

# MONTCLAIR STATE UNIVERSITY

## **MASTERWORK HIGHLIGHTS**

### *BIOGRAPHIES*

FEATURING

## **UNIVERSITY SINGERS**

## **UNIVERSITY CHORALE**

**Dr. Heather J. Buchanan, *conductor***

**Steven W. Ryan, *accompanist***

### **GUEST ARTISTS**

Omar Abdallah, *baritone*

Eliza Arnone, *soprano*

Abigail Brodnick, *soprano*

Barry Centanni, *percussion*

Mario Correa, *Baroque trumpet*

Isabella Cruz, *percussion*

Hannah D'elia, *percussion*

Evan Fleming, *baritone*

Taylor Goodson, *timpani*

Bryce Grier, *Baroque trumpet*

Gabrielle Guida, *mezzo soprano*

Dimitri Korneev, *piano*

Timothy Nuzzetti, *percussion*

Donna Scro Samori, *choreographer*

Thalia Suleymanov, *soprano*

Sydney Swearengin, *soprano*

Max Tripodi, *percussion*

THDN dance majors

**SATURDAY, DECEMBER 2, 2023**

**8PM**

ALEXANDER KASSER THEATER



**John J. Cali**  
**School of Music**

**MONTCLAIR**  
STATE UNIVERSITY

**Daniel Gurskis**  
Dean, College of the Arts

**Anthony Mazzocchi**  
Director  
John J. Cali School of Music

## ABOUT THE PERFORMERS

The **MONTCLAIR STATE UNIVERSITY CHORAL PROGRAM** is an inclusive and dynamic community built on humanistic values (INTEGRITY - COMPASSION - RESPECT), artistic excellence, and service through music. Under the direction of Dr. Heather J. Buchanan since September 2003, the Montclair choral program has been recognized for its successful collaborations with world-renowned artists and celebrated professional musicians in national and international venues. Collaborative pianist, Steven W. Ryan, is the accompanist for all Montclair choirs – Chorale, University Singers, Vocal Accord, and Prima Voce.

### UNIVERSITY SINGERS

The **UNIVERSITY SINGERS** is Montclair's flagship choir - a mixed-voice elective ensemble comprising undergraduate & graduate students who are experienced musicians. Students from all schools/colleges in the University in good academic standing may audition. The University Singers performs a wide variety of sacred and secular repertoire, encompassing genres from the Renaissance to the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, with special interest in contemporary composers.

Previous season highlights include New York Choral Festival Showcase Concerts performances at Carnegie Hall and Alice Tully Hall, their ACDA Eastern Division Convention debut performance in Providence, RI (2012), their NAFME All-Eastern debut in Atlantic City, NJ (2017), Mid-Atlantic tour of the USA (May 2013), and collaborating with the esteemed American composer Morten Lauridsen on his *Nocturnes* during his November 2013 MSU residency. The choir has also toured Central Europe and Russia with performances in Prague, Budapest, Bratislava, Debrecen, Moscow, Pushkin, and St. Petersburg. An important ensemble in the NJ arts community, the University Singers perform regularly with the NJS, presenting Handel's *Messiah* annually since 2014. They have also performed Mozart's *Requiem* under Jacques Lacombe (2013) and Xian Zhang (2018). In October 2018 they gave the US Premiere performance of *Speak Out!* by Kate Whitley (UK), an inspiring work based on texts by Nobel Peace Prize winner Malala, for the NJS's 2018-19 season opening.

