

ChamberFest Italy 2022



A program of MountainTop Strings of California
Music Director, Sharon Rizzo

June 25 - July 15, 2022

About Us



The MountainTop Strings of California, created in 2011, is based in Big Bear Lake and is under the direction of cellist and music educator Sharon Rizzo. MTSC is a small ensemble of string musicians that was created for the purpose of educating youth to concertize locally and tour abroad. These young musicians range from 13-30 years of age.

Our musicians have the joy of rehearsing and performing in an unbelievably artistic and inspiring small mountain community in Southern California, located 100 miles northeast of Los Angeles and surrounded by the San Bernardino National Forest, altitude around 7,000 feet. With over 300 days of sunshine each year, summer temperatures average 80 degrees, and winter brings about 100 inches of snowfall.

Since the first concert tour to Italy and Austria in 2013, MTSC has grown in popularity both on and off the mountain, having performed many concerts and community events, contributing to the overall cultural vision and enhancement of the mountain community.

The MountainTop Strings have performed in concerts and workshops in prestigious venues in Italy and Austria, including Accademia Musicale Chigiana in Siena, Cremona Summer Series, Istituto Boccherini Musicale in Lucca, Chiesa di Sant'Agnese in Agone in Rome, and the Schönbrunn Palace in Vienna. In 2017, MTSC was accepted to perform in the National Youth Concert in the world famous Carnegie Hall in New York City.

The Summer 2022 ChamberFest Italy concert tour has 10 scheduled concerts, which include performing in the Pantheon in Rome as well as at Chiesa di Sant'Agnese on the famous Piazza Navona, the Chiesa di San Filippo Neri in Florence, and Vivaldi's own church, Chiesa della Pietà, in Venice. Other venues are in quaint villages in the Tuscan and Chianti regions.

The MountainTop Strings are most known for their unique performances of a wide range of eclectic musical styles. Performances may range from 4 to 24 musicians, and repertoire consists of the Baroque music of Vivaldi, Corelli and Bach, as well as nationalistic music of Respighi, Bartok, and Copland. Also, they may frequently be seen playing rock, jazz, and pop genres to create delightful programs to share with many types of audiences.

MTSC musicians are held to very high standards of work ethic and professionalism. In addition to long rehearsal hours in the evenings and on weekends, different combinations of musicians can be seen across the mountain performing at over 50 concerts and community events per year. The musicians raise much of their funds for tours and extensive music education expenses through the utilization of their skills by performing in the community.

Musicians have developed lifelong friendships and a unique bond with each other through the successes and challenges of music, world travel and hard work. In addition to music, MTSC musicians juggle heavy academic commitments and are also extremely high achievers in many other areas.

The MountainTop Strings of California is a non-profit organization under the Lighthouse Project of Big Bear, California. Please visit mountaintopstrings.org to learn more about MTSC.



Our Itinerary

Saturday, June 25: Our adventure begins at the 4 Points Sheraton LAX in Los Angeles for an overnight stay before our early morning flight.

Sunday, June 26: Arrive at LAX at 7:00am for our Delta group overnight flight to Venice, with a stop over in Atlanta.

Monday, June 27: Arrive Venice (Venezia), Marco Polo Airport, where we will meet our motorcoach driver and the lovely **Debora Rimondi**, our native Italian guide who will be with us throughout our 18 days in Italy. Stop for an Italian Lunch at Acetaia Leonardi Farm, famous for its excellent "Balsamic Vinegar of Modena". Continue to our Country Farm Residence Hotel, "Fattoria Degli Usignoli" in Regello for 5 nights.

Tuesday June 28: Rehearsals and relaxation at Hotel Fattoria Degli Usignoli.

Wednesday June 29: CONCERT #1 Morning rehearsals and afternoon departure to Villa La Ripa in Arezzo. After the concert at 18:00, we will have wine tasting and a local food experience.

Thursday June 30: CONCERT #2 10:00 am departure to Florence with our concert at Chiesa di San Filippo Neri. Concert at 15:00. Free time after to explore Florence.

