

For Immediate Release

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ARTIS—NAPLES ANNOUNCES APPOINTMENT OF CO-CONCERTMASTER AND FOUR ADDITIONAL NEW MUSICIANS TO THE NAPLES PHILHARMONIC

Naples, FL (September 4, 2025) – Artis—Naples, home of The Baker Museum and Naples Philharmonic, announced today the appointment of five new musicians to the Naples Philharmonic by Artistic and Music Director Alexander Shelley. Violinist Rachel Ostler joins the orchestra as co-concertmaster, taking a leading role in the ensemble. Also joining are Oleg Babkov, section cello; Cassia Drake, assistant principal viola; Catherine Gray, section viola; and Nelson Ricardo Yovera Perez, principal horn.

“It is a tremendous privilege to welcome these outstanding artists to the Naples Philharmonic,” said Artistic and Music Director Alexander Shelley. “The extraordinary musicianship and artistry they bring will strengthen and enrich this exceptional orchestra. I look forward to the dynamic performances we will present together this season.”

“We are delighted to have these remarkable musicians join the orchestra,” said Artis—Naples CEO and President Kathleen van Bergen. “Each brings a wealth of skill and perspective to the Naples Philharmonic, and we know they will enhance both the vitality of the orchestra and the experience we share with our audiences—both on our Kimberly K. Querrey and Louis A. Simpson Cultural Campus and throughout the community.”

“The musicians of the Naples Philharmonic are pleased to welcome our new colleagues,” said Principal Timpani John Evans, chair of the Naples Philharmonic Players Committee. “Their arrival brings fresh outlooks and new energy, and we look forward to performing alongside them in the coming years.”

Rachel Ostler, co-concertmaster

Colombian-American violinist Rachel Ostler has performed in leading concert halls across the United States, Europe, Asia and South America. A member of the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra since 2020, she has also performed and toured with The Cleveland Orchestra, Los Angeles Philharmonic and San Francisco Symphony. An avid chamber musician, she has appeared at the Lucerne, Moritzburg and Sarasota festivals, as well as Carnegie Hall and with the Colburn Chamber Music Society. Ostler studied at the Yale School of Music, the Colburn Conservatory and Brigham Young University.

Oleg Babkov, cello

Oleg Babkov was born in Belarus and raised in Russia and the United States, where he began cello studies at age 15. He earned a Bachelor of Music from the University of Louisville under Paul York and a Master of Music from the Eastman School of Music, where he was a teaching assistant to Guy Johnston. Babkov has performed with the Delaware Symphony, Rochester Philharmonic, Syracuse Symphoria and New York State Ballet, and he recently held positions with the Dayton Philharmonic and Buffalo Philharmonic orchestras.

Cassia Drake, assistant principal viola

Cassia Drake is a violist from Southwest Florida and an alumna of the Naples Philharmonic Youth Orchestra. She gave her solo debut with the Naples Philharmonic at age 14 and has since appeared with the Colburn Orchestra, Sarasota Music Festival Orchestra and Southwest Florida Symphony. Drake earned bachelor's and master's degrees at the Colburn Conservatory and a Master of Musical Arts at the Yale School of Music, where she studied with Ettore Causa. She has participated in festivals including the Perlman Music Program and Bravo! Vail.

Catherine Gray, viola

Catherine Gray is a Canadian violist originally from Calgary, Alberta, and a JUNO-nominated ensemble and orchestral musician. She has performed widely with the Canadian Opera Company Orchestra, Toronto Symphony Orchestra, Canadian Chamber Orchestra and National Ballet of Canada Orchestra, and has appeared at festivals including the Edinburgh International Festival and Ottawa International Chamber Music Festival. In addition to her classical work, she has shared the stage with such artists as Ed Sheeran and The Who. Gray studied at McGill University and the Glenn Gould School of the Royal Conservatory of Music.

Nelson Ricardo Yovera Perez, principal horn

Nelson Ricardo Yovera Perez has performed with leading ensembles including the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, New York Philharmonic, Los Angeles Philharmonic and The Philadelphia Orchestra. He was a member of Venezuela's Simón Bolívar Symphony Orchestra under Gustavo Dudamel and later served as associate principal horn of the San Juan Symphony Orchestra in Argentina. He has also held positions with the Civic Orchestra of Chicago and Battle Creek Symphony, and most recently was principal horn of the Tucson Symphony. A laureate of the Sphinx Orchestral Partners Auditions and International Horn Competition of America, he trained in Venezuela and Chicago.

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 performing and visual arts experiences annually across its 8.5-acre Kimberly K. Querrey and Louis A. Simpson Cultural Campus and throughout the community.

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 music directors. Following a successful inaugural season in 2024-25, Alexander Shelley commences his second season as artistic and music director in 2025-26. Renowned violinist James Ehnes continues as artistic partner through the 2025-26 season, working with Naples Philharmonic musicians in a variety of settings with a focus on inspiring and embodying a high level of artistry. Podium leadership also includes Principal Pops Conductor Jack Everly, celebrating 16 years in this role in the 2025-26 season and bringing pops performances that celebrate music across genres.

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 recently 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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