

# Nevada MTNA Competition 2024 - Final Results

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## Piano

### Junior Piano

Result	Contestant	Teacher
Winner	Elly Zhu	Long Ma
Alternate	Paxton Garcia	Damaris Morales
Honorable Mention	Emily Chen	Timothy Hoft
Honorable Mention	Jane Lee	Yealee Kim
Honorable Mention	Shuyi Zheng	Long Ma

### Senior Piano – Solo

Result	Contestant	Teacher
Winner	Adrian Lin	Tamara Saakyan
Alternate	Claire Lin	Tamara Saakyan
Honorable Mention	Ginger Tie	Long Ma

### Senior Piano – Duet

Result	Contestant	Teacher
Representatives	Ginger Tie Shuyi Zheng	Long Ma

## Strings

### Junior Strings

Result	Contestant	Teacher
Winner	Yejoon Jung	Jeayoung Jo
Alternate	Rose Martin	Mary Straub
Honorable Mention	Solomon Dumont	De Ann Letourneau
Honorable Mention	Duke Greenman	Hyelin Jung
Honorable Mention	Winston Luh	Susan Kim

### Senior Strings

Result	Contestant	Teacher
Winner	Claire Lee	Susan Kim
Alternate	Chloe Lim	Shakeh Ghoukasian
Honorable Mention	Alexander Kim	Andrew Smith
Honorable Mention	Andrew Soberano	Omar Shelly

## Woodwinds

### Junior Woodwinds

Result	Contestant	Teacher
Representative	Fiona Zhou	Lindsey O'Connor

### Senior Woodwinds

Result	Contestant	Teacher
Winner	Sachi Blevins	John McMurtery
Alternate	Axel Kelley	Shawna Pennock
Honorable Mention	Paul Bearden	Lindsey O'Connor

### Young Artist Woodwinds

Result	Contestant	Teacher
Winner	Nicholas Carozza	Stephen Caplan
Alternate	Hayden Eighmy	Lindsey O'Connor

## Composition

### Elementary Composition

Result	Contestant	Teacher
Winner	Kolbe Han	Lisa Fiorenza
Honorable Mention	Theodore Perry	Margarita Bryant

### Junior Composition

Result	Contestant	Teacher
Winner	Stephen Xu	Long Ma
Honorable Mention	Alexander Loosley	James Winn

### Senior Composition

Result	Contestant	Teacher
Winner	Ella Choi	Mary Straub
Honorable Mention	Elijah Joseph	James Winn
Honorable Mention	Ty Tan	Lisa Fiorenza

### Young Artist Composition

Result	Contestant	Teacher
Winner	William Auflik	Lindsey O'Connor

# Nevada MTNA Competition 2024 – Judges Bios

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## Piano



Chinese/American pianist Ning Lu is a recitalist, chamber-music collaborator, orchestral soloist, educator, and competition adjudicator who has been hailed a “true talent of his generation.” In keeping with the instructional practices characteristic of the Russian piano tradition, to which his teachers added Chinese keyboard techniques, Ning began playing the piano when he was just four years old. At age ten, he continued his musical studies at the middle school attached to Beijing’s Central Conservatory of Music, under the tutelage of Pinguo Zhao, the same instructor who has taught well-known contemporary Chinese pianists Lang Lang and Yuja Wang.

