



# **MSM JAZZ ORCHESTRA**

## ***Late Set***

**Elio Villafranca**, Composer and Conductor

**Hana Uwai**, Student Conductor

**Jim Saltzman** (DMA '18), Dean of Jazz Arts

TUESDAY, DECEMBER 9, 2025 | 9:15 PM

ALAN M. AND JOAN TAUB ADES PERFORMANCE SPACE

# ABOUT THE MSM JAZZ ARTS PROGRAM

Manhattan School of Music was one of the first conservatories in the United States to acknowledge the importance of jazz as an art form by establishing undergraduate and graduate degree programs in jazz. The program, which celebrated its 40th anniversary in 2024–25, is one of the richest of its kind, combining systematic and rigorous conservatory training with a myriad of performance and networking opportunities in New York City. In addition to a wide variety of more than 20 small combos, student ensembles include the Jazz Orchestra, the Jazz Composers' Big Band, and the Studio Orchestra. The program is under the leadership of Dean of Jazz Arts Jim Saltzman (DMA '18).

Students study with a faculty drawn from the highest ranks of the jazz world and are provided opportunities to play for and observe world-renowned guest artists. Master classes in recent years have been presented by Terence Blanchard (trumpet), Billy Childs (piano, composition), Buster Williams (bass), Ron Carter (bass), Christian Scott (trumpet), Barry Harris (piano), Stefon Harris (BM '95, MM '97) (vibraphone), Maria Schneider (composition), Vijay Iyer (piano), Jason Moran (MM '97) (piano), Christian McBride (bass), Jimmy Heath (tenor saxophone), Gary Burton (vibraphone), and Wycliffe Gordon (trombone).

Every concert season, prominent guest artists are featured with our large ensembles, providing enriched performance experiences for students. Guest artists have included Omar Thomas, Jim McNeely, Jane Monheit (BM '99), Candido, Dave Liebman, Randy Weston, Joe Lovano, Bob Mintzer, Randy Brecker, Paquito D'Rivera, and Miguel Zenón (MM '01).

**Jim Saltzman**, Dean of Jazz Arts

**Edward Gavitt**, Assistant Dean for Artistic Operations

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### PROGRAM

**Elio Villafranca**

(Arr. Vance Thompson)

*Caribbean Tinge*

**Elio Villafranca**

*La Burla de los Congos*

**Elio Villafranca**

(Arr. Keith Brown)

*Last Train to Paris*

**Elio Villafranca**

(Arr. Vance Thompson)

*The Great Debater*

**Elio Villafranca**

*Tres Aguas*

II. *Palos Por Agua*

III. *Two in One* (part I)

*Two in One* (part II)

# MSM JAZZ ORCHESTRA

Elio Villafranca, Composer and Conductor

## SAXOPHONE

**Matthew Stark**, alto saxophone  
*Walnut Creek, California*

**Michael Tkachenko**, alto saxophone  
*Haifa, Israel*

**David Hodgson-Kugyelka**,  
tenor saxophone  
*Vancouver, Canada*

**Duke Baur**, tenor saxophone  
*Glencoe, Illinois*

**Joseph St. Jules**, baritone saxophone  
*Philadelphia, Pennsylvania*

## TRUMPET

**Owen Chow**, trumpet  
*Victoria, Canada*

**Aaron Ouellette**, trumpet  
*Hebron, Connecticut*

**Giovanni Martinez**, trumpet  
*Jacksonville, Florida*

**Caylie Davis**, trumpet  
*Eugene, Oregon*

## TROMBONE

**Will Tucker**, trombone  
*Larchmont, New York*

**Bruno Tzinas**, trombone  
*Miami, Florida*

**Laura Orzechoski**, trombone  
*Philadelphia, Pennsylvania*

**Zachary Andrews**, bass trombone  
*St. Louis, Missouri*

## RHYTHM

**Jackson Hanks**, vibraphone  
*Hoover, Alabama*

**Pavlos Daniel Loucaides**, piano  
*Nicosia, Cyprus*

**Evan Taylor**, guitar  
*Cincinnati, Ohio*

**Carlos Barreto**, bass  
*Cape Coral, Florida*

**Ido Sussman**, drums/percussion  
*Jerusalem, Israel*

**George Greenhill**, drums/percussion  
*Sydney, Australia*

# ABOUT THE ARTIST

## **Elio Villafranca**, Pianist, Composer, Cultural Activist

Born in the province of Pinar del Río, Cuba, Elio Villafranca is a Steinway Artist, cultural activist, and one of the most innovative voices in modern jazz. A Grammy-nominated composer and pianist, he is a 2021 Guggenheim Fellowship recipient and a two-time Grammy nominee. He was named Rising Stars Pianist in the 2019 *DownBeat* Critics Poll and Rising Stars Keyboard winner in 2018. In 2017, Villafranca became the first Cuban-born artist to receive the Sunshine Award, honoring excellence across the Caribbean, South and Central America, and Africa. In 2014, Jazz at Lincoln Center presented him with its inaugural Millennium Swing Award for his visionary contributions to jazz and Afro-Caribbean music.

