and drinks provided for a fun social and competition evening.

Saturday: 11 AM - 5 PM

Chess private and group lessons.

Sunday: 11 AM - 5 PM

We are only open on tournament Sundays. We offer Quad format (play four people closest in rating to you), Swiss format (open tournament), and Blitz format (fast time control) on a specified schedule. Specific dates for these tournaments are announced via email, Facebook, USCF Tournament Life Announcement, ChessRegister.com, and our webpage www.manasotachess.org.

GRANDMASTER MITKOV

Nikola Mitkov was born in Skopje, Macedonia, and resided with his wife and two children in Mount Prospect, IL from 2005 to 2022. Currently, Mitkov and his family live in Venice, Florida. Together with his wife Marija Mitkova, he is the founder and owner of GM Chess Academy, where he provided chess instruction to schools and community programs in the Chicago area. Mitkov also teaches private lessons, runs summer chess camps, and remains an active chess player. In addition to GM Chess Academy (2014-present), his teaching experiences include Chess Instructor for Chess Education Partners (2005-2014) and US Chess Coach at the World Youth in Al Ain and Pan-American in Ecuador. He is fluent in Macedonian, English, Spanish, Serbian, and Russian.

Main Accomplishments

- International Master Title in 1991
- International Grandmaster Title in 1993
- Two-Time National Champion of Macedonia (2001, 2002)
- Team member of Macedonia at the Chess Olympiad and European Championships (1994-present)
- Peak FIDE rating: 2587
- Peak USCF rating: 2670
- Winner of numerous international chess tournaments throughout the world, in more than 70 countries.
- North American Open Co-Champion
- Chicago Open Champion
- Mexican Open Champion

MUSIC AND CHESS

Here's a short list of famous people: Bob Dylan, Frank Sinatra, Ray Charles, Sergei Prokofiev, Ludwig van Beethoven, Wolfgang Mozart. What do these very different personalities have in common? While "music" comes to mind, these people of song and melody were also particularly fond of chess.

It is said that Mozart learned chess at six years of age and played throughout his life, often for hours on end. He once reported, in his classically ironic fashion, "I am passionately fond of chess, and I can give you no better proof of this than by the fact that I have lost 14 games out of 16." Prokofiev was perhaps a more astute player, at one time defeating the great world champion José Raúl Capablanca, as one of many competitors in a simultaneous chess ("simul") exhibition. And Ray Charles was often seen – and often photographed – pondering his blind-player's chessboard – a special peg chess set in which the pieces and the board have tactile features, allowing the player to actually feel the chess position.

Many famous chess players had a musical life as well: The great chess Grandmaster Mark Taimanov was a violinist from an early age; Vasily Smyslov only committed to chess after unsuccessfully auditioning as a baritone singer for the Bolshoi Theater – chess was his backup plan (he became world champion). And the great English Grandmaster Nigel Short reported in 2016 that he was performing with his rock band. The name of the band? (Apologies here to chess players and Beatles fans...) The Knight b4.

We need look no further than our own local chess and music community. Nick Lewis, known to many of us as an accomplished musician, is the founder of the Manasota Chess Center. Indeed, the overlap between chess players and musicians cannot be missed!

But the greatest example of the convergence of brilliance over the chessboard and through the concert hall belongs to a truly historic figure: François-André Danican Philidor. Beginning at the age of six, as a singer in the royal choir of Louis XV, Philidor grew to become a leader of 18th-century French composition, with production of

more than twenty operas. Nice work if you can get it – but there's more! Studying chess under the Parisian masters, Philidor rose to surpass them all, and to write a book, *Analyse du jeu des Échecs* (Chess Analysis), that broke ground on the entire school of modern chess theory. While the modern *game* of chess had existed already for two hundred and fifty years, Philidor's publication is lauded as the birth of modern chess *theory*. Essentially, the natural science of winning chess games. The principles of play that he first clarified in the mid-18th century are those still learned by chess students of all kinds, throughout the world.

So, what is it about chess and music? The same sort of mental processes? Does one lead the player naturally to the other? There has been much thought and study devoted to this question, and a few points are worth noticing.

There is an essential overlap between the structure of chess logic and the logic of musical composition. Both schools of study rely on certain themes, examine variations, and rely on tempo and the harmony between the players. A record of a chess game is a score and an author who invents salient chess positions is a composer. There is an unmistakable sequential ordering, where one configuration leads to another, always with its own sensibility and often delving into extraordinary, delicious complications.