Friday, July 1: CONCERT # 3 Rehearsals and evening concert in San Giovanni Valdarno, Piazza Masaccio.

Saturday, July 2: We travel from Fattoria Degli Usignoli to the iconic hill town of San Gimignano for 4 nights. On the way, we will enjoy some time in Greve, in the Chianti Region, and enjoy a lunch together in the main square. We will be residing in the main piazza of town at "Hotel La Cisterna", only a 7 minute walk from our rehearsal space at Sant'Agostino Monestery.

Sunday, July 3: Rehearsals and time to enjoy San Gimignano.

Monday, July 4: Rehearsals and time to enjoy San Gimignano.

Tuesday, July 5 CONCERT # 4 Rehearsals and Concert at Convento Sant'Agostino followed by a dinner at Ristorante Fuoriluogo

Wednesday, July 6: CONCERT #5 Departure from San Gimignano, to Viterbo. We will stay in the City Center at Hotel Mini Palace for 2 nights, and perform a concert in Vignanello, Piazza della Repubblica.

Thursday, July 7: CONCERT #6 Afternoon departure to the medieval fortress Fortezza di Narni, concert at 19.00 followed by dinner at the Fortress.

Friday, July 8: CONCERT # 7 Departure from Viterbo to Rome where we will stay for 3 nights at Hotel Genio, a 5 minute walk from Piazza Navona. Rehearsal & late Afternoon Concert at Chiesa di San Lorenzo in Lucina.

Saturday July 9: CONCERT # 8 Rehearsal and Afternoon Concert at Chiesa di Sant'Agnese in Agone, on the famous Piazza Navona. Authentic Roman cooking class in the evening.

Sunday, July 10: CONCERT #9 Rehearsal and sacred concert at The Pantheon, followed by dinner in Trastevere at Meo Patacca.

Monday, July 11: For our Grand Finale and final destination, we will take a high speed train from Rome to Venice. We will spend three nights at "All'Angelo Art Hotel", 50 meters from St. Mark's Square (Piazza San Marco.)

Tuesday, July 12: FINAL CONCERT #10! We will play our final concert here in Venice at Vivaldi's Own Church, Chiesa della Pietà. In the evening, attend a concert of an authentic Venetian Baroque Orchestra, "Interpreti Veneziani" as they will perform all of Vivaldi's Four Seasons at Chiesa di San Vidal.

Wednesday, July 13: Enjoy a day in Venice, explore the narrow streets and bridges as our musical adventure comes to an end.

Thursday, July 14: Depart Marco Polo Airport for the return flight back to the United States with 1 stopover in New York, we will arrive at LAX at 12:17am (July 15).



Our Music

Concertos and Solos with String Orchestra:

Bach *Concerto for Two Violins in D Minor*
(Soloists: Tyki Cantu-Wang, Grace Chung, Ian Kaminski,
Joshua Rodriguez-Irons, Vincent Steger)

Faure *Sicilienne* (Soloist: Addy Epstein)

Hindemith *Trauermusik* (Soloist Sophia Huang)

Telemann *Concerto for Two Violas in G Major*
(Soloists: Sophia Huang and Hollie Mayhugh)

Vivaldi *Cello Concerto C Minor*
(Soloist: Anthony Schnell)

Vivaldi *Concerto Grosso D Minor*
(Soloists: Joshua Rodriguez-Irons, Vincent Steger, Anthony
Schnell)

Vivaldi *Concerto for Two Cellos in G Minor*
(Soloists: Sharon Rizzo and Anthony Schnell)

Vivaldi *Violin Concerto in A Minor*
(Soloists: Tyki Cantu-Wang, Grace Chung, and Hollie
Mayhugh)

Vivaldi *Winter from "The Four Seasons"*
(Soloist: Ian Kaminski)

Chamber Music:

Boccherini *Quartet in D Major*
(Tyki Cantu-Wang, Grace Chung, Hollie Mayhugh, Addy
Epstein)

