

Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

WHAT

Cactus Pear Music Festival announces its 30th festival season “The Infinite Horizon” with all FREE chamber music concerts.

WHEN

July 10, 11, 12 &
July 17, 18, 19, 2026

WHERE

Blanco, Texas
Uptown Blanco Ballroom | Blanco Performing Arts

San Antonio, Texas
Diane Bennack Hall | University of the Incarnate Word

San Antonio, Texas
Jo Long Theatre | Carver Community Cultural Center

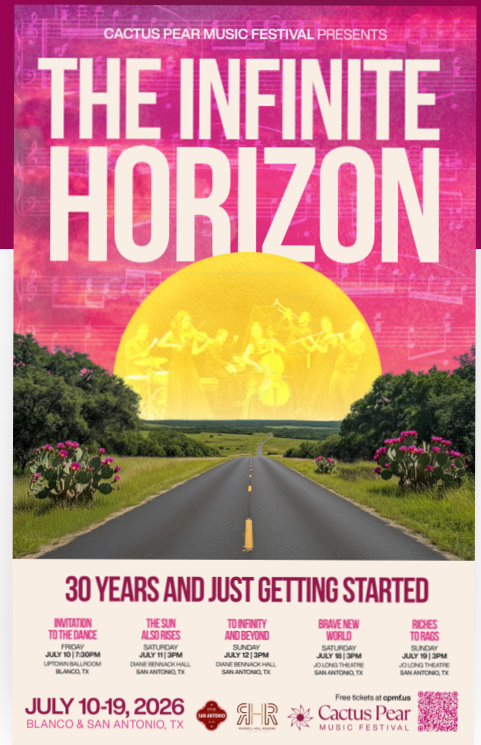
INFO

The Board of Cactus Pear Music Festival, Executive Director Reneé Davis, and Artistic Director Jeffrey Sykes are excited to announce CPMF’s 30th season, **The Infinite Horizon—30 Years and Just Getting Started**, a milestone that honors the Festival’s legacy while embracing a bold new chapter.

Presented across two weekends, **The Infinite Horizon** explores themes of transformation, renewal, and boundless possibility through masterpieces of chamber music. Each program traces moments of change—beginnings and endings, tradition and reinvention, loss and transcendence, elegance and exuberance—inviting audiences to reflect on the ever-expanding possibilities of musical expression. **All concerts are FREE. We do request that all those attending REGISTER THEIR ATTENDANCE through our [website](#).** For more in-depth information on the programs and artists, see the attached pages.

A special highlight of this anniversary season is the participation of members of the **New England Ragtime Ensemble**, whose work helped spark the ragtime revival of the 20th century. Their presence brings both historical depth and infectious energy to the festival’s exploration of this uniquely American art form.

This landmark season also **introduces a refreshed brand identity and website**—one that reflects the Festival’s evolution while remaining rooted in its core spirit, signaling a renewed vision for the future as Cactus Pear Music Festival enters its next chapter.



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WEEK 1 SCHEDULE**Friday, July 10 | 7:30 pm****INVITATION TO THE DANCE** | with works by Vieuxtemps, Mozart, and Messiaen
*Uptown Blanco Ballroom | Blanco, Texas***Saturday, July 11 | 3 pm****THE SUN ALSO RISES** | with works by Mozart, Khachaturian, and Bloch
*Diane Bennack Hall, UIW | San Antonio, Texas***Sunday, July 12 | 3 pm****TO INFINITY AND BEYOND** | with works by Vieuxtemps, Brahms, and Messiaen
*Diane Bennack Hall, UIW | San Antonio, Texas***WEEK 2 SCHEDULE****Friday, July 17 | 7 pm****THE SHAPE OF THINGS TO COME** |
Featuring CPMF's young artists in performance
*UIW, Diane Bennack Hall | San Antonio, Texas***Saturday, July 18 | 3 pm****BRAVE NEW WORLD** | with works by Milhaud, William Grant Still, Scott Joplin, Jelly Roll Morton, and more
*Jo Long Theatre | San Antonio, Texas***Sunday, July 19 | 3 pm****RICHES TO RAGS** | with works by Stravinsky, Ravel, Scott Joplin, Arthur Marshall, and more
*Jo Long Theatre | San Antonio, Texas***Friday, July 10 | 7:30 pm****INVITATION TO THE DANCE**

Uptown Blanco Ballroom, Blanco Performing Arts | Blanco, TX

A co-presentation of Blanco Performing Arts and Cactus Pear Music Festival

The season opens in Blanco with a program that traces a journey from intimacy to the infinite. Vieuxtemps' *Élégie* offers a deeply personal opening—lyrical, searching, and suffused with quiet longing. Mozart's 14th piano concerto, heard here in its chamber form, brings clarity, grace, and a sense of poised conversation among equals.