The University Singers has also had an exciting performance relationship with renowned composer-artist Meredith Monk beginning with their historic collaboration in December 2006 and continuing with the critically acclaimed March 2009 performances of *Ascension Variations* at the Guggenheim Museum. They recorded the CD *Songs of Ascension* with Meredith Monk and Vocal Ensemble on the prestigious European label ECM Records under the legendary producer Manfred Eicher, released May 2011. This collaboration was included in the Producer of the Year section of the 2012 Grammy nominations. 2019-20 saw the choir return to the NJS for two *Messiah* performances under the baton of guest conductor Roderick Cox, with an inaugural live broadcast on WQXR hosted by John Schaffer from the Cathedral Basilica, Newark. During the COVID pandemic, the Basilica performance was rebroadcast in December 2020 on WQXR and the National Public Broadcast network. The choir's first solo CD recording, *I Sing Because...* was released in March 2020 and is also available for digital download on Spotify and iTunes.

During 2020-21, and in the face of the devastating COVID-19 pandemic, the University Singers continued to function in the vanguard of best choral practices, with socially distanced

outdoor rehearsals and innovative recording projects. The choir's activities received widespread regional and national media attention, including TV appearances on *The Today Show*, *NBC Nightly News*, *The Kelly Clarkson Show*, and *News 12 NJ* in addition to print and digital media stories. During the Fall 2020 semester, their social media outreach included 99,591+ views. By invitation of the New York Yankees, their video performance of *The Star-Spangled Banner* was performed at Yankees Stadium in June 2021.

2021-22 season highlights included two NYC debut performances: collaborating with the internationally acclaimed UK-based vocal ensemble VOCES8 at Merkin Hall; and the MSU/ Cali showcase event in the Grace Rainey Rogers Auditorium at The Metropolitan Museum. The choir also commissioned composer Kamala Sankaram *Let My Country Awake* as part of her Cali Immersive Residency. 2022-23 saw the choir return to mainstage performances with the NJS (*Messiah* and Mahler *Symphony No. 3*) under principal conductor Xian Zhang, perform the NY metropolitan premier of the new social justice piece *Weather* (Rollo Dilworth) in collaboration with the Montclair Wind Symphony (Dr. Thomas McCauley, *conductor*), and continue their partnership with VOCES8 (February 2023) through the Cali Immersive Residency Program. 2023-24 season highlights include the World Premiere of *Les Colombes* by composition student/baritone Ian Kearney, performing *Messiah* with Maestro Nicholas McGegan, and collaborating with international choral icon Eric Whitacre in April 2024. The University Singers' performances are broadcast on Cali Live and the Cali YouTube Channel.

## MONTCLAIR STATE UNIVERSITY CHORALE

**CHORALE** is the core choral ensemble and symphonic choir in the John J. Cali School of Music. Currently 140 voices strong it comprises music students majoring in performance (vocal and instrumental), music education, music therapy, composition, and musical theatre, as well as auditioned non-music majors with choral experience. With a focus on masterwork repertoire, the Chorale's 2018-19 season began with three magnificent performances of Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony* under the baton of Xian Zhang for the New Jersey Symphony's (NJS) season opening. It continued with their Stern Auditorium/Perelman Stage debut at Carnegie Hall, also performing Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony* (George Mathew, conductor) in *Beethoven for The Rohingya*, a benefit concert aiding the work of Doctors Without Borders/Médécins Sans Frontières assisting the Rohingya refugees fleeing genocide in Myanmar. The Chorale's 18-19 season concluded with *Dona Nobis Pacem* by Ralph Vaughan Williams featuring soloists Karen Driscoll (soprano) and John Hancock (baritone) with chamber orchestra accompaniment including Steven W. Ryan *pianist*. This concert commemorated the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of WWI and the 200<sup>th</sup> birthday of America's great lyric poet Walt Whitman.

The Chorale's long-standing relationship with the NJS features a range of masterworks, including Howard Shore's Academy Award winning *The Lord of the Rings Symphony*, Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony* (Neeme Järvi and Xian Zhang, conductors), Mahler's *Symphony No. 3*, Verdi's epic *Messa da Requiem* twice with Neeme Järvi (January 2010) and Jacques Lacombe (April 2014) and the Fauré *Requiem* (Eric Jacobsen, conductor) for the NJS Centennial Season. The Chorale's highly acclaimed performances of Orff's *Carmina Burana* and

Verdi *Requiem* with Maestro Jacques Lacombe were celebrated with limited edition CD releases in September 2011 and December 2015.

