

## 2026 ASTA & SAA Collocated Conferences

Pre-Conference Workshops

Wednesday, February 25

12:00-5:00 PM PT

### ASTA Pre-Conference Workshops

#### **Experience Feldenkrais – A Whole Person Approach to Playing**

Colin Pip Dixon

How do we cultivate that “flow” in our playing? Where nothing seems to get in the way and our inner intention is translated directly into sound and expression? Through an in-depth exploration of body awareness and movement we will experience ways of overcoming unhelpful habits in string playing and learn to allow our whole selves to participate, releasing greater creativity and leading to breakthroughs in technique.



Colin Pip Dixon is a violinist and Guild Certified Feldenkrais practitioner. For nearly 20 years he has taught Feldenkrais to musicians, working with professional musicians and teaching at major conservatories and universities. Online he offers weekly classes at [virtuosity.online](http://virtuosity.online) and guest teaches at international festivals. As co-artistic director of The Elsewhere Ensemble, he performs in North America and Europe, and he also serves as associate director of The Krakauer Institute in Provence, France.

#### **How Do We Teach Students with Differences and Disabilities in Music Settings?**

Alice Hammel

Our time together will be spent immersed in a variety of active learning experiences, engaged discussions, and a lot of fun as we share stories, and explore how we can be more and better for students who may have difficulty engaging in more traditional ways. Topics will include Label-Free Learning, Neurodivergence, and other areas in a playful setting that includes rhythm, melody, harmony, improvisation, form, note weight and levels, as well as practical ways to apply adaptations, and wind forward and back our objectives and assessments. Please don't forget to bring your instruments, dress comfortably, and be ready for an enjoyable day of exploration and affirmation.

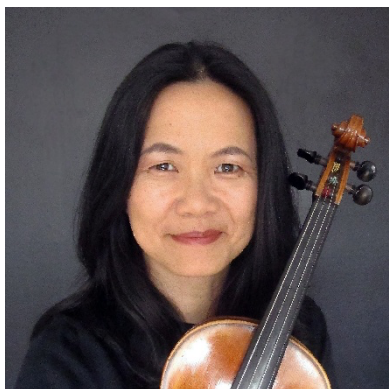


Grammy Award Nominated music educator, Dr. Alice Hammel, is a widely known music educator, author, and clinician whose experience in music is extraordinarily diverse. She is a Disabilities Specialist and has many years of experience teaching instrumental and choral music in public and private schools. She also teaches online courses through many institutions throughout the United States. She has published with Oxford University Press, Conway Productions, GIA, and Routledge and has provided resources for many other music, arts, special, and general education journals.

## Multi-Instrument Mastery: Building Confidence Playing and Teaching Every Instrument

Grace Law

Struggling to teach instruments you don't play? Looking for a more efficient way to start beginners on all four instruments—together, in one class? In this hands-on workshop, learn to play an instrument you've been putting off—bass, anyone? Rather than separating into groups by instrument, we'll stay together to explore teaching (and learning) efficiently in a mixed-instrument setting. You'll leave with new playing skills and a clear, step-by-step method for starting beginners—quickly, confidently, and effectively. Instruments will be available upon request.



Grace is passionate about making string pedagogy clear, simple and accessible for teachers. She is committed to helping music educators fill the gaps in their string teacher training via her online resources. Grace holds music and teaching degrees from the University of Toronto. She has over 30-years experience in private and classroom settings. She teaches high school orchestra in Toronto, author and Director of Pedagogy at Smart String Teacher, and has presented her ideas across Canada and the United States.

