



# EASTMAN

## SCHOOL OF MUSIC

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### UNIVERSITY of ROCHESTER

## 22 OUTSTANDING EASTMAN WOMEN FOR 2020

March 6, 2020



## International Women's Day

Sunday, March 8, is **International Women's Day**. In honor of female musicians around the world. To observe the year 2020, we wanted to highlight 20 outstanding women among thousands of Eastman female alumni, students, faculty members, and friends. It turns out there are so many possible choices we had to have 22 this time! As you read, bear in mind that this alphabetical list represents only a tiny fraction of the Eastman women who have changed and are changing the world of music. (To see our 2019 list, [click here](#).)

Congratulations to all of them!



While an Eastman student, singer **Veena Akamia-Makia** '18E (MM) was a winner of the Links, Incorporated, Scholarship, which recognizes the talent and academic achievement of an African-American scholar musician. "I want to be the one who introduces [children] to opera and classical music, the one who plants that seed. That is why I am developing my craft and why I want to be an artist." Read an interview with Veena [here](#).



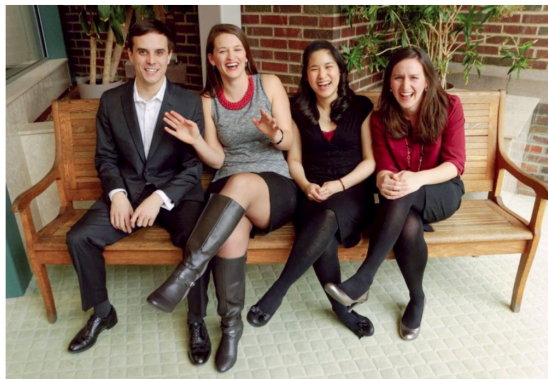
**Joan Beal** '84E is a prominent singer and Los Angeles studio vocalist – including TV and movie scores by her husband, Emmy winner Jeff Beal. (The couple is shown on the red carpet for a recent Emmy Awards show.) In 2015, a generous gift from the Beals established Eastman's Beal Institute for Film Music and Contemporary Media. (Read about it [here](#).) "Jeff and I firmly believe that film and contemporary media studies can be included ... alongside traditional offerings."



**Roslyn Weisberg Cominsky** '22E (1901-2000) was an accomplished pianist and the first graduate (female or male) of the Eastman School of Music. **Cominsky Promenade** – the school's second-floor hallway and lounge, and a gallery of portraits of retired faculty members – is named after her.



**Lauren Haley** '13E is a violinist and violist with her own string studio in Houston, Texas. She is also the author of *Kids Aren't Lazy: Developing Motivation and Talent through Music*. "Motivation and talent are not innate, fixed in place," she writes. "Let's define motivation as the learned rush of joy from overcoming past difficulties as one embarks on new tasks." [Click this link to hear Lauren during a recent visit to Eastman.](#)



Soprano **Caitleen Kahn** '15E (MM), mezzo-soprano **Megan Moore** '15E, and pianist **Florence Mak** '17E (DMA) are three of the four founders of the **Lynx Project**, dedicated to exploring the boundaries of the traditional vocal recital format. In 2017, Lynx created the **Autism Advocacy Project**, settings by contemporary composers of texts by teenagers with autism. (Shown left to right are Lynx co-founder Steven Humes, Caitleen, Florence, and Megan.)



**Jessie Kneisel** (1904-1992) was a professor of German from 1931 to 1976 and also Dean of Women from 1933 to 1945. Her love of German culture is reflected in the **Jessie Kneisel Prize** in German Lieder, awarded each spring to outstanding student vocalists and pianists.



As **founders of the Verdehr Trio**, clarinetist **Elsa Ludewig-Verdehr** '58E (MM), '64E (DMA) and her husband, violinist Walter Verdehr, have commissioned over 100 chamber composition and concertos from contemporary composers all over the world. All three pianists who have played in the trio are Eastman graduates, most recently **Sylvia Roederer** '80E.



Sopranos **Erin Morley** '02E and **Renée Fleming** '83E (MM) have created illustrious careers in opera. Each of them has appeared numerous times at the Metropolitan Opera, and they finally performed together in a well-received 2017 production of Richard Strauss's *Der Rosenkavalier*, with Erin as Sophie and Renée as the Marschallin. This Met production was broadcast live in HD to movie theaters worldwide, and the recording was nominated for a 2019 Grammy Award.



Eastman students **Naomi Nakanishi**, **Olivia Galante**, and **Luisa Hidalgo**, are the founders of **Women Mean Business**, provides musical training and mentorship to young female and non-binary musicians in Rochester. At Eastman's recent *Gender Equity in Music* conference, Naomi and other Eastman students led a series of interactive scenarios where participants practiced using LGBTQ+/POC-friendly language.





The eclectic career of **Maria Newman** '84E includes composing concert and film music, playing the violin in recitals and on movie soundtracks, and directing the Malibu Friends of Music series, which presents more than 40 concerts yearly. Maria is shown during **her residency at Eastman in September 2019**.

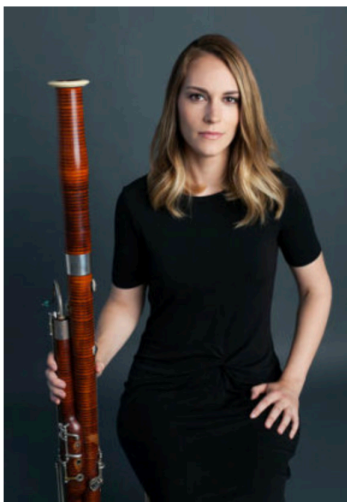


Pianists **Miki Sawada** '12E (MM) and **Susan Zhang** '13E (MM) have found ingenious ways to bring music to different areas. In her Gather Hear Alaska tour in 2017, Miki gave piano recitals throughout the state (top photo). Susan's Concert Truck has a grand piano that she drives to different cities for public recitals (bottom photo).



**Alexa Tarantino** '14E is an acclaimed jazz saxophonist, composer, and (as founder of the Rockport Jazz Camp) music educator. Alexa was voted one of the top saxophonists of 2019 by *JazzTimes* magazine; [click here](#) to read a *JazzTimes* interview about her and her band Lioness.





Oboist **Emily Tsai** '11E and bassoonist **Kara LaMoure** '10E are members of the quintet **WindSync**, which won the Concert Artists Guild and Fischhoff Chamber Music Competitions. WindSync will be here at Eastman from March 17 through 19 for the 2020 James E. Clark Chamber Music Residency at Eastman.



**Marian McPartland** (1918-2013) was a prominent English-American jazz pianist who had close relationships with such Eastman faculty members as Jeff Campbell and Harold Danko, and also with students, many of whom (like Jeremy Siskind '08E, pictured with her) appeared on her NPR program *Piano Jazz*. (You can read an interview with Campbell and Danko's reminiscences of McPartland [here](#).)