Winner of the China National Piano Competition and The Beijing Central Conservatory of Music Piano Competition in the 80s, Ning Lu has also won many major competitions in the US, including the International Tourgee-Debose Piano Competition in Louisiana; the 29th National Young Artist Competition in Midland-Odessa, Texas; the Kingsville International Young Performer’s Competition; and the 2nd Annual Audio-Video Recording International Piano Competition in New York City. He has performed over four hundred recitals in countries throughout the world, including Germany, Austria, Poland, Scotland, the UK, Switzerland, Israel, Japan, Canada, China, and the USA. Ning Lu has presented master classes/recitals in many universities abroad, including the Frankfurt Conservatory of Music and the Mannheim Conservatory of Music in Germany; the Haydn Conservatory of Music in Eisenstaedt, Austria; Brandon University in Brandon, Canada; and the Senzoku Gakuen College of Music in Tokyo, Japan. In the United States, he has performed at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign; the University of Texas-Pan American in Edinburg, Texas; the University of California at Santa Barbara; Duke University in Durham, North Carolina; the University of Oklahoma at Norman; the University of Texas at San Antonio; Tulane University in New Orleans, Louisiana; California State University in Northridge; Liberty University in Lynchburg, Virginia; the University of Nevada; Brigham Young University in Provo and Hawaii; Utah State University in Logan, Weber State University in Ogden, and Utah Valley University in Orem, Utah. In China, Ning Lu has performed and taught in all major conservatories, including Beijing Central Conservatory of Music, Xinghai Conservatory of Music, Wuhan Conservatory of Music, Tianjing Conservatory of Music, and Shanghai Conservatory of Music. He regularly acts as visiting professor of piano at both the Beijing Central Conservatory of Music and at Nanjing Normal University. Professor Lu is a highly sought-after piano teacher in both the US and China, an outstanding educator whose students have won major prizes in international and national competitions, many of them have performed with major symphony orchestras.

Currently, Professor Lu is a full professor, who served as the Piano Area Head for over 8 years, and the Director of Keyboard Studies at the School of Music University of Utah.



Pianist Baruch Meir has performed extensively in Austria, England, France, Israel, Portugal and throughout the United States. A Bösendorfer Concert Artist since 2003, Meir has most recently presented two solo recitals at the Bösendorfer Saal (Vienna) and at the Wise Auditorium in Jerusalem, Bates Hall in Austin, Murphy Hall in Los Angeles, and at the Toujours Mozart Festival in Salzburg.

Currently an artist/teacher professor of piano at Arizona State University, Meir maintains a busy teaching schedule in addition to his international concert career. In demand as master class clinician, Meir recently toured Korea's most prestigious music schools and universities including Seoul National University, Yonsei, Kookmin,

Hanyang, Sunhwa, Kyoungbook and Seoul Arts High School, as well as at the Shanghai Conservatory in China, the Music Academy in Vienna (Austria), the Rubin Academy of Music in Jerusalem (Israel) and various conservatories and universities in the U.S. A native of Israel, Meir is a summa cum laude graduate of the Rubin Academy of Music of Tel Aviv University, where he earned both bachelor's and master's degrees in piano performance. He holds the Artist Diploma from the Royal College of Music in London, and a doctorate from ASU. His teachers include Valter Aufheuser, Michael Bugoslavsky, Rachel Gordon, Robert Hamilton, Pnina Salzman and Irina Zaritskaya. Meir's distinctions include the American-Israel Cultural Foundation Awards, the British Council fellowship, 1st place at the Klatzkin Competition for contemporary piano music and the ASU concerto competition, and additional awards in piano competitions worldwide.



At ASU, Professor Meir maintains a class of outstanding pianists from all over the world. His students were awarded more than 40 prizes and awards in various competitions within the past five years, including 1st place at the Young Concert Artist International Competition, the Schimmel Young Artist concerto and solo competitions, MTNA Arizona, ASU concerto competition and the grand prize at the Phoenix Symphony Guild competition. Additionally, his students regularly participate in summer music festivals in the U.S. and Europe including Aspen,

Adamant, Brevard, Schlern, TCU/Cliburn Institute, ILYM, Prague, New- Paltz, Mannes and Tel-Hai. **Dr. Alexandria Le** is described as "...a warm, animated, outgoing, confident, hyper-talented pianist whose greatest asset is her incomparable power to communicate" by the Boston Musical Intelligencer. Her solo performances have brought her from the world's most illustrious concert venues, like NYC's Carnegie Hall and Paris' Salle Cortot, to the farthest-reaching places where music is hardest to reach, like the jails of Rikers Island and the Las Vegas Rescue Mission. Following her solo debut in Carnegie Hall as a 2011 prize winner of the Pro Musicis International Award, she won a coveted position as pianist with Ensemble Connect, the prestigious fellowship program overseen by Carnegie Hall and The Juilliard School.

A Las Vegas native, she garnered sixteen first-prize awards—all before graduating high school from the Las Vegas Academy of the Arts. From there she polished off degrees from the Eastman School of Music and SUNY Stony Brook, where she received her Doctorate of Musical Arts in piano performance. She is a Yamaha Artist on the Yamaha classical artist roster, of which there are fewer than 200 signed pianists worldwide.

