

ABO Conference 2026 | 4 – 6 February 2026, London

Delegate Profiles

Khyochano Ngully – India

Founder, Brillante Piano Festival; Founder/Director, Music Academy Kohima



Khyochano TCK is the founder of *Brillante*, the world's only multi-genre piano festival, and Founder/Director of *Music Academy Kohima*, one of Nagaland's leading music institutions.

A pioneer of Western classical music education in North-East India, she is a classically trained pianist and alumna of the Biola Conservatory of Music, California (USA), with over 25 years of teaching experience.

Driven by a deep conviction in the transformative power of music, Khyochano has played a key role in nurturing a vibrant local music community that has grown into a pan-India movement, transcending borders, cultures, and social backgrounds. Her work consistently links artistic excellence with social development and ecosystem-building.

Her flagship initiative, the *Brillante Piano Festival*, brings together Indian and international artists through performances, learning opportunities, and creative collaboration. Its fifth edition was successfully held in Bengaluru in 2024.

Khyochano currently serves in several leadership roles, including Artistic Director at the Jose Thomas Performing Arts Center, Kochi; Academic Consultant for Music with Trinity College London, India; President of the Nagaland Piano Teachers Association; and Board Member of the Indian Delphic Council. She is also a recipient of the Governor's Award for Music, Nagaland.

Bindu Subramaniam – India

Entrepreneur, Singer-Songwriter, and Educator



Bindu Subramaniam is an entrepreneur, singer-songwriter, and educator. She is the Co-founder and CEO of SaPa, an organisation that brings music education to more than 40,000 students each year. She is also the lead vocalist of SubraMania and the Thayir Sadam Project.

Bindu has performed around the world - solo, with her family, with her bands, and with orchestras - for audiences of up to 500,000 people. In addition to her artistic work, she has held leadership roles including serving as President of the Stanford Seed Transformation Network South Asia, and she currently co-chairs the Australia India Youth Dialogue.

She holds eight academic degrees, has co-authored more than twenty academic books, and has delivered multiple TEDx talks. Her writing appears in a wide range of publications. Bindu has been recognised among GQ's *25 Most Influential Young Indians* and Business World's *40 Under 40*, highlighting her impact across music, education, and entrepreneurship.

Wandiri Karimi – Kenya

Musician, Cultural Leader, and Co-Founder of the African Women's Orchestra (AWO)



Wandiri Karimi is a Kenyan musician and cultural leader, and the co-founder of the African Women's Orchestra (AWO), a platform dedicated to advancing women's participation, leadership, and visibility in orchestral music across Africa.

Since its founding in 2016, AWO has created performance, training, and professional development opportunities for women musicians, composers, and conductors, while actively challenging structural barriers in the music sector.

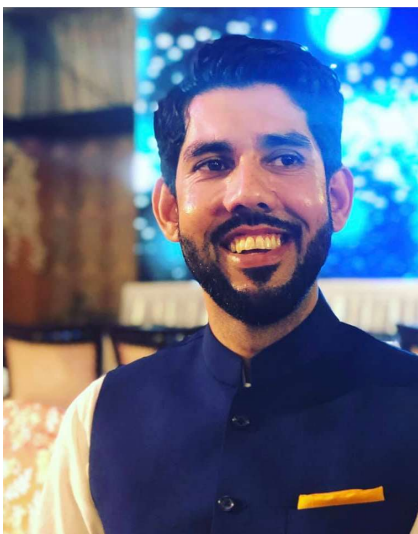
Through concerts, workshops, and regional and international collaborations, Wandiri has helped build a pan-African network centred on artistic excellence, mentorship, and inclusive orchestral practice. AWO integrates African musical traditions with contemporary and classical forms, expanding audiences and broadening the possibilities of orchestral music in African contexts.

Wandiri works with cultural, educational, and policy institutions to champion best practices in music education, leadership, and sustainable creative ecosystems. Her approach is shaped by more than two decades of experience as a performer, arts administrator, and intellectual property law specialist, enabling her to bridge artistic creation with sector development.

She remains committed to shaping equitable, resilient, and globally connected futures for women in orchestral and performing arts spaces.

Omer Jamil – Pakistan

Music Educator, Pianist, and Piano Technician



Omer Jamil is a Karachi-based music educator, pianist, and piano technician whose work centres on pedagogy, craftsmanship, and the transformative role of music in personal and community development. He has played the piano for more than thirty-five years and has over two decades of teaching experience across private studios, schools, and higher education institutions. He holds a Bachelor of Liberal Arts in Music from Knox College, Illinois, with additional pedagogical training in Europe.