After intermission, the atmosphere transforms. Messiaen's *Quartet for the End of Time*, composed in a prisoner-of-war camp during World War II, transcends its origins to create a sound world of astonishing stillness, color, and spiritual intensity. Time seems to dissolve; what remains is something luminous, eternal.

In this opening night, "Invitation to the Dance" becomes something larger: an invitation to cross a threshold—into the season, into new sound worlds, and into the boundless horizon beyond.

Henri Vieuxtemps (1820-1881)*Élégie* for viola and piano, op. 30 (1854) — *Pederzoli, Cuellar***Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791)**Piano Concerto No. 14 in E-flat Major, K. 449 (1784) — *Sykes, Sant'Ambrogio, Zori, Pederzoli, Kostov, Shterenberg***Olivier Messiaen (1908-1992)***Quartet for the End of Time* (1940-41) — *Shterenberg, Sant'Ambrogio, Kostov, Cuellar*

Saturday, July 11 | 3:00 pm**THE SUN ALSO RISES**

Diane Bennack Concert Hall, University of the Incarnate Word | San Antonio, TX

Mozart's 14th piano concerto, presented here in its intimate chamber form, opens the program with radiance, grace, and a sense of poised conversation among equals. Khachaturian's vibrant trio blends folk influence with rhythmic vitality, color, and energy. Bloch's powerful quintet, written in the aftermath of World War I, wrestles with turmoil while reaching toward renewal. Together, these works trace a path from clarity and intensity to hard-won rebirth.

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791)

Piano Concerto No. 14 in E-flat Major, K. 449 (1784) — Sykes, Sant'Ambrogio, Zori, Pederzoli, Kostov, Shterenberg

Aram Khachaturian (1903-1978)

Trio for clarinet, violin, and piano (1932) — Shterenberg, Zori, Cuellar

Ernest Bloch (1880-1959)

Piano Quintet no.1 (1923) — Sykes, Zori, Sant'Ambrogio, Pederzoli, Kostov

Sunday, July 12 | 3:00 pm**TO INFINITY AND BEYOND**

Diane Bennack Concert Hall, University of the Incarnate Word | San Antonio, TX

From the intimate lyricism of Vieuxtemps' *Élégie* to the stormy, searching intensity of Brahms's C minor Piano Quartet, the program unfolds toward Messiaen's transcendent masterpiece. Composed under unimaginable circumstances during World War II, the *Quartet for the End of Time* offers a vision of stillness, radiance, and eternity—music that seems to suspend time itself.

Endings transformed into something larger—music that reaches beyond:

Henri Vieuxtemps (1820-1881)*Élégie* for viola and piano, op. 30 (1854) — Pederzoli, Cuellar**Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)**

Piano Quartet in C minor, op. 60 (1875) — Sykes, Sant'Ambrogio, Pederzoli, Kostov

Olivier Messiaen (1908-1992)*Quartet for the End of Time* (1940-41) — Shterenberg, Sant'Ambrogio, Kostov, Cuellar**Week 1: Artists**Stephanie Sant'Ambrogio: violin
Carmit Zori: violin
Aurelien Pederzoli: viola
Lachezar Kostov: celloIlya Shterenberg: clarinet
Scott Cuellar: piano
Jeffrey Sykes: piano

Friday, July 17 | 7:00 pm**THE SHAPE OF THINGS TO COME**

Diane Bennack Concert Hall, University of the Incarnate Word | San Antonio, TX

Cactus Pear Music Festival's Young Artist Program takes center stage in a program that looks toward the future of music-making. Featuring outstanding young musicians from the San Antonio community, this concert celebrates curiosity, growth, and the thrill of discovery—offering a glimpse of the artistry and imagination that will shape the musical world in the years ahead.

Program TBD

— Hana Sinha, violin; Ella Spivey, violin; Keira Schmal, viola; Ivan Perez, cello; Milly Carlisle, clarinet; Kate Oehlke, piano

Looking ahead to what is to come, the festival now turns to the roots of an American musical voice—and the traditions that continue to shape it.

Saturday, July 18 | 3:00 pm**BRAVE NEW WORLD**

Jo Long Theatre, Carver Community Cultural Center | San Antonio, TX

This production is not a presentation of the Carver Community Cultural Center or the Carver Development Board.

Milhaud's *La création du monde* draws on jazz and African musical traditions to create something entirely new—one of the earliest and most compelling fusions of classical and jazz idioms. William Grant Still's music brings lyricism, elegance, and a distinctly American voice to the program. The second half turns to ragtime itself, with works by Scott Joplin, Jelly Roll Morton, and others, performed by members of the legendary New England Ragtime Ensemble alongside festival artists.

