



# projectSTEP

## 2024 Annual Report

July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024



Photo left by Robert Torres  
Photo right by Matthew Muise

## Table of Contents

|    |                              |
|----|------------------------------|
| 03 | PROJECT STEP AT A GLANCE     |
| 04 | PROGRAM, FUNDING, & STATS    |
| 06 | 2023-2024 HIGHLIGHTS         |
| 08 | BOARD, LEADERSHIP, & FACULTY |
| 10 | FRIENDS & SUPPORTERS         |



# About/Mission

**Project STEP** (String Training Education Program)  
violin, viola, cello, and double bass

While many educational programs in New England offer music training for children, few match Project STEP's comprehensive approach, which provides high-quality, long-term training, support services, and scholarships specifically designed for children from backgrounds underrepresented in classical music. Our program's commitment to equity includes both economic access and the deeper work of supporting students of color in spaces that have historically excluded them, empowering them to excel as musicians, become confident and creative learners, and thrive as successful young adults.

Students engage with Project STEP for up to 12 years, during which they are consistently challenged to achieve and sustain high levels of musicianship. Throughout their journey, they develop perseverance, social and leadership skills, self-discipline, confidence, problem-solving abilities, and a strong work ethic. These qualities are invaluable both in their musical careers and beyond.

By participating in Project STEP, students acquire not only deep musical skills but also a wealth of learning and career opportunities. This growth positions them as role models and mentors within their families and communities, fostering a ripple effect of positive influence and inspiration.

## MISSION

Project STEP champions equitable access to comprehensive music education for students from racial and ethnic backgrounds underrepresented in Western classical music.

We acknowledge and address the unique challenges that Black and Latino students can face as we nurture all of our students' musical growth.

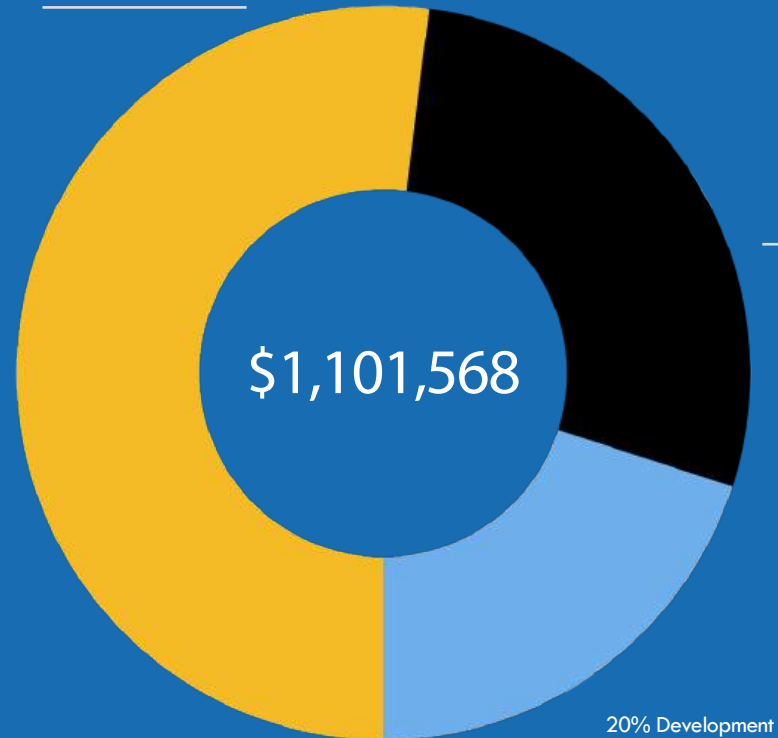
**VALUES:** Community | Collaboration | Excellence



Every Project STEP graduate has attended college or conservatory.

100%

52% Program



28% Staff & Faculty

20% Development

\$1,101,568

## FY2024 Expenses

**FOCUS PROGRAM:** Early access to musical training, exposing children to different types of music and instruments. This program is offered for free to students in kindergarten/K2 who are underrepresented in classical music.

