

## SSMC Teachers' Bios



- **Piano: Mina Cho**

Bachelor of Music (B.M.), Berklee College of Music, *Summa Cum Laude* – Jazz Composition & Film Scoring  
Master of Music (M.M.), New England Conservatory of Music, *Pi Kappa Lambda Nominee* – Jazz Studies (Composition)  
Doctor of Musical Arts (D.M.A.) Candidate, New England Conservatory of Music – Jazz Studies (Composition)

Pianist and composer Mina Cho was on track for a dazzling classical career when she first encountered jazz and gospel music as a university student in her native Seoul. Private study of her new passion for jazz led her to the Berklee College of Music, where she graduated *Summa Cum Laude* in 2009 with a degree in Film Scoring and Jazz Composition. While at Berklee, her musical palette expanded to include South American, Afro-Cuban, and Brazilian styles under the mentorship of Venezuelan pianist/composer Leo Blanco. All of these influences can be heard in

her playing and on her acclaimed debut CD “Originality.” Mina’s music also uniquely touches spirituality in jazz by implying her lifetime theme: Music & Spirit. In addition to her brilliant work as a recording artist, she appears regularly as a church musician and a jazz pianist/composer in the great Boston area. She is the director of contemporary music at Somerville Community Baptist Church and the pianist and a composer of Jazz Composers Alliance Orchestra. In 2013 Mina Cho graduated from the New England Conservatory of Music with the highest of honors, *Pi Kappa Lambda nominee*, acquiring the Master of Music in Jazz Studies – Composition. While at NEC, she studied with numerous renowned musicians, such as Sophia Rosoff, Ken Schaphorst, Ben Schwendener, Fred Hersch, Jason Moran, Frank Carlberg, Jerry Bergonzi, and Dave Holland among many others. Currently, Mina is a Doctor of Musical Arts Degree candidate at New England Conservatory of Music.



- **Drums / Percussions: George Lernis**

B.M. Berklee College of Music – Performance  
M.M. Longy School of Music – Modern American Music

George Lernis was born on July 15th 1980 in Cyprus. At the age of 13 he started attending drum private lessons. In addition from a very young age George became interested in hand percussion. He currently plays a number of percussion instruments, such as; Hadjira, Kanjira, Frame drums, Davul, Darbuka, Riq, Pandeiro, Conga, Timpani and Marimba. By the age of 15 George was playing music with several bands in the styles of jazz, rock and world music. On 2001 he came to the United States to study music at the prestige Berklee College of Music. He graduated on April 2005 with a Bachelor degree in Jazz Performance. In 2008 George was accepted at the Longy School of Music from where he graduated with a master’s degree in Modern American Music. After his master’s degree George released his first album as a bandleader “Shapes of Nature” featuring the George Lernis Jazz Quartet. The quartet performs frequently at different venues in the New England area.



- **Bass: Sam J.C. Lee**

B.M. Berklee College of Music – Jazz Composition & Performance  
M.M. Candidate New York University – Jazz Studies (Performance)

Professional Backgrounds:

2005 BNN TV (Boston Ch 9)  
2006 Tim Hughes Boston Worship Concert  
2007-2008 Phillip Ferrell Worship Concerts/Conferences  
2007 CM Days 2007 National Conference @ Colorado State University Moby Arena  
2007 Prentice Pilot (Boston Symphony Orchestra)  
2007-Present Leader of Sam JC Lee Group  
2007 Chicago Kollaboration guest artist (with Phil Good Band)  
2008 Lenny Wee (American Idol, Jay Leno Tonight Show)  
2008 John Blackwell (Drummer for Prince)  
2008 Recording, Jazz Clinic with Steve Rochinski (Faculty Member of Berklee, Author of Berklee Harmony books)  
2008 George Garzone (jazz legend)  
2007-2012 Berklee Performance Center

2008, 2009 Yoon Seung Cho (world-renowned pianist)  
2009 Award winning short-films “Blue City Rhapsody”  
2009 Agari Crew single “I’m Ready”  
2009 George Russell Jr.  
2009 Newburyport Riverfront Music Festival  
2010 Citylife Christmas Live EP Producer & Bassist  
2010 Marblehead Arts Festival  
2010, 2011 The Regattabar Jazz Club, Boston, MA  
2011 Blue Note Jazz Club, NYC  
2011 True Worshipers 12 Chicago Tour  
2011 Beantown Jazz Festival  
2011 Rajdulari Barnes CD “Honeywine”  
2011 Mina Cho CD “Originality”  
2011 Castle Island Hymns “Christmas”  
2011 Angela Wang CD  
2011 NYC Kollaboration Finalist (Rooftop Pursuit)  
2012 Grace Kang “Grace Sings Grace”  
2012 Yuko Yamamura (CD will be released this summer, 2014)  
2012 Rooftop Pursuit Single “All I Need” Producer & Bassist



- **Vocal: Sami Stevens**

B.M. New England Conservatory of Music – Jazz Studies (Vocal Performance)  
B.A. Tufts University – Psychology

Sami Stevens is a Boston-based vocalist who pursued her bachelors in Jazz Performance at the New England Conservatory and in Psychology at Tufts University. She is lead singer for the celebrated future-soul group The Love Experiment and Italian soundtrack-pop group Tredicci Bacci, in addition to her newly formed project Sami Stevens and the Orchestra. Sami has had the opportunity to work with Jason Moran, Fred Hersch, Luciana Souza, Kate McGarry, John McNeil, and Dominique Eade. She originally hails from East Winthrop, Maine.



- **Violin: Maria van der Sloot**

B.M. New England Conservatory of Music – Violin Performance

Maria van der Sloot was born in Medicine Hat, Canada and grew up in Calgary. She began playing violin at the age of six in an effort to upstage her older brother, who was learning piano. She pursued her undergraduate degree with Donald Weilerstein at the New England Conservatory of Music, Boston, where she performed regularly as part of the Emma Quartet, the NEC Philharmonia, and in various recitals and other settings. Recent performances include Mozart's opera La Clemenza di Tito (NEC Opera and Philharmonia, Jordan Hall at NEC), Turnage's Slide Stride for piano quintet (BSO Prelude concert, Williams Hall at NEC), and her senior recital (Keller Hall at NEC) among many others.



- **Cello: Marza Wilks**

B.M. New England Conservatory – Cello Performance

M.M. New England Conservatory Candidate – Cello Performance

Certified Suzuki Teacher

Marza Wilks is a young Peruvian born cellist. She has been playing classical cello since the age of 5 and graduated from the New England Conservatory of Music (NEC), acquiring the Bachelor of Music degree, under the guidance and teachings of Natasha Brofsky. Marza plays in the New England Conservatory Philharmonia orchestra and is an avid chamber musician. She has performed in NEC's Jordan Hall as part of the Beethoven Birthday annual celebration with her quartet. Marza, not limited to classical music, loves to dive into new musical projects of all genres. She often plays in the Beantown Swing Orchestra, with jazz big band at the New England Conservatory jazz concerts, and in the Contemporary Improvisation department at NEC. After becoming a certified Suzuki teacher in 2012, she has developed a passion to teach and practice with kids of various ages. Currently, she is pursuing her master of music degree at NEC.