Alexander Kasser Theater performances have included collaborations with professional and alumni soloists and instrumentalists, as well as regional youth choirs Newark Boys Chorus, Children's Chorus of Sussex County, and the American Boy Choir. Chorale repertoire highlights include an interdisciplinary performance of *Carmina Burana* (Orff) with the department of theatre and dance (April 2017), *Ein Deutsches Requiem* (Brahms), *Durufé Requiem*, *Saint Nicolas* (Britten), *Fauré Requiem*, *Chichester Psalms* (Bernstein), the regional premiere of *Parables* (Aldridge) in collaboration with the MSU Symphony Orchestra for the 2011 Crawford Concert, *Annelies* (Whitbourn) for the April 2015 Holocaust Memorial Concert, and the Tri-state premiere of *Alzheimer's Stories* (Cohen) for the 2015 Crawford Concert, and the New Jersey premiere performance of *Jubilate Deo* by Dan Forrest (May 2018).

The Chorale's 2019-20 season featured two semi-staged regional premiere performances of the acclaimed fusion oratorio *Considering Matthew Shepard* (Hella Johnson) for the 2019 Crawford Concert (December 2019). This was their final performance prior to the closure of live performances due to the COVID-19 pandemic. After a semester of online instruction with a focus on pedagogical concepts, the Chorale returned to performing in Spring 2021 with two modalities to accommodate students' instructional preferences: Virtual Chorale (100% online instruction) and Red Hawk Chorale (starting online and progressing to in-person instruction). With the welcome return to in-person concertizing, the Chorale celebrated the 2021-22 season with regional premiere performances of two exciting extended works by living composers: *The Breath of Life* (Dan Forrest) and *Circlesong* (Bob Chilcott), integrating multi-media and live dance elements in both productions. *The Breath of Life* was released as a "live audio" digital download in January 2022. Their 2022-3 season included *Psalms* settings by Mendelssohn, Howells, and Wilberg with Bernstein's *Chichester Psalms* the Winter Concert centerpiece. The 2023-24 season focus is *Carmina Burana* performed as "highlights" in an interdisciplinary collaboration in Kasser (December 2023) and with the NJS in March 2024 (Xian Zhang conductor). The spring semester culminates with Eric Whitacre's eagerly anticipated Cali Immersive Residency, and performances of *Cloudburst* and *Seal Lullaby* under the composer's direction.

## MONTCLAIR STATE UNIVERSITY DANCE PROGRAM

The **Montclair Dance Division** combines a conservatory-based approach to training within a liberal arts curriculum to prepare students for their lives and careers as performing artists. We are dedicated to a program that is welcoming and inclusive of diverse viewpoints and lived experiences, including gender, sexuality, disability, age, socioeconomic status, ethnicity, race, and culture.

The Dance Division holistically educates its students by developing and cultivating a deep knowledge of dance in many facets. We seek to enhance the student's mind/body connection and their technical facility; encourage their sense of play, creativity and critical thinking; deepen their appreciation/understanding of the historical and cultural relevance of dance in our global society; and promote their engagement as global citizens as well as their understanding of the democratic principles that enable them to be free-thinking artists. We continue to evolve our anti-biased, anti-racist stance to affect learning and teaching. We actively work to revise

curriculum and course content to be inclusive of all people.