This field of possibilities, presented to the chess player or the musician, becomes an entirely engaging ocean of opportunities. Every move made on the chessboard and every note uttered in an ensemble has the dual purpose of reinstating the motif up to that moment, and steering the entire game plan into new territory, with new questions and new demands – seeking a means to fulfill the feeling and the logic of the game – or the song. It is no wonder that deep, analytical minds and fiercely passionate personalities are drawn to both chess and music.

Beyond the individuals who enjoy music and chess, and beyond the personalities that flourish in them, both music and chess have a deep cultural connection. Chess, arising in central Asia some fifteen hundred years ago, has spread to every continent, being transformed, celebrated, adapted, and re-invented by every civilization it touched. The "international" game that we play today is only one branch of the great tree of chess games that have thrived and evolved, century after century.

Similarly, music – whose original roots can barely be traced – has developed through the centuries with conventional forms of melody, rhythm and harmony unique to every civilization and culture of the world. While similar styles of pop music may become current between modern countries, and while the chess rules we know so well are now played internationally, the indigenous songs and variations of chess still thrive in the many corners of the world. The student of humanity need only begin searching, for a whole universe of harmony, logic and endless play to be revealed.

Rick Knowlton worked many years as a professional pianist in the posh clubs of Southern California. For the past twenty years, Rick has been sharing chess with students, chess collectors, and YouTube fans online at AncientChess.com. He is coauthor, with Jean-Louis Cazaux (Toulouse, France), of the latest and most comprehensive volume of chess history and evolution, A World of Chess: Its Development and Variations through Centuries and Civilization (McFarland, 2017). Rick enjoys competing at Manasota Chess Center whenever he has a chance, and is always enthusiastic about sharing the many chess sets in his own strange and culturally diverse collection.



*Rick Knowlton,
Chess Historian & Pianist*

MEET OUR MAESTRO



Kenneth Bowermeister is the former Music Director and Conductor of the Venice Symphony and is the former conductor of the Sarasota Pops Orchestra. He also served as conductor of the State College of Florida Chamber Orchestra and the Sarasota Orchestra's Youth Symphony and Symphonic Strings Orchestras. Mr. Bowermeister has appeared several times as a guest conductor with the Sarasota Orchestra and with the International Festival Orchestra of Oxford,

England. For 30 years, Mr. Bowermeister was director of orchestras at Pine View School for the Gifted in Sarasota County. He developed the award-winning string program that included 350 students in five orchestras. The recipient of many honors, Mr. Bowermeister was selected Teacher of the Year at Pine View School on three occasions, was twice voted Sarasota County Music Educator of the Year and in 1998, was chosen Sarasota County Middle School Teacher of the Year. In 1999, he received the Sarasota Arts Council award for Outstanding Educational Leadership in the Arts. Mr. Bowermeister performed as a violinist and a violist with the Sarasota Orchestra, where he served as Assistant Concertmaster for 21 years. He is a pupil of the internationally renowned Hungarian violinist Kato Havas and is a well-known teacher of Ms. Havas' exciting and revolutionary new approach to string playing. A graduate of New College, the Honors College of the State of Florida, Mr. Bowermeister has been a member of the Florida Music Education Association (FMEA), Florida Orchestra Association (FOA), and the National Association for Music Education (NAfME).

MEET OUR FOUNDER



Monica Sirocchi is the Founder and Executive Director of Strings Con Brio and a violinist in the ensemble. She holds a Masters of Nonprofit Management, Bachelors of Science in Health Science with a concentration in Health Services Administration, and completed over 40 credit hours in music, specifically in voice, violin, piano, and music theory. Her professional experiences have included roles in healthcare, education, business, and work with nonprofit

organizations. Monica has interests in music education, and is the owner of Impara SRQ, where she provides group music instruction to charter and private schools. She is a member of the Music Teachers National Association (MTNA), the American String Teachers Association (ASTA), the National Association for Music Education (NAfME), and previously the Performing Arts Medicine Association (PAMA). Prior to incorporating Strings Con Brio, Monica coordinated collaborative performances of students and alumni of State College of Florida and conducted a string ensemble under the guidance of Maestro Kenneth Bowermeister, through a local chapter of MTNA. She resides in Sarasota, works freelance, and has served on the board of directors for various nonprofit organizations since 2010.

MEET THE ORCHESTRA

Dr. Henry David Abraham

Henry is a psychiatrist, writer, and activist. Before studying the violin as an adult, he graduated from Muhlenberg College in Pennsylvania, Hopkins for his medical degree, and Harvard for psychiatry. He served as a consultant to the National Academy of Sciences and as advisor in the development of the Diagnostic Manual of the American Psychiatric Association. Henry was also a writer of TV sitcoms in Boston which were awarded an IRIS, Peabody, and an Emmy. In 1985 he was a co-recipient of the Nobel Peace Prize for his work co-founding the International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War. He is a past president of the Toronto City Opera. He is honored to be playing with Strings con Brio for the first time.

