



**Arthur Satz**  
**Department of Music**

**Graduation**  
**Ceremony**

***Class of 2026***

May 16, 2026

9:00AM

Sloan Performing Arts Center

# Program



Welcome and Introduction of Faculty

Matt BaileyShea

Reflections from the Class of 2026

Grace Widjaja

Student Performance

Gwendoline Saaire

Announcement of Special Prizes and Awards

Bruce Frank

Ward Woodbury Award

Kim Kowalke Academic Achievement Award

Awarding of Diplomas

Jason Titus

Valediction

Jennifer Kyker

Closing Remarks

Matt BaileyShea

*Please join us for a reception immediately following our ceremony in the lobby.*

# *Max Blechman*

**BA Music**  
**BA Linguistics**



Hometown: New York, NY

Why Music? I enjoyed playing in my school's jazz band, as well as making and discussing music with friends

Future Plans: Currently applying to graduate school for linguistics.

Favorite Courses: Jazz Ensemble, Music of Black Americans

Involvement on Campus: WRUR, Hillel, Cards Club, Quiz Bowl, LUC, MIF, Pep Band

Thanks to: My parents (Lisa and Chuck Blechman), Khai Wicks and his family, Sam Mattson, the entire music department, the entire linguistics department, and Prof. Steven Rozenski

Well-wishes for the class of 2026: May you make something I find out about!

Advice for future music students: Don't let the tech overlords win! Make your own music with your own mind, hands, time, and humanity!

# *Aaron Do*

## **BA Music BA Russian Computer Science Minor**



Hometown: Sparta, NJ

Why Music?: I love it!

Future Plans: MEd in K-12 Computer Science Education at the Warner School of Education

Favorite Courses: It's hard to say, since I loved them all. The music theory is probably my favorite area of music, and the area I've studied the most.

Involvement on Campus: I lived on MIF for two years, and did various ensembles and student clubs. My favorite memory was playing the reed books for ROC Players with Joey when we did Chicago. That show was so much fun!

Thanks to: Mom, Dad, Ellie for helping me get through school!

Additional thoughts: The same group I sat with on the first day of my first semester -- those students in Theory I with Dr. BaileyShea, have become my closest college friends and suitemates. Thank you guys for an awesome 4 years!

# *Emma Loiacono*

**BA Music**  
**BA Psychology**  
**AME Minor**



Hometown: Ithaca, NY

**Why Music?:** Music has always been something I'm interested in and something that brings me joy! I grew up loving to sing, play piano, and write songs, and I would do everything by ear. Coming to college, I wanted to gain more technical knowledge of music and be able to understand why it works the way it does! But mostly my music courses have all been so hands-on, creative, and fun, that I just couldn't stop taking them once I started.

**Future Plans:** I will be attending Nazareth University's graduate Music Therapy program!

**Favorite Courses:** I really loved Theory IV Analysis of Song with Professor BaileyShea, Keyboard Skills with Professor Frank, and voice lessons at Eastman with all my incredible voice teachers.

**Involvement on Campus:** I was in the a cappella group After Hours! I was on the music direction team for 2.5 years and loved every second of it. One of my favorite memories is when we got to perform at a local wedding (and rickroll all the attendees).

**Thanks to:** I want to thank my family, and my friends who have become family, for being the best and coolest people in the whole world and always supporting me in every single thing I do (and proofreading all the emails I am too scared to send). I also want to thank everyone in the music department for the amazing experience I've had these past four years!

**Well Wishes to the Class of 2026:** It was fun doing this together, good luck with everything in the future!

**Advice for future music students:** Don't be afraid to ask questions in class, even when it seems like everyone else already knows the answer.

# *Haoyu (Ester) Luo*

**BA Music**  
**BA Computer Science**  
**Music Cognition Minor**

Hometown: Guangzhou, China

Why Music?: Intuition

Future Plans: Master or RA

Favorite Courses: Gospel Ensemble, Ngoma Music, Music Theories

Study abroad experience: Went to Japan for a semester. Favorite memories: delicious food and jazz bar!

Involvement on Campus: widely explore some! e.g. roc lab, csug, astro club, research ambassador etc. Ppls are all lovely ;D

Thanks to: Thanks so much for all faculty in musc dept - nicest ppl in the campus!

Well-wishes for the class of 2026: Wish they could enjoy music throughout their lives!

Advice for future music students: Widely explore and have fun :-)



# *Elana Memke*

**BA Music**  
**BS Neuroscience**



Hometown: Bainbridge Island, WA

Why Music?: I wanted to continue playing my instrument and I ended up loving the music department and wanted to do as much as I could!

