



projectSTEP

2025 Annual Report

July 1, 2024 – June 30, 2025



Photo Cover: Preston Morton
Photo left: Olivia Barros by Matthew Muise
Photo right: John Barros, Jr. by Matthew Muise

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Mission/About

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

ABOUT

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 Western 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.

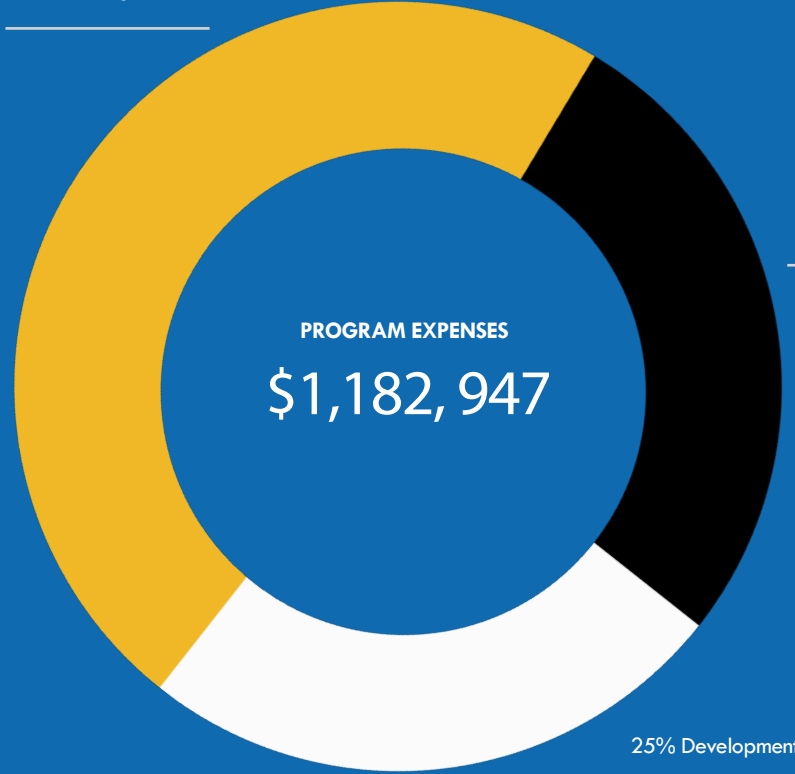
Students engage with Project STEP for up to 12 years, during which they are consistently challenged to achieve and sustain high levels of musicianship. Throughout their journey, they develop perseverance, social and leadership skills, self-discipline, confidence, problem-solving abilities, and a strong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

Every Project STEP graduate has attended college or conservatory.

100%

48% Program



REVENUE \$1,335,668

- 28% Individual
- 43% Foundation, Government, and Corporate Support
- 1% Earned Revenue (program fees)
- 14% In-Kind Contributions
- 14% Net Assets Released from Restrictions



27% Staff & Faculty

FY2025 Funding

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 Western 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 35 teaching artists from esteemed partnerships with NEC, BSO, A Far Cry, and Rivers Conservatory.

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.

Photo left: Spring Recital 2025 by Matthew Muise
Photo right: Valentina Monteiro



2024 – 2025

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 had an exceptional year, marked by impressive 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 senior students being accepted into top colleges and conservatories. 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.

STEP and A Far Cry: *For Seasons* Collaboration

Project STEP students joined Grammy-nominated ensemble A Far Cry at Jordan Hall for a side-by-side performance of *For Seasons*, the ensemble's reimagined interpretation of Vivaldi's *The Four Seasons*.

Lab Orchestra

Project STEP's Lab Orchestra brings student compositions to life in real time. A faculty ensemble rehearses and performs original works by STEP composition students, giving young composers the rare opportunity to hear their ideas realized, respond to professional musicians, and refine their music through the rehearsal process.

BSO Concert for the City

Project STEP joined the Boston Symphony Orchestra's community celebration at Symphony Hall, contributing to the event's pre-concert festivities alongside local music, art, and dance organizations. The free event celebrated Boston's rich cultural traditions and brought communities from across the city together through music and performance.