## National Teachers Orchestra

Helen Cha-Pyo

Join us for a day of community music-making and relationship-building through the art form that we all love! This enjoyable pre-conference workshop will feature a full day of interaction with colleagues through string orchestra rehearsals culminating in an informal performance at the Welcome Reception on Wednesday evening. The day of planned rehearsals will include rehearsal technique strategies and conversation with lots of playing and musical interaction. Participants will gain new insights and rehearsal techniques while rehearsing and playing the repertoire. It will be an active day! Teachers are encouraged to exercise your primary or well-developed secondary instrument skills for this event. Repertoire will include pedagogical compositions, arrangements, and eclectic styles, as well as great standard repertoire. It will also feature compositions from the [New Canon Project](#). Music will be distributed one month before the conference so participants can prepare ahead of time. Instruments will be available upon request. Performance attire will be "business casual."



Helen H. Cha-Pyo is an award-winning conductor and arts leader, serving as Artistic Director and Principal Conductor of the New Jersey Youth Symphony and Wharton Arts, New Jersey's largest performing arts education organization. Known for her dynamic podium presence, she is a sought-after guest conductor and clinician. Formerly Music Director of the Empire State Youth Orchestra, she has been a Visiting Associate Professor of Conducting at Montclair State University and an Adjunct Professor at Rutgers University. She holds degrees from Juilliard Pre-College, Oberlin Conservatory, and the Eastman School of Music.

## The Soul Orchestra Experience: Learning Black Music Through Performance

Darcy Ford-James, Jelani Brown, & Shane Kalbach

Step into *The Soul Orchestra Experience*—an immersive, hands-on workshop where string educators explore Roots, Blues, Jazz, Soul, R&B, Neo-Soul, and Hip Hop through collaborative rehearsals and performance. Learn about Black American music while gaining practical tools to teach it, including adaptable arrangements and groove-based techniques. This session culminates in a powerful live performance and offers a transformative model for culturally responsive, inclusive, and deeply engaging music education. Instruments will be available upon request.



Darcy Ford is a violinist, educator, and founder of Stockton Soul, a nonprofit that educates and inspires through the performance of Black music. With 25 years of teaching experience, she currently teaches Strings in Stockton, CA. An inaugural Black Banjo Fiddle Fellow, she also serves as SJ County Regional Director for the California Bluegrass Association. Passionate about equitable music education, she sits on the board of the Foundation for the Advancement of String Education.



Jelani Brown was born in San Jose, California, and he is an artist with a strong passion for creativity, songwriting, and education. Over the years, Jelani has had the opportunity to open for notable artists such as Kiana Ledé, P-Lo, and Larussel. His love for music and dedication to education have led him to collaborate with several organizations, including The O'Connor Method, founded by Grammy-winning violinist Mark O'Connor, Little Kids Rock, Stockton Harmony, Blackwing Foundation, and The CW.



Shane Kalbach graduated from CSU Sacramento in 2004 with a BM in viola performance and theory/composition. He currently teaches orchestra and guitar at Lincoln High School and orchestra at Sierra Middle School in Stockton CA. He has also served as the Vice President of the San Joaquin County Honor Orchestra program and conducted the Central Valley Youth Symphony's prep orchestra from 2006 to 2020. Shane works for La Honda Music Camp in July and gives private lessons throughout the year. He enjoys working with students of all ages and is interested in a diverse array of musical genres. Shane is an active freelance performer (fiddle/violin/viola) and can be seen performing, most often bluegrass, throughout California's Central Valley and beyond.

## **SAA Pre-Conference Workshops**

### **Best Practices for Online Teaching**

Carrie Salisbury

Whether you're an experienced Teacher Trainer or just getting started, this session is great for anyone offering online coursework! Learn best practices for how to offer high-quality, engaging, and relevant teaching for online courses.



Carrie Salisbury is the creator of StringsPop, a unique online teen summer camp and monthly workshops, with a support network and training for innovative string teachers. She is a studio musician and private violin and viola teacher based in Los Angeles. Her students perform regularly as Crescendo Strings, a multi-level violin and viola group. Her advanced teen students form First Inversion, a premiere ensemble known for creating and performing their own arrangements. You can follow her students' projects on Instagram at @stringspop. Carrie currently serves as President of the Suzuki Music Association of California – Los Angeles Branch. She is the parent to three young Suzuki string students with husband and collaborator, Ben Salisbury.