Amanda Bauman, Bassist

Amanda Bauman has been an orchestra teacher at Laurel Nokomis School since 2004. Her principal instrument is clarinet. Double Bass was the first orchestral string instrument she fell in love with under the guidance of Dr. Michael Allen at Florida State University, where she earned her Bachelors of Music Education. Amanda spends time with the Mark Wood community where many orchestral educators work to bring string teaching into the 21st Century. Aside from recreational composing, beading, and gardening, she enjoys spending time with James, her husband of 12 years, and two rescue dogs.

Dorothy Blum, Percussionist

Dorothy is involved with arts, music, and cultural events throughout the state. A member of the Association of Florida Teaching Artists and recognized watercolorist, she provides workshops and classes in percussion and watercolor. Dorothy is Co-Director of ROOTS Summer Arts and Cultural Program of Manatee County, and percussionist with the Manatee Community and Northport Concert Bands. She has served on multiple arts, music, and health boards throughout the state, steering committees including Ringling and the Sarasota Orchestra, and advocated on state and national levels.

Scott Blum, Percussionist

Scott performs and teaches throughout Florida and locally with Sarasota Contemporary Dance, First Brass, Lakewood Ranch Wind Ensemble, Anna Maria Island Concert Chorus and Orchestra, and Manatee Community and North Port Concert Bands. He is an active member of the Association of Florida Teaching Artists and Arts for Healing. Scott is Director of the ROOTS Summer Music and Cultural program of Manatee County, and received numerous awards and grants for community initiatives. His performances include theatre, band, orchestra, opera, radio, television, and studio recording.

Linda Brucksieker, Violinist

Linda Brucksieker has played violin since third grade. She played for over 20 years in the Livonia Symphony in Detroit, Michigan, as well as churches, weddings, and Nutcracker ballets. Since moving to Florida in 2006, she has played with Boynton Beach Symphony, Sunrise Pops, Broward Symphony, and now that she is in Sarasota, the Pops Orchestra of Bradenton and Sarasota, and as a mentor in Church of the Palms Orchestra. She also is a registered nurse and a grandmother of four.

Dr. Donald (Don) Buxton, Cellist

Don Buxton is a professor emeritus from Auburn University. He began music at age 50 on his wife's old cello after her teacher said she had gotten good enough and needed a better instrument. There is a lot of truth in the adage about "old dogs and new tricks". Don played cello with the Auburn Community Orchestra before moving to Bradenton in 2010. Currently, he plays with the North Port Symphony, the Bradenton Symphony Orchestra, and Strings Con Brio.

Fredda Buxton, Cellist

Fredda Buxton took piano lessons as a child. She played clarinet in high school and college, but always wanted to play the cello. As an adult she played bass clarinet in the Auburn University Band and started cello at age 48. Subsequently, she has played cello with the Auburn Community Orchestra, LaGrange Georgia Symphony, and Montgomery Alabama Symphony. Currently, she plays with the North Port Symphony, the Bradenton Symphony Orchestra, and Strings Con Brio.

Sumiko Chipman, Violinist

Sumiko has been a lover of the arts since a young child. She started playing violin at the age of seven. Sumiko participated in the Sarasota Orchestra Youth Philharmonic program and played in her high school orchestra at Riverview High School. As an adult she continues to play for fun!

Jaime Del Castillo, Violinist

Jaime grew up in Sarasota, where his love of playing music began with the piano at eight years old. At age 12, Jaime fell in love with the violin as a student in the Pine View School orchestra program under the direction of Mr. Kenneth Bowermeister, to whom he is eternally grateful. Jaime now works locally as an Attorney with Legal Aid of Manasota, providing free legal services to low income individuals in the community. Jaime is delighted to be making music once again with Maestro Bowermeister and Strings Con Brio.

Piilani Edwards, Violinist

Piilani's father's love for classical music and opera inspired her to play the violin. Originally from Hawaii, she has lived in Lakewood Ranch since 2006. She and her husband spend their time between Florida and Sonoma County, California. She also plays with the North Port Symphony and Illyrian Symphony Orchestra. After retiring from airline and sales management, she enjoys traveling, swimming, golf, playing mahjong, and genealogy.

Nancy Eldridge, Violinist

Nancy Eldridge recently moved from Costa Mesa, CA, to Osprey, Florida. From 1996-2021, she was a first violinist in the Pacific Symphony (Orange County, CA). In addition to playing in the Pacific Symphony, she coached aspiring young violinists in the Pacific Symphony Youth Ensembles and maintained a private Suzuki violin studio. Nancy joined Strings Con Brio in the Fall of 2022.

