

The SOUNDPOST



CALIFORNIA CHAPTER, INC., of the AMERICAN STRING TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

Spring 2026



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CIRCULATION

ASTAMembers in California
President, Editors, Advertisers,
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The SOUNDPOST



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COORDINATOR

TBA

HISTORIAN/INSURANCE
REPRESENTATIVE

TBA

Please complete all applicable fields on the registration form. If you have any questions, please contact Member Services. We look forward to welcoming you to the ASTA community.



703-279-2113



www.astastrings.org



Fax form: 703-279-2114
 Mail form: 4155 Chain Bridge Rd.,
 Fairfax, VA 22030

Who recruited you to join ASTA?

RECRUITER NAME _____

RECRUITER CITY/STATE _____

RECRUITER E-MAIL ADDRESS _____

Membership Category

- Professional member
- Student member: full time student *(Please provide expected Graduation Date (MM/YY))* _____ / _____
- Senior member: age 62 or older
- Dual: two professionals at same address *(Please complete two separate forms)*

Contact Information

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FIRST NAME _____ MIDDLE INITIAL _____ LAST NAME _____

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CELL PHONE _____

Select a primary address where you will receive correspondence & if applicable, *AST Journal*. Home School/Work

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COUNTRY _____

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COUNTRY _____

Tell Us About You

(Required for professional/tenor and dual members)

What is your primary profession?

- Higher Education
- Private Studio
- Music Administrator
- K-12
- Performer
- String Enthusiast
- Student
- Conductor
- Retired

What year did you start teaching music? _____

What level do you teach? *(Select all that apply.)*

- Elementary [K-5]
- Middle [6-8]
- High School [9-12]
- Collegiate *(Undergrad & Graduate)*
- Adult

What is your primary instrument?

- Violin
- Viola
- Cello
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- Guitar
- Brass
- Percussion
- Harp
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ASTA State Chapter

Your membership dues include state chapter membership. To find your state information, visit www.astastrings.org.

Dues Payment

- \$116: Professional Member
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- \$162: Dual *(age 62 or older)*

"ADD ON"

- \$15: Membership certificate
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As I step into my new role as President of CalASTA, I would first like to extend my sincere gratitude to our Past President, Stephanie Holmes. Her dedication, leadership, and countless contributions to our organization have set the bar high, and I look forward to continuing to work alongside her as we support both our board and our members moving forward.

I am incredibly honored to serve this community of passionate educators, performers, and advocates for string education across California. CalASTA continues to thrive because of the generosity, creativity, and commitment of those who give their time and energy to inspire their communities and students.

Reflecting on the National ASTA Conference

I would also like to take a moment to reflect on what an incredible National ASTA Conference we had this past February. It was especially meaningful that California had the opportunity to host the conference for the first time in many years, and we certainly hope to welcome everyone back again in the future.

Although I always love the panels and sessions, one of my biggest highlights of the conference this year was having the opportunity to meet so many members and section leaders in person and hear about the exciting programs, ideas, and opportunities occurring throughout California.

I am especially proud of and inspired by the Student Chapter leaders I had the opportunity to speak with. Their passion and dedication to the future of music education left a lasting impression on everyone they shared ideas with, and I am truly excited to follow and support their efforts as they continue to grow, collaborate, and shape their own vision for the next generation of music teachers.

Lastly, I would like to congratulate CalASTA on receiving the membership award for the most new memberships! This is a wonderful reflection of the energy and momentum within our organization, and I hope we continue building on that excitement in the months and years ahead.

ASTA Member Resources & Support

During the recent National Board meeting, several valuable resources were shared to help support members in navigating the many tools included with ASTA membership. The online library includes information on how to access your membership roster, how to use ASTA's web platform, tradewing, and how to support membership communication strategies, as well as how to locate liability insurance documentation (and request additional insurance coverage), and much more.

ASTA Online Library

I encourage everyone to take advantage of these resources and explore the many benefits available through membership.