Rockport Music

STEP students took the stage at Rockport Music's Shalin Liu Performance Center for an unforgettable concert featuring works by Black composers. The day honored the late William Moyer, Project STEP's founder.

Castle Of Our Skins

STEP alumnus Yansaneh Clayton performed with Castle Of Our Skins for a concert showcasing the music of Julius Eastman. Eastman was one of the most exciting figures in American music from the 1960s through the 1980s.

Boston Society of the New Jerusalem

STEP student Lorenzo Ye performed a solo recital accompanied by Maryann Han 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 Chicago, IL

Several Project STEP students were chosen for the 2025 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 members of The Chicago Symphony Orchestra.

Photo above: Christopher Hernandez and Ethan Dobinski by Matthew Muise
Photo right: Kenry Mejia

Andres Sanchez Masterclass

Honduran-Venezuelan cellist Andres Sanchez conducted a masterclass for our students while he was a guest soloist with the Longwood Symphony Orchestra.

Callisto Quartet Masterclass

Internationally acclaimed Callisto Quartet gave an inspiring masterclass, offering our students valuable insights into the art of chamber music.

Senior Students

Congrats to the 2025 senior graduates: Lorenzo Ye, cello, studying composition at the New England Conservatory Prep School, and Gabriel Vignon-Villani, violin, who is attending UMASS Amherst to study engineering and physics.

Spring Recital

The culminating event of our students' intensive music studies and hard work, this community concert at Symphony Hall celebrated our students' achievements for the 2024/2025 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 gathered at Grace by Nia in Boston's Seaport to celebrate STEP and hear an amazing concert from an amazing concert featuring Project STEP students Lorenzo Ye, Ammerah Manigat, Gabriel Vignon-Villani, and Julien Roberson. The evening also welcomed STEP alumnus, Noah Kelly. Faculty members Miki Sophia Cloud and Jason Amos performed with Dr. Ian Saunders, Artistic Director. Andrés Holder, Executive Director of Boston Children's Chorus, was presented with the inaugural William Moyer Champion of Change Award for his work in equity, community, and the arts. Lee Pelton, President/CEO of The Boston Foundation, gave a keynote speech.

Emmanuel Music

Project STEP was invited to perform J.S. Bach's *Gelobet seist du, Jesu Christ*, BWV 91, alongside Emmanuel Music during their Christmas concert.

Recording with Midori

STEP students were invited to record with world-renowned artist Midori on a newly commissioned work by Derek Bermel titled "Spring Cadenza." An exceptional opportunity for students to gain firsthand exposure to professional recording.

Seth Parker Woods Workshop

Three-time GRAMMY®-nominated cellist, Seth Parker Woods, held a workshop with STEP to share his insights on technique, interpretation, and the role of the cellist in both traditional and contemporary contexts.

Summer Music Camps

Students headed to summer music camps including Apple Hill, Walnut Hill, Berklee, YOLA, Interlochen, Encore/CODA, Sphinx Performance Academy, Four Strings Academy, Cremona International Music Academy, Greenwood, Meadowmount, Prelude, Rivers, Camp Musical des Laurentides, and 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 2025, Stringfest included a performance featuring The Rasa Quartet.

Longwood Symphony Orchestra

Project STEP students embarked on their second year partnership with members of the Longwood Symphony Orchestra that culminated in a collaborative concert at New England Conservatory's Jordan Hall.

FOCUS

Project STEP's FOCUS programs introduce young musicians to intensive string study while building a pathway into the Core STEP Program. FOCUS I provides an entry point for emerging students, while FOCUS II supports continued growth as students strengthen their skills and prepare for the next stage of training. In 2025, four FOCUS students advanced into the Core STEP Program, continuing their musical journeys within STEP.