In 2024, she exited her term from the Executive Board of the Las Vegas Music Teachers Association and joined the Nevada Music Teachers Association as their first Board Chair of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging. She is Artistic Director for two Las Vegas-based concert series, Re-Classified and RDA Performs at the Rita Deanin Abbey Museum, and she is founder of the music non-profit, Notes with a Purpose. You can find her performing as a soloist with the Las Vegas Philharmonic and the Henderson Symphony Orchestra (with an upcoming performance of Ravel's G major concerto with the HSO in February 2025). You can read more at [alexandriale.com](http://alexandriale.com).

## Strings



**Movses Pogossian** made his American debut performing the Tchaikovsky Concerto with the Boston Pops in 1990, about which the Boston Globe wrote: "There is freedom in his playing, but also taste and discipline. It was a fiery, centered, and highly musical performance..." Laureate of several competitions, including the Tchaikovsky International Competition, he extensively performs worldwide. A devoted chamber musician, Pogossian has performed with members of the Tokyo, Kronos, and Brentano string quartets, and with such artists as Kim Kashkashian, Jeremy Denk, Lynn Harrell, Ani and Ida Kavafian, and

Rohan de Saram. He frequently collaborates with the Apple Hill Chamber Players, teaching annually at their summer music festival in New Hampshire. A committed champion of new music, Pogossian has premiered over 100 works, and works closely with composers such as G. Kurtág, K. Saariaho, T. Mansurian, Gabriela Lena Frank, and many others. Pogossian's discography includes the Complete Sonatas and Partitas by J. S. Bach, solo CDs "Inspired by Bach", "Blooming Sounds", "In Nomine", and, most recently, "Hommage à Kurtág" (2022) and a 4 CD-set "Serenade with a Dandelion". The Bridge Records CD of Complete Violin Works of Wolpe made the 2015 Top Ten list in Sunday Times (UK), and the 2020 releases of Armenian contemporary music: "Modulation Necklace" (New Focus Recordings) and "Con Anima" (ECM) have garnered critical acclaim. Pogossian is Distinguished Professor of Violin at the UCLA Herb Alpert School of Music and Founding Director and Advisor of the UCLA Armenian Music Program. As Head of the Los Angeles Chapter, he actively participates in the Music for Food project ([musicforfood.net](http://musicforfood.net)) which raises awareness of the hunger problem and gives the opportunity to experience the powerful role music can play as a catalyst for change.



**Lindsey Springer** is a multi-genre cellist who received her Masters Degree in Cello Performance from the Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music. Most recently, Lindsey performs with the show Weekends with Adele, and has held roles as Principal Cellist for Celine Dion as well as Directing Orchestras at the Las Vegas Academy for the Arts. Versatile in many genres, Lindsey has performed with Alicia Keys, Barbra Streisand, Beyonce, Carrie Underwood, Celtic Women, David Foster, Evanescence, Harry Connick Jr, Il Divo, John Legend, Johnny Mathis, Kanye West, Kelly Clarkson, Lady Gaga, Rod Stewart, Seal, Seth MacFarlane, Shakira, Stevie Wonder, Tony Bennett, and Usher- to name a few. She has also joined the World Tours of Adele and Andrea Bocelli. She performed at the 2013 and 2016 Grammy



Awards, the Latin Grammys, American Music Awards, Soul Train Awards, Country Music Awards, and Billboard Awards. As a recording artist, Lindsey has recorded numerous albums, including Beyonce's "Live in Las Vegas" DVD, Air Supply's album "Mumbo Jumbo," and Celine Dion's platinum album, "Sans Attendre." Her Broadway in Las Vegas experience includes productions of The Lion King, The Phantom of the Opera, The Producers, Sound of Music, Fun Home, The Last Five Years, Charlie and the Chocolate Factory, and Matilda. She has also performs with the Las Vegas Philharmonic and the Nevada Ballet.