Future Plans: Work as a Research Technician at Seattle Children's Research Institute

Favorite Courses: I loved Music Theory I and my Black American Music course!

Involvement on Campus: I was involved in the wind and jazz ensembles! I loved playing our Prism concert with everyone from all campus musical groups.

Thanks to: Bill Tiberio and Dr. Frank!

# Joseph Stempien



## BA Music BS Environmental Science

Hometown: Hamlin, NY

**Why Music?** In addition to a career in the atmospheric sciences, I have professional aspirations as a composer of large ensemble music and as a local bandleader.

**Future Plans:** Continue to professionally write, record, and conduct in the Rochester area while pursuing a Masters' of Science in Meteorology.

**Favorite Courses:** Theory I, II, IV with Prof. BaileyShea; Conducting with Dr. Powell

**Involvement on Campus:** I have been involved in all manner of ASDM performing ensembles (Jazz, Brass Choir, Wind Symphony, URSO, URCO), though my favorite would have to be the University of Rochester Jazz Ensemble. Separately, I have also been a member of the Ice Core and Atmospheric Chemistry laboratory.

**Favorite memory:** Either conducting the 2025 Meliora Weekend finale on the Prism concert, or playing geography games with my Theory I classmates in the Dewey Hall lobby between Theory and our next class.

**Thanks to:** All faculty of the department have been nothing short of amazing, and are all deserving of thanks and appreciation. I would, in particular, like to thank Dr. Powell for his diligent mentorship in conducting and composition (and accompanying me to Chicago to receive an award at the Midwest Clinic), Sara Rembert for her willingness to work with me as I undertook numerous funded projects (often with complicated paper trails), and Prof. BaileyShea for always being so welcoming and believing in me (and, unbelievably, connecting me to a gig in the Hamptons).

**Well-wishes for the class of 2026:** It has been the privilege of a lifetime to go on this journey alongside you. I have nothing but confidence that you will prosper wherever you go next!

**Advice for future music students:** Your professors are nothing short of extraordinary and are masters at their particular areas of expertise. Utilize those connections, and you will succeed.

**Additional thoughts:** Choose your seat in Theory I very carefully, because your adjacent classmates might just become your friends for years!

# *Aminya Suwannatat*

## **BA Music**



Hometown: Port Washington, NY

**Why Music?:** I originally went to college with the mentality that I should keep music separate from my career path and have it remain something I engage with during my free time, out of fear of "ruining" it due to how personal of a relationship I have with it. I started out with music as my minor and as I continued learning more and more about it, I came to the realization that it would be something that I can find enjoyment and curiosity in no matter what. Because of that, I switched into a music major my junior year and am planning to pursue it professionally.

**Future Plans:** I've been applying to grad school for music therapy, which I intend to pursue as a career path. I also want to continue performing live music throughout my life, as it's something I've enjoyed for as long as I can remember.

**Favorite Courses:** My favorite courses were Theory IV: Analysis of Song as well as Arranging, where I had the opportunity to tap into my creative side and better familiarize myself with the process of writing my own work.

**Involvement on Campus:** In the Fall semester of 2023, I became involved with No Jackets Required, the student-run live performance org. Ever since, this club has been very important to me, having taught me confidence, diligence, and leadership. I ended up being on the club's e-board for for two years and have enjoyed it more than any job I've ever had— I've told people that I would have pursued NJR as a professional career if I could. This club has been a source of joy and hope for me when everything else wasn't going well, and I owe so much of who I am now to NJR and the friends I've met through it, and for that I am very grateful.

**Thanks to:** I'd like to thank my parents for their encouragement of my musical endeavors from a young age, as well as all my private teachers who helped me explore my potential as a musician. I'd also like to thank Professor Covach for all of his guidance in navigating music as a career, as well as Sara Rembert and Professor BaileyShea for their support and patience as I figured out that was where I belonged. Finally, I'd like to thank the friends that I have made throughout my undergrad years, who have had my back through the roughest parts of it and have been there for the best.

**Well Wishes to the Class of 2026:** I hope they get to accomplish everything they aspire to, and that they remember that it's never too late to start over if they realize there's a better path for them, which is something I was able to successfully experience during my time here.

# Grace Widjaja

**BA Music**  
**BS Biochemistry**



Hometown: Fargo, ND & Colorado Springs, CO

**Why Music?:** Music has grown to be an outlet for expression for me. Music has helped me meet some of my best friends and allowed me to meet the most wonderful people in the various ensembles I've played in. It is because of music that I explored beyond playing in a Symphony. I learned under grad students at Eastman, played cello, viola, and cello on viola in musicals, got involved with logistics and marketing for orchestra concerts, and put together string quartets.