Leon Friedberg, Cellist

Leon is from Ohio and holds both Bachelor and Master Degrees in cello performance. He has taught music in public school and privately. He has performed in several local and regional orchestras in Ohio and Illinois. Friedberg has been a practicing attorney for over forty years. Leon very much appreciates

not only the opportunities that Strings Con Brio offers for performing the unique string orchestra repertoire, but also the warm and inviting environment that SCB provides for its musicians and their families.

Maria Fullam, Violinist

At age eight, Maria was taught violin at school by Mary Ann Wirth (violinist). Maria played in school orchestras throughout high school and college. She graduated from SUNY Stony Brook with a Bachelors of Science in Computer Science/Math Education. For 28 years, Maria's violin was hardly played. She was too busy raising her family of four children. In 2010, the Mid-Hudson Community Orchestra helped to unearth her violin where she played until 2020. Maria and her husband, Marty (bassist) moved to Lakewood Ranch in 2021. They were introduced to Strings Con Brio in 2022 because of Maria's longtime friendship with Mary Ann. Maria & Marty thoroughly enjoy playing with this orchestra. Maria encourages parents to give their children music lessons. So many benefits, which will last a lifetime.

Martin (Marty) Fullam, Bassist

Marty started playing guitar at age nine and enjoys playing folk, soft rock, and Irish pub tunes on acoustic guitar, and jazz on electric guitar. About 20 years ago, he picked up the electric bass to play in a church worship band and a classic rock band. Just 10 years ago, with an urge to play jazz bass, he bought a string bass but wound up playing in the Mid-Hudson Community Orchestra with his wife Maria (violinist) instead! Upon retiring from a career at International Business Machines Corporation (IBM) and moving to Florida in 2021, he played a season with the Pinellas Park Civic Orchestra, and then joined Strings Con Brio at the beginning of 2022. Marty is currently a student of the amazing David Cobb of Sarasota.

Maria Ginés, Violinist

Maria Ginés is a violinist and strings teacher in the Lakewood Ranch area. She has over 30 years of experience playing the violin and toured for several years playing with professional orchestras all over Florida and the USA. Miss Ginés has Bachelor's Degrees in Music Education and Early Childhood Education and a Master's Degree in Education. She toured with Motor City Irish Dance both playing the violin and dancing from 2015-2020. Miss Ginés enjoys reading, dancing, running, and listening to music. She is currently the director at Risen Savior Academy in LWR.

Gail Gold, Cellist

Gail is originally from Chicago, Illinois. She and her husband, Sam, moved to Sarasota in 1978. She is an Insurance Agent. Her family includes two sons, one daughter in law, and a granddaughter and grandson. Gail came back to playing the cello after a long lapse and enjoys being a member of Strings Con Brio as well as The Pops Orchestra of Bradenton and Sarasota.

Arnold (Arnie) Jochums, Violist

Arnold is a retired Assistant Attorney General from Arkansas who has always enjoyed music. With music his main hobby, he played guitar in numerous small combos. He started on cornet in grade school and played in high school. After law school, he studied flute with a professor at SIU-C. In Pine Bluff, he played violin in a community orchestra. He took saxophone lessons and played with the North Little Rock Community Band. He was a founding member of the Meshugga Klezmer Band. After moving to Sarasota in 2014, he took lessons on violin and viola. Most recently, he played with the Sarasota Adult String Orchestra.

Margaret (Marge) Knoblock, Violinist

Having roots in the Midwest, Marge worked her way through Wheaton College earning a Bachelor of Science degree, followed by teaching home economics in the public schools. After marriage and starting a family, her husband was transferred to Florida. At age 65, Marge inherited a violin and started taking lessons. She is presently active in real estate, singing and bell choirs, orchestra, painting, and pickleball.

Carol Koehler, Violinist

Carol Koehler is a retired registered nurse of 42 years and in nine states. She moved to Sarasota, FL from Cleveland, Ohio to be near family. Carol has played second violin with Community orchestras for 20 years. She is thrilled to be part of Strings Con Brio.

Ann Krause, Cellist

Ann Krause recently unpacked her cello after several years and is happy to be playing again. She has played cello with the Minot (ND) Symphony Orchestra off and on since she was in high school. Ms. Krause recently retired. Her hobbies include boating, travel and animals. She is a member of the Sarasota Bay Rotary

Club. You may see her volunteering as an usher at The Van Wezel. North Dakota is her summer home and Siesta Key is her primary residence. She lives with her Miniature Dachshund, Pippi.

