

Bardin-Niskala Duo

An-Lin Bardin, cello
Naomi Niskala, piano

www.Bardin-Niskala-Duo.com

email contact: info@bardin-niskala-duo.com



The Bardin-Niskala Duo (cello and piano) uses music to explore notions of identity, belonging, and community to fight racism, promote cultural awareness, and celebrate humanity. The Duo commissions ALAANA (African, Latinx, Asian, Arab, and Native American) composers to write pieces that incorporate folksongs and children's songs of their particular cultures and countries.

Through these commissions and the performances of these works the Duo promotes these composers and opens dialogue with and amongst audience members on the notions of homeland, community, and belonging, on the complexity and uniqueness of various cultures, and on the challenges of navigating life in this country as a bi-cultural, multi-cultural, or minority person. Each commissioned work is preceded by a short video message from the composer, where they discuss their own journey towards identity and a sense of belonging, how they

constructed their piece, and the historical or personal significance of the folk or children's song they chose for their work.

Formed in early 2021, the Duo has performed across the United States from New York and Pennsylvania, to Florida and Mississippi, Minnesota and Indiana, and California. They have presented at regional and national conferences, and have been awarded three residencies at the Avaloch Farm Music Institute. Their performances are offered in concert halls, high schools, universities, and community centers, and range from traditional concerts to more informal performances mingled with open dialogue between the Duo and audience members. The Bardin-Niskala Duo also co-directs the Winterhaven Chamber Music Retreat, an adult amateur chamber music festival held in January in New Hampshire.

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Community Engagement with Schools

Our Goals:

1. Empower minority students to celebrate their identities and acknowledge their challenges of navigating more than one culture or community
2. Address the notion that finding one's identity, as well as community and place of belonging, are often ongoing and fluid - and it's okay to not have all the answers now
3. Ask students to acknowledge their peers' diverse backgrounds and values
4. Personalize historical racial injustices and recognize the enduring effects over generations
5. Promote minority and female composers in the Western Classical music canon

Our Formats:

- Assembly presentation incorporating performances of works, videos from the composers, opening and closing discussion and dialogue with students (30-250 students, 50-90 minute presentation)
- Follow-up meetings and more personalized discussions with students in the classroom (10-30 students)*
- Workshops with middle and high school music ensembles and classes where we discuss and present the pieces and composers in detail, and can also work with performance students in a master class format (piano, cello, and chamber music) and with composition or theory students via score study
- *If desired, materials (video and audio recordings of the songs composers use, translated texts, and historic information on the songs) can be sent to teachers prior to arrival. These materials will help teachers inform students before the presentation, and will facilitate questions and discussions with the Bardin-Niskala Duo in follow-up meetings, discussions, and workshops
- Evening concert for students, parents, and teachers that includes the videos from the composers and dialogue with the audience during and after the performance

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Works we perform by ALAANA composers:

Yiheng Yvonne Wu (b. 1981), Taiwanese-American: *Three Adaptations** (2021)

Juantio Becenti (b. 1983), Diné/Navajo: *Fantasy** (2022)

Miguel del Aguila (b. 1957), Uruguayan-American: *Tango Volante** (2022)

Michael-Thomas Foumai (b. 1987), Chinese-Samoan/Hawaiian: *Breath Water Spirit** (2022)

Jean "Rudy" Perrault (b. 1961), Haitian: *Fallen** (November 2022)

Jean "Rudy" Perrault: *Brother Malcolm...* (2017)

Chihchun Chi-Sun Lee (b. 1970), Taiwanese-American: *Goán ê koa** (2023)

Chihchun Chi-Sun Lee: *Diversities* (2021)

Seare Ahmad Farhat (b. 1996), Afghani-American: *Lalo** (2023)

Melissa Dunphy (b. 1980), Australian-American-Chinese: *Brisbane: Spring of 1987** (2023)

Victor Márquez-Barrios (b. 1977), Venezuelan: *TBD** (January 2024)

Michi Wiancko (b. 1976), Japanese-American: *TBD** (February 2024)

Ivette Herryman Rodriguez (b. 1982), Cuban: *TBD** (March 2024)

Reena Esmail (b. 1983), Indian-American: *Jhula-Jhule* (2013)