**Future Plans:** I plan to pursue my PhD in Biochemistry and Molecular Biology at Michigan State University to study the intersection of photosynthetic microbes, biochemistry, and bioengineering. I plan to take my music along with me (maybe I'll be playing to my cyanobacteria in the lab, idk)

**Favorite Courses:** MUSC 111 and 112 with Prof. BaileyShea

**Involvement on Campus:** URSO, ROC Players, OBOC, Chamber Ensembles, UR Orchestras Committee

**Thanks to:** Thank you to Prof. BaileyShea for putting up with my unannounced drop-ins and for being willing to talk to me about anything and everything. Thank you to Dr. Powell for being the first person to refer to me as Dr. Grace (and probably confusing the first-years), but more so for his endless support in pushing me to be a better musician, a better leader, and a bigger dreamer. Thank you to Sara Rembert for also putting up with me and for being able to do literal magic and make our ideas come to life.

**Well-wishes for the class of 2026:** I'll see you soon guys :P Keep exploring and keep pushing boundaries. You guys are the coolest people I know, I want to be that cool one day and I am honored to be able to call you guys my friends.

**Advice for future music students:** Be creative and ask so many questions. That's what music is all about. The best part of music is the exploration part and the people you meet, especially in this department, are incredibly supportive of all of their students.

**Additional thoughts:** MIF1.0, MIF1.5, (MIF1.7?) and MIF2.0. It's crazy to look back at how far we've come... Also that one time freshman year when almost all the MUSC 112 kids ran into each other at the formal. Naturally we stood in a circle and conducted whatever songs were playing and took a group pic for Prof. BaileyShea to see in class the next day.

# ***Music Minors***

Génia Esthelle Esperanza Abbey

Ali Al Qazzaz

Louis L. Bailey

Isabella Luisa Briggs

Marian Cora Cespedes-Montalvo

Yichi Chen

Alyssa Adela Cisneros

Ashlyn Nicole Kau'ilani Clapprood

John Fix

Michael Thomas George

Trisha George

Lily A. Harrigan-Laquercia

Olaniyi Adunni Harty

Gabriel Edward Hoag

Laura Aimée Houle

Trần Quang Huy

Luis Oswaldo Ixcamparij Solis

Joshua Sejin Jung

Anna Lauren Kim

Colby Maxwell Kramer

Nathaniel James Levas

Leo Liang

Sasha Belle Lifchez

Cordelia Lucy March

Isaac Lincoln Mathias

Natalie Rose Opdahl

Elena Perez

Makayla Marie Press

Renae Josephine Spangler

Jessie Rose Talasco

Brian Simon Taliano

Zachary Schuyler Tan

Xinyi Xiao

Madeleine Gabrielle Zimmerman

# 2025-2026 Faculty

**Matt BaileyShea**, *Professor of Music and Chair*  
*Associate Professor of Music Theory, Eastman School of Music*

**Kerfala Bangoura**, *Director, West African Drumming Ensemble*

**John Covach**, *Professor of Music*  
*Professor of Music Theory, Eastman School of Music*  
*Director, Institute for Popular Music*

**Julius Dicks**, *Director, Gospel Choir*

**Bruce Frank**, *Senior Lecturer*

**Naomi Gregory**, *Lecturer*

**Sheena Hui**, *Instructor, Coordinator of Chamber Ensembles*

**Cory Hunter**, *Assistant Professor of Music*  
*Assistant Professor of Musicology, Eastman School of Music*

**Hanisha Kulothparan**, *Assistant Professor of Music*  
*Assistant Professor of Music Theory, Eastman School of Music*

**Jennifer Kyker**, *Professor of Music*  
*Associate Professor of Ethnomusicology, Eastman School of Music*

**Carson Landry**, *University Carillonist*

**Honey Meconi**, *Arthur Satz Professor of Music*  
*Professor of Musicology, Eastman School of Music*

**Christopher Meeker**, *Instructor*

**Bruce Pilato**, *Instructor*

**Mark Powell**, *Lecturer and Director of Orchestral Activities*

**Philip Silvey**, *Director, Treble Chorus*  
*Associate Professor of Music Education, Eastman School of Music*

**William Tiberio**, *Director, Wind Symphony, Jazz Ensemble, and Brass Choir*

**Jason Titus**, *Senior Lecturer*

**Lee Wright**, *Director, Chamber Singers and Concert Choir*