

Composer Biographies

Peter Ahn is a third-year student majoring in music and economics. While he has studied piano and violin, he has recently focused on composition, dedicating himself to honing his craft. Passionate about pursuing a career in music—whether in composition or performance—he remains open to the many possibilities that lie ahead.

Jeremy Chase is a third-year at the University of Virginia pursuing a B.A. in Music and a Minor in Spanish Business. He was a recipient of the UVA Undergraduate Arts Award in 2024. He plays guitar and piano however, his primary focus is film composition. He has scored 15 short films and has provided additional programming/additional music on a number of other projects. Before college, he worked for film composers Scott McRae and Ryan Rapsys. He also handled the Warner Media film music catalog for Total Music Metadata.

Hunter Colson is a fourth-year music major, musician, and composer from Washington, D.C. He has studied the piano and has composed for a variety of ensembles. He completed an extensive film scoring program at the Film Scoring Academy of Europe. At UVA, Hunter is a Miller Arts Scholar and has won several awards including the Miller Arts Scholar Rising Fourth Year Award. He is a member of the Radio Music Society, the Catalyst Program, is a Lawnie, and has also composed music for the Student Game Developers. Hunter's Distinguished Major Program in Music is a collection of works primarily inspired by music of the romantic period, and contemporary video game soundtracks.

Ava Ghods is a second-year undergraduate student at UVA, double majoring in Political & Social Thought and Music. Having started piano at age five, she completed the Royal Conservatory of Music and Development program and has earned multiple accolades in piano competitions, including the NVMTA Concerto and Sonata Festivals. Ava is continuing her musical studies at the University of Virginia under the guidance of Professor John Mayhood. Alongside her academic

pursuits, she is dedicated to developing her craft by exploring both performance and composition, seeking to deepen her understanding of how these disciplines inform and inspire one another.

Andy Heil is a fourth-year Astronomy and Music double major, graduating in May. He has sung in both the University Singers and the Chamber Singers since his first year, which inspired him to pursue a Distinguished Majors Program focusing on composing and conducting choral music. In addition to studying conducting with Michael Slon and composition with Leah Reid, Heil served as the Music Director of the Flying V's, a UVA rock-themed a cappella group, from January 2021 until December 2024. Beyond his work composing and arranging for chorus, Heil is a self-taught guitarist, drummer, and punk-rock/alternative singer-songwriter. Between 2019 and 2021, Heil independently recorded, produced, and released three original full-length albums: *7th Try's a Charm*, *Armageddon*, and *Apathetic*. A fourth album, *Lost*, is planned for release in May 2025.

Eduardo Hinkley is a fourth-year Chemistry and Music double major. He creates music that educates as much as it entertains. With a deep respect for science and the visual arts—both classical and contemporary—his work blends research, curiosity, and synesthetic insight. He explores sound as a medium for connection, crafting textures and timbres that reflect the individuality of his influences. Each composition is a thoughtful study, built on layered meanings. Whether drawing from physics, paintings, or philosophy, he uses music to bridge ideas and disciplines, creating pieces that resonate both intellectually and emotionally. His goal is to make listeners think, feel, and learn about the world in a different way.

Hannah Martin is a fourth-year Music and Biology student with a concentration in Environmental and Biological Conservation. After taking Ecoacoustics in her first year at UVA, she has been fascinated by works at the intersection of her studies. She finds herself focused on ornithology and avian conservation after both working at the Avian Conservation Center in Charleston, SC, and studying abroad in a Polar Biology program that highlighted migratory Arctic birds. She also remains dedicated to the trumpet, her main instrument since the fateful day she picked it up in sixth grade, and has performed in various UVA Music ensembles, most notably the Cavalier Marching Band for all four years.

Davy McConnell-Wells is a third-year student at the University of Virginia, pursuing a degree in Music. With a vast repertoire of pieces for both viola and piano, he finds it easy to apply the knowledge gained to his composition studies. In addition to composing, he has developed strong transcription skills, which often influence his own work. While much of Davy's writing is soundtrack-heavy, it also explores aspects of nature in the present day. His music frequently blends both electronic and acoustic elements.