Originally trained as a painter, Villafranca studied classical piano, percussion, and composition at Havana's prestigious Instituto Superior de Arte. Since relocating to the U.S., he has emerged as a leading figure among contemporary jazz pianists, blending classical technique with jazz language and the deep rhythmic traditions of the African diaspora. His debut album, *Incantations/Encantaciones* (Universal Latin, 2003), was named among *JazzTimes*' 50 Best Jazz Albums of the Year. His most recent release, *Standing by the Crossroads* (ArtistShare), was selected by *DownBeat* magazine as one of the Best Jazz Albums of 2023.

Villafranca's discography includes ten acclaimed albums as a leader and collaborations with jazz legends such as Chick Corea, Wynton Marsalis, Johnny Pacheco, Pat Martino, Paquito D'Rivera, Joe Lovano, Pat Martino, Cécile McLorin Salvant, Billy Hart, David Murrey, Lewis Nash, Jon Faddis, Billy Harper, and Steve Turre. In 2001, he was commissioned by WHYY-TV (PBS) to compose the score for *Murals*, a documentary series exploring Philadelphia's public art. His 2009 album received a Grammy nomination for Best Latin Jazz Album, and his 2014 project *Caribbean Tinge* (Motéma) was internationally praised and nominated for the Preis der Deutschen Schallplattenkritik. That same year, Chick Corea handpicked Villafranca as one of five pianists to perform at the inaugural Chick Corea Jazz Festival at Jazz at Lincoln Center.

In 2018, he released *CINQUE* (ArtistShare), a powerful double album inspired by Joseph Cinqué and the Amistad rebellion. The album earned a Grammy nomination and further established Villafranca's reputation as a leading composer of Afro-Caribbean jazz. That year, he also served as Artist-in-Residence with the Miami Symphony Orchestra. Most recently, Villafranca premiered his large-scale big band suite *TRES AGUAS*, commissioned by Wynton Marsalis and Jazz at

Lincoln Center Orchestra, performed at Jazz at Lincoln Center's Rose Theater.

A passionate educator and author, Villafranca is on the jazz faculty at The Juilliard School, Manhattan School of Music, Princeton University, and Temple University. In 2019, he published his first children's book, *Who Ate the Pie?*, followed by *Habana Blues Mosaic* in 2022, a visual and written companion to his album *Standing by the Crossroads*. He is currently completing *Cubano!—The Evolution of Popular Cuban Piano Styles*, a book to be release in early 2026, for musicians and music schools that explores the historical and stylistic development of Cuban piano traditions through analysis, interviews, and performance practice.

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# ABOUT MANHATTAN SCHOOL OF MUSIC

Founded as a community music school by Janet Daniels Schenck in 1918, today MSM is recognized for its more than 1,000 superbly talented undergraduate and graduate students who come from more than 50 countries and nearly all 50 states; its innovative curricula and world-renowned artist-teacher faculty that includes musicians from the New York Philharmonic, the Met Orchestra, and the top ranks of the jazz and Broadway communities; and a distinguished community of accomplished, award-winning alumni working at the highest levels of the musical, educational, cultural, and professional worlds.

The School is dedicated to the personal, artistic, and intellectual development of aspiring musicians, from its Precollege students through those pursuing doctoral studies. Offering classical, jazz, and musical theatre training, MSM grants a range of undergraduate and graduate degrees. True to MSM's origins as a music school for children, the Precollege Division is a professionally oriented Saturday music program dedicated to the musical and personal growth of talented young musicians ages 8 to 18. The School also serves some 2,000 New York City schoolchildren through its Arts-in-Education Program, and another 2,000 students through its critically acclaimed Distance Learning Program.

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To enable Manhattan School of Music to continue educating and inspiring generations of talented students and audiences alike, please consider making a charitable contribution today.

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## Land Acknowledgment

We want to acknowledge that we gather as Manhattan School of Music on the traditional land of the Lenape and Wappinger past and present, and honor with gratitude the land itself and the people who have stewarded it throughout the generations. This calls us to commit to continuing to learn how to be better stewards of the land we inhabit as well.



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