Boccherini *Quintet in C Major*
(Ian Kaminski, Tyki Cantu-Wang, Sophia Huang, Anthony
Schnell, Sharon Rizzo)

Corelli *Trio Sonata in A Minor*
(Vincent Steger, Hollie Mayhugh, Addy Epstein)

Dvorak *String Quartet in F Major, "American"*
(Joshua Rodriguez-Irons, Vincent Steger, Hollie Mayhugh,
Anthony Schnell)

Kodaly *Intermezzo for String Trio* (Ian Kaminski, Sophia
Huang, Anthony Schnell)

Mozart *Quartet in C Major*
(Tyki Cantu-Wang, Grace Chung, Hollie Mayhugh, Addy
Epstein)

Sacred Works:

Corelli "Christmas Concerto"

Handel *Overture from "Messiah"*

Lauridsen *O Magnum Mysterium*

Traditional Hymns:

Be Thou My Vision

But the Greatest of These

It is Well

(Soloists: Joshua Rodriguez-Irons and Barbara King)

String Orchestra Features:

Bartok *Rumanian Folk Dances* (Soloist: Ian Kaminski)

Copland *Hoedown*

Respighi *Ancient Aires & Dances No. 3*

Jazz & Pop:

All Blues **Miles Davis**

Happy Together **The Turtles**

It's Only a Paper Moon **Arlen**

Libertango **Piazzolla**

Starlight **Muse**

Stolen Moments **Nelson**

Take 5 **Desmond**

Viva la Vida **Coldplay**

Italian Folk:

Funiculi Funicula **Denza**

O Sole Mio **DiCapua**

Vocal Music With Strings:

(Soloist: Tori Waner)

At Last **Warren/Gordon**

Ave Maria **Bach/Gounod**

The Crucifixion **Barber**

Feeling Good **Newly/Bricusse**

Fly Me to the Moon **Howard**

O Mio Babbino Caro **Puccini**

Pie Jesu **Lloyd Webber**

Somewhere Over the Rainbow **Arlen**

Una donna a quindici anni **Mozart**



Our Concerts

29 JUNE 2022 - h 18:00 VILLA LA RIPA, Località Antria, 38,
52100 Arezzo (AR)

30 JUNE 2022 - h 15:00 PIAZZA DI SAN FILIPPO NERI CHIESA,
Piazza di San Firenze, 5, 50122 Firenze (FI)

*This performance was made possible by the generosity of
Bob Angilella of Big Bear Lake, CA*

01 JULY 2022 - h 21:00 SAN GIOVANNI VALDARNO, Piazza
Masaccio

05 JULY 2022 - h 15:30 CONVENTO SANT'AGOSTINO,
Piazza Sant'Agostino 10 San Gimignano CAP 53037 (SI)

06 JULY 2022 - h 21:00 VIGNANELLO, Piazza della Repubblica



07 JULY 2022 - h 19:00 FORTEZZA DI NARNI, Via di Feronia,
05035 Narni (TR)

**08 JULY 2022 - h 16:30 PIAZZA DI SAN LORENZO IN LUCINA
CHIESA**,
Piazza di S. Lorenzo in Lucina, 6, 00186 Roma (RM)

09 JULY 2022 - h 16:30 SANT'AGNESE IN AGONE CHIESA, Via di
Santa Maria dell'Anima, 30/A, 00186 Roma (RM)
This concert was made possible by the generosity of Erin



Lanza of Big Bear, CA

10 JULY 2022 - h 17:00 PANTHEON,
Piazza della Rotonda, 00186 Roma (RM)
*This performance was made possible by the
generosity of The Warren Family Foundation of
Big Bear Lake, CA.*

12 JULY 2022 - h 11:30 CHIESA DELLA Pietà,
Riva Degli Schiavoni, VENICE
*This concert was made possible by the generosity
of Arrowhead Arts Association, Lake Arrowhead,
CA*



