



The New York Flute Club

NEWSLETTER

Ballet Orchestra's Rachel Blumenthal Kept on Her Toes By the Unexpected

By Isabella Carucci

Rachel Blumenthal, associate principal flutist of the New York City Ballet Orchestra, has extensive orchestral and free-lancing experience. Her Dec. 7 recital at the Allen-Stevenson School will feature works by several living composers, including Jake Heggie and Valerie Coleman, in addition to Poulenc's flute sonata and some other classics.

When asked whether Jake Heggie's affinity for vocal writing comes through in his flute piece



"I've had the most success in auditions where I've unabashedly decided the job is mine and I really want to win," says guest artist Rachel Blumenthal, associate principal flutist of the NYC Ballet Orchestra, who will teach a mastery class and perform on Sunday, Dec. 7.

Soliloquy, Blumenthal is quick to elaborate on her unique history with his music. Her connection to Heggie's music, she explains, goes back to a night she describes as "pretty unforgettable." In 2019, while freelancing in Chicago, she received a last-minute call: A flutist at the Lyric Opera had called in sick, and the company needed someone—in one hour—for that evening's performance of *Dead Man Walking*.

She said yes.

"That experience, the emotions that Heggie evokes in that work, and the incredible story of the opera have been on my mind ever since," she recalls. The immersion was total, she says: no time to really prepare, only time to respond and to live in the moment inside Heggie's musical language.

Her coming New York Flute Club performance

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From the President



**So Many Flutes,
So Many Styles,
So. Much. Fun.**

November brought the chill and the rain, but Néstor Torres and Silvano Monasterios brought the sun.

I think we were all inspired by the group mastery class; Torres and Monasterios' suggestions and insights were impactful, as were the volunteers who performed in the session.

Teresa Payne also brought the wonder of what air can do when blown into, across, and through different vessels from around the world. Her ease in playing so many different types of flutes and sharing her musicianship journey were inspiring.

November was delightful—and suddenly it's December.

On Dec. 4, flute exploration continues online with composer and multi-instrumentalist David Amram, and our next in-person guest artist is Rachel Blumenthal, associate principal flute of the New York City Ballet. She will present an orchestra excerpt/audition repertoire mastery class and recital on Dec. 7.

I'm looking forward to catching up with you soon!

Lish

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“Explore With Wonder,” Torres Says

Jazz duo’s mastery class offered wisdom on metronomes and life. Concert illustrated the narratives that go into expert improvisation.



Above, below and right, flutist Néstor Torres and pianist Silvano Monasterios during their concert.



Many attendees had the chance to come on stage and improvise with Néstor Torres and Silvano Monasterios, including (clockwise from left): Michele Smith, Hal Archer, a 13-year-old and Iona Aibel.

Photos: Lisa Vickery and Lish Lindsey



Photo: Udhaya Reddy

The Unexpected Keeps Ballet Flutist Blumenthal on Her Toes

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features *Soliloquy*, Heggie's arrangement of *Beyond* from *Pieces of 9/11: Memories from Houston* (2011). Each song in the cycle sets reflections from firefighters who traveled to New York in the aftermath of the attacks.

"*Beyond* sounds like a lament to me," she says, quoting the text:

*For those of us who will never be born,
For those who died on that tragic morn,
Let go of what might have been,
For if you don't, those who did this will win.*

These words shape Blumenthal's phrasing and timbral palette as she prepares the piece.

"I have really been enjoying living in Heggie's sound world," she says, adding with relief, "This time around, I'm certainly glad to have more than an hour to learn the music!"

While Heggie's music brings Blumenthal back to a vivid moment of professional spontaneity, Poulenc brings her somewhere even earlier.

"I first learned the Poulenc in high school," she says, returning to the sonata after many years away. "It's been entertaining to see the markings I have in my part from 2004. I guess as a 15-year-old I was really into exclamation points and writing in all caps! Thank goodness for heavy-duty erasers."

Practicing this alongside Valerie Coleman's *Requiem Milonga* for her NYFC concert, she has found that Coleman's writing "teaches you to feel from the inside," guiding the performer and audience members through a space where grief and dance coexist.

Ahead of the Dec. 7 5:30 p.m. recital, Blumenthal will conduct a mastery class for members to watch at 3:30 p.m., also at Allen-

Stevenson School. The class will focus on orchestral excerpts and audition repertoire, with three student flutists chosen ahead of time to participate.