Upcoming Solo Competition: October 24th

We are also looking forward to our upcoming Solo Competition event, which is held every other year and alternates between Northern and Southern California. This year's Solo Competition will take place on Saturday, October 24, at Sonoma State University.

I look forward to celebrating the incredible talent and dedication of our students and teachers.

Looking Ahead

As we move into this next chapter together, I look forward to building upon the strong foundation that has already been established while continuing to foster connection, collaboration, and inspiration throughout our string community. I am excited for the opportunities ahead and grateful to work alongside such a dedicated board and membership.

Thank you for your continued support of CalASTA and the important work you do every day to bring music into the lives of students and communities across our state.

Warmly,
Jennifer Albrent
President, CalASTA
CalASTA, San Diego Section



**ASTA Calendar Year Accounting Report
California Chapter
Calendar Year 2025 (1/1/2025 – 12/31/2025)
Prepared by Michael Feeney, State Treasurer**

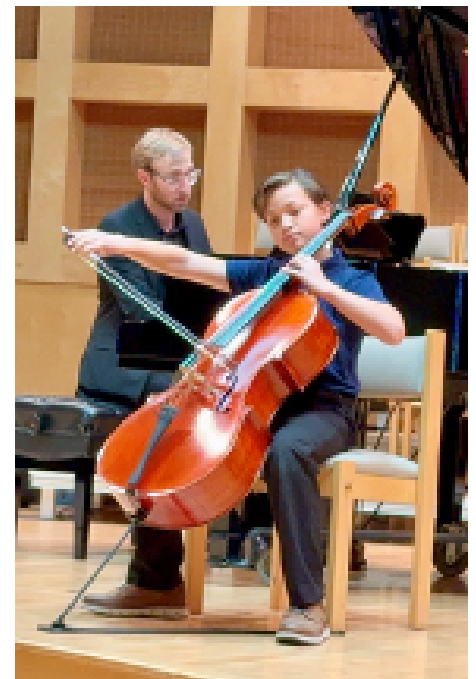
INCOME	Rebates from National	6,480.50
	Total Income:	6,480.50
EXPENSES	Rebates to Sections	4,740.75
	CBDA Conference Booth Expenses	624.00
	Website Support	622.23
	Miscellaneous	137.22
	CAGovernment Registration	45.00
	Total Expenses:	6,169.20
	Actual January 1, 2025 Bank Balance	7,631.29
	Less Outstanding Checks as of 01/01/2025 (-)	0.00
	Calculated January 1, 2025 Bank Balance	7,631.29
	Plus Income	(+) 6,480.50
	Minus Expenses	(-) 6,169.20
	Calculated December 31, 2025 Bank Balance	7,942.58
	Outstanding Checks as of 12/31/2025	(+) 0.00
	Actual December 31, 2025 Bank Balance	7,942.58



Our 2025-2026 season of activities has been satisfyingly hectic so far!

First up, our annual Chamber Music Workshop was on February 21, held once again at Alta Sierra Intermediate School, and once again attracting a large number of participants. Sixty young musicians joined us this time out! Students aged 5 through 18—38 violinists, 8 violists, and 14 cellists—enjoyed a full day of sightreading and rehearsing, topped off with a casual performance for friends and families. Everyone had a great time!

Our coaches were both ASTA and non-ASTA teachers, including Luis Cerrillos, Julia Copeland, Adam Elmore, Janice Fleming, Yuliya Hess, Emma Hill, Jonathan Lee, John Morrice, Judy Robinson, K.C. Simba-Torres, Matthew Smoke, and Cynthia Stuart. This is a wonderful event and we love the venue which is ideal for this project. We had used this facility for a number of years successfully when the pandemic forced the school to close its doors to us. But we were able to resume using the school for our workshop starting in 2023 and hope to continue for many more years.



Fresno ASTA Student Recital 2026

Next, on March 21, we enjoyed our Annual Student Recital at University Presbyterian Church. Thirty-two players performed in a surprisingly eclectic program that ranged from Suzuki Book One to violin concerti by Tchaikovsky and Vieuxtemps and cello concerto by Elgar, culminating by an electrifying, memorized rendition of the Zoltán Kodály's Duo by brothers Asher (violin) and Christian (cello) Moore.