Our Founders



Sharon Rizzo

Co-Founder, Music Director and Cellist

Director Sharon Rizzo is an accomplished and professional cellist, who holds a Bachelor of Music from the University of Connecticut, a Master of Music from the University of California, Irvine, and an Artist Certificate from Southern Methodist University in Dallas, Texas. In addition, Sharon holds a California State Teaching Credential in Music from the University of Redlands. Sharon has performed in many professional symphony orchestras and can be found performing regularly with the Redlands Symphony Orchestra. Her affiliation with these professional ensembles has allowed her to not only practice her craft at an extremely high level, but to set an example of excellence for her students, set a high artistic standard, and share musical experiences with them. Ms. Rizzo's specialty is chamber music, which is featured on all of the MountainTop Strings concerts, which she directs.

Sharon is currently the director for several very large mountain-area strings programs including the Bear Valley Unified School District, the Lighthouse Youth Orchestras, and the Arrowhead Arts Association, reaching over 200 students per week ages 7 to 18.

Sharon was fortunate to have the opportunity when she was younger to travel and perform in many places both in the United States and abroad. Some of these experiences include the Aspen Music Festival in Colorado (her inspiration for creating a string program in a mountain community), the Oregon Coast Music Festival, and the Rome Festival Orchestra in Italy, both as a student, and later a professional. Sharon has also performed with touring groups to Hong Kong, Bangkok, Singapore, and Canada.

In 2011, Sharon founded the MountainTop Strings of California, which consists of high school strings students from all over the San Bernardino Mountains and beyond. This elite ensemble was created specifically for the purpose of traveling and performing abroad. The MountainTop Strings of California took its inaugural performance tour to Europe in June of 2013 with performances in Italy and Austria. A Carnegie Hall invitation and performance was a highlight in 2017. The fourth international tour was a 2-week concert tour in Italy in 2019.

Sharon is a native of Norwalk, Connecticut, who began her strings study at age 7 in an experimental public school strings program, which has led to her lifelong passion of string playing and dedication to her students.

Ms. Rizzo currently resides in Big Bear, California with her husband Jay and her daughter Sophia

Barbara King

Co-Founder, Community Liaison, and Pianist

Ms. King is a classically trained pianist holding a BA in Music from CSULB and graduate courses from Teachers' College in Columbia University in New York City. For 35 years, Barbara taught group piano and comprehensive musicianship in her music studio in Manhattan Beach, CA. She served on the Board of Music Teachers Association of California (MTAC) South Bay Branch, was a consultant for the International Piano Teaching Foundation (IPTF), and worked with the Manhattan Beach School District as a music specialist and arts consultant.

For the past 18 years, utilizing her musical talent, she has enjoyed being a piano accompanist for many young vocalists and instrumentalists on and off the mountain.

In 2010, Barbara and her cellist friend, Sharon Rizzo, co-founded the MountainTop Strings of California to create new and exciting artistic opportunities for dedicated young string musicians from the ages of 13-25. As a result, in the past 12 years, the MountainTop Strings has performed many unique concerts, including four stellar tours in Italy and Austria, and an unforgettable concert performance in Carnegie Hall in New York City. Ms. King spends much of her efforts as Community Liaison for the program, organizing concerts and fundraising for the Orchestra, as well as supplying pianistic support when needed. She is proud to have seen many audiences brought to their feet in rousing appreciation as the MountainTop Strings young musicians share their musical gifts with the world.



Our Musicians



Tyki Cantu-Wang

Tyki Cantu-Wang is a violinist from Big Bear City, California. She has been playing under the direction of Sharon Rizzo and in the Lighthouse Youth Orchestra of Big Bear since 2014. She attends Big Bear High School, and in the fall she will be starting her sophomore year. Aside from playing violin, she likes to play the piano, listen to music, and spend time with her dog, Potato.

Grace Chung

Grace Chung is a violinist from Big Bear Lake, California. In 2016 she started playing under the direction of Sharon Rizzo with the Lighthouse Youth Orchestra. She has played in the All County Honors Orchestra twice and was the concert master for the elementary and middle school division. She also went to ArrowBear Music Camp. She is enrolled at Big Bear Middle School, but this fall she will be starting her freshman year at Big Bear High School. Aside from playing the violin, she likes to listen to music, read books, and ride bicycles.



