

# ***WCS Bio Profiles***

## ***Brandenburg Concertos (January 1)***

**BENJAMIN ACRISH (trumpet)** has been performing on trumpet for over 30 years. He attended the Crane School of Music and holds a Masters of Fine Art from the Purchase Conservatory of Music where he studied with jazz greats Ray Vega, Jim Rotondi and Jon Faddis. Since moving to Westchester in 2005 he has established himself as a top call musician, playing a diverse range of styles including, classical, jazz, and rock. He is a regular member of several award winning local ensembles, including the Westchester Symphonic Wind and the Benson-Scott Big Band. He has most recently founded a NOLA inspired brass band - The Bear Mountain Brass. Mr. Acrish is a dedicated music teacher and currently works in the Hendrick Hudson School District where he is the High School Band Director and guitar instructor. His students and music department have been the recipients of numerous awards, including NAMM's "Best Communities for Music Education" for the last 4 years. Benjamin Acrish lives in Croton-on-Hudson with his wife, Karen, and their two girls Abigail and Aliya.

**KATE ASHBY (violin)** is co-Artistic Director of Westchester Chamber Soloists and as a co-founder of the ensemble has played a leading role in producing our annual chamber music and orchestral programs since 2018. In October 2022, Kate joined the staff of the new David Rockefeller Creative Arts Center at The Pocantico Center. She previously served as Artistic Director and Music Program Director of RiverArts and was a co-Producer of the RiverArts Music Tour. From 2018-2020, Kate was an Associate at Primo Artists in New York, coordinating engagements for international classical soloists and conductors. Kate is a member of the Yonkers Philharmonic Orchestra and has performed widely with chamber vocal ensembles in the New York area, including Monteverdi's *Vespers* at Concordia and Bach's *St. John Passion* at Lincoln Center. Kate moved to New York from London in 1995 to pursue a career in modern dance and performed with Pilobolus in Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte*, directed by John Eliot Gardiner, as well as in performances with Robert Battle, Parsons Dance Company, Merce Cunningham Repertory Group and others. Highlights include performances at the Amsterdam Concertgebouw, Queen Elizabeth Hall, Carnegie Hall and Lincoln Center. A native of Liverpool, England, Kate holds a BA Honors Degree from University of Kent at Canterbury.

**THOMAS BASTONE (bass)** is a musician and music educator originally from White Plains, NY. He is currently the orchestra director at Harrison High School. Prior to his appointment in Harrison, he taught instrumental and general music in the Ossining and Spackenkill UFSDs, as well as with the Philadelphia String Project. An active freelancer in the Tri-State

area, he is principal bass of the Taconic Opera Orchestra and the Yonkers Philharmonic Orchestra, and has also performed with the Woodstock and the Northern Dutchess Symphonies. He has also been heard playing in the pit orchestras for various musicals at the White Plains Performing Arts Center in White Plains, and Westchester Broadway Theater in Elmsford. Mr. Bastone has been fortunate to perform overseas, with the AIMS Festival Orchestra in Graz, Austria, and the Siena Music Festival Symphony and Opera Orchestras in Tuscany. Additionally, Mr. Bastone is an active member of several professional organizations, including NAFME, NYSSMA, ASTA and WCSMA. He was invited to present at the ASTA National Conferences in 2012 (Atlanta, GA) and 2013 (Providence, RI) regarding his work with the Philadelphia String Project. Mr. Bastone received a Bachelor of Music in Music Education at Temple University's Boyer College of Music and Dance in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, where he studied double bass with Robert Kesselman of the Philadelphia Orchestra. He earned a Masters Degree in Music Education at the University of the Arts in Philadelphia.