**CORE PROGRAM:** Provides students in grades 1-12 with a comprehensive classical string education. STEP offers up to 12 years of instruction and students receive an instrument, participate in workshops, masterclasses, a summer music camp, and orchestra. They benefit from numerous enrichment opportunities. The program provides ongoing, informed guidance tailored to each student's

individual needs. Students enter the Core Program either by progressing through our introductory FOCUS program or by audition. Both serve as intentional entry points through which we identify, nurture, and welcome young talent into the full STEP journey.

Project STEP works with the top musicians in the field to provide the very best education for our students. We have over 30 teaching artists from esteemed partnerships with NEC, BSO, A Far Cry, and Rivers Conservatory.

REVENUE

\$1,052,409

36% Individual  
30% Foundation, Government, and Corporate Support  
1% Earned Revenue (program fees)  
7% In-Kind Contributions  
26% Net assets released from restrictions

## DID YOU KNOW?

*African American/Black musicians account for only 2.1% of our nation's orchestras and Latinx musicians make up only 4.1%*

*League of American Orchestras 2025*

Approximately 60 % of our graduates go into the music profession while others go into esteemed career paths such as engineering, mathematics, and healthcare.

Every student in the Project STEP program is able to use an instrument from our collection throughout their twelve years of musical training. Like Goldilocks, we have to find the right instrument for the right student, considering age, size, experience, and use. As the student grows, so does their instrument, and it is exchanged for the next perfect fit.

## IMPACT STATEMENT

- 1.) Our students become well-rounded individuals who are empowered to pursue their goals and dreams within and beyond music, serving as role models for young people, especially Black and Latino youth.
- 2.) Our students' families benefit from a life-long support system as they navigate the field of classical music.
- 3.) The Greater Boston community embraces and benefits from a more diverse and accessible field of Western classical music.
- 4.) The field of Western classical music becomes more accessible and relevant.



# 2023 – 2024

## Highlights

Project STEP is the nation's first college and career pathway program for students from racial and ethnic backgrounds underrepresented in classical music.

Project STEP's student musicians have had an exceptional year, marked by remarkable achievements and growth. From standout solo performances to prestigious ensemble collaborations, their talent and dedication shone on every stage. Highlights of the year include performances at major cultural events, national competition recognitions, and several senior students being accepted into top conservatories and music programs. These milestones reflect Project STEP's enduring commitment to fostering excellence and equity in classical music.

### Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Concert

Project STEP students performed a commemorative community concert for over 100 guests in memory of Dr. King at Burnes Hall, New England Conservatory.

### Street Stories with A Far Cry

Project STEP's Honors Group performed solo on stage, while a select group of students joined the Grammy-nominated orchestra A Far Cry at Jordan Hall for a side-by-side performance of Night Music of the Streets of Madrid by Luigi Boccherini (arr. Miki Cloud).

### Sofía Hernández-Williams

Sofía Hernández-Williams, cello, grade 4, performed a solo with the Joy Of Music Program Youth Orchestra. Sofia left the audience in awe with her performance of Cello Concerto No. 1 in C Major, Hob. VIIb:1 by Joseph Haydn.

### Daniel Bernard Roumain

Project STEP, Suzuki School of Newton, and composer/ musician Daniel Bernard Roumain presented a K-12 performance of an original composition on the theme of diversity in classical music. The performance highlighted the voices and stories of our community, continuing the work of making classical music a bridge towards equity.



### Winsor Music

Winsor Music premiered the first-ever collective composition created by Project STEP students titled *Jamboard*. Winsor's Co-Artistic Directors Gabby Diaz and Rane Moore joined acclaimed composer deVon Russell Gray to work with STEP students in composing a violin, clarinet, and piano trio. They seamlessly stitched together themes from each student to make a new multi-movement composition.