Classical music encounters new sounds, new rhythms, and new possibilities:

Darius Milhaud (1892-1974)

Concert Suite from *La création du monde*, Op. 81b (1932) — *Kim, Sant'Ambrogio, Sorgi, Levine-Tsang, Sykes*

William Grant Still (1895-1978)

Suite for violin and piano (1943) — (*Sant'Ambrogio, Sykes*)

Ragtime and early jazz masterpieces by **Scott Joplin (1868-1917)**, **Jelly Roll Morton (1885-1941)**, and others

Mailing Address

PO Box 880
Converse TX 78109-0880

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Sunday, July 19 | 3:00 pm**RICHES TO RAGS**

Jo Long Theatre, Carver Community Cultural Center | San Antonio, TX

This production is not a presentation of the Carver Community Cultural Center or the Carver Development Board.

Stravinsky's *L'histoire du soldat* blends classical precision with popular dance rhythms in a sharply etched theatrical score. Ravel's Violin Sonata—especially its iconic “Blues” movement—reveals a composer fascinated by American jazz. The festival concludes with a vibrant set of ragtime, tracing the roots of jazz and celebrating the composers who shaped an enduring American sound.

A playful and illuminating dialogue between refinement and revolution:

Igor Stravinsky (1882-1971)Suite from *L'histoire du soldat* for violin, clarinet, and piano (1919) — *Sant'Ambrogio, Kay, Sykes***Maurice Ravel (1875-1937)**Violin Sonata no. 2, M. 77 (1923-27) — *(Kim, Sykes)*Ragtime and early jazz masterpieces by **Scott Joplin (1868-1917)**, **Arthur Marshall (1881-1968)**, **Tom Turpin (1871-1922)**, **James Reese Europe (1880-1919)**, **James Scott (1885-1938)**, and **Eubie Blake (1887-1983)****Week 2: Artists**

Stephanie Sant'Ambrogio: violin

SoJin Kim: violin

Colin Sorgi: viola

Amy Levine-Tsang: cello

Zlatan Redzic: bass

Stephanie Jutt: flute

Alan Kay: clarinet

Mark Belair: drums

John West: piano (ragtime)

Jeffrey Sykes: piano (classical)

George Chase: trumpet/cornet

Steve Peterson: trombone

Gary Poffenbarger: tuba

Ken Woods: conductor & banjo

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Featured Festival Artists

For full bios on all festival artists, please visit our [website](#).
For logo, poster, artist headshots, etc., please go to our
media page at: cpmf.us/media-press

WEEK 1



Aurelién Fort Pederzoli, viola

French-born violist Aurélien Fort Pederzoli is a founding member of the Black Oak Ensemble and has performed with the Chicago Symphony, Lyric Opera of Chicago, MET Opera, and Orpheus Chamber Orchestra. A graduate of the Paris Conservatory and Bern Hochschule, he was also a founding member of the Grammy-nominated Spektral Quartet and the Anaphora Ensemble. He is a rare instrument consultant at Colin Maki Inc. and co-founder of the Cordes en Gascogne music festival in France.



Lachezar Kostov, cello

Lachezar Kostov is Associate Principal Cellist of the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra and an internationally acclaimed soloist and chamber musician. He has performed at Carnegie Hall, the Kennedy Center, Leipzig's Gewandhaus, and Oji Hall in Tokyo, and won top prizes including the MTNA Young Artists Competition. A frequent festival guest, he collaborates in the Kostov-Valkov Duo. Kostov teaches in Washington, DC, is a Larsen Strings artist, and performs on a rare 1738 Carlo Antonio Testore cello.



Stephanie Sant'Ambrogio, violin

CPMF favorite and Artistic Director Emerita, Stephanie is described as a “violinist who most often takes your breath away” by Gramophone Magazine, Stephanie Sant'Ambrogio enjoys a varied performing and recording career as a soloist, chamber musician and orchestral leader. Professor Emerita at the University of Nevada, Reno, she is also Artistic Director Emerita of Cactus Pear Music Festival, which she founded in 1997 while serving as Concertmaster of the San Antonio Symphony. Currently she plays Concertmaster for the Fresno Phil and chamber music across the U.S.

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WEEK 2**SoJin Kim, violin**

Korean-American violinist SoJin Kim, appearing with CPMF for the second time, has been praised by critics and audiences alike for her “powerful interpretation...[and] flawless sound” (Cuxhavener Nachrichten) and “creating tones of poetry” (The Strad). Following her successful solo debut with the Juilliard Orchestra in Lincoln Center’s Alice Tully Hall in 2006, she has appeared as a soloist throughout North America, Europe, and Asia with ensembles such as the Czech Radio Symphony Orchestra, St. Petersburg State Symphony Orchestra, I Musici de Montreal, Seoul Chamber Ensemble, and the Budapest Symphony Orchestra.