Omer is the founder of Eighth Note, a centre dedicated to the study of Western classical music, where he develops curriculum, directs recitals, and creates collaborative performance opportunities that connect students with professional musicians. He has taught extensively at the National Academy of Performing Arts (NAPA) and the Centre for Advanced Studies (C.A.S.), where he pioneered Pakistan's first IGCSE and O Level Music programmes with an emphasis on musicianship, literacy, and sequential skill development.

In 2011, he became Pakistan's first certified piano technician after completing training at the Chicago School for Piano Technology. Guided by training in counselling and Music Learning Theory, his work reflects a holistic, person-centred approach focused on long-term musical understanding, wellbeing, and sustainable artistic practice.

Joselle R. Cayetano – Philippines

Associate Professor, Visayas State University - Institute of Human Kinetics



Joselle R. Cayetano is an Associate Professor at the Institute of Human Kinetics, Visayas State University, where he integrates expertise in music, physical education, culture, and the arts. An accomplished academic, he holds a Master's degree in Music Education and is currently a PhD candidate in Curriculum and Instruction.

His research focuses on culturally responsive pedagogy, particularly the preservation of traditional Waray folk songs and student achievement in music. He has also collaborated with Ms. Carmen Flores of the Nottingham Chamber Music Festival on the British Council-funded project *Bridging Communities in Music*, strengthening both local and international artistic connections.

Beyond teaching, Mr. Cayetano contributes actively to the VSU community through multiple roles. As a musician, he is a violinist, choir trainer, and conductor. As an athletic coach, he led the VSU Arnis Team to regional championship success.

Through his unique combination of arts and athletics, Mr. Cayetano plays a vital role in advancing VSU's academic and cultural mission, ensuring that local heritage - especially Waray musical traditions - remains central to contemporary educational practice.

Yasin Arman – Turkey

Production and Event Coordinator



Yasin Arman is a production and event coordinator with more than ten years of experience in cultural and performing arts management. Since 2020, he has served as Programme Coordinator at the Istanbul State Symphony Orchestra, overseeing concert planning, conductor and soloist coordination, technical production, and event communications. He has also collaborated extensively with leading ensembles such as the TRT Philharmonic Orchestra, CRR Symphony Orchestra, Eurasia Philharmonic Orchestra, and the Doğuş Children's Symphony Orchestra, further deepening his skills in stage and production management.

From 2014 to 2021, he worked at Allaturca, managing the planning and production of concerts, festivals, and artist projects across Türkiye and internationally. During this time, he contributed to major festivals including the D-Marin Turgutreis International Classical Music Festival, Akra Jazz Festival, Bozcaada Jazz Festival, and Beylikdüzü Classical Music Festival. He also collaborated with renowned artists such as Gidon Kremer, Hilary Hahn, Nikolai Lugansky, Lionel Bringuier, Sascha Goetzel, Andreas Ottensamer, Daniel Lozakovich, Camille Thomas, Denis Kozhukhin, Fazıl Say, İdil Biret, and Lara St. John.

Yasin holds a Master's degree in Visual Communication Design and brings a design-focused approach to event management. He is proficient in Adobe Creative Cloud and MS Office and speaks English (B2) and German (A2.1).

Mariam Verdiian – Ukraine

Musicologist, Educator, and Project Curator



From 2016 to 2018, Mariam completed a Master's degree in Music at the Ukrainian National Academy of Music in Kyiv, where she later pursued postgraduate studies (2018–2022). In 2023, she defended her dissertation and was awarded a PhD in Musicology.

In 2023–2024, she was a Fulbright Scholar at Columbia University in New York, working within the Department of Music and presenting her research on contemporary Ukrainian music at Boston University and the University of Wisconsin–Madison.

Since 2024, she has served as a project curator at the Youth Music Center (CMM) and Ensemble 24 in Kyiv. These organisations focus on concerts and educational initiatives dedicated to contemporary music. CMM provides essential platforms for young musicians to gain mentorship, visibility, and professional experience, including the commissioning of new works by emerging Ukrainian composers. Ensemble 24 continues this mission by performing contemporary and experimental music from Ukraine and abroad, with a commitment to openness, equality, and artistic innovation.