Diana Labrador, Violinist

Diana Elizabeth Labrador is 19 years old and is currently a Senior at the University of South Florida, Sarasota-Manatee. She is a part of the Judy Genshaft Honors College with a Major in the Language-Speech and Hearing Sciences and a Minor in Children's Behavioral Healthcare. She has been playing the violin since she was five years old, and most recently, was the Concertmaster for the Venice Symphony Youth Orchestra and a member of the Sarasota Youth Philharmonic. She has been singing as part of a children's choir from the age of six years and is now a cantor at her church. She has performed as a vocalist, singing the national anthem, in several musical theater productions, in gigs with a Latino band, and as a volunteer with her musical talents.

Armida Lawter, Violinist

Armida started violin at a music school at the age of 6 and later, after auditioning, was accepted at the professional school of music and arts in Tirana, Albania, continuing for violin as a primary instrument and piano as secondary. She has played violin in youth festivals as first chair, and has also performed under the baton of the renowned Albanian conductor, Zhani Ciko. She continued her studies for speech therapy in Italy, but in the States, she has been primarily raising and homeschooling her children. She has played in weddings, memorials, galas and other events. She sings and arranges violin parts for church music. She also writes songs, poetry, and enjoys dancing. She is a member of Strings Con Brio and the Illyrian Symphony Orchestra.

Nicholas (Nick) Lewis, Violinist

Nicholas Lewis joined Strings Con Brio in 2018 as principal violist then held the position of Concertmaster. He graduated from Florida State University with a Bachelors of Music Education. While at university, he was the Assistant Conductor of Florida State Opera for two years, the Principal Conductor of Opera Workshop for one season, and guest conductor of the Big Bend Community Orchestra. In his role as an educator, he assisted the Tallahassee Youth Orchestras and adjudicated young artists competitions. He has attended numerous music

festivals and workshops as a violinist and conductor, including Brevard, and performed with various local ensembles. In service to the community, Nicholas has served on the boards of the Universal Design Coalition and Strings Con Brio, and operates Manasota Chess Center, where he is Executive Director.

Jack Liang, Violinist

Jack is ten years old, a 5th grade student at Pine View school. He has studied playing violin since he was five years old. Music has been part of his life and gives him a lot of joy. He is happy to be part of the Strings Con Brio Orchestra!

Ralph Liebstein, Violinist

While in California, Ralph went to a performance of the Los Angeles philharmonic. His cousin was a member of the violin section. As a child, he studied piano. It was at the concert that he thought it would be a good idea to take violin lessons. So, at age 41, he started. As it turns out, it was one of the best decisions he ever made. In his business life, he was an insurance broker. He insured small businesses along with automobile and homeowners insurance. Ralph feels that it is a wonderful experience being part of an orchestra. In addition to making many friends in the orchestra, he has also become good buddies with Mozart, Beethoven, and Tchaikovsky.

Arlene Locola, Violinist

Arlene Locola, violinist, violist, teacher, conductor, and performer, inherited her grandfather's violin at the age of 10. Music and children have been her lifelong passions. She earned her Bachelors and Masters in Music Education, and spent her life teaching strings in the New York, California, and Fort Lee public schools in New Jersey, where she spent 25 years and was known as the "Mom of the Pops Orchestra". Upon retirement, she started a Bergen County youth orchestra called "The Fine Tuners" that provided many opportunities to perform in the community. Most recently, she and her husband fell in love with Sarasota while on vacation, sold their house in New Jersey, and moved to Florida.

Joann Wagner, Violist

Originally from Rochester (Brighton), New York, Joann has been playing violin since the fourth grade, adding viola in high school. College and career as an Optical Engineer interrupted until she started to play again about 20 years ago.

She is currently a student of Mrs. Mary Cobb and Mr. Kenneth Bowermeister. She plays either violin or viola, and is very happy to be playing in a group again.

Becky May, Violinist

Becky grew up in Greenfield, MA and graduated from Hood College in Frederick, MD. She began singing in church choir at age five and has enjoyed singing in choirs for 50+ years including with Voices From the Heart in Portsmouth, NH. With Voices, she enjoyed traveling to Ireland, Croatia, Cuba and South Africa. When she's not working for BayCare Home Care or practicing, Becky volunteers for Longboat Key Turtle Patrol and the Sarasota Orchestra. In 1998 she added "learn the violin" to her New Year's resolutions. She fulfilled that goal by starting violin lessons in 2019 with Meghan Jones from the Sarasota Orchestra. She enjoys the joys and challenges of being an adult learner and is excited to be playing with Strings Con Brio.