## **DR. HEATHER J. BUCHANAN** **CONDUCTOR**

Australian-born conductor **Heather J. Buchanan, PhD**, is Professor of Music and Director of Choral Activities at Montclair State University (MSU) where she conducts the Chorale (symphonic choir), University Singers, Vocal Accord (chamber choir), and Prima Voce (SSAA). Choirs under her direction have won critical acclaim for their “heartfelt conviction” “grace and precision,” “vibrant sound,” “eloquence”, and for singing with the “crispness and dexterity of a professional choir.” During her 21-year tenure, Montclair choirs have collaborated with a variety of renowned national and international performing artists and composers including VOCES8, Rhiannon Giddens, Meredith Monk, Neeme Järvi, Jacques Lacombe, Xian Zhang, Patrick Duprè Quigley, and Richard Alston Dance Company (UK), with Eric Whitacre upcoming in April 2024. Her numerous mainstage orchestral collaborations with the New Jersey Symphony (NJS) include Beethoven’s *Ninth Symphony*, Mozart’s *Requiem*, Verdi’s *Messa da Requiem*, Fauré’s *Requiem*, Orff’s *Carmina Burana*, Mahler *Symphony No. 3*, Mendelssohn’s *Midsummer Night’s Dream*, *Zelda: Symphony of the Goddesses*, *Harry Potter & The Prisoner of Azkaban*, and Howard Shore’s Academy Award winning *The Lord of the Rings Symphony*, with Handel’s *Messiah* annually since December 2014. In June 2023, the NJS honored her 20-year relationship with the orchestra at the New Millennium Gala, the culminating event of their Centennial Season. Dr. Buchanan’s choirs have also sung on commercially produced recordings with Meredith Monk (*Songs of Ascension*) and the NJS (*Carmina Burana* & *Verdi Requiem*), and in March 2020 the University Singers released their own professionally recorded CD *I sing because...* which is also available for digital download on Spotify and iTunes.

Dr. Buchanan holds degrees from the Queensland Conservatorium of Music (Australia), Westminster Choir College of Rider University (U.S.), and the University of New England (Australia). A licensed Body Mapping Educator since 2002, she specializes in the teaching of this neuro-anatomical educational technique that trains musicians to attain freedom of expression through effective movement. A vibrant teacher, dynamic performer, and passionate musicians’ health advocate, Dr. Buchanan is in demand as a guest conductor, somatic educator, and choral clinician in the U.S. and abroad. Her 30-day choral tour (June-July 2023) hosted by the Australian National Choral Association was a comprehensive educational and artistic undertaking involving dozens of choirs and hundreds of choristers from all ages, amateur to professional, participating in clinics, festival choirs, rehearsals, and workshops across the nation.

## **STEVEN W. RYAN** **MSU ACCOMPANIST**

**Steven W. Ryan** joined the Cali School faculty in 2006. He has performed as an orchestral keyboardist with most of the major orchestras in New York City, including members of the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra. He has played celesta with the legendary Berlin Philharmonic at

Carnegie Hall; piano, harpsichord, and portative organ with the Desoff Choirs; and synthesizer with the Moody Blues rock band. He has collaborated with conductors such as Lorin Maazel, Vladimir Ashkenazy, Neeme Järvi, Bernhard Haitink, Gerard Schwarz, and Maxim Shostakovich, among others. Mr. Ryan took first place in the 2001 Concours des Grands Amateurs de Piano. At the close of this international competition, he was engaged to perform Tchaikovsky's Piano Concerto No. 1 in B-Flat Minor at the Sorbonne in Paris. In addition to winning the French competition, Steven took second prize in the 2000 Van Cliburn International Piano Competition for Outstanding Amateurs. In July 2022 he performed Messiaen's *Couleurs de la Cité Céleste* with the Wind Symphony (Dr. Thomas McCauley, *conductor*) in Prague for WASBE Conference. Steven recently performed at Merkin Hall with VOCES8 in their collaboration with Montclair State University's Vocal Accord.