In June 2025, she joined the Ukrainian Institute's delegation representing Ukraine at the Holland Festival in Amsterdam and The Hague.

Dr. Nasser Sahim Aljassim – Qatar

Composer, Vocalist, Educator, and Deputy Executive Director, Qatar Philharmonic Orchestra



Dr. Nasser Sahim Aljassim, born in 1979, is a leading figure in the Qatari and Arab musical landscape. Since beginning his artistic journey in 1995, he has become known for blending traditional Gulf musical heritage with modern, innovative forms. As both a composer and vocalist, his orchestral works, expressive songs, and contemporary arrangements have made a lasting impact on the region's cultural scene.

A major contributor to the development of contemporary music in the Gulf, Dr. Sahim has been instrumental in bringing Qatari musical traditions into polyphonic and symphonic frameworks. His notable compositions - *Spirit of Maqam*, *Sensation*, and *Al Freasa Ashory*—along with acclaimed songs such as *I Traveled*, *Enough of Your Cruelty*, and *You Made Me Believe*, are celebrated for their authenticity, emotional depth, and refined musical structure.

Beyond his artistic achievements, he is an active educator and researcher, delivering masterclasses and workshops on composition and polyphonic arrangements rooted in Gulf identity. He has also contributed to conferences and published research that supports greater international recognition of Qatari music.

As Deputy Executive Director of the Qatar Philharmonic Orchestra, Dr. Sahim continues to shape the region's musical future, championing cultural exchange and artistic excellence.

British Council Staff

Joel Mills, Music Director - UK



As Director of Music, Joel oversees the music portfolio for British Council, leading on key partnerships and programmes. With a background of over 25 years in the music and arts sector, that bridges both the commercial and funded sector, Joel joined the British Council in 2009.

She has developed numerous programmes that support international collaboration, residencies and professional exchange opportunities. Having worked extensively with teams in South Asia, East Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, she spent several months in South Africa as Interim Director Arts, Sub-Saharan Africa. As well as leading the global Music portfolio for British Council, she has championed and led many cross-disciplinary work with music and film, arts and tech such as British Council's work at SXSW.

Tom Sweet, Senior Relationship Manager Music – UK



Tom joined the British Council music team in 2015 and has worked extensively in Wider Europe and South Asia. He led on the creation of Envision Sound – a film scoring programme for emerging composers; Selector Pro – a music industry capacity building programme, and Creative Producers – a project to develop cross-sectoral arts practice and ecosystems in Wider Europe. He has played key roles in the shaping and delivery of large-scale programmes and grant schemes within seasons in countries including Ukraine, Pakistan and India.

More recently, he manages Selector Radio and oversees the delivery of Selector's live events at The Great Escape and South by Southwest (SXSW).

Personal highlights from his time at British Council include working with Boiler Room to deliver their inaugural events in Pakistan and Uzbekistan, leading on the contemporary music programme for the UK-Russia Year of Music in 2019 and working with Brian Eno to present his generative audio-visual work *77 Million Paintings* at the History Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina in Sarajevo.

Prior to joining the British Council, Tom developed and produced contemporary audio-visual concerts for venues and organisations including Sydney Opera House, South Bank Centre, Royal Opera House, Brighton Festival, No-Nation and Music Beyond Mainstream, and international touring projects with The Light Surgeons and CDR.

Shannon-Latoyah Simon, Music Relationship Manager – UK



Shannon-Latoyah Simon is a Music Relationship Manager at the British Council, where she develops and nurtures partnerships across a broad cultural spectrum, emphasising classical, contemporary, and new music in the UK, Europe, and East Asia. She provides specialist music expertise to ensure the development of high-quality, strategic music programmes, and she cultivates partnerships for British Council global initiatives. Shannon collaborates with the arts and culture sector in the UK and a global network of British Council offices to achieve impact and change by exploring new ways of connecting through the arts and music.

Alongside her work at the British Council, she is a professional classical guitarist specialising in new, interdisciplinary, and experimental music, and was selected as one of Britten Pears Arts' *Future Leaders* in 2024. Shannon is an Associate Lecturer of Classical Guitar Studies at Goldsmiths, University of London, and serves as a trustee of both Misfits Music and the Scottish Ensemble.

Her work is grounded in a strong commitment to diversity, inclusion, and supporting underrepresented communities, and she is currently completing a PhD in Black Studies at the University of Nottingham.