Karen Mamel, Violist

Karen began playing viola in the eighth grade in the Sarasota public school system. It became a passion through high school along with youth orchestra. Her career was as a registered nurse. Karen has been a member of the Tampa Bay Symphony since 2001. In 2022 Karen relocated from Tampa to Sarasota where she discovered Strings Con Brio and that she and Maestro Bowermeister played in the same youth orchestra! Other interests include learning harp and glass art. Karen has multiple installments of glass art around Florida. In Tampa, her work is displayed in the front windows of Violin Shop Tampa.

Alexzandra Mattia, Violinist

Alexzandra is a 3rd year medical student at Florida State University College of Medicine with plans to pursue plastic surgery residency. She is especially interested in craniofacial and reconstructive plastic surgery. Alexzandra is currently completing her clerkship rotations at Sarasota Memorial Hospital. Originally from Providence, Rhode Island, Alexzandra and her parents moved to Naples, Florida, in 2010. She has played the violin for 11 years and plans to continue playing for as long as she can. Other interests include playing the piano, weightlifting, painting, swimming at the beach and wheel throwing. She hopes to bridge her love for the arts with her medical practice someday. Alexzandra is thrilled to be part of Strings Con Brio.

Alexandra Merton, Violinist

Alex graduated from Colby College (Maine) with a B.A. in Music History, and has a Masters in the Management of Human Services from Brandeis University. She played the piano for many years including high school and college. After a career as the Business Manager of a non-profit human services agency outside of Boston and then moving to Venice, she took up the violin. She has played with Strings Con Brio and the Venice Community Orchestra.

Dr. Susan Oliveri, Violist

Susan Oliveri grew up in Sarasota and started playing viola with Mr. Bowermeister in 6th grade at Pine View School. She has played with the Sarasota Youth Orchestra, Pine View Orchestra and String Quartet, and was a Young Artist Concerto Competition finalist - playing the Hindemith Viola Concerto. Susan received her Bachelors in Nutrition and Doctorate of Pharmacy from the University of Florida, completed a residency at the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania, and is a cardiac hospital pharmacist at Sarasota Memorial Hospital. Susan and her husband Anthony relocated to the Gulf Coast in 2022 and are usually busy shuttling kids to music lessons, youth orchestra, and soccer practice. She is ecstatic to be playing in an orchestra with Mr. "B" again!

Andrii Padkovskyi, Violinist

Andrii is 13 years old, and was born in Lviv, Ukraine. He has been learning to play the violin since the age of 6. In Ukraine, he studied at a specialized school for gifted children. In connection with the war in Ukraine, Andrii and his mother moved to Florida, where he now lives and is an eighth grade student at Laurel Nokomis School. Andrii has taken part in many competitions for young musicians in Ukraine and Europe and has repeatedly won. From an early age, he enjoyed taking part in various concerts and playing in orchestras. Currently, he performs with the Sarasota Youth Philharmonic Orchestra, String Con Brio, and the Illyrian Symphony Orchestra. He recently received second prize in a music scholarship competition presented by the Venice Musical Society.

Patricia (Trish) Pearce, Violinist

A Tampa Bay native, Trish has not strayed far from this corner of Florida. She works in Corporate Finance for Sarasota Memorial Hospital. Trish holds degrees in Accounting and English Literature from the university of South Florida. She took

piano lessons as a child, and currently studies violin, guitar, and piano. Trish performs as a violinist with Strings Con Brio, the Venice Community Orchestra, the Illyrian Symphony Orchestra, and Allegro Music Academy.

Lynne Richman, Violinist

Lynne Richman is originally from Pennsylvania and moved to Florida in 2018. Upon moving, she retired from the medical profession working family practice for 15 years as an LPN, and prior to that, on a Medical/Surg floor at her local hospital. She has always had a love for classical music. She studied classical guitar for 8 years and is currently studying classical violin under the instruction of Cynthia Wiley of the Sarasota Violin Academy.

Paula Rothman, Cellist

Paula is a retired clarinetist and teacher from Philadelphia. She has an undergraduate degree from the Eastman School of Music and a graduate degree in performance from Temple University. She was a freelance clarinetist and an orchestral and chamber music specialist. She had a private studio and taught at Settlement Music School. After taking cello class at Eastman, she vowed one day to seriously study cello. At age 68 she kept that promise and discovered she had been playing the wrong instrument for 58 years. She is devoting her retirement to learning to make music on the cello. Her most interesting orchestral job was playing the Shofar (ram's horn) with the New York Philharmonic.

Carol Sandborn, Violinist

Carol Sandborn is a retired teacher from Sarasota County Schools. During her time teaching elementary school, she played the violin in both the Port Charlotte and the Venice Symphony orchestras. After a long break, Carol is happy to resume playing the violin with Strings Con Brio.