**SETH VELEZ**  
**CHORALE ASSISTANT CONDUCTOR**

**Seth Velez** is an accomplished conductor, bass-baritone, and educator within the choral spheres of Los Angeles and New York. As a singer, Seth has performed extensively with choirs touring the United States, the U.K., South Korea, and much of Europe. He has competed and headlined in multiple international choral competitions and has a solo background that encompasses both Classical and Musical Theatre styles. Seth's conducting and teaching portfolio includes positions at Montclair State University, Syracuse University, Azusa Pacific University, Brooklyn Youth Chorus, the Desoff Choirs, and the Los Angeles Children's Chorus. Seth also runs a private voice studio with clients of all ages and ability levels. His research interests primarily revolve around the flexibility and versatility of the human voice. Seth holds both a MMus in Choral Conducting and a MMus in Voice Pedagogy from Syracuse University as well as a BM in Performance from Azusa Pacific University. He is an inducted member of Pi Kappa Lambda and has active memberships with ACDA, NATS, and CMS.

**OMAR ABDALLAH**  
**BARITONE**

**Omar Abdallah**, baritone, is a junior Music Education major enrolled in the 5-year dual certification program, that will allow him to attain his bachelor's and master's degrees and a certification to teach students with disabilities. He studies voice with Prof. Jeffrey Gall. As a vocalist, Omar enjoys performing many different genres, from Opera and classical choral and solo repertoire to pop and jazz. At Montclair, Omar starred in the main stage opera production *Gianni Schicci*, playing the role of Simone. He was also cast as Don Giovanni in the spring 2023 Opera Scenes workshop, as well as Bob from *The old Maid and the Thief*. Omar currently serves as bass-baritone section leader in University Singers, and also studies choral conducting with Dr. Buchanan. In the worlds of both performance and pedagogy, Omar hopes to share his love of music with minds young and old to foster a community of open expression and love for creation.

**ELIZA ARNONE**  
**SOPRANO**

**Eliza Arnone**, soprano, is a fifth-year senior music education major in the John J. Cali School of Music. She is a long-term member of University Singers, Vocal Accord, and Chorale, and also sang with Prima Voce for the NJ Symphony's Mahler *Symphony No. 3* last season. For the last two years Eliza has also served as Soprano Assistant Section leader for Chorale. This season, Eliza will perform her operatic role debut as Sister Catherine in Montclair's mainstage opera production of Poulenc's masterwork *Dialogues des Carmélites*. Eliza currently studies voice with eminent Italian American soprano Maria Natale and plans to continue pursuing her passion for singing by auditioning for the Masters in Vocal Performance program this spring.

**ABIGAIL BRODNICK**  
**SOPRANO**

Described as "personable, pretty of voice [and] engaging" by South Florida Classical Review, coloratura soprano **Abby Brodnick** is a grand prize winner of the 2023 Camille Coloratura Awards (Student Division). A finalist in the 2023 Sherrill Milnes Opera Idol Competition, she also graced the 2023 Savannah Voice Festival as a Study Grant Artist. Noteworthy performances with VOCES8, Decoda, the New Jersey Symphony Orchestra, and the Indianapolis Chamber Orchestra highlight Abby's expertise in oratorio and chamber music. Experienced in contemporary music, she recently premiered a song cycle by Thomas Parente at the New York Composer's Circle. Her upcoming endeavors include her portrayal of Sister Constance in the Cali Opera production of *Dialogues des Carmélites* in January, directed by Malena Dayen and conducted by Kyle Ritenauer. Currently pursuing graduate studies with Beth Roberts at the Cali School of Music, Abby previously earned her Bachelor of Music in Vocal Performance with a musical theater minor at DePauw University, studying with Dr. André Campelo. The recipient of the 2022 Fitzpatrick Opera Award for stage excellence, Abby has portrayed several memorable roles, including Belinda in *Dido and Aeneas*, Barbarina and Susanna (cover) in *Le Nozze di Figaro*, the Dew Fairy in *Hänsel und Gretel*, Pernille in *The Beautiful Bridegroom*, and Percy Talbott in *The Spitfire Grill*. Originally from Naperville, Illinois, Abby's artistic journey continues to captivate audiences worldwide.