Blumenthal is characteristically frank when discussing the reality of auditions. She has taken 38, winning six, reaching finals or superfinals in four, and advancing to semifinals about half the time.

"This process is heartbreaking, exhausting, and expensive," she says. "To anyone reading this who's in the thick of it with auditions: I really, truly get it," she adds, cautioning young musicians against tying too much meaning to a single result. Everything from the hall to the panel to the hotel mattress can skew an audition. She explains that sometimes the difference between a finalist and a winner is just one vote and that winning doesn't make one the best player, just as not advancing does not predict any future failure.

At her New York City Ballet audition, Blumenthal was only six months out from shoulder surgery to repair tears in her labrum and rotator cuff.

"Even though I was recovering well, I could only really practice for about ninety minutes per day," she says. Rather than viewing that as a setback,

she reframes it: "I'm an extremely efficient practicer. That skill has been a huge advantage to me in my professional life. Even without injuries, you simply can't spend your whole life practicing."

Blumenthal is a "big fan" of sports psychology books and mental preparation. She continues: "Without a doubt, I've had the most success in auditions where I've unabashedly decided the job is mine and I really want to win. It has never been in my nature to

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think that way, so over the years I've really had to learn to almost brainwash myself!"

She acknowledges that added pressure can produce clinical or stiff performances and did her best to focus on playing the same way no matter the round, prelims or super finals, which freed her interpretation and spirit.

Blumenthal concludes on a gracious note: "I'm a newcomer to New York, and I'm grateful to the NY Flute Club for welcoming me into the fold like this. This program doesn't have any grand overarching theme. I simply wanted to pick repertoire that I thought might make people smile."



Rachel Blumenthal, flute Min Young Kang, piano

Sunday Dec. 7, 2025

3:30 p.m. mastery class

5:30 p.m. concert

Allen-Stevenson School

132 East 78th Street

Suite de trois morceux.....Benjamin Godard
(1849-1895)

Soliloquy.....Jake Heggie
(b. 1961)

Sonata.....Francis Poulenc
(1899-1963)

Requiem Milonga.....Valerie Coleman
(b. 1970)

Sonata in C Major.....Otar Taktakishvili
(1924-1989)

Program subject to change

Ragan Whiteside, Soul Jazz Flutist, Online for Club on Jan. 8



Soul jazz flutist Ragan Whiteside

Join award-winning flutist Ragan Whiteside for an inside look at her journey from classical training to jazz chart-topper.

On Jan. 8, in an online session for the New York Flute Club via Zoom. Whiteside will share insights on life as a full-time independent musician and the entrepreneurial mindset today's artists need to thrive.

Whiteside is one of contemporary soul-jazz's leading voices. With 10 consecutive Billboard and Mediabase Top 10 singles—including three #1s—she's a proven hitmaker and sought-after collaborator. Her upcoming seventh album, *RAGAN* (2025), follows 2022's *Thrill Ride*, whose title track hit No. 1 across five charts.

Mark your calendars for the Jan. 8 session at 7 p.m., part of the New York Flute Club's I Just Wanna Play online series.

Samuel Baron Centenary Celebrated at Stony Brook

The music department of Stony Brook University on Oct. 17 and 18 hosted a two-day birth-centennial celebration of flutist Samuel Baron, longtime faculty member who also taught at Juilliard. Baron was a founding member of the New York Woodwind Quintet, artistic director of the Bach Aria Group, and a steadfast proponent of new American music. Click [here](#) for a Flute Club YouTube program about Baron.



Clockwise from top right: Members of the New York Woodwind Quintet, with pianist Gilbert Kalish, played Samuel Baron's arrangement of the Brahms Piano Quartet, op. 25. NYFC archivist-historian Nancy Toff spoke about Baron's long association with the club, beginning in 1947, and especially his role in the evolution of the Eldin Burton Sonatina. A panel of Baron students reminisced about his influence on their lives: From left, Bärli Nugent, Tanya Dusevic Witek, Stony Brook music department chair Christina Dahl (moderator), Sue-Ellen Hershman-Tcherepnin, and Andrée Martin. Tara Helen O'Connor, who studied with Samuel Baron at Stony Brook for three degrees, spoke movingly of his legacy as performer and teacher.



Photos: Stony Brook Music Department and Madeleine Vaillancourt

Calling All Flute Fair Proposals!

The Flute Club invites your ideas for workshops, lectures, recitals, panel discussions and more for NY Flute Fair 2026: *From Dream to Reality*.