Kate Sorge has always had a passion for music. As an undergraduate, she majored in both music and literature. After graduate school, she accepted an engineering position with the Department of Defense, where she designed sensitive communication systems. During her time at the DOD, Sorge performed on the hammered dulcimer and guitar with traditional and roots music groups around the DC metro area and in Rappahannock County, Virginia. She also began songwriting. After retiring, Kate moved to the Charlottesville area and began studying music at the University of Virginia as a community scholar. Through the mentorship of Dr. Leah Reid at UVA, she soon discovered her love for composing music. As a romantic composer, her works emphasize passion, emotion, and individualism. A lover of nature, her compositional approach is deeply rooted in pantheistic ideas, reflecting her belief in God's presence within nature.

Elle Woodard is a fourth-year Music major with a Psychology minor at the University of Virginia, graduating in May. She has performed as an oboist in concert bands, wind ensembles, and symphony orchestra; played mellophone and clarinet in marching band; and sung as a soprano with the University Singers and the Charlottesville Oratorio Society, serving as section leader and stage manager for the University Singers. She studied voice with Brenda Patterson (2022–2025) and composition with Michael Slon (2023–2025) and Leah Reid (2024–2025). Previously, she was interim music director at Marion Baptist Church (2020–2021). Focused on choral composition, she blends dramatic melodies with vibrant harmonies. After graduation, she plans to work as a music director before pursuing a PhD in Music Education or a Doctor of Musical Arts (DMA) degree in 2027.

UVA Faculty Performer Biographies

Ayn Balija is a dynamic violist dedicated to expanding the viola's expressive range through innovative performances and collaborations. She has performed as a guest artist in Canada, Hungary, Brazil, New Zealand, and various locations in the United States showing her commitment to sharing musical diversity. Dr. Balija actively champions new works by contemporary composers like Libby Larsen, Leah Reid, Judith Shatin, and Jorge Variego, commissioning and premiering pieces that push the boundaries of the instrument. Dr. Balija's versatility in performance styles allows her to collaborate with a range of organizations, including the Charlottesville Chamber Music Festival, Charlottesville Opera, Charlottesville Ballet, Early Music Access Project, Victory Hall Opera, Carolina Chamber Music Festival, the Richmond Symphony, Pittsburgh Symphony and the Staunton Music Festival. As an educator, she fosters creativity in younger musicians through initiatives like Violapalooza, an annual viola event in Central Virginia, serving on the faculty in the summer at the Tennessee Governor's School for the Arts, and offering masterclasses and coachings at the college level. Currently, she serves as the Associate Professor of Viola at the University of Virginia and holds the position of Principal Violist with the Charlottesville Symphony. Ayn Balija's passion for the viola and commitment to education make her a prominent figure in the music community.

Jiyeon Choi is a lecturer in Clarinet and principal clarinet with the Charlottesville Symphony Orchestra. She also holds the Co-Principal Clarinet position with the Sinfonia da Camera. Dr. Choi has previously served on the faculty for the Purdue University, Illinois Youth Summer Music, and Blue Lake Fine Arts Camp. She has performed with several orchestras, including the Virginia Symphony Orchestra, Richmond Symphony, Heartland Festival Orchestra, Wintergreen Music Festival Orchestra, Williamsburg Symphony Orchestra, and Illinois Symphony Orchestra. She has been a resident artist at the Atlantic Music Festival in Maine and the Orchestre de la Francophonie in Montreal, QC. Dr. Choi received a Doctor of Musical Arts degree in music performance from University of Illinois Urbana Champaign, a Master of Music degree from Eastman School of Music, and a Bachelor of Music degree from Ewha Womans University.

David Sariti is Associate Professor of Violin, having joined the UVA faculty in 2005. He has performed widely on both modern and period instruments and is also an avid proponent of new and improvised music. He is Director of the Baroque Orchestra, teaches studio violin, coaches chamber music, and is Principal Violin II of the Charlottesville Symphony at UVA. He holds degrees from Ithaca College, the University of Akron, and the Hartt School at the University of Hartford.