**Dr. Tianna Heppner Smith** has been a performer, educator and a collaborator around the globe for nearly 2 decades.

She earned her Doctorate in Viola Performance from the University of California, Santa Barbara under the tutelage of Ms. Helen Callus and Mr. Jonathan Moerschel. She earned both her Bachelor and Master Degrees in Viola Performance (with an emphasis in Orchestral Studies) from the University of Nevada, Reno, under the tutelage of Mr. Philip Ruder, Ms. Stephanie Sant'Ambrigo and Mr. Theodore Kuchar.

Most recently, she held the position of Director of Orchestra and Viola Professor at Stanislaus State University in Turlock, CA. Additionally, she has been the orchestra director at Bishop Gorman High School in Las Vegas, NV; the Orchestra Director at Porterville College in Porterville, CA. She has also held faculty positions as adjunct faculty at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas; College of Southern Nevada, the University of Nevada, Reno; Lassen Community College in Susanville, CA; and the Clark County School District.

She has performed globally with headliners like Lady Gaga (where she is currently Principal Viola for the Jazz and Piano Residency), Hugh Jackman, Celine Dion and countless others. Her recording credits include Lady Gaga, Justin Timberlake, Jennifer Hudson, Ryan Reynolds for Deadpool 2, Celine Dion, Days of our Lives and many more. In traditional Classical Music venues, she has performed regularly with the Las Vegas Philharmonic, the Los Angeles Ballet Company, the Deadline Hollywood Orchestra, the Nevada Ballet, the Nevada Opera, the Reno Philharmonic, the Fresno Philharmonic and the Bakersfield Symphony Orchestra.

## **Woodwinds**



**Dr. Shane Werts** is the Assistant Professor of oboe at Northern Arizona University's Kitt School of Music. He currently holds orchestral positions with the Flagstaff Symphony Orchestra and the Amarillo Symphony Orchestra.

Previously Dr. Werts has held positions with the Grand Junction Symphony Orchestra, with Colorado State University - Pueblo, and with the Jacobs School of Music at Indiana University. He has performed with orchestras nationwide such as the Civic Orchestra of Chicago, the New World Symphony, the National Repertory Orchestra, and the National Orchestral Institute. He has also toured internationally, performing chamber music in Germany, Austria, Slovakia, and Hungary. Dr. Werts can be heard playing principal oboe under the Naxos label on the 2018 Grammy Nominated album "Ruggles, Stucky, Harbison," with the

National Orchestral Institute Festival Orchestra.

In addition to teaching and performing, Dr. Werts has experience working with non-profit organizations in arts administration. He is currently on the team of directors that make up the Snake River Music

Festival, based in Dillon, Colorado. He has previously served as the president of the Summit Community Orchestra (Frisco, CO) and has collaborated with the National Repertory Orchestra and Alpenglöw Music Festival with Music Education programs. In these roles he has fostered partnerships with local government, developed educational programs, planned numerous performances, and collaborated with other local arts organizations.

Dr. Werts has presented and performed at the International Double Reed Society Conferences in Flagstaff, Boulder, Phoenix, Oklahoma, and Ohio. Additionally, he has presented and performed at the Colorado Music Educators Association conference in Colorado Springs.

Dr. Werts has earned his degrees from Indiana University (DM and MM), and Colorado State University - Fort Collins (Bachelor of Music Education). His primary instructors include Roger Roe, Linda Strommen, and Gary Moody. Dr. Werts is a Howarth artist and has professional affiliations with the National Association for Music Education, the International Double Reed Society, and the College Music Society.



US-based saxophonist, **Nathan Mertens** (he/they) currently serves as Assistant Professor of Saxophone at the University of Colorado Boulder. As an active soloist and chamber musician, he has performed in Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Thailand, Bolivia, the United Kingdom, and throughout the United States. He has performed as a soloist with ensembles including the Busan Philharmonic Orchestra, Austin Saxophone Ensemble, Hastings Symphony Orchestra, and has played within the San Antonio Symphony, Boulder Philharmonic, Fort Collins Symphony, and the Omaha Symphony.

Previously, Mertens lived in Tokyo, Japan as a Monbukagakusho Research Scholarship recipient with the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology. As such, Mertens was the first American saxophonist to formally study in Japan. Seeing that Japanese music wasn't well-known or easily accessible in the West, Mertens created the Japanese Saxophone Database to bridge that gap. While in Tokyo, he played with the Kunitachi Saxophone Ensemble, the Japan Saxophone Orchestra, Marie Kikuchi, and Emi Kondo.