Mario Santana, Violinist

Mario Santana started his music education with piano and violin at the age of seven in his hometown of Holguin, Cuba. In 2012, he was concertmaster of the Sarasota Youth Symphony, and in 2013, toured Europe as a member of Jazz Juvenocracy, playing on the top student stages of every major European jazz festival such as the famous North Sea and Montreux Jazz Festivals. He currently resides in Sarasota, Florida, and has freelanced as a violinist since.

Shane Sharkey, Violinist

Shane is a junior at Venice high school and has been playing the violin for five years. He enjoys making, teaching, and composing music and hopes to share this passion through teaching and performing in the future. He has shared this passion for music through different orchestral groups such as the Venice Symphony Youth orchestra, Venice High School Chamber Orchestra, Sarasota Youth Orchestra, and Strings Con Brio. He has also helped co-direct a summer music class and has participated in different activities with The Venice Symphony and Chamber Orchestra of Sarasota.

Roberta K. Simon, Cellist

Roberta K. Simon started playing the cello in fourth grade through senior year in White Plains, New York, She played in school orchestras, Westchester County Junior Orchestra, and in multiple All County Music Festivals. After a 25 year hiatus, while volunteering for the Baltimore Symphony, Roberta met Paula Childress, a cellist in the Baltimore Symphony with whom she began to study again. Then in Scarsdale, New York, she had the opportunity to study with Yosif Feigelson, a Concert Cellist who studied at the Moscow Conservatory with Rostropovich and Natalia Gutman. There she played in the Manhattanville College Community Orchestra. After a seven year hiatus, she joined Strings Con Brio in September 2022. She plays a 1749 Italian Cello attributed to Giovanni Pasta.

Donna Smith, Violinist

Donna Smith is an accomplished pianist and violinist, holding multidisciplinary degrees from Indiana University of Pennsylvania, The University of Michigan, and Troy State University. Donna serves Trinity Presbyterian Church, Our Lady of Lourdes, and Epiphany Cathedral in Venice, FL. Donna teaches private violin, viola, and piano lessons and accompanies professional and aspiring musicians. Donna plays for The Sarasota Players, Venice Theatre, and Dingbat Theatre Project. Donna is the former principal 2nd violinist and section violinist for both The Venice Symphony and The Punta Gorda (formerly Charlotte) Symphony. She also played with Strauss Orchestra of America in the annual Salute to Vienna New Year's Concert Series. She performed in Bulgaria, Hungary, Slovakia, Czech Republic, and Italy. Donna is the founder and former director of The Venice Symphony Youth Orchestra.

Michaeline Spencer, Violinist

Michaeline began playing the violin in second grade. She was not sure if it was going to be something she stuck with for life or just something fun to do at the moment. The more she learned, the more she was hooked. From middle school through college, she attributes so many great memories with her violin. Her violin is more than a hobby. It is a passion that will never go away. She has been a part of so many orchestras back in her home state of Indiana and is now branching out into Florida. Her most favorite experience was getting to go to China with her University Orchestra.

Claire (Harson) Stone, Violist

Claire grew up in Sarasota attending Pine View School, where she started playing strings with Mr. Bowermeister in middle school, and continued on through high school until graduation in 1991. Returning to Sarasota after studying engineering and history at Northwestern University, Claire was delighted to return to the viola with Mr. B. in the Sarasota Adult String Orchestra. Between her busy career as a Solutions Architect building and implementing software with Insurity, Inc. and keeping up with her daughter, Claire has not made time for making music in recent years. She is thrilled to be returning to Pine View to play with Maestro Bowermeister and Strings Con Brio.

Carolyn Suda, Cellist

Carolyn Suda is an Emeritus professor from Monmouth College in Illinois. Carolyn serves as principal cellist of Knox-Galesburg Symphony and recently guest principal of the Champaign-Urbana Symphony. While living in Atlanta, she was principal cellist of the Atlanta Opera, Atlanta Pops, and Atlanta Choral Society and guest principal of the touring Boston Ballet and American Ballet Theater. As a member of the Emory Piano Trio and KGS Piano Trio, she has performed at the Spoleto Festival in Charleston, New England's Monadnock Festival, University of Barcelona, and many colleges and universities in the East and Midwest. Carolyn has been a dedicated teacher, and as a cello clinician, participated in numerous national workshops. Carolyn now lives in her childhood home of Sarasota. She and Ken Bowermeister have been friends since high school.

