



December 2020 Newsletter

From The Board

Dear Friends,

Welcome. You are probably reading this because you, like many of us, are a member, leader, or community beneficiary of a medical orchestra. The National Association of Medical Orchestras was created to serve you! Our mission is to foster community and collaboration among medical orchestras by serving as a resource and advocate for medical orchestras nationwide. Through these actions, we hope to nurture an interconnected community of medical orchestras that inspires and enriches through shared knowledge and expertise.

Put simply, we want to get medical orchestras across the country in contact to strengthen arts in medicine.

Within these digital pages you will find our inaugural quarterly newsletter, with which we hope to begin connecting the participants, leadership, and communities of medical orchestras around the country. This issue collects recent news, announcements, member profiles, and a few other odds and ends from medical orchestras nationwide.

This issue was created with help from many contributors, including our new membership. If you have an idea or something to share, please let us know. We welcome suggestions and contributions for this newsletter and the organization in general. Together we can build a network of knowledge so that established orchestras can grow and new orchestras can establish.

Please visit www.thenamo.org to learn more, and get in touch at info@thenamo.org.

Sincerely,

The NAMO Interim Board



Congratulations to Tiffany Tsay, Virginia Commonwealth University medical student and member of the VCU Health Orchestra. She is one of 30 scholarship recipients nationwide chosen for a yearlong leadership institute hosted by the American Academy of Family Physicians Foundation. Read about it [here](#).

Nebraska Medical Orchestra



The Nebraska Medical Orchestra was founded in 2018 as a collaborative partnership between the University of Nebraska Medical Center (UNMC) and the University of Nebraska at Omaha (UNO) School of Music. While a few musician-physicians had expressed their desire to have an ensemble at UNMC, psychiatrist Steven Wengel, MD, saw one potential antidote to the increasing levels of stress and burnout among healthcare professionals. “Doctors and nurses are feeling the pinch. What can we do to refresh their souls, recharge their batteries?” he asked in an interview given to the *Omaha World Herald*. As Associate Vice Chancellor for Campus Wellness at UNMC and UNO, Wengel made the introduction between interested parties at the UNO School of Music and UNMC, including Matthew Rizzo, MD, Professor and Chair of the Department of Neurological Sciences at UNMC, and Washington Garcia, DMA, Director of the UNO School of Music. With over 120 responses to a UNMC and Nebraska Medicine survey measuring interest in joining a medical orchestra, the Nebraska Medical Orchestra was born.

Although its founding mission was to reduce levels of stress and burnout among faculty, staff, and students of the health professions, NMO provides a musical outlet to the participants, adds to the already regular public musical performances within Nebraska Medicine hospital buildings, helps to create community, and simply adds to the “fun quotient” on campus. Dr. Sarah Holstein, a physician-scientist who specializes in the

treatment of multiple myeloma and related plasma cell dyscrasias, is an accomplished flutist in NMO. “I love playing music. It uses a different part of my brain than the part that’s constantly worrying about work-related things or patients,” she said in the *Omaha World Herald* interview. “That goes away, and I can focus on the music and the joy of playing with others.” She has also met people she normally would not encounter at work, such as Dr. Melinda Chen, a pediatric oncologist at Children’s Hospital and Medical Center of Omaha. They have been playing flute duets together for fun since meeting in NMO, and have both been featured soloists with the orchestra.

The creation of the Nebraska Medical Orchestra has prompted other musical organizations to sprout up at UNMC. Medical students started an a capella singing group called Doc’Appella. Other students created an instrumental and vocal ensemble that arranges and performs popular tunes. Just recently, another medical student brought Musicians for Healing to UNMC, an organization she previously created to bring music to patients in healthcare settings. All of this musical activity has even prompted the University to fund a tenure-track position, Assistant Professor/Director of Orchestral Activities in Music & Medicine, now occupied by Matthew Brooks, DMA.