**LARISSA BLITZ (violin)** was born in St. Petersburg, Russia and received her degree from the St. Petersburg's Conservatory, where she also worked at the St. Petersburg Opera House and maintained a private teaching studio. She received her Masters degree from the Manhattan School of Music, studying with Rafael Bronstein and Ariana Bronne. Since then, Ms. Blitz has had an extensive performing and teaching career playing in orchestras such as the Brooklyn Philharmonic, the Springfield, Stamford and Savannah Symphonies, the Berkshire Opera, and the Manchester Music Festival and Tchaikovsky Chamber Orchestras, among others. She worked on Broadway and as concertmaster in a touring production of "Fiddler on the Roof". Her recent solo and chamber music performances include Beethoven's violin sonatas, trios by Rachmaninoff and Quartets by Faure, including appearances at the annual RiverArts Music Tour. Ms. Blitz teaches at a private studio in New Jersey and with the Spring Creek Youth Orchestra in Brooklyn, NY, among other venues and was previously on the faculty with RiverArts and at Franklin Pierce University.

**DOROTHY DARLINGTON (oboe/English horn)** was born in New York City but spent about half her upbringing in Lake Placid where she began her oboe studies. She holds three degrees in music and has performed with the Costa Rica, Savannah, Jacksonville and Atlanta Symphonies, after which she joined the US Marine Band known as "The President's Own" for 6 years for White House duties and tours to Europe under President Reagan. Finding the military commitment too intensive to consider starting a family, she freelanced with Wolf Trap, the National Symphony (at Kennedy Center) and the Washington Bach Consort among others, as well as serving as a long-term alternate with the New York Philharmonic. Dorothy has been a member of the Ridgefield Symphony for 35 years

and recently performed for an entire weekend in Carnegie Hall. She has two sons, age 29 and 25, and she thinks they are the best thing that ever happened to her!

**RUTH DIAMON FABES (oboe)** earned a B.M. in Music Education SUNY Fredonia and an M.M.E. at the Hartt School of Music. She retired from the New York City Dept. of Education after 30 years as a Teacher of Instrumental Music and Chorus in Junior High Schools. Ruth is currently Coordinator of "Live in HD" at Monmouth University, and performs with the New Jersey Wind Symphony while also teaching senior citizens, performing with local orchestras, and volunteering, when time and distance allows. She lives in Staten Island, NY with her husband, Keith, and Ruby the Doberman. During the pandemic lockdown, Ruth learned how to sew and make quilts (discovering that it's easier than making oboe reeds!).

**MONICA GERARD (viola)** has performed with the Brooklyn Philharmonic, Orchestra of St. Luke's, American Composer's Orchestra, Westchester Philharmonic, American Ballet Theater, Stamford Symphony, and New Jersey Symphony. As a baroque violist, she has performed and recorded with the Hanoverian Ensemble. She has served on the faculties of the Hoff-Barthelson Music School and Hudson River School of Music and currently maintains a large private studio of viola and violin students. Her primary teachers have included Raphael Hillyer, Jesse Levine, Karen Tuttle, Kim Kashkashian, and Hatto Beyerle. Ms. Gerard holds a Bachelor of Arts in Music from Yale College, a Master of Music in Viola from the Yale School of Music and studied as a Fulbright Scholar at the University of Music and Performing Arts in Vienna, Austria.

**ELLEN GRUBER (oboe)** is a New York City-based oboist, currently studying Orchestral Performance with Sherry Sylar at the Manhattan School of Music. She previously attended the Peabody Institute, where she obtained degrees in oboe performance, recording arts and sciences, and acoustics. Ellen has played in a variety of ensembles, including the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, the MSM Symphony Orchestra, and the Peabody Symphony Orchestra. She has also attended several music festivals and masterclasses, including Interharmony Music Festival, Hidden Valley Music Seminar and Eastern Music Festival. Ellen was part of Peabody's Inaugural Sensory Friendly Performance Project, where she played chamber music in a concert with the Musical Autist, an organization of musicians with autism. She has performed chamber music in other settings as well, including on Peabody's Friday Noon:30 concert series and on a Showcase concert at Interharmony in Aquil Terme, Italy. In her spare time, Ellen loves to cook and bake, as well as play with her dog, Henry.

