

Meet our Master Class Hosts



Linc Smelser received his bachelor's degree in Cello Performance from the University of Arizona where he studied with Dr. Gordon Epperson and received his Master's Degree and Performer's Certificate in Cello Performance and Pedagogy at Northern Illinois University having studied with renowned cellist and pedagogue Raya Garbousova.

Mr. Smelser has appeared as a soloist with Camerata Chicago, Kishwaukee Symphony Orchestra, the Illinois Valley Symphony Orchestra, the NIU Philharmonic and the Rockford Symphony Orchestra and has twice appeared in recital on the Dame Myra Hess Memorial Concerts Series in Chicago, which is broadcast live on over 44 stations across the United States.

Mr. Smelser has been a member of the Grant Park Symphony Orchestra Cello section since 1992 and has been an active substitute with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra since 1997, having most recently embarked on his 12th international tour with the symphony.

In 2003, Mr. Smelser was appointed conductor/music director of the Kishwaukee Symphony Orchestra in DeKalb, IL. In 2009 he was awarded Conductor of the Year by the Illinois Arts Council and in 2014 was appointed conductor/music director of the Rockford Symphony Youth Orchestra. He has guest conducted the Rockford Symphony Orchestra, Northern Illinois University Philharmonic, the Harper Symphony Orchestra, the Fox Valley Orchestra (Aurora) and the Skokie Valley Community Orchestra. He is also conductor of the NIU Sinfonia and Symphonette, two youth symphonies that attract students from the Northern Illinois area.

Mr. Smelser is currently a faculty member of the Music Institute of Chicago in Winnetka. He is also a faculty member the Northern Illinois University Music Department and has been teaching private cello and piano lessons through the NIU Community School of the Arts since 1988. He is currently on the faculty of both the Chicago Suzuki Institute and the American Suzuki Institute and is pianist/accompanist of the Northern Illinois University Suzuki program.



Ann Montzka-Smelser began her violin studies at the age of three with the help of her parents. In between receiving her Bachelors of Music Education and Masters in Performance and Pedagogy at Northern Illinois University, Ann studied with Dr. Shinichi Suzuki at the Talent Education Institute in Matsumoto, Japan.

Ann has performed in many orchestras and ensembles and is currently principal second violinist with Camerata Chicago and concertmaster of the Kishwaukee Symphony Orchestra. Ann is on the music faculty at Northern Illinois University, Roosevelt University and Northwestern University teaching Suzuki Pedagogy. She is Director of the NIU CSA Suzuki Strings Program maintaining a studio of 40 violin and viola students. She enjoys working with students and their families at Festivals in Lima, Peru, Singapore, Mexico, Costa Rica and throughout the US. Ann lives in DeKalb, IL with her husband Linc. Their two children, Benjamin and Genevieve are pursuing careers as professional musicians.