

Artis—Naples

Home of The Baker Museum
& Naples Philharmonic

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ARTIS—NAPLES ANNOUNCES APPOINTMENT OF SIX NEW MUSICIANS TO THE NAPLES PHILHARMONIC FOR THE 2026-27 SEASON

Naples, Fla. (September 8, 2026) — Artis—Naples, home of The Baker Museum and Naples Philharmonic, announced today six new musician appointments to the Naples Philharmonic by Sharon and Timothy Ubben Artistic and Music Director Alexander Shelley for the 2026-27 season. Joining the orchestra are Alex Heidt, section violin; Jesús Linárez, section violin; Myles Mocarski, section violin; Ryan Babe, section cello; Ricardo Alberto Puche Bravo, section bass (one-year); and Melvin Cortez Jackson, assistant principal horn. Daniela Shtéрева, who previously served as section violin, has been appointed associate concertmaster; Davis Pierson, previously associate principal bass, has been appointed principal bass; and Matthew Medlock, previously section bass, has been appointed associate principal bass for one year.

“It is a great pleasure to welcome these exceptional musicians to the Naples Philharmonic,” said Sharon and Timothy Ubben Artistic and Music Director Alexander Shelley. “Each brings a distinctive musical voice, perspective and experience to the orchestra, and I look forward to the important contributions they will make to the ensemble as we make music together in the season ahead.”

“These appointments mark another important step in the continued growth of the Naples Philharmonic, and we are delighted to welcome these musicians to Artis—Naples,” said CEO and President Kathleen van Bergen. “We eagerly anticipate the many ways they will strengthen the experiences we create for audiences on our Kimberly K. Querrey and Louis A. Simpson Cultural Campus and across Southwest Florida.”

“It has been rewarding to see and participate in the growth of the Naples Philharmonic over the years, and the orchestra is pleased to welcome these new colleagues,” said Principal Timpani John Evans, chair of the Naples Philharmonic Players Committee. “We look forward to getting to know them on and off the stage and to all they will bring to our ensemble in the years to come.”

Alex Heidt, violin

Violinist Alex Heidt has performed throughout Florida and Georgia and previously appeared regularly as a substitute violinist with the Naples Philharmonic, Jacksonville Symphony, Orlando Philharmonic and Coastal Symphony of Georgia. A native of Tampa, he earned a Bachelor of Music from the University of Central Florida and later continued his studies at Southern Methodist University’s Meadows School of the Arts. His chamber music studies have included work with artists such as Aaron Boyd, William Wolfram, Edward Arron and Tao Lin.

Jesús Linárez, violin

Venezuelan violinist Jesús Linárez was a 2023-25 fellow of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and previously served as concertmaster of the Civic Orchestra of Chicago and of the Tucson Symphony Orchestra. He has also performed with the Illinois Philharmonic Orchestra and Grant Park Orchestra and toured Europe with Venezuela's Simón Bolívar Symphony Orchestra under Gustavo Dudamel. Linárez won first prize in the Chicago Violin Competition and was a semifinalist in the 2021 Sphinx Competition. He earned bachelor's and master's degrees in violin performance from Roosevelt University.

Myles Mocarski, violin

Myles Mocarski previously served as principal second violin of the Louisville Orchestra and Richmond Symphony and held section positions with the Albany Symphony and Eastern Connecticut Symphony while a student. Originally from North Haven, Connecticut, he began playing violin at age 15 and later earned dual degrees in music and speech language hearing science from the University of Connecticut. Mocarski subsequently earned a Master of Music and Doctor of Musical Arts from the University of Maryland, College Park.

Ryan Babe, cello

Oregon native Ryan Babe has performed with the San Antonio Philharmonic and Victoria Symphony and as a substitute cellist with the Houston Symphony. Internationally, he has appeared with the BBC Philharmonic in Manchester, England, including performances as associate and assistant principal, and participated in the Taipei Music Academy and Festival. Babe earned bachelor's and master's degrees in cello performance from Rice University's Shepherd School of Music. He is also a member of the Britt Festival Orchestra in southern Oregon.

Ricardo Alberto Puche Bravo, bass

Venezuelan bassist Ricardo Alberto Puche Bravo is a former fellow of the New World Symphony and has performed with the Fort Worth Symphony, Richardson Symphony, Waco Symphony, Wichita Falls Symphony and Fort Smith Symphony. He previously served as principal bass of the Bogotá Chamber Philharmonic. Puche Bravo won the 2025 Papich Chamber Competition at the University of North Texas with *Pandora*, his original work for bass trio, and was a finalist in the 2025 International Society of Bassists Orchestral Competition. He began his studies through El Sistema and later completed graduate studies at the University of North Texas.