The students represented our local ASTA teachers Adam Elmore, Lianna Elmore, Thomas Loewenheim, Laura Porter, Judy Robinson, Kamilah Simba-Torres, Cynthia Stuart and Limor Toren-Immerman. Many thanks to accompanists Maria Briggs and Matthew Harikian as well as to Julia Copeland who supplied the programs and works miracles with her computer.



Fresno ASTA Student Recital 2026

Other string related incredible events this season were the Cello|Fresno – International Cello Festival with guest artists Emilio Colón, Cara Colón, Thomas Landschoot, Thomas Loewenheim, Jonathan Ruck, and Bion Tsang. The event was held in November and included a concerto competition for pre-college and college levels, and two gala concerts featuring the guest artists with the Fresno State Symphony Orchestra and the Youth Orchestras of Fresno’s Philharmonic Orchestra conducted by Thomas Loewenheim. In March our Annual Violin and Viola Festival featured violinist Giora Schmidt and violists Che-Yen Chen who gave master classes and performed as soloists with the Fresno State Symphony Orchestra. Critsian Fatu joined the faculty and worked with our younger violinists who opened the closing gala concert.

Still to come is our ASTA Student Competition on Saturday June 6 at Fresno State. We look forward to another great showing from our local teachers and their amazing students. We are happy to announce that this year, once again, the Fresno Musical Club will offer its Hildred Minich Scholarship of \$1,000 to an outstanding string player who has placed in the 2026 Solo Competition and plans to attend a four-year college in the 2026 fall semester as a music major or minor. We look forward to great things!

Respectfully,

Dr. Thomas Loewenheim

President, CalASTA Fresno Section



AWARDS:

Annual Awards: Each year we honor special people in our Los Angeles Section. This year's awards will include:

- Outstanding Studio Teacher of the Year:: Nancy Yamagata, cello coordinator of the Suzuki String Program at the Colburn Community School of Performing Arts
- Outstanding School Teacher of the Year: Elizabeth Blake, Director of Orchestras, Westlake High School and Los Cerritos Middle School, Conejo Valley Unified School District
- Distinguished Service: The Colburn School

ELECTIONS:

Elections for open positions on our board will take place will take place May 4-10 online. Nominees for include:

- President-Elect: **Johanna Gamboa-Kroesen**
- Treasurer: **Wendy Velasco**
- Secretary: **Elizabeth Blake**

The election results, including the results of the special election will be announced at the next Board meeting.

Changes on our board:

- **Kristin Herkstroeter** will become our President starting July 1, 2026.
- **Laurie Niles** will remain on the board as Past President
- **Connie Deeter**, who served as our Secretary for 10 years, has resigned from the board.

ASTACAP: Chaired by **Celine Gietzen**.

This spring 145 students participated in our in-person ASTACAP exams, representing 21 teachers. In-person exams

were held at five locations on six separate days. Site Coordinators were:

- Nick Alvarez (Viewpoint School Calabasas)
- Louise Brown (Pasadena Christian School)
- Cheryl Scheidemantle,(Polytechnic School Pasadena),
- Gary Hung (CSU Fullerton)
- Celine Gietzen (Woodland Hills)
- Diana Ray-Goodman (Woodland Hills)

Site Coordinators were polled for their feedback after this year's exams and a training video for judges is being created to help comments and grades be more standardized.

COMPETITIONS:

Our LA Section guitar and harp competitions took place on April 4, and our bowed strings finals will take place in May. Here is a summary:

BOWED STRINGS COMPETITION, chaired by **Trina Carey Hodgson and Logan Hodgson**.

The Preliminary Round of our Bowed Strings Competition took place during the month of March, with 108 applicants participating in nine categories from 49 studios. Our national panel of judges included Allen Lieb, April Losey, Brandon Encinas, Jacob Thompson, Lindsay Genadek and Stephanie Hunt.

