

## 2025 WMC Competition – Judges' Bios

**Ayn Balija** Associate Professor of Viola at the University of Virginia, Ayn Balija serves as the Principal Violist of the Charlottesville Symphony and violist of the Rivanna String Quartet. She regularly performs with the Richmond Symphony, Williamsburg Symphony, and Roanoke Symphony, and was invited to tour with the Pittsburgh Symphony on their East Coast Tour, including a performance at Carnegie Hall. An avid supporter of new music, Dr. Balija has performed and recorded numerous orchestral premieres. She founded Violapalooza, an annual, all-violist day, featuring guest violist artists including Kim Kashkashian, George Taylor, and Paul Neubauer. Ayn Balija holds a Bachelor of Music degree from the Oberlin Conservatory of Music, Master of Music degree from The Cleveland Institute of Music and Doctorate of Musical Arts from James Madison University. A committed teacher, Dr. Balija maintains a private violist studio, gives master classes, teaches at Governors Schools for the Arts and summer music camps, and coaches chamber music.

**Adam Carter** is the principal cellist of the Charlottesville Symphony and an Associate Professor at the University of Virginia's McIntire Department of Music. He received his Bachelor's degree and Master's degree with distinction from the Eastman School of Music, completed his Doctoral degree at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and was a top prizewinner at the 1998 Fischhoff National Chamber Music Competition. A founding member of the Tarab Cello Ensemble, Dr. Carter traveled the country playing new works for cello octet. The ensemble's accolades include grants from the Howard Hanson Institute for American Music, the Foreman Institute for the Creative and Performing Arts, and the Fromm Foundation. The Ensemble has recorded on Bridge Records and Albany Records. Dr. Carter maintains an active career as a recitalist, chamber, and orchestral musician. Recent engagements include performances at UNC-Chapel Hill, Wake Forest University, the University of Virginia, Randolph College, Bridgewater College, and Hampden-Sydney College. He currently performs with the Rivanna String Quartet, the Artemis Duo, and the Virginia Sinfonietta.

**Lise Keiter** has performed as a recitalist, collaborative artist, and soloist with orchestras across the United States and Europe. She is Professor of Piano at Mary Baldwin University, where she also serves as Music Department Chair. At Mary Baldwin, she developed an interest in the music of women composers, and she has curated programs featuring works for piano by Florence Price and Clara Schumann, among others. Frequently in demand as a lecturer, adjudicator, and masterclass clinician, she is active in many organizations, including MTNA (Music Teachers National Association) and CMS (College Music Society). She is committed to furthering the education of young musicians and maintains a studio of high school students, many of whom have been accepted into prestigious music programs at the college and graduate levels. Dr. Keiter earned a Bachelor of Music degree from the Oberlin Conservatory, and a Master's Degree and Doctorate of Music at Indiana University, where she received an award for outstanding teaching.

**Kate Tamarkin** is Professor Emeritus in the McIntire Department of Music at the University of Virginia. Described by Leonard Bernstein as “extremely musical, a vivid personality, and a strong performer,” she has had a distinguished career of 35 years as an orchestral conductor. She is Music Director Laureate of the Charlottesville Symphony, which she conducted from 2006 to 2017. Formerly Associate Conductor of the Dallas Symphony, she has held music directorships with the Monterey, East Texas, Vermont, and Fox Valley Symphony Orchestras. Kate Tamarkin holds a Bachelor of Music Education degree from Chapman University in California, a Master’s Degree in Orchestral Conducting from Northwestern University, and a Doctor of Musical Arts degree from the Peabody Conservatory of Music. She is a Certified Music Practitioner through the Music for Healing and Transition Program and plays the Celtic harp as a Musician in Residence at the University of Virginia Medical Center.

#### COMPOSITION JUDGES

**Seung-Hye Kim** is a pianist and composer of acoustic and electroacoustic music. Her works have received awards from competitions staged by the Korean Electro-Acoustic Music Society and the Italy Percussive Arts Society and have been selected for presentation at numerous conferences in the US and abroad. An active performer, Ms Kim has premiered numerous works for solo piano as well as works for piano and computer. Her performance background is instilled with a particular interest in other performing arts. One of her collaborations, “Global Drift,” for real-time audio-visual installation/performance, was performed in Brisbane, Australia as part of the international large-scale artistic project *Accented Body*. Ms Kim received a BA in Piano Performance from Seoul National University, MA in Electroacoustic Music Composition and PhD in Music Composition from the University of Florida. She is a lecturer of composition and keyboard at Christopher Newport University in Newport News, Virginia.

**Maxwell Tfirm** is a composer and performer based in Newport News, Virginia, where he serves as the Director of Creative Studies at Christopher Newport University. His compositions have been performed at ICMC, SEAMUS, Electro Acoustic Barn Dance, Society of Composers, FEAST Festival, Technosonics, N\_SEME, and Subtropics Music Festival. His music has been performed by Jack Quartet, Loadbang, MehanPerkins, Dither, Ekmeles, The New Thread Quartet, percussionists I-Jen Fang, pianist Seung-Hye Kim and Kenneth Broadway. Mr. Tfirm performs live improvised noise music using digital and analog electronics and has received a National Science Foundation grant to study sonification possibilities for tracking chemotactic behavior of bacteria. He holds a Bachelor of Music Education degree and a performance certificate in percussion from the University of Florida, an MA in Music Composition from Wesleyan University and MA and PhD degrees from the University of Virginia.