The Nebraska Medical Orchestra has grown to involve healthcare-related musicians from UNMC, Nebraska Medicine, Clarkson College, CHI Health, private practices in greater Omaha, and even musicians from as far away as Lincoln, Nebraska. With an emphasis on wellness and inclusion, NMO welcomes musicians of all backgrounds and experience levels. In just two years, NMO has partnered with the Omaha Symphony for performances and educational opportunities and has performed at the Holland Performing Arts Center, UNMC’s Buffett Cancer Center, and UNO’s Jan and John Christensen Concert Hall.

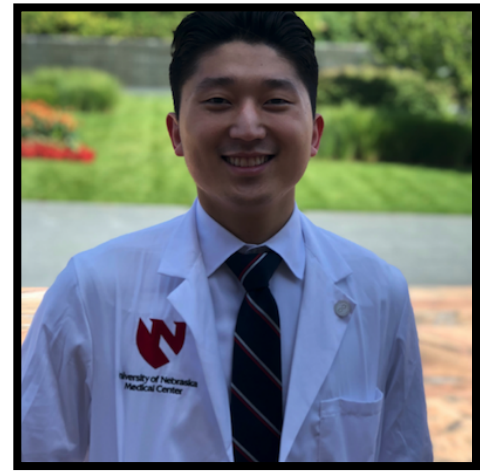
Los Angeles Doctors Symphony Orchestra

The Los Angeles Doctors Symphony Orchestra is one of the oldest medical community orchestras in the country. Over the years the orchestra has broadened its membership to encompass musicians with diverse backgrounds outside of medicine, as well as dedicated amateur musicians. Our mission is to offer high-quality affordable concerts to the diverse communities of Southern California, to support important medical causes and partner with groups that support young classical musicians, and to encourage musical growth and fellowship among our members.

Our 67th season (2019 – 2020) was a great success, despite its truncation by the COVID-19 pandemic. This year we undertook our first collaboration with the Los Angeles Lawyer's Philharmonic and Chorus in a spectacular holiday concert at the historic Ebell Theater. During this pandemic we continue to maintain our orchestral identity through weekly Zoom meetings to review and critique prior performances and discuss topics of interest, including a recent session with the eminent Leonard Slatkin, also attended by our colleagues from Boston's Longwood Symphony Orchestra.

We are thrilled to announce being awarded the American Prize for the best recorded performance in the American Prize National Nonprofit Competitions in the Performing Arts, winning first-place among 14 finalists in the community orchestra category. Our musical director, Dr. Ivan Shulman, celebrated his 30th season with the orchestra and was also awarded a finalist-honorable mention in the American Prize, community orchestra conducting category. Bravo, Ivan!

The orchestra is always searching out passionate musicians. For more information, including prior performance pictures and videos, we invite you to visit our website at www.ladso.org, or contact us at info@ladso.org.



Featured member: Violinist Jake Son has been a member of the Nebraska Medical Orchestra for the past year. He is currently a 2nd year MD/PhD student at the University of Nebraska Medical Center and is originally from San Diego.

What drew you to music, and when did you start playing violin?

I grew up appreciating music, as my dad played the saxophone and guitar around the house and my brother was always singing. I first saw my cousin playing the violin when I was 5 years old and took one lesson before deciding it wasn't for me. I tested out the violin again in 5th grade with my elementary school orchestra. I loved playing and developed a healthy obsession with music.

What musical opportunities have you pursued?

In high school, I played with the San Diego Young Artists Symphony and then with All About Music under Mary Gerard, who inspired me to pursue and to love music. She gave me the countless opportunities to learn, from performing with the San Diego Opera to participating in masterclasses. I joined the Duke University Orchestra for just my freshman year then continued private lessons with Professor Eric Pritchard for the rest of undergrad. At the University of Nebraska Medical Center, I play violin in assisted living facilities with a group called Musicians For Healing and also play with the Nebraska Medical Orchestra.

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What intersections do you see between music and science?