Melvin Cortez Jackson, assistant principal horn

Melvin Cortez Jackson has held positions with the Sarasota Orchestra, Evansville Philharmonic and La Crosse Symphony and has performed with ensembles including the San Diego Symphony, Cincinnati Symphony, Louisville Orchestra, Columbus Symphony and The Florida Orchestra. He earned an Artist Diploma from the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music, a bachelor's degree from the Peabody Conservatory and a master's degree from the University of Wisconsin. Jackson has also performed and recorded extensively in jazz and other genres and composed works for jazz ensemble and horn and guitar duo.

ARTIS—NAPLES

Artis—Naples, home of The Baker Museum and Naples Philharmonic, creates and presents world-class visual and performing arts. Through our multidisciplinary offerings, we inspire, educate and entertain to engage and enrich the growing and diversifying community.

KIMBERLY K. QUERREY and LOUIS A. SIMPSON CULTURAL CAMPUS

Led by CEO and President Kathleen van Bergen and Artistic and Music Director Alexander Shelley, Artis—Naples offers more than 800 paid and free events annually across its 8.5-acre Kimberly K. Querrey and Louis A. Simpson Cultural Campus. Artis—Naples welcomes hundreds of thousands of visitors each year for a broad array of artistic and educational opportunities perfect for audiences of all backgrounds and interests. The cultural campus is home to five buildings, including two performance halls (Frances Pew Hayes Hall and Myra J. Daniels Pavilion), The Baker Museum, the Toni Stabile Education Building and the Kohan Administration Building.

NAPLES PHILHARMONIC

The Naples Philharmonic has long been recognized as one of the cornerstones of Southwest Florida's arts community. As part of Artis—Naples, the Naples Philharmonic performs more than 140 orchestral and chamber music concerts, as well as opera and ballet, education, community and special event concerts annually between September and June in the 1,477-seat Hayes Hall, the 283-seat Daniels Pavilion and around Southwest Florida.

The Naples Philharmonic has enjoyed a history of working with world-class artistic leadership, a tradition that continues in 2026-27 with Alexander Shelley in his third season as artistic and music director, following two successful years in the role and an extended commitment through the end of the decade. Podium leadership also includes Principal Pops Conductor Jack Everly, marking 17 years in this role in the 2026-27 season and bringing pops performances that celebrate music across genres. Renowned violinist James Ehnes continues as artistic partner through 2026-27, working with Naples Philharmonic musicians in a variety of settings with a focus on inspiring and embodying a high level of artistry.

THE BAKER MUSEUM

The Baker Museum is the foremost fine art museum in Southwest Florida, presenting an ambitious slate of exhibitions annually to complement installations of works from its permanent collection. Comprising more than 3,000 objects, the museum's broad holdings of 20th- and 21st-century art reflect particular strengths in modern art of the United States and Mexico. The Baker Museum's collection demonstrates the generosity and commitment of area collectors, including significant gifts from the collection of the late Olga Hirshhorn.

In 2025, The Baker Museum was accredited by the American Alliance of Museums, the highest national recognition for museums in the United States, affirming the museum's commitment to excellence, accountability and public service.

With more than two decades of collecting and exhibiting, the museum is committed to the stewardship and scholarship of its collections and to fostering inspiring and transformative experiences with the visual arts. At the same time, The Baker Museum partners with the world's leading arts institutions to make extraordinary exhibitions accessible to the Southwest Florida community—including the National Portrait Gallery, London and the Helen Frankenthaler Foundation. In 2020, Artis—Naples celebrated the renovation and expansion of The Baker Museum and adjoining Norris Garden, designed by Weiss/Manfredi Architecture/Landscape/Urbanism, which created new spaces for multidisciplinary exploration and social interaction.

EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY

In addition to creating and presenting visual and performing arts, Artis—Naples provides robust education and community activities for students of all ages in Collier and Lee counties. Each season, thousands of Collier County Public School students interact with Artis—Naples education programming, both on our cultural campus and in their classrooms. Beyond our commitment to youth education, the Lifelong Learning program provides informative lectures and study opportunities for adults seeking to engage more deeply with the arts.

The Friends of Artis—Naples, comprised of more than 3,500 donor households, offers activities, travel experiences and events designed to foster a deeper relationship between patrons and the arts.

In 2017, Artis—Naples acquired the Naples International Film Festival (NIFF), expanding its film offerings and providing a platform for the festival's continued excellence and growth. In 2023, the festival's 15th anniversary year, NIFF was named one of *MovieMaker* Magazine's "20 Great Film Festivals in Vacation Destinations."

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