Finalists were announced on April 24, with 40 violin, cello and viola students advancing to the Final Round.

GUITAR COMPETITION, chaired by **Brian Head**

This took place on April 4, 2026 at USC's MacDonald Recital Hall. Brian Head has yet to give us information about the winners.

HARP COMPETITION, chaired by **Marcia Dickstein**

This took place April 4, 2026 at at First Baptist Church of Glendale. Much thanks to our chair, Marcia Dickstein, cochair Jillian Risigari-Gaias, and judges Diane AlanCraig and Elizabeth Zosseder. Our winners:

Novice Level:

- First Place - Jeremy Liu
- Second Place - Rebecca Chou

Junior 1 Level:

- First Place - Emmeline Liu
- Second Place - Erin Bai

UPCOMING EVENTS:

May 3: Laurie Niles will present two of the three ASTA-LA Annual Awards at the Colburn Community School's Suzuki Spring Festival to give maximum attention to honoring our recipients Nancy Yamagata (Outstanding Studio Teacher) and the Colburn School (Distinguished Service).

May 4-10: Online elections for CalASTA-LA Board positions: President-Elect, Treasurer and Secretary

May 21: Laurie Niles will present the ASTA-LA Annual Award for Outstanding School Teacher at the Los Cerritos Middle School Orchestra Spring Concert to give maximum attention to honoring our recipient Elizabeth Blake.

May 23: ASTA-LA Bowed Strings Competition Finals, followed by our ASTA-LA Board Meeting and Awards Dinner at the Spaghetti Factory in Fullerton, where we will introduce our awards winners to the board and have an official presentation ceremony.

June 7: Olympia Youth Orchestra Concert, which will feature a solo by violinist Jacob Sun, who won the Grand Prize on our 2025 ASTA-LA Bowed Strings Competition. He will also be awarded the \$200 Noumi Fischer Prize at this performance.

California State University, Northridge

SPRING 2026 | 10

Department of Music



Situated in Los Angeles, the string program at CSUN cultivates a vibrant curriculum and nurturing environment for its dynamic and diverse student body.

CSUN String Faculty

Lorenz Gamma, Violin

Head of String Studies
Director of Chamber Music

Roberto Cani, Violin

Concertmaster, L.A. Opera

Wendy Richman, Viola

Founding Violist,
International Contemporary Ensemble

Diane Roscetti, Cello

Director, CSUN Honors String Quartet Program

Jory Herman, Double Bass

Los Angeles Philharmonic

Allison Allport, Harp

Los Angeles Studio Musician





ASTA Featured on Two Rancho Bernardo Library Concerts!

The San Diego Section held two ASTA sponsored musical programs for members and their students giving all the opportunity to perform which was held on Saturday, February 14th 3pm at the RB Library for the Discovery Concert Series which featured Jennifer Albrent in a Valentine's Day "For The Love of Music". ASTA students were featured in performances along with Jennifer performing solo selections for the audience. Another concert on Saturday, April 10th "Rising Young Stars" also at the RB Library featured high school students three who are students of ASTA San Diego Chapter President, Ulli Reiner. Both programs were for no fees and was a generous donation through the San Diego Library system and organized through the Discovery Concert Series chaired by Ulli Reiner.

The Discovery Concert Series will continue to offer programs for next season and will be posted in August of this year. These concerts are offered free of charge and open to the general public. If you are interested in presenting a concert program under the Discovery Concert Series please contact Ulli Reiner for additional details.

Board Members Participated in a Performance Tour to Europe and will return again this summer of 2026.

Two of our board members traveled to Europe this past summer to perform in Budapest, Hungary and Salzburg, Austria with the Poway Symphonette. We participated in the Salzburg Cantus International Music and Cultural Festival and the Poway Symphonette was featured as the official "Orchestra in Residence" for the festival for the 5th year in a row. We will be returning this summer of 2026 to perform in and around the area of Salzburg and also at the Cantus Festival in Salzburg, Austria. The performances are charity concerts with proceeds going to children in hospice, families in need and seniors in need. For high school students looking for volunteer opportunities in their college application process, this is a wonderful opportunity to participate in as a performer and in participating in volunteering. <http://powaysymphonette.com>

Board Meetings!

