

iMA Newsletter

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International
Music
Academy

Year XXX, No. 8

August 2026

WELCOMING OUR NEW STUDENTS

Liam Zhang, piano
Llyod Chen, piano
Mary Pashin, piano & violin
Devin Persaud, piano
Vitsu Patel, piano

IMA STUDENTS' BIRTHDAYS IN AUGUST

Lydia L., Jonathan T., Moira C., Jason T., Krish C., Aliyah L., Ira V., Chenyi W., Ezekiel B., Kiaan M., Noah D., Devin P., Nivaen S.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

GET A \$30 CREDIT ON YOUR NEXT MONTH TUITION

We are always very happy to welcome new students of all ages, levels, and instruments to the iMA. **Please tell your friends about your experience with the International Music Academy.** Do you know someone who is thinking of taking music lessons or who has **children** who may be interested in getting their hands on a musical instrument or singing? Do you know a **teenager** who needs a high school OAC credit? Do you know an **adult** who has wanted for a long time to learn how to play a musical instrument but has never had the time or inclination? **Please tell them about the IMA.** As an appreciation for your referral, we will give you a **\$30 credit** for each new family who registers at the International Music Academy as a result of your referral.

COMPOSERS' ANNIVERSARIES IN AUGUST

2/08/1945	Mascagni died
8/08/1975	Shostakovich died
09/08/1919	Leoncavallo died
10/08/1928	Janacek died
12/08/1992	John Cage died
13/08/1912	Massenet died
22/08/1928	Stockhausen was born
22/08/1862	Debussy was born
25/08/1918	Bernstein was born
26/08/1958	Vaughan Williams died
28/08/1959	Martinu died

IMPORTANT DAYS IN AUGUST

August 3	Civic Holiday. IMA is open.
August 7-8	RCM theory examination
August 10-23	RCM practical examination

International Music Academy

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for the latest updates on classes, events, and musical opportunities!

FEATURED STUDENTS OF THE MONTH

Gabriel Gnanasampanthan



- 1. What instrument do you play?**
I play the piano.
- 2. How long have you taken lessons?** I have been taking piano lessons over 4 years
- 3. Who are your favourite musical artists?** My favourite composer is Mozart. I enjoy listening to his music because it is expressive and inspiring.
- 4. What are your other hobbies, besides music?** I like to play badminton. It is a fun and active way to spend my free time.
- 5. Favourite food?** My favourite dish is pasta.
- 6. What is the coolest thing you've learnt in your lessons in the past three months?** The coolest thing I learned is to play J.S. Bach's Minute in D Minor.
- 7. Do you have any performance coming up?** I don't have any upcoming performances, but I'm looking forward to performing at the Winter Music Festival.

KINDRED SPIRITS ORCHESTRA
Kristian Alexander | Music Director

**ELEGANCE
and IMAGINATION**

**SATURDAY
OCTOBER 17, 2026
8 P.M.**

RAVEL
Ma mère l'Oye
MOZART
Concerto for flute, harp and orchestra
FRANCK
Symphony in D minor

Kristian Alexander | conductor
Kelly Zimba Lukić | flutist
Andrew Chan | harpist

FLATO MARKHAM THEATRE | 171 TOWN CENTRE BLVD. | 905.305.7469 | KSORCHESTRA.CA

FEATURED TEACHER OF THE MONTH

Antonia de Wolfe, M.Mus., B.Mus.
Piano Studies and Interpretation, Music Theory



Ms. Antonia de Wolfe has graduated with a degree in piano performance from the George Enescu Institute of Music in Bucharest, Romania and, later, with another degree from the Central School of Music affiliated with the P. I. Tchaikovsky State Conservatory in Moscow. She has also graduated from the Academia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia in Rome, where she studied with Sergio Perticaroli,

and has earned a Master in Music (piano performance) degree from the University of Toronto. In addition, Ms. de Wolfe has studied with Maestro S. Petricaroli at Mozarteum Hochschule für Musik in Salzburg (Austria). Ms. de Wolfe has given several recitals and concerts in some of the finest concert halls in Bucharest, Moscow, Rome, Paris, Salzburg, and Toronto. She has also taught piano at the Columbus Centre, Cosmo school of Music, and Koffler Music School. As a collaborative pianist and accompanist, she has been in great demand for several productions of the Centuries Opera Association, Toronto Opera Repertoire, Palestrina Choir, Ethobicoke Centennial

Choir, and others. Ms. de Wolfe is a registered teacher with Royal Conservatory of Music.

Ms. De Wolfe was happy to answer a few questions for our students and parents:

1. What do you like most about teaching? I feel a great satisfaction upon following the development of my students' skills and of their understanding of music. When I teach pieces that I myself have played I get a new perspective on them and I get new ideas about alternative ways to approach them. Teaching requires a keen analysis of musical structure, which helps the teacher to unveil hidden or new meanings involved in the experience of music. Also, I like to perpetuate the love of classical music for the new generations.

