

Spotlight 2025 Contemporary Instrumental Semifinal Judges

Edwin Livingston has been involved in music from a young age. His many musical pursuits have led him to record and tour extensively with Queen Latifah, Elvin Jones, Ellis, Delfeayo, Jason Marsalis, The Headhunters, Los Hombres Calientes (Grammy-nominated), Bill Summers, Munyungo Jackson, Donald Harrison, Jr., Alvin Batiste, Ronnie Laws, Debra Laws, Lionel Loueke, D.J. Logic, David "Fathead" Newman, John Beasley, The MONK'estra, Otmaro Ruiz, Mike Garson, Russell Ferrante, Sadao Watanabe, Justo Almario, Leni Stern, Kevin Toney of The Blackbyrds, Dave Weckl, Will Kennedy, Peter Erskine, Vince Wilburn, Jr., Jimmy Branly, Horacio "El Negro" Hernandez, Tootie Heath, Dave Weckl, Joe LaBarbera, Hot Buttered Rhythm, Gecko Turner, Henry Butler, James Clay, Barbara Morrison, The Wichita Symphony Orchestra, The Afro-American Chamber Music Society Orchestra, Catina DeLuna & Lado B Brazilian Project (Grammy-nominated), The Benjamin Wright Orchestra (Raphael Saadiq, Justin Timberlake, Will.I.Am, Brian McKnight, Mary J Blige, Aretha Franklin), Dave Slonaker Big Band (Grammy-nominated), Vince Mendoza, Bob Mintzer (Grammy-nominated), Yellowjackets, Mary Chapin Carpenter, Jovanotti, Keiko Matsui, Melody Gardot, Seal, Natalie Cole, Ben Vereen, Sadao Watanabe, Frankie Valli, Thelma Houston and many others. He is on the faculty at CalArts and USC's Thornton School of Music and holds a Performer-Composer MFA from CalArts.

Tom Luer is a member of the Poncho Sanchez Latin Jazz Band and D'Addario Woodwinds Performing Artist. His 2011 album *Project Popular* was released to critical acclaim. Recording credits include: Grammy-winning album *Generation Gap Jazz Orchestra*; John Beasley's Grammy-nominated albums *MONK'estra: Volume 1, 2, and 3*; Dave Slonaker's Grammy-nominated *Intrada*; and Grammy-winning jazz vocalist Kurt Elling's *The Brill Building Project*. Mr. Luer has also recorded with Lee Ritenour, the Alan Chan Orchestra, the Mike Barone Big Band, Wayne Bergeron Big Band, Cooper Phillips, the Bicoastal Collective, and Oliver Future. TV appearances include: NBC's *The Voice* and *Sports Illustrated 50 Years of Beautiful*; Fox's *X-Factor*; *The American Music Awards*; *The Tonight Show with Jay Leno*; and the *Ellen Degeneres Show*. Additional performance credits and tours include: Gordon Goodwin's Big Phat Band; Queen Latifah; Tom Wopat; Patrizio Buanne; and Engelbert Humperdinck. Currently, he is on faculty at Cal Poly Pomona and serves as the Jazz Program Director for the Shell Lake Arts Center in Shell Lake, Wisconsin.

Jose Perez can be seen performing a variety of genres in venues all over LA and the US. Mr. Perez currently records and tours with the Poncho Sanchez Latin Jazz Band, as well as the Yayennings Quartet. Since moving to Los Angeles in 2012, Mr. Perez has performed, recorded, and travelled with a variety of artists, including Haley Reinhart, Us The Duo, Snarky Puppy, Mongorama, Pomplamoose, and Bokanté. As a bandleader, he created "Estilo Y Gracia," a small group which pays homage to classic Cuban music. He releases his own music under his full name, Jose Miguel Perez.

Dr. Rick Schmunk, Music Technology Department Chair and founder of the Music Production undergraduate program, teaches in the Music Production and Popular Music programs at the USC Thornton School of Music. In 2022-24, he was a visiting professor at the Sibelius Institute in Helsinki, Finland, and mentored recording students at the Paris Conservatoire. Dr. Schmunk has presented at the Association for Popular Music Education (APME), Association for Technology in Music Instruction (ATMI), College Music Society (CMS), International Society for Music Education (ISME), Jazz Educators Network (JEN), and the Association of European Conservatories (AEC PJP) national and international conferences. His publications include eighteen LinkedIn Learning video courses, seen by over a million viewers, on topics ranging from music notation to analog synthesis to signal processing to Ableton Live. Recent releases include Ableton Live 12 Essentials and Creating with Ableton Live Plug-in and Instruments.

Elise Solberg is a keyboardist, songwriter, producer, flutist, and composer. She has performed with artists such as Beyoncé, Chloe x Halle, Doechii, Ellie Goulding, Pawpaw Rod, and Chloethegod. She has performed at the Oscars with Beyoncé and with 5-time Grammy-nominated artist Chloe x Halle at the *MTV Movie & TV Awards*, Global Citizen Festival, NPR's Tiny Desk concert, and James Corden's *Late Late Show*. For Chlöe, she has played and programmed sounds for the MTV VMA's, the BET Awards, and performed with her on *The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon*, The New Yorker Festival, and Tiny Desk. With Halle Bailey and Ellie Goulding, she has performed on Dick Clark's New Year's Rockin' Eve 2022 and 2023. She performed on the main stage of Coachella Festival with Doechii and at Outside Lands and Afropunk festivals with Pawpaw Rod. She has performed as a piano concerto soloist with orchestras such as the Breckenridge Festival Orchestra. In 2020, Ms. Solberg performed for the 20th Anniversary Celebration of the Library of Congress' Veterans History Project. In 2023, she was signed to Sir Nolan and Warner Chappell. She co-produced songs by DannyLux and Thomas Day with Sir Nolan. She studied with Patrice Rushen and Russell Ferrante at USC and is the Founder and Executive Director of Turn Up Her Mic, a non-profit organization aiming to empower female musicians.