**AMY HERSH (flute)** has an active career that combines her love of chamber music, orchestral performance and teaching. The New York Times has written that Ms. Hersh "...plays the flute...with directness and an ear for subtlety." She began her career playing flute and piccolo in the Mexico City Philharmonic and since then has performed with many

ensembles, including the NJ Symphony, Long Island Philharmonic, New York Gilbert and Sullivan players, and with various Broadway pit orchestras. She currently plays with the St. George's Choral Society and Hudson Valley Philharmonic and is a member of chamber ensembles The Virtuosi Woodwind Quintet and the Cara Quartet. Ms. Hersh made her New York debut at Carnegie's Weill Hall as an Artist's International-winning member of the "Venus Trio", a group of flute, harp, and mezzo-soprano. She was also a winner of the NY Flute Club competition, performing in CAMI Hall. She earned Bachelors and Masters degrees from the Manhattan School of Music, and attended international programs in Nice, France and Canada, studying with Alain Marion and Robert Stallman. Her teachers have included Carol Wincenc, Harold Bennett, and Harvey Sollberger. She is an advanced level Suzuki flute teacher and teaches at the Hackley School in Tarrytown and at her home studio.

**MARJORIE HONE (flute)** grew up in Ohio and after graduating from Michigan State University she taught social studies in the Marietta, Ohio school district and later worked as assistant to the Director of Libraries at Columbia University. She studied flute with William Hebert, Paige Brook, Judith Mendenhall and Eleanor Lawrence and most recently with Sandra Miller. She served as principal flutist in the Westchester Symphonic Winds for over 20 years and is a long-time board member, including serving as president from 1995-2005 and now serving as treasurer. She has also played piccolo with the Chappaqua Orchestra, sings in her church choir, and was a member of the Westchester Symphony for many years. She maintains a private studio in Irvington and is active as a chamber musician and soloist, including many performances for the Hudson Valley Music Club. She has been active in her church and in community organizations, including chairing the PTSA, Irvington Town Hall Theater, Inc., the Irvington Drug Abuse Council, and the Hudson Valley Music Club. She also is a member of the Thursday Club charitable group. Her other passions include whitewater kayaking, swimming, Pilates, and enjoying her granddaughters.

**TOM JORDAN (French horn)** began playing the horn as a child, never dreaming it would lead him down such interesting paths. He studied Music at Gettysburg College, The Hartt School of Music, and Western Connecticut State University, and enjoyed 40 years of teaching music in Isabel and Mobridge, South Dakota, New Canaan, Connecticut, and Mamaroneck, New York. He has played in numerous ensembles and settings, but currently enjoys playing horn with the American Chamber Orchestra, The Westport Community Band, the Connecticut Symphonic Winds, The Vintage Brass Quintet, the Fairfield County Brass, and on guitar, in a duo with his wife on flute at St. John's Lutheran Church in Stamford, CT.

**ROBERT LAWRENCE (violin)** Bob Lawrence has had a varied performing career, ranging from Karl Munchinger's Stuttgart Chamber Orchestra to the acclaimed Broadway revival of *Guys and Dolls*, starring Nathan Lane and Faith Prince. He is currently the director of programming as well as violinist for the All Seasons Chamber Players (NJ), violinist for the Caecilian Chamber Ensemble (NYC), concertmaster of the New York Gilbert and Sullivan Players, and associate concertmaster of the Springfield (MA) Symphony Orchestra. He has also served as concertmaster for Opera Saratoga (formerly the Lake George Opera Festival), the Mid Atlantic Opera, Teatro Lirico D'Europa, and the Teatro Lirico Sperimentale. Bob has appeared at the Grand Teton, Colorado, and Spoleto Festivals. He studied at Yale University and the Accademia Chigiana in Siena, Italy, and has taught with RiverArts since 2005.

