

THE  
NEW  
SERIES

David Serkin Ludwig, *Artistic Director*

Spotlight on Composer

Reena  
Esmail

Juilliard



# Welcome to The New Series!

It is my great pleasure to welcome you to the first season of The New Series. We chose the name not because we ran out of ideas but because it describes well our commitment to presenting the music of our time through the lens of imaginative collaboration. I am co-curating all The New Series concerts with guests who are leading artistic voices, so that every event is highly personal and exceptional. Each concert offers onstage conversations about the ever-evolving world of performance in changing times.



Tonight, we turn the spotlight on one of today's most sought-after artists, Juilliard alum Reena Esmail, whose work bridges Hindustani musical traditions and American contemporary classical music. Our concert, which features five of her works, is a rare opportunity to hear music that combines Indian classical idioms in dialogue with Western performance techniques. Esmail's compositions epitomize the rich and varied languages of a composer committed to openness; her core practice addresses inclusivity and belonging for performers and audiences.

We opened our series in January with a double bill of musical stories: Stravinsky's iconic *L'histoire du Soldat* and *A Fiddler's Tale* by Wynton Marsalis, director of Juilliard Jazz. In February, Terry Riley's minimalist masterpiece *In C* was presented in a simultaneous performance of musicians from Juilliard's campuses in New York and Tianjin, China, that also featured dynamic contributions by the Dance Division. It's available to watch on Juilliard's YouTube channel.

We conclude our first season April 13 with a workshop showcasing composition faculty member Amy Beth Kirsten's Théâtre Études class. The music, dance, and drama students in Kirsten's class are collaborating to create projects that combine theatrical elements, movement, music, and multimedia to make a new performance practice.

Stay tuned to find out more about The New Series: We have some uniquely Juilliard programs in mind for next year that are sure to be unforgettable. As always, we are grateful to have you here—we wouldn't be here without you!

Yours in music,

David Serkin Ludwig  
Dean and Director of the Music Division  
Artistic Director of The New Series



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The Juilliard School  
presents

# The New Series: Spotlight on Composer Reena Esmail

Thursday, March 30, 2023, 7:30pm  
Judith Harris and Tony Woolfson Orchestral Studio (Room 543)

6:30pm Preconcert talk with David Serkin Ludwig (Graduate Diploma '02, composition)  
and Reena Esmail (BM '05, composition)

REENA ESMAIL  
(b. 1983)

*Blaze* (2019)  
Luke Henderson, Violin  
Sameer Gupta, Tabla

ESMAIL

*The light is the same* (2017)  
Alex Lombo, Flute  
Kara Poling, Oboe  
Anoush Pogossian, Clarinet  
Hugo Bliss, French Horn  
Zach VonCannon, Bassoon

ESMAIL

*Saans* (2017)  
Xin Quan, Violin  
Noah Chen, Cello  
Jingting Zhu, Piano

ESMAIL

*Who makes a clearing* (2022)  
Britt Hewitt, Soprano  
Sophia Werner, Violin  
Boubacar Diallo, Cello

*Intermission*

ESMAIL

*Meri Sakhi Ki Avaaz (My Sister's Voice)* (2019)  
Shabnam Abedi, Hindustani Singer  
Shelen Hughes, Soprano  
Sahana Shravan, Emma Richman, Violin  
Marcus Stevenson, Viola  
Wangshu Xiang, Cello  
Grace Francis, Piano

Performance time: approximately 1 hour and 20 minutes, including an intermission



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This performance is part of Carnegie Hall's *Women in Music*, a season-long exploration of the many contributions that women have made to the world of music.

Juilliard is committed to the diversity of our community and to fostering an environment that is inclusive, supportive, and welcoming to all. For information on our equity, diversity, inclusion, and belonging efforts, please visit our website at [juilliard.edu/edib](https://juilliard.edu/edib).



Large  
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Please make certain that all electronic devices are turned off during the performance. The taking of photographs and the use of recording equipment are not permitted in this auditorium.



# About the Artists

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## Reena Esmail

Indian-American composer Reena Esmail (BM '05, composition) works between the worlds of Indian and Western classical music, bringing communities together by creating equitable musical spaces. Her life in music was profiled on the PBS' series *Now Hear This* as well as *Frame of Mind*, a podcast from the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Esmail has written commissions for ensembles including the Los Angeles Master Chorale, Seattle Symphony, Baltimore Symphony Orchestra, and Kronos Quartet, and her music has featured on Grammy-nominated albums including *The Singing Guitar* by Conspirare, *BRUIITS* by Imani Winds, and *Healing Modes* by Brooklyn Rider. Many of her choral works are published by Oxford University Press. Esmail is the Los Angeles Master Chorale's 2020–25 Swan Family artist in residence and she was Seattle Symphony's 2020–21 composer in residence. She holds awards/fellowships from United States Artists, the S&R Foundation, American Academy of Arts and Letters, and Kennedy Center. Esmail also holds degrees in composition from the Yale School of Music (MM '11, MMA '14, DMA '18). Her primary teachers have included Susan Botti, Aaron Jay Kernis, Christopher Theofanidis, Christopher Rouse, and Samuel Adler. She received a Fulbright-Nehru grant to study Hindustani music in India. Her Hindustani music teachers include Srimati Lakshmi Shankar and Gaurav Mazumdar and she studies and collaborates with Saili Oak. Her doctoral thesis, *Finding Common Ground: Uniting Practices in Hindustani and Western Art Musicians*, explores the methods and challenges of the collaborative process between Hindustani musicians and Western composers. Esmail was composer in residence for Street Symphony (2016–18) and is an artistic director of Shashtra, a nonprofit organization that promotes cross-cultural music connecting music traditions of India and the West. She resides in her hometown of Los Angeles.



## David Serkin Ludwig

David Serkin Ludwig (Graduate Diploma '02, composition) enjoys collaborating with today's leading musicians, filmmakers, and writers. This year, Ludwig received the American Academy of Arts and Letters Award in Music and, in 2022, he was awarded the Stoecker Prize from the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, the largest award of its kind. He received the 2018 Pew Center for the Arts and Heritage Fellowship, along with the A. I. duPont Award for significant contributions to classical music. In 2013, Ludwig's choral work *The New Colossus* opened the private prayer service for President Obama's second inauguration. He holds positions and residencies with nearly two dozen orchestras and music festivals in the U.S. and abroad and was named a Steinway Artist in 2021. At the Curtis Institute of Music, Ludwig served as dean of artistic programs, chair of composition, director of Ensemble 20/21, and artistic director of Curtis Summerfest. He also holds degrees from Oberlin Conservatory, Manhattan School of Music, and Curtis as well as a PhD from the University of Pennsylvania. Ludwig studied at the University of Vienna and taught at Cheyney University of Pennsylvania while attending Juilliard. He has received commissions from artists and ensembles including the Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Minnesota, and National symphony orchestras as well as Jonathan Biss, Jeremy Denk, Jennifer Koh, Jaime Laredo, David Shifrin, Eighth Blackbird, Imani Winds, and the PRISM Saxophone Quartet. Ludwig was appointed dean and director of music at Juilliard in 2021, and he serves on the faculty and is the artistic director of Juilliard's collaborative contemporary music project The New Series. He lives in New York City with his wife, violinist Bella Hristova, and their four beloved cats.





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