### **Business Development and Leadership**

Eric Branner

Learn how to grow and maintain your studio through mindful marketing, joyful teaching, strong values! This interactive pre-conference session will help you implement positive changes to develop your leadership skills and business acumen.



Eric is the CEO and co-founder of Fons, a mobile/web based platform that streamlines and automates payments and scheduling for appointment-based business. Fons brings together the best business practices Eric and his wife Alyson have developed while operating one of the most successful private music teaching studios in the country.

Eric is the owner of the Blackforrest Music School in Seattle. He has taught music for more than two decades to students aged 5 to 85 and has reached more than two-million online students through his YouTube channel. Eric is the author of The Blackforrest Guitar Companion Book, which features his entire introductory guitar method through a free ebook and video lessons. Eric founded Camp Branner, an annual, week-long intensive music camp in the Methow Valley for high school students. He also hosts the annual Guitarbeque guitar recital in Seattle and has previously taught at Holy Names Academy, The American Music School and Shenandoah Academy.

Eric performs and records on a regional and national level as a guitarist and singer/songwriter. He is versed in classical, bluegrass, blues, rock, folk, fingerstyle, flatpicking, and traditional guitar styles. Eric has studied with more than 50 world-class teachers such as Keith Stevens, Michael Nicoletta, and Steven Novacek. He has also attended masterclasses with luminaries such as David Russell and Manuel Barrueco. Eric has performed at the Northwest Folklife Festival and was a prizewinner at the Northwest Classical Guitar Competition. Eric is no longer available to play at your wedding, unless you've been friends for quite some time.

Eric has previously managed marketing and development campaigns for Seattle Symphony, Seattle Opera, Seattle Children's Theater, Seattle Repertory Theatre and ACT Theatre. Eric loves the mountains, yet prefers the ocean. Surfing and swimming in the cold waters of the northwest Pacific Ocean are his favorite pastimes. He lives in Seattle with his wife Alyson, two children Huck and Edith and a German shepherd named Cannon.

## Every Child Can!

Charles Krigbaum

Every Child Can! (ECC!) is an introduction to Dr. Suzuki's philosophy and its application to Suzuki education. For parents, teachers, prospective teachers, and others in North America, this course provides an inspiring, in-depth look at the Suzuki approach to teaching and learning.

In addition to exploring the elements of the Suzuki approach and its far-reaching goals, it includes an introduction to learning styles, history of the development of Suzuki education, the role of parents, the importance of Suzuki pedagogical training, and an overview of the SAA's role in supporting teachers and parents. A fast-paced, engaging and inspiring program, ECC! includes video materials and SAA-developed courseware and provides each participant with useful reference materials (manuals) for later study. For teachers, ECC! serves as the first course in the Suzuki Association of the Americas' Teacher Development Program.



Charles Krigbaum is the founder and Co-Director of the North Texas School of Talent Education, a private Suzuki violin and viola program with an international reputation for excellence, serving the north Dallas community. A lifelong advocate for excellence in teaching, Charles was among the first in the United States to earn the Certificate of Achievement from the Suzuki Association of the Americas in 2010. In 2014, he became a registered SAA Teacher Trainer, and today he mentors the next generation of Suzuki educators with the same thoughtfulness and rigor that define his own teaching.

Charles has taught at workshops and Institutes throughout the United States, Canada, Latin America, England, and Germany. He is a former President of the North Texas Suzuki Association, a Chapter Affiliate of the SAA, and remains active in leadership and teacher development initiatives.

A violinist, violist, Teacher Trainer, successful small business owner, author, and public speaker, Charles is known for his ability to inspire others to pursue excellence with courage, clarity, and purpose. His work reflects a lifelong dedication to nurturing talent, strengthening communities, and advancing the vision of music education as a vehicle for human potential.