### Rockport Music

STEP students took the stage at Rockport Music's Shalin Liu Performance Center for an unforgettable concert featuring works by Black composers, including Xavier Foley and Walter Hawkins.

### Castle of Our Skins

STEP students Suubi and Sokki Laurent performed in Castle of our Skins' (COOS) "Love & Justice" concert featuring chamber music works of Adolphus Hailstork III, who attended the event.

### Rafael Popper-Keizer Masterclass

Hailed by The New York Times as "imaginative and eloquent," and described by The Boston Globe as "a local hero," cellist Rafael Popper-Keizer led a STEP masterclass, offering deep insight into expressive phrasing and performance.

### Boston Society of the New Jerusalem

STEP student Caleb Graupera (cello), accompanied by Joy Cline Phinney (piano), performed works by Bach and Beethoven at the Boston Society of the New Jerusalem. Project STEP is honored to participate in the Carlton Doctor Scholarship, supported by BSNJ.

### National Pathways Festival in Nashville, TN

Several Project STEP students were chosen for the the 2024 National Pathways Festival that convenes 60 talented pre-college musicians of color from Pathways programs across the country for a multi-day musical intensive. The Festival included side-by-side rehearsals and a performance with The Nashville Symphony Orchestra.

### Boston Symphony Orchestra

Dr. Ian Saunders, Josué González, Josefina Guzmán, and members of STEP's Board of Directors attended the Boston Symphony Orchestra's Gala, where STEP alumna Njioma Chinyere Grevious (Class of 2017, violin)—a Sphinx Competition winner and Avery Fisher Career Grant recipient—performed as a featured soloist with the BSO, marking a proud milestone in her remarkable career.

### Music in the Parks

STEP students play "Music in the Parks" at Six Flags, New England...and win first prize! Thank you to all of our supporters who donated to this #givingtuesday campaign. You helped make this incredible opportunity happen!

### Senior Students

Congrats to the 2024 senior graduates: Suubi Laurent, cello, attending New York University to study Instrumental Performance, cello; Gui Vignon-Villani, cello, attending McGill University; Jean-Caleb Belizaire, viola, attending Boston University for String Performance, viola, with a minor in Business and Marketing; Caleb Graupera, cello, attending Harvard College to study Government; and Paul Yansaneh Clayton, cello, attending Robert Mcduffie Center for Strings at Mercer University for String Performance, cello.

### Spring Recital

The culminating event of our students' intensive music studies and hard work, this community concert at Higginson Hall in Symphony Hall, celebrated our students' achievements for the 2023/2024 academic year and was hosted by the Parents' Council of Project STEP. Sponsored in part by the Gregory E. Bulger Foundation and the Parents' Council.

### STEP into Grace

Friends, supporters, and peers gathered at Grace by Nia in Boston's Seaport to celebrate STEP and hear an amazing concert from Paul Yansaneh Clayton, cello; Suubi Laurent, cello; Dr. Ian Saunders, bass and special guest Dr. Chelsey Green, violin. This event raised crucial funds for our program and students.

### Bachfest & Emmanuel Music

STEP student Suubi Laurent and Jodie McMenamin, Director of Development & Marketing headed to Liepzig, Germany for Bachfest, an annual international music festival dedicated to the works of Johann Sebastian Bach.. We are incredibly grateful to Emmanuel Music for this incredible opportunity.

### Greece

NEC Youth Symphony Orchestra traveled on a 9-day performance tour to Greece - Thessaloniki, Larissa, and Athens. Dr. Ian Saunders accompanied students Jean-Caleb Belizaire, Suubi Laurent, and Lorenzo Ye on this incredible trip!

### Europe with BPYO

Caleb Graupera and Xavier Ip (STEP alumnus) went on tour to Europe with Boston Philharmonic Youth Orchestra (BPYO), visiting Basel, Prague, Hamburg, Vienna, and Berlin.