Addy Epstein

Addy Epstein began learning the cello in 2015 and since then has performed in honors orchestras, MountainTop Strings, attended the Redlands cello camp, and recently taught cello lessons to beginning musicians. With learning the cello, Addy has also been taught many important life lessons such as valuing the significance of commitment and hard work. The decision to pick up the cello in 5th grade has now brought her the opportunity to play in Italy which will be an experience that she will never forget.



Our Musicians

Sophia Huang

At the age of twelve, Sophia Huang started playing the violin after lying to their middle school teacher that they knew how to play the violin. From this rash decision, they asked their father to be their private teacher to cover up the lie. Three weeks into learning the violin, Sophia knew that the pursuit of music would bring them immense fulfillment and growth. Through their high school years, they studied under Robert Hanford, the concertmaster of the Chicago Lyric Opera. Their high school summers were occupied by chamber music camps such as Green Lake Festival of Music and Madeline Island. During their senior year in high school, they won the opportunity to play the Saint Saens Violin Concerto No. 3 with the Niles North High School Orchestra. They knew that their true path was to follow music, so they found their way from Chicago to Pasadena. Along the way, Sophia has played in operas, musicals, chamber ensembles, orchestras, and solo recitals. During fall of 2021, they discovered their love for the viola after taking required viola lessons for their Bachelor's of Music in Performance. Currently, Sophia is studying for their Masters Degree in Music Performance under Samuel Fischer for violin and Kira Blumberg for Viola. They aspire to compete in concerto competitions while teaching courses and lessons at community colleges where they believe they can spark pivotal change within students of various backgrounds and histories



Ian Kaminsky

Violinist Ian Kaminsky, known for his vibrant playing and masterful technique, is an in-demand musician throughout Southern California. Mr. Kaminsky possesses a Master of Music and Artist's Diploma from the University of Redlands where he was a student of Samuel Fischer and concertmaster of the University Orchestra. Former instructors include recording artists Jeanne Skrocki and Jerry Pence, and Sebastian Gürtler of the Philharmonix. Mr. Kaminsky has studied with top chamber music performers in Vienna, Austria which instilled a lifelong love of chamber music as a whole.

Mr. Kaminsky comes from a long lineage of Jascha Heifetz pupils culminating in attending the Jascha Heifetz Symposium studying under the direction of Heifetz's last assistant, Sherry Kloss, where he was able to cultivate his own unique sound. During his free time Mr. Kaminsky enjoys working with youth orchestras and coaching chamber ensembles. Mr. Kaminsky maintains a large private studio in Redlands and the surrounding mountain communities.



Our Musicians



Hollie Mayhugh

Hollie has been a musician learning and performing since 2014. Starting with violin and moving on to learn as many instruments as she could, she has had many wonderful experiences. Hollie has gone on tour with MTSC, performed in Honors Orchestras, and even learned to teach and conduct both band and stringed instruments. Throughout her musical career, Hollie has received many rewards for performance but the thing she finds most rewarding is the joy her music has brought to many audiences.

Joshua Rodriguez-Irons

Joshua Rodriguez-Irons has played the violin since the young age of ten years old. This will be his third European Tour with MountainTop Strings. Joshua received his Bachelor of Music degree in Violin Performance from California State University San Bernardino where he studied under Dr. Lucy Lewis. In 2022 he received his Master of Music in Violin Performance from the Bob Cole Conservatory of Music at California State University of Long Beach, studying under Andrea Byers. Joshua has enjoyed a life full of adventure and passion. He has been fortunate enough to have traveled and played throughout Europe, Korea, and the United States. Joshua has participated in multiple ensembles during his time in the CSUSB Music Department. These groups have consisted of Chamber Orchestra, where he has served as the Concertmaster for several quarters, Chamber Strings, Collaborative Piano, and Chamber Singers. Joshua's dream is to play in a Professional Philharmonic Orchestra.