Several informal board meetings via phone and zoom calls have been held when needed and will continue to update the board members and San Diego members on upcoming events for next year.

Upcoming ASTA Events!

A Winter Chamber Music Recital is in the works for the fall of 2026 and Jennifer Albrent will be the organizer. More information to come. Stay tuned for these events and more to come. Warmest wishes as you gear up for your spring recitals, concerts and end of the year programs. Best wishes for a summer filled with continued musical adventures and fun activities.

Musically yours,

Ulli Reiner,

President, CalASTA San Diego Chapter

wolfemozart@gmail.com

Discovery Concert Series for 2025-2026

A FREE Concert for All

Select Saturdays • 3:00pm - 4pm • 2nd floor Community Room
Rancho Bernardo Branch Library • 17110 Bernardo Center Dr.

Open seating until capacity is reached

Kevin Ayesch, Piano



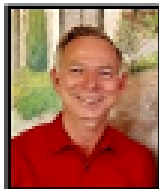
September 13, 2025

Poway Symphonette, Spooktacular



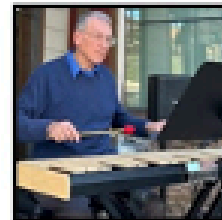
October 11, 2025

**Gordon Kohl,
Accordian Extraordinaire**



November 8, 2025

David Topham, Marimba



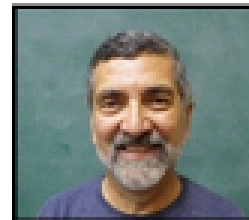
January 10, 2026

**Jennifer Albrent
For the Love of Music**



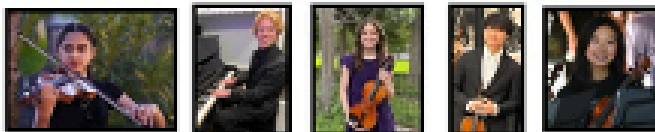
February 14, 2026

San Diego Community Jazz Band



March 14, 2026

Rising Young Stars



Ashwika Nittoor Luke Millay Hannah Carrasco Yeongsu Kim Arianna Lee

April 11, 2026

Michael Krause, piano



May 9, 2026



James Greening-Valenzuela and Michelle Walther held ASTACAP evaluations in March. They went well, and the honors students will be performing in a recital in Albany on May 3rd.

May 20th is the deadline for Irene Sharp Scholarship applications. The previous year's applicants are winding down and sending in their materials (videos, etc).

The final round of our solo competition will be held on May 23, 2026 at Grace Presbyterian in Walnut Creek CA

August 2 is our section meeting. We are looking for a recreational area to hold the event. This will be the moment when I step down and James Greening-Valenzuela takes the helm as the new president.

Warmwishes,
Kathleen Balfe
President, CalASTA San Francisco



Our section is continuing to grow and we now have 31 members! We welcome all CalASTA members to participate in any of our events. We are all so busy with our teaching, performing, and life's demands, that we are sharing access to events with neighboring sections. We had several members of the Sacramento and Fresno sections join us at our second general membership Zoom meeting that included a wonderful presentation from Priscilla Hawkins, "The History and Development of the Cello". Our Stockton Section and the Sacramento Section were invited by the San Francisco Section to participate in the 2026 Solo Competition they are hosting. Collaboration is a wonderful way to share our resources and talents for the good of our students and teachers.

Our section was well represented at the National ASTA/SAA Conference in San Francisco. Darcy Ford-James, Shane Kalbach, and Jelani Brown from Stockton Soul gave a well attended workshop and performance. Griena (Goody) Choi's Mountain House HS Orchestra performed. Many members were in attendance at the conference. Also a shout out to member Ruth Britton who was very busy this year conducting one of the CODA Honor Orchestras in December as well as several regional honor bands and orchestras, and also presenting at the Chicago Midwest Conference with Darcy Ford-James.