### Summer Music Camps

Students headed to summer music camps including Apple Hill, Kulturwelten, Walnut Hill, and Berklee, YOLA, Interlochen, Encore/CODA, Sphinx Performance Academy, Four Strings Academy, Cremona International Music Academy, Greenwood, Meadowmount, Prelude, Rivers, Camp Musical des Laurentides, Luzerne Music Center, among others!

### Stringfest

Part of Celebrity Series of Boston's Neighborhood Arts program, Stringfest is a series of events that brings together young string players, including Project STEP, with professional musicians. In 2024, Stringfest included a performance featuring the Rasa String Quartet and Dr. Chelsey Green.

### Jordan Bak Masterclass

Award-winning Jamaican-American violist Jordan Bak taught a riveting masterclass for our students. has achieved international acclaim as a trailblazing artist, praised for his radiant stage presence and dynamic interpretations.



Photo by Robert Torres



Photo by Matthew Muise



### 2024 Graduating Seniors

Top Row from left to right:  
Suubi Laurent, cello  
Gui Vignon-Villani, cello  
Jean-Caleb Belizaire, viola

Bottom row from left to right:  
Caleb Graupera, cello  
Paul Yansaneh Clayton, cello





Photo by Matthew Muise

## Board of Directors

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Graham Robinson  
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Elisa Pepe, President

## Leadership & Faculty



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Miriam Bolkosky, Cello  
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Meghan Carye, Cello  
Mark Churchill, Cello  
Miki-Sophia Cloud, Violin & Chamber  
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Jenny Fan, Cello & FOCUS II  
Emmanuel Feldman, Cello  
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Mariana Green-Hill, Violin & Chamber  
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Nancy Hair, Cello  
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Hyun-ji Kwon Cello  
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Dubravka Moshfegh, Violin  
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Magdalena Richter, Violin  
Matthew Smith, Cello & Chamber  
Dr. Joung Hoon Song, Violin & Conductor  
Tim Terranella, Cello  
Cynthia Woods, Violin  
Liana Zaretsky, Violin

Project STEP works with top musicians in the field of music to provide the very best education for our students. We have over 30 faculty artists from esteemed partnerships including NEC, BSO, and A Far Cry, among other noteworthy institutions.

8,000+  
Hours of Instruction

55  
Students

16  
Artistic Collaborations & Partners in FY2024  
A Far Cry, Ashmont Chamber Music, Jordan Bak,  
Boston Symphony Orchestra, Celebrity Series of Boston,  
Castle of Our Skins, Emmanuel Music, Dr. Chelsey Green,  
Randall Goosby, Longwood Symphony Orchestra, New England  
Conservatory, Rafael Popper-Keizer, Rockport Music, Daniel  
Bernard Roumain, Suzuki School of Newton, & Winsor Music

# Community of Support

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Photo by Robert Torres

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## Gifts in Honor & Memory

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Roger & Judith Kamm  
Debby Schriver

### In Honor of Paul Yansaneh Clayton

Paul Clayton  
Ronald Clayton

### In Honor of The Diggs Family

Jane Shapiro

### In Honor of Edward Gazouleas

Alison Melicj & Duncan Kruse

### In Honor of Jenny Fan

Karen Morales

### In Honor of Edward Gazouleas

Alison Melicj & Duncan Kruse

### In Honor of Sara E. Kitaeff, Esq.

Joan Rosenberg  
Marc Zwetchkenbaum

### In Honor of the Hon. Antoinette McLean Leoney (ret.)

William Palant

### In Honor of Jodie McMenamin

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### In Honor of Bill Moyer+

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Nina Graupera

## In Memory of Helen Griffiths

Carol Allen

## In Memory of Arthur Kravitz

Diana M. Nugent

## In Memory of Phyllis Levinson

Nan Levinson

## In Memory of Dr. Daniel I. Palant, M.D.

John Orenberg

Barbara Palant

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