

## Spotlight 2025 Contemporary Instrumental Preliminary Judges

**Alex Budman\*** moved to Los Angeles in 2005 and has since been in heavy demand as a session musician and soloist, recording on a wide variety of albums, TV shows, and movies. His command of the saxophone, clarinet, and flute keeps him busy playing in the top tier of LA's musical community, including the big bands of Clare Fischer, Alan Chan, Bernie Dresel, Chris Walden, Kim Richmond, Geoff Stradling, and his own Budman/Levy Orchestra, co-led by composer/arranger Jeremy Levy. Known in particular for his jazz clarinet playing, Alex is included in Hal Leonard's solo transcription collection *Clarinet Omnibook*. He has performed and toured with a diverse set of artists that includes Christopher Cross, Barry Manilow, Jamie Cullum, Boz Scaggs, Seth MacFarlane, Wendy and Lisa, Robby Krieger, Wayne Brady, Melissa Etheridge, Engelbert Humperdinck, Liza Minnelli, Poncho Sanchez, Wayne Newton, The Funk Brothers, The Temptations, Cheap Trick, and Rosemary Clooney.

**Andy Langham** is a longtime member of the multi-Grammy-nominated Poncho Sanchez Latin Jazz Band. He contributed to the current 2021 Grammy-nominated release *Trane's Delight* as a performer, composer, and arranger. Mr. Langham has performed on over 150 recordings, including 5 Grammy-nominated albums. He has toured with Natalie Cole, Christopher Cross, Christian McBride, New York Voices, Dewey Redman, Steve Tyrell, and Jane Monheit. Langham has recorded or performed in concert with Terrance Blanchard, James Carter, The Four Freshmen, Gerry Gibbs, Tom Harrell, Christian Scott, Ernie Watts, and Bill Watrous. Mr. Langham also teaches Jazz Piano at the Bob Cole Conservatory at Cal State Long Beach and Cal Poly Pomona.

**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.

**Dr. Rick Schmunk**, Music Technology Department Chair and founder of the Music Production undergraduate program, teaches within 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.

**Jeff Hooker\*** is a seasoned musician and educator with over a decade of experience. He received a Bachelor of Music degree at the Los Angeles College of Music, where he now serves on the faculty, sharing his expertise and passion with the next generation of musicians. Mr. Hooker is a studio musician and producer for clients such as Disney, Sony, and the Grammy-winning vocal group Pentatonix. Over the years, he has performed at prominent venues such as The Walt Disney Concert Hall, Disneyland Resort, Universal Studios Hollywood, and others.

\* Preliminary 1 only

\*\* Preliminary 2 only