Gabriela Lena Frank (b. 1972), multi-racial Latina: *Adagio para Amantaní* (2007)

Daniel Bernard Roumain (b. 1971), Haitian: *Femié* (2007)

William Grant Still (1895-1978), African-American: *Mother and Child* (1943)

Florence Price (1887-1953), African-American: *The Deserted Garden* (1933) and *Elfentanz*

** these works have been commissioned by the Bardin-Niskala Duo*

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An-Lin Bardin (cellist)

Described as “stunning,” by the New York Times, cellist An-Lin Bardin currently freelances and teaches both music and math in the greater NYC area. As the cellist of the Vinca Quartet, she performed extensively throughout Europe and the US, including Carnegie’s Weill Hall, Aspen, and Vilar Performing Arts Center. Bardin’s performances have been broadcast on Deutschlandradio and WNYC. She is a laureate of several international quartet competitions, including the Paolo Borciani Quartet Competitions in Reggio Emilia, Italy, and the Fischhoff, the Plowman, the Yellow Springs, Chesapeake, and the International Chamber Music Ensemble Competitions in the United States. A recipient of a DAAD fellowship which enabled her to work with the Vogler String Quartet in Stuttgart, Germany, Bardin also studied extensively with Gunter Pichler and Valentin Erben of the Alban Berg Quartet, Walter Levine, Heime Mueller, and the Artemis String Quartet under the auspices of the ProQuartet program in Paris, France, and with the Emerson String Quartet through the Carnegie Hall Chamber Music Workshops. She was a graduate assistant to the Takacs Quartet at the University of Colorado at Boulder for two years as part of the graduate quartet residency program. A strong proponent of music education, Bardin was a founding member of Music Haven, an intensive mentorship program serving youth from low-income neighborhoods in New Haven, Connecticut. She also founded two ongoing music educational programs in rural Washington State through the Gorgeous Sounds Residency Program. Raised in California by two nuclear physicists, Bardin began her cello studies at the age of eight with Irene Sharp. She holds a B.S. from Yale University in Geology and Geophysics, and an M.M. from the Yale School of Music, where she studied with Aldo Parisot and was a member of the Grammy-Award-winning Yale Cellos.

Naomi Niskala (pianist)

A soloist and chamber musician who has appeared in Europe, North America, Russia, Israel, Thailand, and Japan, pianist Naomi Niskala's performances have been broadcast on BBC Radio, Deutschlandradio, RTV Germany, and NPR’s *Performance Today*. Niskala performs regularly with *Spectrum Concerts Berlin*, one of Germany’s leading chamber organizations, and has also recorded two discs with them. Recent performance highlights include the San Francisco Symphony Chamber Series at Davies Symphony Hall, soloist with the St. Petersburg Chamber Philharmonic of Russia, and solo and chamber performances with *Spectrum Concerts Berlin* in the Philharmonie Kammermusiksaal of Berlin, Carnegie’s Weill Hall, in Thailand, and in Kosovo. Her release of the only complete recordings of American composer Robert Helps’s solo piano works on two discs with Albany Records in 2007 was met with high acclaim, and she has also recorded piano chamber works of Robert Helps and Ursula Mamlok with *Spectrum Concerts Berlin* for two discs on Naxos, as well as the world premiere of Mamlok’s 2015 quintet “Breezes” for Bridge Records. Niskala is featured in the 2013 German rbb television documentary entitled “Sehnsucht Musik” (Searching for Music), documenting the work of four members of *Spectrum Concerts Berlin* towards improving the harsh conditions for young musicians at a music school located in Prizren, Kosovo. Born to Japanese/Finnish-American parents, she began studying piano at the age of three, raised in Rochester, New York and then later in Tokyo, Japan. Niskala holds degrees from the Yale School of Music, Stony Brook University, and the New England Conservatory of Music, where she studied with Claude Frank, Gilbert Kalish, and Patricia Zander. She also worked with pianists Leon Fleisher, Menahem Pressler, Peter Serkin, and Maria Louisa Faini, and violinists Louis Krasner and Eugene Lehner. Niskala is currently Associate Professor of Music at Susquehanna University in Pennsylvania, where she teaches piano and theory, and leads a summer chamber music exchange program to Japan.