As a biomedical engineering student in undergrad I've been asked this before, and it's hard for me to give a good answer. I don't really think of music and science as two different parts of my life. Two things that have been personally important in both are the willingness to make mistakes and mentorship. Each allows me to improvise and explore new techniques every day, which I enjoy.

Why did you join the Nebraska Medical Orchestra?

One of my favorite things about the violin is that it gives me the opportunity to play a small part in a larger musical group. I wish I had continued orchestra in college, and Nebraska Medical Orchestra allowed me to continue learning from and practicing with others.



Featured Member: Frances S. Celi, MD, MHS - Virginia Commonwealth University Health Orchestra

The VCU Health Orchestra was created in 2017 by the efforts of Francesco S. Celi, MD and Theresa Erichsen, RN. After a chance conversation, they realized they were both musicians and had interest in expanding available performance opportunities. Dr. Celi knew that several academic health centers had created medical orchestras, and with Ms. Erichsen's expertise in project management at VCU Health, together they got their own medical orchestra off the ground. As a result, the VCU Health Orchestra was born with a mission to promote wellness, enhance relationships among team members, patients, families, visitors and the community, and support

fundraising for local-health related charities.

Dr. Celi has been a violinist in the VCU Health Orchestra since the beginning. In his medical career, he is the William G. Blackard Professor of Medicine, Chair of the Division of Endocrinology Diabetes and Metabolism, and Director of the Virginia Commonwealth University Health Diabetes Program. This year he was named one of *Richmond Magazine's* 2020 Top Docs. In an interview¹ with *Richmond Magazine* he discussed how playing is "a counterpoint to his high pressure and detail-focused career" and brings joy to his life beyond what he does in his day job.

Dr. Celi is also part of a team of investigators researching the physiology of violin playing, including the effects of experience on energy expenditure under stress. "The goal of the study is to assess how the body reacts to the stress while performing a demanding psychomotor skill, in this case playing violin," said Dr. Celi. "We are recruiting violin players who are willing to play a set of music while we measure their energy expenditure in a metabolic chamber. The hypothesis is that the more experienced players will use their body more efficiently and will require less energy to play the music". Dr. Celi explained that the data from these volunteer violinists could have many parallels in medicine, such as how surgeons with differing levels of experience use energy and movement during complicated procedures.

We are proud of our very own Dr. Celi and his many accomplishments. We are honored to have him as a member of the orchestra and a medical professional in the Virginia Commonwealth University.

To read the full article in *Richmond Magazine* featuring Dr. Celi, click [here](#).

Virtual Performances and Articles

- [VCU Health Orchestra Performance of Bring Him Home with Tenor Soloist Pablo Talamante](#)
- [VCU Health Orchestra Virtual Performance of Jupiter Chorale](#)
- [Stanford Medicine and the Muse "Stuck at Home" Concert Series](#)
- [About Stanford's "Stuck at Home" Concert Series](#)

Meet the Interim Board Members



Mary Perkinson, D.M.A. - Newsletter Coordinator

An artist, educator, and community leader, Dr. Mary Perkinson began her violin studies at the age of 5 in the Philadelphia public schools and has been a visiting artist/presenter in Europe, Asia, South America, and 35 U.S. states. Recent artistic collaborations and projects include recitals of the six J.S. Bach sonatas for baroque violin and a national tour of Timeless Music, Timeless Disease; Classical Composers and Consumption, a collaborative recital with microbiologist Dr. Yolande Chan. In 2009 she founded Sound Health; Bringing Music to Medicine, a program that contributes to the environment of care through live music and has served as a mentor for the Nebraska Medical Orchestra since its inception in 2018.

