

Karen Ouzounian

Bio

Described as “radiant” and “expressive” (*The New York Times*) and “nothing less than gorgeous” (*Memphis Commercial Appeal*), cellist Karen Ouzounian leads a multi-faceted career as a chamber musician, soloist, collaborator and composer. Winner of the S&R Foundation’s Washington Award, she is at home in diverse musical settings and sought-after for her open-hearted, passionate and vibrantly detailed approach to music-making.

At the heart of Karen’s artistic practice is her love of unusual collaborations and the development of adventurous new works. Her current and recent projects include the creation of an experimental theater work with acclaimed director Joanna Settle; the world premiere of Lembit Beecher’s cello concerto *Tell Me Again* with conductor Eric Jacobsen and the Orlando Philharmonic; the world premiere of Anna Clyne’s *Shorthand* for solo cello and strings with The Knights, which she subsequently toured as soloist with The Knights throughout Europe and the U.S. and released on Avie Records; the commissioning of a new piece for cello/voice, *Bring Your Own Garden Party*, by Christina Courtin; and the digital world premiere of Beecher’s *A Year to the Day*, filmed for The Violin Channel with Augustin Hadelich and Nicholas Phan. Recent releases include her debut album as soloist with orchestra in Kayhan Kalhor’s *Blue as the Turquoise Night of Neyshabur* for solo cello, kamancheh and tabla (Bright Shiny Things), Osvaldo Golijov’s *Falling Out of Time* with the Silkroad Ensemble (In a Circle Records), and the chamber music of Tigran Mansurian (ECM New Series). Her evening-length video work *In Motion*, an exploration of heritage, family history and migration through interviews, her own compositions, and collaborations with visual artists Kevork Mourad and Nomi Sasaki and composer-percussionist Haruka Fujii, was presented by *BroadBand* in 2021.

Karen’s passion for chamber music led her to become a founding member of the Aizuri Quartet from 2012-2023, during which time the ensemble was awarded major chamber music prizes on three continents, including Chamber Music America’s Cleveland Quartet Award, the Grand Prize at the M-Prize Chamber Arts Competition, the Osaka International Chamber Music Competition and the Wigmore Hall International String Quartet Competition, and served as the MetLiveArts String Quartet-in-Residence at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. The Quartet’s debut album, *Blueprinting*, featuring new works written for the Aizuri Quartet by five American composers, was released by New Amsterdam Records to critical acclaim (“In a word, stunning” - *I Care If You Listen*), nominated for a GRAMMY Award, and named one of NPR Music’s Best Classical Albums.

Karen performs around the globe as a member of the Silkroad Ensemble, the GRAMMY Award-winning group founded by cellist Yo-Yo Ma in 2000 that engages cross-cultural collaboration and understanding. Recent tours with the Silkroad Ensemble include *Uplifted Voices*, which included the world premiere of her composition *Der Zor* and appeared at Carnegie Hall with Rhiannon Giddens, *American Railroad*, *Phoenix Rising*, and Kinan Azmeh and Kevork Mourad’s *Home Within*. Her love of collaboration has led Karen to become a member of the Brooklyn-based chamber collective The Knights, tour with *Musicians from Marlboro*, give recitals at the Caramoor Center for Music and the Arts with pianist Ieva Jokubaviciute, and perform as guest principal cellist of the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra.

Passionate about nurturing the next generation of artists, Karen has conducted cello clinics and workshops at USC and University of Nebraska-Lincoln, taught extensively at the high school and collegiate levels with the Aizuri Quartet and Silkroad Ensemble, and serves as a mentor in

Juilliard's Mentoring Program. Born to Armenian parents in Toronto, Karen holds Master of Music and Bachelor of Music degrees from The Juilliard School, where she was a student of Timothy Eddy. She resides in New York City with her husband, composer and animator Lembit Beecher.

(629 words, current as of Sept 2023; for more information visit www.karenouzounian.com)

Short Bio

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(252 words, current as of April 2023; for more information, www.karenouzounian.com)