Anthony Schnell

Anthony graduated from the University of Redlands in the Spring of 2021 with a Bachelor of Music in Cello Performance. While attending the University of Redlands, he studied with Kyle Champion. He attended the Brevard Music Center Summer Institute and Festival in 2018 and 2019, studying under Alistair MacRae. His initial cello studies were under the tutelage of Lynn Angebrannt. Anthony has a passion for teaching cello and spreading the love of music. Currently, he teaches students of all levels in his private studio, and is the Strings Coach at both Granada Hills Charter High School and Robert Frost Middle School.

Our Musicians

Vincent Steger

Vincent is currently a junior in college studying at California State University Long Beach. He is pursuing a degree in violin performance at the university's Bob Cole Conservatory of Music under the tutelage of Andrea Byers. In high school, Vincent has gone on concert tours with MountainTop Strings on three separate occasions, making this current tour his fourth. When Vincent is not practicing violin, he enjoys bicycling, going to the gym and playing chess.



Tori Waner

Tori Waner is an award-winning singer and international performer. She was born and raised in Big Bear Lake, where she made her stage debut as Woodstock in *You're a Good Man Charlie Brown* at the age of 6. Throughout her early career she sang, danced, and acted her way into lead roles, a professional quartet group, and on to win regional vocal competitions. After graduating with a degree in Theatre from California Polytechnic State University, SLO, Tori joined the international performing arts and educational group, The Young Americans. For two consecutive years, Tori performed and taught in 12 countries, and across the United States. Grateful to MTS, Tori is thrilled to get back on the road and pursue her passion for music alongside such a talented group of musicians. When not performing, you can find Tori exploring sunny San Diego and spending time with her beloved family. She thanks you for supporting the arts and sponsoring such an essential element of the human connection.



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MOUNTAINTOP STRINGS STAFF

Music Director & Program Manager, Sharon Rizzo
The Lighthouse Project, MTSC 501c3:
Tim Brigham, President
Beth Wheat, Executive Director
Lisa Patterson, CPA

Lance Eldred, Attorney & Consultant
Barbara King, MTSC Co-Founder, Community Liaison & Pianist
Bob Perry, Videographer & Photographer
Jared Storz & Melody Hung, Music Arrangers
Tori Waner, Publicity

Rehersal Venues

Community Church Big Bear, Big Bear Lake, CA
Lake Arrowhead Community Presbyterian Church, Lake Arrowhead, CA
Bear Valley Unified School District, Big Bear, CA
First Congregational Church, Redlands, CA



Our Team

Our Excellent Team Members:

Yu Ying Chen
Andi Epstein
Elizabeth Meyer
Nancy Meyer
Bob Perry
Xiaoying Wang

MountainTop Strings is incredibly grateful for the generous gift of time and talent of these wonderful adult travelers who help smooth out all the wrinkles to ensure a fabulous Tour for all. We certainly couldn't do it without them!

ChamberFest Italy Tour Organizers:

Anna Bernabei, Stop In Italy
Roxana Mititelu
Tour Guide Debora Rimondi

In appreciation for all your knowledge, dedication, and tenacity in creating the most exciting and fulfilling tour ever!

Bob Perry & Beth Meyer

Beth and Bob have been retired and residing in Big Bear for over ten years. Since then, Bob has been actively involved in assisting with numerous productions and performances for the Middle School, High School, Community Theater, as well as the MountainTop Strings. He hopes to capture all the magical moments from the ChamberFest Italy 2022 Tour in both still images and video. We wish all the musicians much success with their future dreams.

Nancy Meyer

As an artist manager, Nancy Meyer has coordinated all aspects of her clients' careers including; film appearances, recording, publishing, publicity and touring. Out of these activities, her current responsibilities have grown to encompass Rights Clearance and Music Licensing for various documentary film productions. With an extensive history representing classic American artists and their related intellectual property, Meyer has developed a passion and knowledge for world-class music and its international creative impact.





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Music Director, Sharon Rizzo



www.mountaintopstrings.org