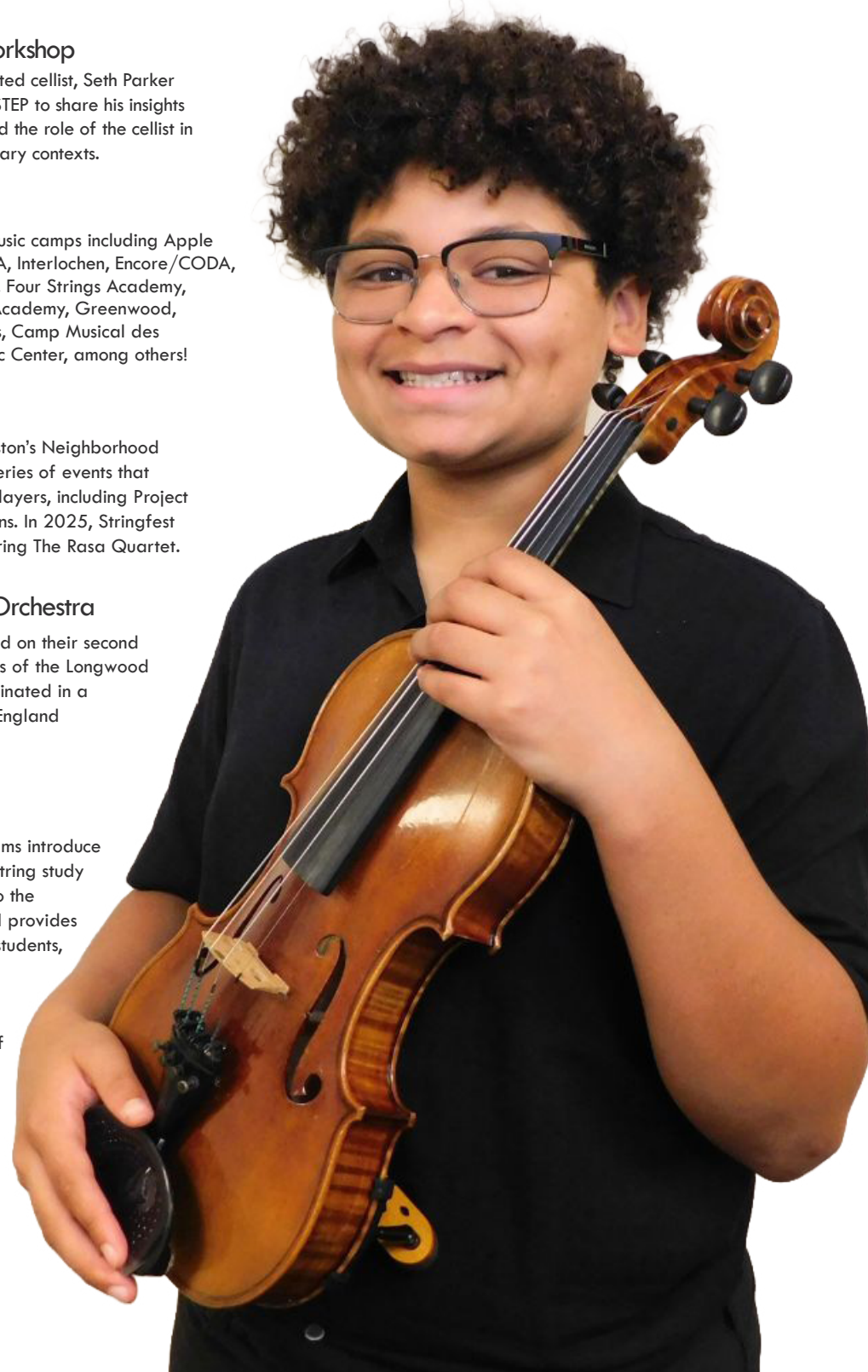




Photo by Matthew Muise

Photo left: Andrés Holder, Executive Director of Boston Children's Chorus and 2025 William Moyer Champion of Change Awardee, Elisa Pepe, Board of Directors, and Malik Williams, Board of Directors and Project STEP parent.

Photos opposite page | top: Josué González, Executive Director with Dr. Ian Saunders, Artistic Director; Ashleigh Gordon, Board of Directors; and Meghan K. Jasani, Board of Directors.