Any programs that promise to inspire the students, parents, teachers, performers, professionals and amateurs will be seriously considered. The deadline is Jan. 1, 2026. For more details click [here](#) or go to www.nyfluteclub.org.

The Flute Fair is Sunday March 22, 2026, at the Allen-Stevenson School.

Save the date!

Ensemble Members Share Performance Memories



Left to right: Javad Yaramadi, Jennifer Hastings, Gail Tishcoff, Doug Ramsdell, Natalie Ward, Danielle Schussel, James Marcus, Judith Thoyer, Bette Druck, Karen Robbins, Roger Brooks, Frances Lenci, Sam Ostrowski, Ambika Bansal, Kathy Saenger, David Russell, Laura Pologe, Lauren Kurtz, Mark Vickers, Gail Clement, Lester Yu, Bill Giannone, Elizabeth LaBarbera, NYFC President Lish Lindsey.

On Sunday, Oct.19, the ensemble held its second rehearsal, with 24 members (23 returning and one new) participating at Studios 353 in Manhattan. Director Mark Vickers led the group through *Flutes and Vegetables* (Cohen), *Birdland* (arr. Lombardo), *Allegro con fuoco* from *New World Symphony* (arr. Long), *Japanese Silhouettes* (arr. Buonanni), *Fantasy on Amazing Grace* (arr. Louke), and *Little Red Monkey* (arr. Farmer).

The icebreaker question was “What was your most exhilarating performance?” There were a variety of answers, from performances as a student in high school, college, or beyond. Some were performances that felt highly inspirational while others were terrifying but successful and were left etched in their memory.

To join the ensemble you must be a current member of the NY Flute Club. No audition is required. We accept all levels of players. If you would like to participate, email Ensemble director Mark Vickers at ensembles@nyfluteclub.

2025-2026 Events

IN-PERSON CONCERTS

Sunday, Oct. 5, 2025, 5:30 p.m.: Robert Langevin, Church of Christ and Saint Stephen's, 120 West 69th Street, New York

Sunday, Nov. 9, 3:30 p.m. mastery class and 5:30 p.m. concert with **Néstor Torres**

Sunday, Dec. 7, 3:30 p.m. mastery class and 5:30 p.m. concert with **Rachel Blumenthal**

Saturday, Jan. 10, 2026, 5:30 p.m.: Jacqueline Cordova-Arrington

Sunday, Feb. 8, 5:30 p.m.: American Chamber Music for Flute with Flute Force and many other performers; **world premiere by Bonnie McAlvin**

Sunday, March 22 all day: New York Flute Fair, with guest artist **Jennifer Grim**

April: Winners of the New York Flute Club Competition. Exact date and place TBA

Unless otherwise indicated, all concerts take place at 5:30 p.m. at the Allen-Stevenson School, 132 East 78th St. in Manhattan. Admission is free to NYFC members and their 2-4 member guests, depending on membership level. Non-members: \$25 general, \$15 full-time students (with ID) and seniors (65+)



ONLINE PROGRAMS

Thursdays at 7:00 p.m. via Zoom link.

Oct. 16, 2025: Samuel Baron's recordings of American music, with commentary by his colleagues. Hosted by **Tara Helen O'Connor**.

Nov. 13: Flutes of the World with **Tereasa Payne**

Dec. 4: An evening with flutist, multi-instrumentalist and composer **David Amram**

Jan. 8, 2026: Ragan Whiteside, soul jazz flutist (I Just Wanna Play series)

Jan. 29: The Flute Works of **Joan Tower**. Music and interviews with Joan Tower, **Lisa Bost-Sandberg**, **Patricia Spencer**, and **Carol Wincenc**.

March 26: John Ragusa, improvisational flutist, on world flutes (I Just Wanna Play series)

April 16: Flutes and Flutemakers in Early New York, with **Wendell Dobbs**, **Nancy Groce** and

Michael Lynn. The instruments, flutemakers, flutists, and composers who promoted the flute, with music of Foster, Riley, and others.

All dates and programs subject to change.

For more information about the New York Flute Club, including competitions, ensemble programs, education, and membership, please visit www.nyfluteclub.org

Flute Happenings Elsewhere

Dec. 23, 6:30 p.m.: Beyond Flute Group at Downtown Music Gallery, with Cheryl Pyle on C flute/alto flute, Sylvain Leroux on C flute/fula flute, Gene Coleman on bass flute and piccolo, and Ayumi Ishito on tenor sax. **Downtown Music Gallery, 13 Monroe St.** in Manhattan



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