**MILES LEVINE (cello)** is a congressionally recognized young cellist and student at Hastings High School. He began his cello studies at age four at The School for Strings in New York City with Alex Croxton, and currently studies at Juilliard Pre-college under the tutelage of Astrid Schween. Miles gave his orchestral debut at age 13 and has played in venues such as Carnegie Hall's Stern Auditorium and Weill Hall, Merkin Hall, and the Dimenna Center for Classical Music. Now 16, he has received numerous awards and accolades, including first prize at the New York International Classical Music Competition, Yonkers Philharmonic Concerto Competition, and Medici International Music Competition, as well as the gold prize at the Camerata Artists International Competition. He has also been recognized with second prize at the International Grande Music Competition, third prize at the Bellagrande International Music Competition, a special recognition award at the New York Chamber Players Orchestra Concerto Competition, and the Christine Nelson Memorial Scholarship. Miles has attended summer programs and festivals such as Meadowmount and the Heifetz International Institute, and has played in masterclasses for esteemed musicians David Geber, Rebecca Fisher, Julia Lichten, Steven Doane, Alan Stepansky, Elizabeth Simkin, Shai Wosner, Amy Yang, and Melissa White. He also has substantial chamber music experience, studying at New York Youth Symphony, Juilliard, Heifetz, New York String Orchestra Seminar, and more. With a wide breadth of experience, Miles has a passionate love for music.

**ALAN MURRAY (piano/harpsichord)** is the founder and Executive & Artistic Director of Westchester Chamber Soloists, which was conceived from inception as a chamber orchestra focused on the Concerto literature in which the orchestra's members would be the soloists, enabling them to demonstrate their skills as both solo performers and ensemble collaborators. He has appeared extensively in solo and chamber music recitals and as concerto soloist with symphony orchestras in the US and Europe, performing the great piano concertos of Bartók, Beethoven, Brahms, Chopin, Dvořák, Liszt, Prokofiev, Ravel, Rachmaninoff, Saint-Saëns, Scriabin and Tchaikovsky, as well as recording in 2020

the complete cycle of Mozart's solo piano concertos. A dedicated chamber musician, Alan – together with WCS & Friends - has been a regular participant at the *RiverArts' Annual Music Tour* in the lower Hudson Valley, performing Beethoven's and Brahms' complete *Sonatas for Violin & Piano* and for *Cello & Piano* as well as duos, trios, quartets, quintets and sextets by Arensky, Brahms, Dohnanyi, Fauré, Grieg, Mendelssohn, Piazzolla, Poulenc, Ravel, Schumann, Tchaikovsky and others. As piano soloist, in the 2010-2012 seasons he presented the *Masters Series* and *Sunrise Series* concerts in lower Westchester County, performing the complete cycles of major works by Chopin, Schumann, Debussy, Ravel and J.S. Bach as well as Beethoven's 32 Piano Sonatas and Diabelli Variations in a series of 40 recital programs, as well as major works by Spanish masters Albéniz (*Iberia*) and Granados (*Goyescas*), Liszt and Rachmaninoff. When not enjoying musical pursuits, Alan maintains a career in insurance risk analytics and capital markets. He holds a degree in physics/cosmology and languages from Cornell University, where he also received a special *University Award* for distinguished piano recital soloist. Alan resides in Hastings with his wife Amada, daughter Celia and cavalier King Charles spaniel Lizzy.

**LIZ NILSEN-BAUMWOLL (viola)** has performed with the Albany Symphony, Hudson Valley Philharmonic, Manhattan Chamber Orchestra and the New York Gilbert & Sullivan Players. She is also a founding member of the Rivertown String Quartet. Liz earned her Bachelors of Fine Arts degree at SUNY Purchase (now Purchase College), and a Masters of Fine Arts at the Mannes College of Music. She also has a Masters in Teaching from Lehman College (CUNY) and Suzuki Teacher Certification from the School for Strings. She studied with notables Emanuel Vardi, Karen Ritscher, Burton Kaplan, and Joey Corpus, and is herself a former faculty member of the Hudson River School of Music, Hoff-Barthelson Music School, the 92nd Street Y, and Greenwich Public Schools.

**LUCIE ONDERWYZER (violin)** began her musical studies with her mom, a piano teacher in Shelburne, VT. She picked up the violin at age 7, which became her primary instrument. She earned degrees in music from Manhattan School of Music and the University of Miami. Lucie performed as a professional violinist in Florida for several years but made the switch to technology where she enjoys a career in Cybersecurity. When she isn't working or playing the violin, she spends time with her husband, daughter and Samoyed, Coco!