Board of Directors

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William Moyer+
Ann Hobson Pilot
Wendy Putnam
Astrid Schween
Marcus Thompson
Martha Batchelor Volpe
Owen Young
(+passed/in memoriam)

Faculty

Jason Amos, viola
Alexander Badalov, cello
Jean Huang Baverstam, violin
Miriam Bolkosky, cello
Heidi Braun-Hill, violin
Paola Caballero, violin
Meghan Carye, cello
Mark Churchill, cello
Miki Sophia Cloud, violin
Thomas Cooper, violin
Arson Fahim, composition
Jenny Fan, cello

Emmanuel Feldman, cello
Pascale Delache Feldman, bass
Susanne Friedrich, cello
Melody Schindler Giron, cello
Mariana Green Hill, violin
Josefina Guzmán Pérez, violin
Nancy Hair, cello
Christopher Hernández, bass
Tyler James, music theory
Kathleen Jara, violin
Susan Jarvis, violin
Hyun-ji Kwon, cello

Angela Leidig, violin
Danielle Lennox-Heichman, violin
Francesca McNeeley, cello
Dubravka Moshfegh, violin
Sergio Muñoz, theory fundamentals
Joy Cline Phinney, pianist
Magdalena Richter, violin
Dr. Joung Hoon Song, violin & viola
Tim Terranella, cello
Cynthia Woods, violin
Liana Zaretsky, violin

Staff

Josué González, Executive Director
Dr. Ian Saunders, Artistic Director
Jodie McMenamin, Director of Development
Leigh Kelter, Director of Institutional Relations
Danielle Lennox-Heichman, Artistic Coordinator
Josefina Leonor Guzmán Pérez, Programs & Communications Manager
Riani Suarez, Development Associate
Mariana Green Hill, Artistic Advisor
Benz Theodore, Volunteer Alumni Coordinator
Jude Bedel, Development Consultant



8,000+
Hours of Instruction

55
Students

18
Artistic Collaborations & Partners in FY2025

A Far Cry, American Composers Orchestra, Andres Sanchez, Ashmont Hill Chamber Music, Boston Symphony Orchestra, Callisto Quartet, Castle Of Our Skins, Curtis Stewart, Emmanuel Music, Horacio Fernandez, Leonardo Vasquez, Longwood Symphony Orchestra, Midori Goto, Nathan Amaral, Rasa String Quartet, Rockport Music, Seth Parker Woods, Sphinx Virtuosi, and Vivo Performing Arts (formerly Celebrity Series of Boston).

Community of Support

\$50K+

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\$20K+

Diana & Nat Alpert
Meghan K. Jasani & Adam Margolin
Adriaan Jobse+
The Kravitz Family

\$10K+

Nina & Gene+ Doggett
Wilhelm & Tara Merck
 & The Merck-Evarts Fund
Graham Robinson

\$5K+

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Peter Boberg & Sunwoo Kahng
Susan Oakie Bush
Deborah Cohen
Goetz Eaton & Ted Davis
Elkan Gamzu
Josué González
 & Tami Papagiannopoulos
Priscilla Hallberg
Linda Jeffries
Dianne Luby
Michael Marshall
Betsy Moyer
Laura Thompson
John & Samantha Williams

\$2,500+

Anonymous
Gregory E. Bulger & Richard Dix
Melinda K. Cheston
Jessica and Doug Fenton

\$1,000+

Anonymous
Jay Anton
Paul & Catherine Buttenwieser
The Hon. Levin H. Campbell
Catherine Cheng
Dr. Mark Churchill
Sheila Esquivel

\$1,000+ continued

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Raymond Carl Green
Joanna Helferich
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Lan Ying Ip
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Drs. Thomas & Dennie P. Wolf
Paul Monsky & Beverly Woodward

\$500

David & Holly Ambler
Diane Baehre
Rev. Kevin Baxter
Susan Bryant
HF Bunn
Ann S. Buxbaum
Juliana Castedo
Miki Sophia Cloud
Gene Dahmen