2. How do you inspire students to practice more? It's very important to listen to music. Listening to recordings, going to concerts... Listening to music is an active process that inspires a student. It awakens in them the expressive possibilities that music offers. I always demonstrate a piece of music on the piano. Also, I give the student several repertoire choices and let them pick their favourite one. Finally, it is important to put a piece in historical context: information about the composer and the period the music was written in. All of this leads to inspiring my students to learn more.

3. What roles does performance play in student's development? It is important to have performances as milestones in a student development. Such events contribute much to shape the self-image of a student. Once a student has a performance as a set goal practicing becomes more exciting! Simply, a motivated student puts more effort into practicing. The performance in itself represents the culmination of all the effort put into practice. Plus, it's a great feeling to be on stage and create beautiful music.

4. Who are your favourite composers? Robert Schumann has been a long-standing favourite composer of mine. His intense romanticism has always moved me. His ability of changing moods from lyrical calm to passionate torment, from sadness to great joy and glamour, exemplify is depth of character (as a composer). Also, from orchestral repertoire I like *Symphonie Fantastique* by Hector Berlioz. Wagner and Berlioz were both innovators of program music (music that has a story line behind it).

5. What was the last piece of music (sheet music or a recording) you purchased for yourself? I purchased *Carnival* by Robert Schumann, a piano piece.

FEATURED ARTICLE



music
MAGAZINE

MILES DAVIS: THE FLAWED GENIUS WHO TURNED THE JAZZ WORLD UPSIDE DOWN

Roger Thomas marks 100 years since the birth of a jazz legend by looking back at the style and personality that shaped his unique career



Miles Davis 1959
Michael Ochs Archives/Getty Images

It's said that *Kind of Blue* is the jazz record owned by anyone who owns only one jazz record. What's interesting is that there seems to be no obvious equivalent for either classical or mainstream popular music, both of which have their legendary bestsellers but neither can point to a single pivotal recording by an individual artist. In the year that marks the centenary of the birth of trumpet player, composer and bandleader Miles Davis, the inevitable celebratory writings, musical tributes and rehashed recordings are already in generous supply (not that there was a dearth of such material previously), so perhaps Miles's main achievements are more easily viewed at distance.

Born in Alton, Illinois into a land-owning professional family (a favourite boyhood pastime was riding horses on his grandfather's farm), Miles Dewey Davis III received a typical middle-class education culminating in a year at the Juilliard School, although he abandoned his music studies when professional engagements overtook them. Despite encounters with racism at various times in his life, Miles (who always insisted on being referred to thus) had no time for the stereotype of the downtrodden negro; when presented with the idea of the blues being rooted in suffering, he simply said, paraphrasing Gershwin, 'My daddy is rich and my momma's good-looking. I haven't suffered and I don't intend to suffer. I can play the blues.' He preferred instead to focus on the inner workings of the music that had obsessed him since childhood, a mindset that would inform his artistic development throughout his career.

His family moved to the St Louis area a year after his birth, where trumpet tuition led to the young Miles forging an early career as a musician. Unexpectedly roped into the Billy Eckstine band, he found himself sharing the bandstand with Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie, remaining intermittently

after they had left. Already restless, this presented him with the final incentive he needed to move to New York, where he could seek out fresh opportunities. Joining Parker's quintet in 1947, he was swept up in the creative maelstrom that would become known as bebop.

Many regarded bebop, with its complexity and often hectic pace, as a new and different music altogether, to the extent that even towards the end of the 20th century a band might present itself as playing 'jazz and bebop'. Just short of his 19th birthday in 1945, he made his recording debut with reeds player Herbie Fields before playing on Parker's recordings for Savoy and Dial Records.

While his contributions to these sessions have provoked as many opinions as there are critics, the signs of Miles's developing style are clearly discernible. However, while his technique allowed him to place suitable notes in the right places, bebop was not an obvious environment for his musical thinking. He was wary of overstatement, having gravitated towards restraint, precision and informed evaluation. He famously described this as wearing both spats and a flower in your lapel, deciding you didn't need both and then realising you didn't need either.

A combination of internal dissent and Parker's heroin-fuelled behaviour led Miles to part company with him at the end of 1948. He subsequently became a member of the creative circle surrounding the arranger Gil Evans, who was interested in working with ideas associated with classical composition within the broad context of jazz. Evans admired the attention to detail, texture and timbral density he heard in the music of Debussy and had also absorbed ideas from a host of other composers such as Milhaud and Weill. Miles had found a kindred spirit, as had Gerry Mulligan, a youthful baritone saxophonist also possessed of the kind of arranging skills that could be brought to bear on this new approach.

The upshot was the seminal nonet recording entitled *Birth of the Cool*, with subsequent issues tagged as *The Real...* and *The Complete...* depending on the mixture of track sources. Credited to Miles but with much input from his associates, the innovative style and an extended instrumentation that included French horn and tuba saw a critical reception that tended in the direction of polite perplexity. The original band had a short lifespan and the album would only find true appreciation in hindsight, exacerbated by its intermittent recording schedule delaying its release until 1957. Nonetheless, Miles now had a basis for further progress.