**BARRY CENTANNI**  
**PERCUSSION**

Percussionist **Barry Centanni** attended Montclair State University before earning a bachelor's degree in performance from the Manhattan School of Music and a Master of Music degree from the Juilliard School. He is the principal percussionist with the Orchestra of St. Luke's and performs with many other orchestras including the New York Pops, the New York Philharmonic, the Westfield Symphony, the Colonial Symphony, the NJ State Opera and the Metropolitan Opera. His television credits include Live from Madison Square Garden, Live from Lincoln Center, Saturday Night Live and Late Night with David Letterman. As a freelance percussionist, he has

performed with Frank Sinatra, Tony Bennett, Sting, Whitney Houston, James Taylor, Elton John and with the bands Yes, the Moody Blues and Metallica. He has taught at SUNY Purchase, the Mannes College of Music, Columbia Teachers College, and the Montclair Kimberley Academy.

**MARIO CORREA**  
**BAROQUE TRUMPET**

**Mario Correa** is a freelance trumpeter and educator in the New Jersey and New York area. Since graduating Rutgers University Mason Gross School of the Arts in 2012 and receiving a performance certificate from Montclair State University in 2016, he has engaged in a wide range of educational and performance experiences. Specializing in historically informed performance practice techniques and instrumentation, Mario has performed in various ensembles such as Baltimore Handel Choir, North Carolina Baroque Orchestra, Bach Vespers at Holy Trinity, Tempesta di Mare, and La Fiocco. Mario also enjoys teaching instrumental music in North Arlington Public Schools and working as a freelance audio engineer with Bove Audio and Purple Critter Media.

**EVAN FLEMING**  
**BASS – BARITONE**

Hailing from New Jersey, Baritone **Evan Fleming** is elated to return to the stage at the Alexander Kasser Theater. A 2019 graduate of the Music Education program at Montclair State University, Evan was frequently seen performing in the Montclair Choirs (Chorale, University Singers, Vocal Accord) and opera productions, including Britten's *The Rape of Lucretia* (2018) and Donizetti's *Il giovedì grasso* (2016). While pursuing the Master of Music degree at the University of Alabama, Evan created roles in the world premieres of Joseph Landers' *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* (2019) and Michael Ching's *Remove Shoes Before Entering* (2020). Past roles include Baron (*La traviata*, Quisisana Resort 2023), Bobby (*Company*, Opera Steamboat 2022), and Papageno (*Die Zauberflöte*, UA 2021). Mr. Fleming is a Resident Artist with Toledo Opera for their 2023/24 Season, singing in their upcoming productions of *Roméo et Juliette* and *Ragtime* as well as their touring children's opera. For more information, please visit: [evan-fleming.com](http://evan-fleming.com)

**EMILY CLARE GOCON**  
**LIGHTING DESIGNER**

**Emily Clare Gocon** (she/her) is a Filipino-American lighting designer and technician for live entertainment. She is a recent graduate from Montclair State University, where she received a BFA degree in Theater Production & Design with a focus in Lighting Design & Technology. She has worked on multiple shows in positions ranging from electrician to lighting designer.

Some of her recent design credits include Chicago (High Tech High School), Head Over Heels (Molloy University), and Spring Dance 2022 (Montclair State University). Though her main focus is lighting design for theatre, dance and other live performance, Emily has many other passions and hobbies that include different aspects of the performing and visual arts. Some of which include dance/choreography, playing the guitar, singing/songwriting, photography, and crocheting/crafting. Keep up with her work on Instagram: @ecgocon\_design