Mathew Brooks, D.M.A. – Outreach

Matthew J. Brooks is Assistant Professor and Director of Orchestral Activities in Music & Medicine at University of Nebraska at Omaha (UNO) where he serves on the School of Music faculty, but also the UNO Medical Humanities and the University of Nebraska Medical Center (UNMC) College of Medicine faculties. As part of a collaboration between UNMC and the UNO School of Music, Dr. Brooks was critical in creating the Nebraska Medical Orchestra in 2018, for which he is the founding music director and conductor. He has guest conducted and presented across the United States, Latin America, and Europe on topics ranging from conducting pedagogy to medical humanities, and is currently engaged in research related to music and wellness.



Matt Lordo - Strategic Planning

Matt Lordo is an MD/PhD student in the Ohio State University Medical Scientist Training Program. He holds a bachelor's degree in Biomedical Science from the Ohio State University. He has served as an executive board member of the Ohio State University Professional School Orchestra since 2017. Since 2012, he has also been a member of the Dublin Silver Band, a British-Style Brass band based out of Dublin, Ohio. The band competes in national and international events each year, most frequently in the *US Open Brass Band Championship*, where it has won the award for "Most Entertaining Band" on a record seven occasions. In 2015, DSB placed 1st overall at the US Open, which earned the band the opportunity to compete with the top bands in the world at the November 2016 *Brass In Concert Championship* in Gateshead, England

(one of the most prestigious by-invitation-only events in the brass band world). More recently, the band was the winner of the 2017 Dublin Festival of Brass Shield, the 2017 & 2018 Ohio Brass Arts Festival Cup, and the 2019 North American Brass Band Championships (First Section). Matt is a member of the Ohio State University Professional School Orchestra and is also a member of the National Virtual Medical Orchestra.



Gabriella Rizzo - Development

Gabriella Rizzo is a third-year medical student in the MD/MBA program at the University of Nebraska Medical Center. Prior to attending medical school she worked as a writer and editor at Becker's Healthcare in Chicago and a fellowship coordinator at Rush University Medical Center for the departments of Vascular and Cardiothoracic Surgery, also in Chicago. She holds a bachelor's degree in Ecology and Evolutionary Biology from Princeton University in Princeton, NJ. In her free time she enjoys playing violin (and sometimes viola), cooking, gardening, and reading. She is a member of the National Virtual Medical Orchestra and the Nebraska Medical Orchestra.

Nicoletta Moss, M.M. - Webmaster

Nicoletta Moss is a versatile musician, conductor, and arts activist. Currently, Nicoletta is a part of the student services team at Levine Music, a community music school in the Washington D.C. Area. Previously, Nicoletta was a graduate assistant at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, where she conducted the Symphony Orchestra, Sinfonia, and Casella Sinfonietta. Along with a team of faculty and staff, she coordinated outreach programs that reached over 4,000 students and 100 teachers annually. Recent engagements include positions with the Richmond Symphony Youth Orchestra

Greensboro Symphony OrKIDStra Program, UNCG Summer Music Camp, JMU Spring String Thing, JMU Club Orchestra, and Blue Lake Fine Arts Camp.



Rachael Neff - Newsletter Design

Rachael Neff is a Research Data Technician in Pathology and Cytotechnology student in the School of Allied Health Professionals at the University of Nebraska Medical Center. She holds a bachelor's degree in Computer Science from the University of Nebraska at Omaha where she served as concertmaster of the Heartland Philharmonic and Chamber Orchestras. She was a soloist with the Heartland Philharmonic Orchestra in 2017 as a winner of the Concerto/Aria competition and was a recipient of the Scott Scholars String Quartet Scholarship. Serving as co-concertmaster, Rachael is a member of the Nebraska Medical Orchestra. She is also a member of the National Virtual Medical Orchestra.



Submit Here for our Next Quarterly Newsletter!

Interested in submitting a contribution or being in a story for our next quarterly newsletter? We are currently accepting announcements, feature stories, performance videos, programs, research, tips, and other content suitable for members of other medical orchestras nationwide. Click [here](#) to fill out a Newsletter Interest Form, or contact the Newsletter Coordinator, Mary Perkinson at info@thenamo.org.

The next submission deadline is February 1, 2021.