The intervening period was one of mixed experiences. A visit to Paris in 1949, which he found inspiring and liberating, was followed by a shortage of engagements on his return to New York. Good news came in 1951, when producer Bob Weinstock, who understood where the music on *Birth of the Cool* had come from, signed him to his Prestige label. A period of heroin addiction was brought to an end when he returned to live with his father in 1953, allowing him to re-enter the fray with a sense of clarity and renewed energy the following year.

Feeling a need to make up for lost time, Miles recorded several albums in succession. He had become drawn in the

direction of hard bop, the more straightforward but nonetheless energetic offspring of bebop that rehabilitated more conventional structures, adopted tight, funky rhythms and incorporated arrangements of popular songs, a strategy that he would make his own later in his career. This period also saw John Coltrane playing in his band, although the saxophonist was sacked in 1957 due to his own heroin addiction which he too overcame, leading to his reinstatement and his subsequent appearance of two more essential albums: Milestones in 1958 and the aforementioned Kind of Blue in 1959.

Milestones retained components drawn from several areas of the trumpeter's musical experience, with elements of the blues, swing and bebop and the music that followed it. However, it also marked the first fully gestated piece of modal jazz in the form of the title track, based around a brief, uncomplicated but memorable uptempo riff that recurs at intervals during the composition, which overall is joyously liberated yet also perfectly sculpted. Kind of Blue consolidates this approach. With typical insight, Miles described modality as a challenge to melodic invention that also avoided the dead end of improvising on a chord sequence when 'you know at the end of 32 bars that the chords have run out'. Seasoned jazz listeners will have encountered examples of this, typically marked by a hapless player ending a solo with long single notes while waiting for the cavalry to arrive.

Anyone new to Miles's music could do far worse than starting with these two albums before exploring his recorded timeline in either direction. He would continue to innovate, very much on his own terms, with such projects as the soundtrack to the Louis Malle film *Ascenseur pour l'échafaud*. Dating from the same period and informed by the same modal style, the music was largely created through live improvisation inspired by footage from the film. Sketches of Spain from 1960, co-composed by Gil Evans and derived from interpretations of music by Rodrigo and de Falla, is either a brilliant example of the notional classical/jazz fusion tagged by Gunther Schuller as 'Third Stream' or simply nondescript, depending on who you ask. Sketches of Spain was produced by Teo Macero, whose subsequent artistic relationship with Miles has been compared to that of George Martin and The Beatles.

Miles embraced electric instruments and rock rhythms from the late 1960s onwards, resulting initially in *In A Silent Way* and *Bitches [sic] Brew*, the former assured and elegant, the latter either an inspired and fearless incursion into the avant-garde or a noble/ignoble failure, again depending on who you ask. Certainly, the whole 'electric Miles' era has been an area of contention between traditionalists and futurists, but his methodology, rooted in a pluralist ethic that today would be regarded as musicological as much as musical, retains its own identity regardless of context.

Miles was, after all, a musician who was perfectly at ease referencing Indian music (a natural fit with his modal approach), flamenco or Stockhausen. One likeable example of his good-music-is-where-you-find-it stance is his take on Michael Jackson's 'Human Nature' on the 1985 album *You're Under Arrest*, its limpid melody providing the perfect

environment for the trumpeter's sparse yet uplifting improvisations.

Miles Davis died in 1991 of pneumonia and respiratory failure exacerbated by a stroke. He was 65. It's impossible to do more than sample his sprawling discography here and equally impossible to list all the A-list musicians associated with him, but happily there are plenty of sources for this information. However, despite his unique gifts, he was also notoriously aggressive, authoritarian and misogynistic, exemplifying Anthony Braxton's proposal that the history of music is not exclusively the history of nice people. In very different ways, we can hopefully learn from both these aspects of Miles's legacy.

No vibrato Miles's teacher Elwood Buchanan encouraged him to play without vibrato, supposedly on the grounds that 'you gonna be shaking enough when you get old' but added he already had his own unique style that he should continue to develop.

Favouring the midrange Rather than stretching the range of the trumpet to extremes at the cost of the instrument's timbre, Miles would focus on the midrange, where tone, dynamics, projection and intonation could be properly controlled.

The Harmon mute This aluminium mute (pictured above) was strongly identified with Miles's sound. The Harmon has a removable stem for producing the often comedic 'wah-wah' effect which Miles unsurprisingly dispensed with, saying of the resulting tone that 'it sounds like a voice'.

A modal approach as an alternative to the energy of bebop, Miles adopted a modal style that provided scope for improvisation but with an added element of structural discipline, the open-ended results allowing the use of static harmony rather than chords as a backdrop. The distinctive nature of modal scales in general is easily demonstrated on a keyboard instrument by playing a white-notes-only seven-note scale.

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