

Agarita Chamber Players, Violin, Viola, Cello, and Piano

January 16, 2022

Agarita Chamber Players is a nonprofit 501 (C) (3) formed in March 2018. Founded by four musicians rooted in San Antonio, Agarita aims to nourish the arts community through multi-disciplinary collaboration, educational community engagement, and free, adventurous programming. Agarita provides world-class, innovative performances for San Antonio, in San Antonio, and with San Antonio.

A chamber ensemble dedicated to producing bold, collaborative musical events, Agarita offers a new way to experience classical and contemporary music. Founded by Daniel Anastasio (piano), Marisa Bushman (viola), Ignacio Gallego (cello), and Sarah Silver Manzke (violin), Agarita provides concise, eclectic performances that are “splendid – unified, spirited, and well prepared” (Greenberg, Incident Light), the young chamber group offers a new, open-armed experience for listeners.

Agarita works intimately with local artists (musical, visual, culinary, architectural, dance, and more) to weave cross-artistic narratives for each concert. Agarita’s 2018 season included collaborations with the McNay Art Museum’s Pop América exhibit, lighting artist Chuck Drew, Cameron Beauchamp from the Grammy Award-winning vocal group Roomful of Teeth, chef Elizabeth Johnson and Pharm Table restaurant, and the Luminaria Contemporary Arts Festival for a concert inside San Antonio’s historic Mission San José. Follow Agarita’s upcoming projects and future performances at www.agarita.org or for any questions, email agaritachamberplayers@gmail.com.

Samantha Bennett, guest violinist

Hailed by the Chicago Tribune as a violinist "full of subtlety and poise", Samantha Bennett is an active and varied performer around the globe. In 2016, she joined the Sarasota Orchestra as Principal Second Violin. Prior to this position, she was a violinist in The Florida Orchestra. She performs regularly with Boston Symphony Orchestra, Boston Pops and Minnesota Orchestra. As a recitalist, Samantha has performed in Boston's Jordan Hall, London's Wigmore Hall, and Zankel Hall at Carnegie Hall. She has participated in the Lucerne Festival Academy, Spoleto Festival USA, Music Academy of the West, and Tanglewood Music Festival, where she performed for three seasons with the New Fromm Players. A fierce advocate of new music, she is the co-founder and Artistic Director of ensembleNEWSRQ, a contemporary music collective based in Sarasota, FL. She completed her degrees at the New England Conservatory with Donald Weilerstein and Malcolm Lowe.

Marisa Bushman, viola

A native New Yorker, violist Marisa Bushman's musical career has reached all corners of the world. Ms. Bushman is currently a member of the San Antonio Symphony's viola section, where she also serves as the delegate to the International Conference of Symphony and Opera Musicians. As a founding member of Agarita and an avid and active chamber music collaborator across her career, she has performed throughout the United States, Europe, South and Central America, South Africa, and China.

Ms. Bushman received her Bachelor's Degree in Viola Performance from the University of California, Los Angeles and her Masters in Viola Performance at Indiana University, Bloomington. Her principal teachers have included Atar Arad, and Paul Coletti. From 2008 to 2010, she was a fellow at the New World Symphony in Miami Beach, where she frequently sat principal under Michael Tilson Thomas and was a prominent fixture in the New World Symphony's Chamber Music Series. This summer, Marisa is looking forward to her third summer at the Pikes Falls Chamber Music Festival in Vermont. In her free time, Marisa enjoys taking walks with her husband Ignacio and their dogs, Maggie and Emma, riding her tandem road bike on the mission trail, cooking up a storm, collecting wine, and shopping for shoes.

Ignacio Gallego Fernandez, cello

The Spanish-American cellist Ignacio Gallego Fernandez has an active performance career that has taken him around the world, from Europe to Asia to the Americas. As a select scholarship recipient from the Spanish government, Ignacio received his Bachelor of Arts from the Manhattan School of Music in New York as a student of Nathaniel Rosen and Marion Feldman. After receiving a scholarship to Indiana University, Bloomington's Jacobs School of Music, Mr. Gallego completed his Masters of Music degree, where he was a disciple of Janos Starker and a member of the prestigious Kuttner Quartet. He furthered his education at Indiana University by obtaining a Performance Diploma under the tutelage of Eric Kim.

Recent career highlights include solo appearances with the National Orchestra of El Salvador, which culminated in a solo recital at their National Museum of Art and solo performances with the Youth Orchestra of the Americas tour of China. Ignacio has also performed several times at Carnegie Hall, including a solo performance as part of the 100th year celebration of the Hispanic Society of America. Ignacio can also be heard in one of the latest Mercedes-Benz commercials.

Ignacio resides in San Antonio, Texas where, along with being a founding member of Agarita, he is Assistant Director of the Strings Program at Alamo Heights High School. He is a familiar face in the cello section of the San Antonio Symphony and maintains a distinguished private studio.

Daniel Anastasio, piano

A soloist, chamber musician, and educator based in San Antonio, Texas, Daniel Anastasio combines an intellectual curiosity with “technical prowess and emotional sensitivity” (Rivard Report). His performance of Beethoven’s Piano Concerto no. 3, conducted by Leon Fleisher with the Ithaca College Chamber Orchestra, was “the highlight to everyone’s ears, if the full-house of standing ovation were any indication” (ECM reviews).

Mr. Anastasio was a concerto competition finalist at Stony Brook University and Juilliard, where he won the Mieczyslaw Munz Scholarship. He received fellowships to Music Academy of the West, Kneisel Hall, Tanglewood Music Center and Yellow Barn Music Festival. Mr. Anastasio is co-founder Unheard-of//Ensemble, a group dedicated to commissioning composers and premiering their works. With his wife, pianist Erika Dohi, he co-directs BLUEPRINTS piano series in Manhattan.

Growing up in San Antonio and studying under Rebecca Wilcox, Mr. Anastasio was a member and student leader of the Tuesday Musical Club, winner of that club’s “Bowman Award,” winner of the San Antonio Symphony’s “Future Stars” competition, concerto soloist with the Mid-Texas Symphony under David Mairs, and a repeat guest with the Olmos Ensemble and Musical Bridges.

Mr. Anastasio received a Bachelor of Arts degree in music and philosophy at Cornell University, a Master of Music degree from Juilliard, and is a candidate for the Doctor of Musical Arts at Stony Brook University under Gilbert Kalish and Christina Dahl. Mr. Anastasio is thrilled to be back in San Antonio as a full-time instructor at San Antonio College.

Source: agarita.org