George Tapia, Violinist

Born and raised in Sarasota, George owns a locally-based digital marketing agency. His passion for music started out with the piano in elementary school and was furthered by picking up the violin in sixth grade. He has played with the Venice Symphony, Pine View School Chamber Orchestra and String Quartet, FSU Philharmonia, as well as the Sarasota Orchestra's youth program, joining the group in their Carnegie Hall debut in 2008. Since graduating from Florida State University, moving back to be closer to family and start his business, George is thrilled to bring music to the community once again through the Venice Community Orchestra and Strings Con Brio.

Carmen Troyer, Cellist

Carmen was born and raised in Sarasota, Florida. She currently works a full-time job in accounting at a food distribution company and has been playing the cello for almost two years. Although she grew up playing piano, Carmen always thought the cello had such a terrific sound and knew that if she ever learned a new instrument, cello would be the one. She is honored to be a part of the talented group that is Strings Con Brio.

Nicholas (Nick) Ungarelli, Cellist

Nick is a Sarasota native, and has been playing the cello since he was in middle school. He first began playing at age 11, and quickly discovered what would become his life-long hobby and passion. While he spends his working hours assisting employees who get injured at work, he always makes sure to leave a portion of the day for practicing, and when he finds time, for reading too. When he was younger, he was a member of the Sarasota Youth Orchestra, and was also involved in their yearly summer music camp.

Norma Wanegar, Cellist

Norma began to play music at the age of five with piano lessons. At 11, she began studying violin, which she made her primary instrument until she was in her 30s. During a hiatus from active playing, she raised her daughters and worked as a Computer Specialist for the International Business Machines Corporation (IBM) and insurance companies. During her late 50s, after completing a Master's degree, she satisfied her lifelong passion for playing the cello, playing with chamber, community, and professional groups.

Bonnie Wolfgram, Pianist

Bonnie Wolfgram was born into a musical family in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and was active in music from an early age. She earned a Bachelor's Degree in Piano Performance and Music Therapy from Alverno College - Milwaukee and a Master's degree in Piano Performance from Syracuse University. Bonnie served as Director of Music for churches in Wisconsin, New York, Georgia and Florida. She taught privately and in the piano preparatory programs at Albany Junior College and Alverno College. She served as staff accompanist at State College of Florida and Southeastern University (Lakeland). She is a partner in "Duets of Distinction", Director/Accompanist for the Village Voices of Bradenton, pianist for the Braden Trio, and busy accompanist for local soloists and chamber groups.

Andi Zdrava, Cellist

Zdrava began his piano studies at the Onufri School of Music in Albania, and at age 12, moved to Athens, Greece, where he earned his Piano Diploma at the Glyfada Music Conservatory. Later, he completed his Bachelor's degree in Music Composition from the University of Indianapolis, and Masters degrees in Orchestral Conducting and Piano Performance from the University of South Florida, where he served as Graduate Assistant for piano and orchestral conducting. Cello is his secondary instrument. As a conductor and pianist, Zdrava has participated in concerts, festivals, competitions and master classes in Europe and the United States, and he is the conductor of the Illyrian Symphony Orchestra.

Georgene Zechman, Violinist

Georgene Zechman graduated from Penn State University as a Reading Specialist, and has taught in Pennsylvania, Virginia, and Indiana. She lived in Chicago for 38 years, and has two children and seven grandchildren. Georgene has lived fulltime in Sarasota for the last thirteen years, but was a snowbird for the past 25 years. She began studying the violin at the age of twelve, and played with several different orchestras including the Penn State Orchestra and Fairfax Symphony Orchestra (Virginia). Currently, Georgene plays with the Church of the Palms Orchestra and Strings Con Brio.

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About Us

Impara SRQ offers group music instruction to preschools, charter, and private schools. Founder, Monica Sirocchi, is Italian and a Sarasota native. In Italian, “impara” means “learn”, and Monica is thrilled to inspire a love of learning through her music offerings.



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Save the Date

Manasota Chess Center Monthly Super Swiss

The Manasota Chess Center will hold a U.S. Chess Federation (USCF) rated 4-round Swiss tournament for up to 36 players. All rounds are Game in 25 minutes, with a 5-second delay.

November 19, 2023 | 12:00 PM – 5:00 PM

Location

3501 South Tamiami Trail, Suite 96
Sarasota, FL 34239

Strings Con Brio Holiday Concert

Enjoy the sights and sounds of the season at a special outdoor concert presented by Strings Con Brio. The orchestra will perform a selection of seasonal favorites in the open air under the holiday lights on The Green at UTC. The performance will be immediately followed by a light show. FREE admission!

December 17, 2023 | 6:00 PM

Location

The Green at UTC
125 N Cattlemen Road
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