Our section is focused on the future and plans to get a jump on next year by scheduling events early to avoid scheduling conflicts that impacted our plans this year.

Submitted by,
Donna Harrison, President
CalASTA Stockton Section



We have had a busy year here in Bakersfield. On Saturday, April 11, 2026 we put on our Annual CalASTA Festival and Competition Festival at Valley Baptist Church in Bakersfield. There were 21 students registered for the Festival portion and 2 students for the Competition. The judges were from Visalia and gave great comments to the performers. For the Competition there was one student for the Junior Division and one for the Senior Division. Both students received a first-place ribbon and a cash prize for their wonderful performance. Everyone performed well and it was a great day.

Bakersfield/Kern County had a good turnout at the ASTA Convention in San Francisco in February. This was the first National ASTA Convention for many of us and we all really enjoyed it. Our own Stockdale High School Orchestra performed at the convention.

In the Fall we will once again host our annual Fall String Workshop. This workshop offers five levels. From beginning to level four (advanced). It has been well received by our public-school teachers and we usually have between 80-100 students in attendance.

We continue to increase our membership and have invited more of our members to join in at board meetings.

Thank you,
Regina Pryor
CalASTA Bakersfield Section Vice-President

CODA Message



The California Orchestra Directors Association (CODA) exists “to promote school orchestras in California by providing quality honor orchestra experiences for school orchestra students, facilitating an exchange of instructional strategies and ideas for the school orchestra director, and providing a forum and community for school orchestra directors.”

With the purpose above clearly in mind, CODA would like to invite all educators to be actively engaged with the organization throughout the year.

First, individuals are encouraged to renew or establish their membership by visiting codaorchestras.org. Membership is measured annually (July 1 – June 30) and all are invited to visit the website to ensure that CODA can stay effectively connected to its members throughout the year.

Next, CODA is proud to sponsor two wonderful honor orchestra experiences for California’s students: the December Honor Orchestras and the All-State Orchestras (January).

The December CODA Honor Orchestras will be held at the beautiful Occidental College, Los Angeles and will take place on December 4th and 5th 2026. Audition recordings and application materials are due by Wednesday , October 15th, 2026 for CODA and Allstate High School recordings and Junior High School recordings are due November 2, 2026.

The All-State Orchestras had played significant role in California All-State Music Education Conference (CASMEC). CASMEC will be on January 14th to 17, 2027 in Sacramento. Students this year will be have the opportunity to work under the direction of three committed educators: TBA (Symphony Orchestra), TBA t (String Orchestra) and TBA (JHS String Orchestra, and TBA (JHS Concert Orchestra).

Please visit codaorchestras.org for audition materials, repertoire selections, or additional information on the above ensembles.

Finally, CODA is committed to serving orchestra educators by arranging for quality professional development sessions and music education opportunities at February’s All-State Music Education Conference (CASMEC). Presenters this year will include both nationally recognized pedagogues and leaders from within our communities here in California. In addition, CODA will continue to highlight select student ensembles and is committed to exploring additional opportunities to include more students, directors, and schools at CASMEC.

The members of our CODA board and related committees are committed to serving California’s school orchestra programs, students, and educators. Your voice in our organizations matters, so please do feel free to contact either myself, Executive Administrator Trish Adams, or any member of our CODA leadership team with questions or considerations as we continue to work towards supporting the objective noted above.

Thank you for your service to music education in California!

Membership Report



May Membership Report

We currently have 729 members. We have 162 lapsed members.
In April we had 800 members.

Section	members in good standing	# Lapsed
Bakersfield	29	6
Fresno	29	6
Los Angles	304	87
Sacramento	41	11
San Diego	34	10
San Francisco	264	36
Stockton	28	6

Submitted by,
Stephanie Holmes
Membership Chair



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