**John West, piano**

An international performer making his CPMF debut, John has toured throughout the world. Performance credits include solo appearances with the New York Philharmonic Orchestra, and featured artist of American Guild of Organists as well as Canadian Royal College of Organists. He performed as a featured vocalist in New York with ‘Patti LuPone on Broadway’. He also performed on the Distinguished Organist’s Recital Series at Cadet Chapel West Point, New York and in summer of 2025 performed on the International Concert Series, at The Mariannahill Monastery Church Würzburg Germany.

**Ken Woods, conductor & banjo**

Making his CPMF debut, Kenneth Woods is a conductor and musician with an acclaimed international career. He is the current artistic director of the English Symphony Orchestra, and his discography ranges from the canonical symphonic repertoire to premieres of long-forgotten composers. Woods is able to captivate audiences, whether with a Mahler symphony or electrifying a hall with a rock guitar. Alongside his robust training as a cellist and his fervent work in music advocacy, Woods has experience in the world of rock, giving his artistry an interdisciplinary lens.

**Stephanie Jutt, flute**

CPMF favorite, flutist Stephanie Jutt’s elegant artistry and passionate intellect have inspired musicians and audiences around the world. Her groundbreaking performances of new music, transcriptions, and traditional repertoire have made her a model for adventurous flutists everywhere. Stephanie Jutt’s recordings are available on Albany, Centaur, and GM Records. Her recent recordings, “Latin American and Spanish Masterpieces for flute and piano” and “Seducción” are available on Albany Records, a result of extensive travels in South America. Jutt is principal flute of the Madison Symphony the Madison Opera in Madison, WI.

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REBRAND & APPLICATIONS

For a more in-depth explanation of our rebrand, please visit our rebrand page on our [website](#). To download our logo and poster, please go to our media page at: cpmf.us/media-press

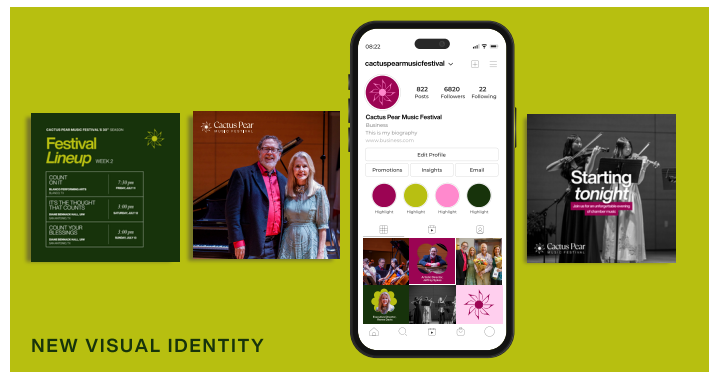
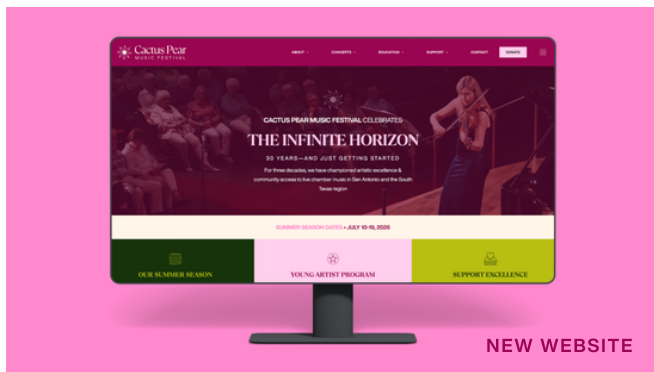
As Cactus Pear Music Festival enters its 30th season, it proudly unveils a refreshed brand identity that reflects both its legacy and its future. Rooted in the vibrant spirit that has defined the Festival since its founding, this new visual direction introduces a renewed sense of energy, clarity, and creativity—honoring three decades of extraordinary music while setting the stage for what’s to come.

At the heart of the rebrand is a new logo mark built from the repetition of an eighth note—a fundamental symbol of rhythm and musicality. Through this repetition, the notes form a dynamic shape that evokes a cactus pear flower, its sharp, expressive petals nodding to both the resilience and beauty of the desert landscape. The form also suggests a radiant sun, a subtle reference to the Festival’s Texas roots and the brilliance of its summer season.

The circular, radiating composition embodies harmony, energy, and growth, mirroring the way music resonates across spaces, genres, and generations. This emblem brings together the Festival’s core elements—music, nature, and light—into a single, vibrant expression.

This rebrand is not a departure, but an evolution. It offers a more cohesive and contemporary visual language while remaining grounded in the values that have shaped Cactus Pear Music Festival for three decades: accessibility, artistry, and community.

As this new chapter begins, the Festival remains rooted in what matters most—connection, accessible experiences, and the power of live music. With a renewed vision, Cactus Pear Music Festival looks ahead to many more seasons of inspiring performances and meaningful moments.



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