**GABRIELLE GUIDA**  
**MEZZO – SOPRANO**

**Gabrielle Guida** (mezzo-soprano) is a fourth-year year Music Performance major with a primary in voice, and studies in the studio of Prof. Barbara Dever. Gabrielle is extensively involved in a variety of Cali School of Music performances, including Chorale, University Singers, Vocal Accord, Mainstage Opera, and Opera Workshop. This year, she is privileged to serve as the University Singers' Alto Section Leader. In January, Gabrielle will take the stage in the role of "Mother Marie of the Incarnation" in the mainstage opera production *Dialogues des Carmélites*. Previous performances include "Cherubino" in *Le nozze di Figaro*, "Maestro Spinelloccio"/"The Notary"/"The Magistrate" in *Gianni Schicci* and *Buoso's Ghost*, as well as "Jo" in scenes from *Little Women*, directed by Prof. Karen Driscoll. Gabrielle is deeply grateful for the extensive solo and ensemble performing, and leadership opportunities afforded her by the Cali School of Music faculty who have mentored, inspired, and supported her on her vocal journey.

**TAYLOR A. GOODSON**  
**TIMPANI**

**Taylor Goodson** is active as a freelance percussionist in the New York/New Jersey metropolitan area, participating in performance with members of the Metropolitan Opera, the New York Philharmonic, the New York City Opera, and the Orchestra of St. Luke's at many notable venues in both New York and New Jersey. He is the principal tympanist of both the Apex Ensemble and the FEA Symphony and he performs regularly with a plethora of ensembles, including the Paragon Ragtime Orchestra and the New Jersey Festival Orchestra. He is also active as a member of the New York Percussion Group, a New York City-based percussion ensemble, and Festival Percussion, an educational percussion quartet in the New York/New Jersey area.

**BRYCE GRIER**  
**BAROQUE TRUMPET**

**Bryce Grier** is a fourth-year undergraduate trumpet performance major. An aspiring freelancer and young artist, Bryce has played principal trumpet on various works in Montclair's symphony orchestra and wind symphony. A member of The Highland Stage organization since 2016,

has played dozens of Broadway scores. Bryce is also recognized as an outstanding soloist at Montclair and around the North Jersey Area, performing not only as a go to orchestral player, but as soloist in various churches and events. Bryce was recently featured as a guest soloist for the charity benefit “Music for M.S.,” a benefit concert meant to raise awareness for multiple sclerosis.

**DMITRI KORNEEV**  
***PIANO***

In addition to his performances as a collaborative pianist at the Cali School, **Dmitri Korneev** is an active educator and composer, currently pursuing his PhD in Composition at Mason Gross School of the Arts. His most recent chamber work won First Prize in the IX International Competition of Composers “Romanticism: its Origins and Beyond” in memory of Elena Gnessina in Moscow, Russia. Dmitri earned a Second Prize at the National Prokofiev Competition, a Third Prize in the Dunaevsky International Competition for the large choral work on a sacred text, and a Special Award at the International Piano Competition IBLA Grand Prize in Italy. “.. Combining gentle humor, expansive beauty, fire, flare, and virtuosity, music remained true to the transcendently tragic Russian romantic roots of the composer.” (from McDowell Concert Series). As a solo pianist, Dmitri spent several years giving recitals throughout Russia, Greece, Italy, and the United States, including such prestigious concert halls as Carnegie Hall, Merkin Hall, and United Nations Concert Hall.

**DONNA SCRO SAMORI**  
***CHOREOGRAPHER***

**Donna Scro Samori**, the Artistic Director of Freespace Dance, is a member of the Montclair dance faculty, Mental Health Consultant for The Department of Theatre and Dance, therapist, and yoga teacher.

She has worked professionally for over twenty years and has performed at some of the most prestigious venues, including The Paris Opera House, Theatre de la Ville, the American Dance Festival, Spoleto Festival, Jacob’s Pillow, The Egg, the Joyce Theater, The New Victory Theater, Central Park Summerstage, Symphony Space, and Lincoln Center. She has been applauded by The New York Times, The Village Voice, The Star- Ledger, The Houston Chronicle, Dance Insider, Backstage, and The Boston Globe for her compelling signature style. Prior to establishing Freespace Dance, Donna was a principal dancer with the Nikolais and Murray Louis Dance Company, founding member of Sean Curran Company, and has worked with many other established New York choreographers throughout her career.