Mertens has commissioned and premiered works by composers including Lucy Armstrong, Akio Ito, Sachie Kobayashi, Andrew Boss, Rob Buckland, and Zach Browning. He has premiered these works with many ensembles across the globe at the World Saxophone Congress, North American Saxophone Alliance Conference, and other concert venues. Most recently, he commissioned Anthony Greene for a work entitled, "kWEe(a)r(e)," which centers around celebrating and uplifting queer identities.

As an educator & clinician, Mertens has been a guest artist at the Conservatorio Plurinacional de Música (Bolivia), Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts (Singapore), and many universities and high schools throughout the United States. Mertens has previously been on the faculty at the University of Arkansas, Baylor University, and Hastings College.

Mertens earned degrees from The University of Texas at Austin - Butler School of Music and Hastings College with Stephen Page and Debra Rhodes respectively. He completed additional studies at Kunitachi College of Music with Masato Kumoi, the Global Leaders Institute, and the Université Européenne de Saxophone. He plays exclusively on and is an endorsing artist for Yamaha saxophones, D'Addario reeds, and Rousseau mouthpieces.



Andre Long holds a Bachelor of Music degree from the Cleveland Institute of Music where he was a student of Jeffrey Khaner, Principal Flute of the Cleveland Orchestra. In addition, he also completed a Bachelor of Science degree in Music Education from Case Western Reserve University. He has participated in masterclasses with Julius Baker and Geoffrey Gilbert. Andre served as the piccolo player in the Las Vegas Philharmonic Orchestra for 22 seasons. After teaching music in the Clark County School District, Andre went on to serve as a school administrator for 27 years.

## Composition



**Dr. Jennifer Bellor** is Assistant Professor of Composition at the University of Las Vegas and holds degrees from Eastman School of Music (PhD), Syracuse University (MM), and Cornell University (BA). Described by Textura as “that rare composer whose music manages to be instantly listenable and emotionally resonant without any compromise to its sophistication,” Bellor is a versatile composer whose music draws on a variety of influences. Her compositional style, marked by a fusion of influences drawn from imagery, literature, and personal experiences, showcases a melodic richness underscored by jazz and pop-infused harmonies.

Bellor’s music has been presented widely throughout the U.S. and abroad and has four acclaimed albums to her name. Her debut album *Stay* (2016), a melting pot of different music styles largely based on poetry, was featured on *NewMusicBox’s* 2016 Staff Picks, which praised the record for its ability to “maintain a highly individual identity without needing to take refuge in pre-post-genre musical silos.” The magazine lauded the first track, “Chase the Stars,” not only for its “dazzling eclecticism” combining opera, hip hop, and jazz, but also for Bellor’s singing. The composition was awarded The American Prize (2016) in the orchestral category. *Reflections at Dusk* (Innova Recordings, 2019), showcases instrumental music inspired by the Nevada sunsets; *Jazz Weekly* described it has having “evocative musical images.” Bellor’s collaboration with the percussion quartet *Clocks in Motion* culminated in the release of her album *Oneira* (Aerocade Music, 2022). Her music was hailed by Textura as “rousing and infectious,” characterized by a distinct expressive signature transcending traditional genre boundaries. The title track, *Oneira*, served as the soundtrack to an animation created by Christine Banna. The music video was featured on *I Care if You Listen*, and it received screenings at multiple film festivals.

Her newest album, *Long These Days*, was released on August 16, 2024 by EMITHA’s prestigious label, Lexicon Classics. She is featured as the composer, pianist, and producer. Collaborating with soprano Olivia Yokers, bassist Norman Espinoza, and electric guitarist Tasos Peltekis, the concept album comprises art songs and instrumental interludes. Within a month after its release, tracks *Echo* and *Postlude: Resurgence* were featured on Marvin Rosen’s *Classical Discoveries* radio program and her music video for the title track was featured on Textura. In addition to the release of her album, Bellor was one of the resident composers who served on the faculty at the International Alba Music Composition program in May 2024, where she taught lessons, gave a presentation on her recording project, and heard her composition *A Grey Dream* performed by the Soli Chamber Ensemble.