**SACHI PATITUCCI (cello)** is a graduate of the Eastman School of Music and has worked as a freelance musician in New York and Los Angeles, performing concerts and recording on many film and television soundtracks and albums. She was a founding member of *Cello*, an all-female cello quartet who had their debut at Carnegie Recital Hall and has frequently performed and recorded in chamber music groups with musicians such as Lawrence Dutton of the *Emerson String Quartet* and Richard Rood of *Orpheus*

*Chamber Orchestra*. She toured the world as a soloist with various pop musicians and appeared in music videos and television shows. Sachi earned a Professional Certificate in Music Supervision from Berklee College of Music during the pandemic, is manager for her husband's music career, and serves as the CEO of their independent record label, *Three Faces Records*.

**DAVID RESTIVO (violin)** grew up in Houston, TX, and has played violin for almost 40 years. After receiving a BM from Texas State University, David moved to the Boston area, finally settling in Chappaqua with his family. In addition to working as a programmer, David was the Executive Director of Orchestra914 from 2013-2022, freelances for regional stage shows and performs with several orchestras in the NY area, including Orchestra 914 and Collegium of Westchester. His teachers include Stephen Redfield and Elliot Magaziner. David is excited to join the Westchester Chamber Soloists for a wonderful performance of Bach's – Brandenburg Concertos.

**THOMAS SEFCOVIC (bassoon)** is a long-standing member of the Orchestra of St. Luke's, performing on both bassoon and contrabassoon. He is also a member of the Mostly Mozart Festival Orchestra at Lincoln Center, New York Pops Orchestra, and has appeared with the New York Philharmonic, Metropolitan Opera, and Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center. The conductors he has worked under include André Previn, Roger Norrington, Bernard Labadie, Kurt Masur, Zubin Mehta, Franz Bruggen, and Louis Langrée. On Broadway, he has performed in "Oklahoma!", "Swan Lake", Stephen Sondheim's "The Frogs", "A Little Night Music," and most recently the Tony Award winning Best Musical "A Gentleman's Guide to Love and Murder." Tom studied bassoon and contrabassoon with Lyell Lindsey of the Detroit Symphony, Hugh Cooper at the University of Michigan, Steven Maxym at the Manhattan School of Music, and had further studies with Arthur Weissberg. He is also known as a specialist in early performance practice on period bassoon and contrabassoon and has performed and recorded with the Orchestra of the 18th Century in Amsterdam; the Handel and Haydn Society in Boston; Philharmonia Baroque in Berkeley, California; The Connecticut Early Music Festival; The Hanoverian Ensemble; and Tafelmusik in Toronto.

**JACQUELINE STERN (cello)** is an orchestral and chamber musician in groups including Orchestra Lumos, the trio Terzetta and the Cara Quartet. She has played Baroque cello with the Artek Ensemble, Orchestra of the 18th century and New York Baroque. She is an active music educator, conducting Westchester Junior Strings (a division of Greater Westchester Youth Orchestras), and is chair of Instrumental Music at Green Meadow Waldorf School, where she conducts the orchestras, teaches 'cello and coaches chamber music. Ms. Stern also enjoys multi-style string playing, and has played in the improv group, "Spirit."

**MARC WAGER (French horn)** currently plays with the St. Thomas Orchestra and the Yonkers Philharmonic Orchestra; his previous tenures have included the Albert Einstein Symphony and the Chappaqua Chamber Orchestras. He has also appeared with the Ridgefield Symphony and with the Bermuda and New York Philharmonics. In addition to his ensemble work, Marc has appeared as guest soloist with orchestras in works including Weber's Concertino and Mozart's Sinfonia Concertante for Winds. He has performed with notables Glenn Dicterow and Karen Dreyfus, and remains an active chamber musician, appearing with Angels in the Chamber and the former Amber Woodwind Quintet, and at chamber music programs at Bennington College and Kinhaven, and has performed in over 200 musicals and operas. A graduate of Lehigh University, Dr. Wager earned his medical degree at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine and has devoted his professional practice to Pediatrics.