\$500+ continued

Belden & Pamela Daniels
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Gerald & Joanne Dreher
Alexandra Fuchs
Leslie S. Goldberg
Rose & Jean Pierre Gombay
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James W. Gorman Jr.
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Robert Hagopian
B. Henry
Dr. Michael J. Hoyle
Russell Kavanagh
Robert Keller
Sara E. Kitaeff

Photo: Julia Monteiro by Matthew Muise



GIFTS IN HONOR

2025 Project STEP Seniors

Albert & Lucy Casiano
Jessica & Doug Fenton
Meghan K. Jasani & Adam Margolin
Alex McCray & Richard MacMillan
Elisa Pepe
Dr. Ian Saunders
John Trevor

Mary Allen

Cornell Allen

Holly Ambler

William T. Russell

Diane M. Austin

Roger & Judith Kamm

The Capone Family

John McCausland

Joanna Geller

Vivian Bendix

Samuel Goldberg

Leslie S. Goldberg

Josué González

Stephanie Price-Wong
Stanford Thompson

**Conny Landmann
& Caroline Reiner-Williams**

Maya & Jack French | Vermont Community

Daniel Mallampalli

Bill Palant

Peggy Pearson

John Graef

Dr. Ian Saunders

Marta Jimenez
Stanford Thompson

Kathy & Mike Thomas

Marty McMillin

Wendy & John Warren

Leigh Warren

GIFTS IN MEMORY

Christian J. Barros

Tchintcia & John Barros
Jodie & Paul McMenamin

Barney Freiberg-Dale

Eileen Freiberg-Dale

Robert Gilson

Betty Gilson

Ruth Hertz

Scott Arkin
Caitlyn Boyles
Donna Brower
Goetz Eaton & Ted Davis
Jane Golder
Patricia Krol & Stephen Chiumenti
Beth Rosenzweig
Eric Weinstein

Keith Johnson

Kirk Johnson

Clara H. Jones

Mona Jones

**Arthur R.
& Barbara N. Kravitz**

Neal Kravitz
Diana Nugent

Phyllis Levinson

From her daughters

Ruby Louise Wright Luse

George Luse & Lynn Duval

William Moyer

Catherine Applewhite
Don & Sandy Baxter
Jane Beswick
Dr. Mark Churchill
David Clampitt
Loring Conant
Barry David



William Moyer (cont.)

Donald Goldstein
William Grove
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Leigh & Chris Kelter
Patricia Krol & Stephen Chiumenti
Jeanne McCluskey
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\$250+

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Marijane M. Zeller

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Esther Handy
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Claudia & Charles Licata
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Merissa duFrend
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Elkan Gamzu
Gibson Gives
Josué González
Grace by Nia
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Lola Beauty Boutique
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Palaver Strings
Paperless Post
Elisa Pepe
Rockport Music
Rockport Music
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Riani Suarez
Suzuki School of Newton

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Terezin Music Foundation
Vivo Performing Arts
 (formerly Celebrity Series of Boston)
Winsor Music
Patricia Plum Wyld



Photo Left: Aaliyah duFrend and Sofia Hernandez-Williams



Photo Right: Laura Licata, Adia Serene Bazile, Alexander Hernandez-Williams, Valentina Monteiro, and Lorenzo Ye





Photo below from left to right:
 Madely Mejia, Bass
 Xavier Boursiquot-Washington, Violin
 Lorenzo Ye, Cello

Foundation | Gov. | Corp.

Anonymous
 Blessing Foundation
 Charles H. Bond Trust
 Boston Society of the New Jerusalem
 Boston Symphony Orchestra
 Brookhaven at Lexington
 The Gregory E. Bulger Foundation
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 CommonTime Pathways
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 Granville Foundation
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 Hamilton Company Charitable Foundation
 Harman Family Foundation
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 New England BioLabs
 New England Conservatory
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 Reuning & Son Violins
 The Mary Saudek Jaffee Fund
 Savage Family Foundation
 The Michael T. Sherman Foundation
 Town Fair Tire Foundation
 Vargas & Vargas Insurance
 Wegmans
 Winsor Music
 WS Development
 The Youth Career Coach

Photo by Matthew Muise



projectSTEP

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