

Karen LeFrak Full Biography 2023-2024

A native New Yorker, composer and author Karen LeFrak has created vibrant, moving musical scores that have been presented in prestigious concert halls across the globe. She has received wide accolades for her children's books published by [Bloomsbury](#), [Random House](#), and [Crown Books](#).

Ms. LeFrak is an avid recording artist and has released ten studio recordings since March 2021 – the four-volume *Interlude, Days, Tomorrow, Continuum, Renewal, Awakening, and Months*. Her eleventh album, titled *Penumbra*, features ten short solo piano works that evokes the partial shadow of a penumbra – the hazy, enigmatic space between darkness and light. Additional albums this season are *Christmas Cookies* (chamber music) and additional peaceful piano recordings. Her music has been included in hundreds of curated playlists and has been streamed over 26 million times.

Superstar violinist Joshua Bell applauds her first album project, *Interlude*, saying, "Karen LeFrak is a true renaissance woman. One can find much-needed peace and comfort in this beautiful collection of piano miniatures." David Foster also celebrates the album saying, "Karen LeFrak's melodies are haunting, memorable and simply complex. Melody is king and Ms. LeFrak does not disappoint to even a nano second!!!" A number of orchestral, chamber, and solo works from Ms. LeFrak's catalog have also been recorded by the St. Petersburg Chamber Philharmonic, Mariinsky Orchestra, and [Gloriosa Trio](#), who recorded on [Centaur Records](#) and performed on [Colorado Public Radio](#).

Ms. LeFrak's works have been commissioned and performed by a wide variety of prominent institutions and artists worldwide, including the [New York Philharmonic](#); [American Ballet Theatre](#); the [Mariinsky](#), [Joffrey](#) and [San Francisco Ballets](#); the [New York University](#) and [Juilliard School Percussion Ensembles](#); the [Shanghai](#) and [Miami Symphony Orchestras](#); [Boston Chamber Symphony](#); pianist [Anne-Marie McDermott](#); [Sejong Soloists](#); and flutist [Eugenia Zukerman](#), among many others. Her compositions have been heard at esteemed venues across the United States, Europe, Russia, and Asia including David Geffen Hall and the Koch Theatre at [Lincoln Center](#), [Kennedy Center](#), [Mariinsky Theatre](#) in Saint Petersburg, Moscow's Kremlin for the 250th anniversary of the [Bolshoi Ballet School](#), [Symphony Space](#) in New York, [National Sawdust](#) in Brooklyn, [Bethel Woods Arts Center](#), [Festival Napa Valley](#), and the White House – where her musical works *Acceptance* and the *New Yorker Trio* were honored at an International Women's Day Luncheon.

Highlights of Ms. LeFrak's 2023-24 season include the premiere of "Bailamos" – the first movement of her *Miami Concerto* for guitar and orchestra – performed at National Symphony Orchestra's annual Labor Day concert on the West Lawn of the U.S. Capitol, with the internationally acclaimed, GRAMMY-winning guitarist Sharon Isbin as soloist, led by conductor Enrico Lopez-Yañez. Later, the full concerto receives its world premiere by the Miami Symphony Orchestra. Additional highlights include performances of *Sleepover at the Museum* by the

Singapore Symphony Orchestra with conductor Rodolfo Barráez, and by the Nashville Symphony with conductor Enrico Lopez-Yañez.

Highlights of previous seasons include *Sleepover at the Museum* in Washington D.C. with the National Symphony Orchestra and in Shanghai with the Shanghai Symphony Orchestra; a choreographed version of *Sleepover at the Museum* in Chicago by A & A Ballet and in Guatemala City at the Bravissimo International Festival; the world premieres of *Jake the Philharmonic Dog* and her “Summer” piano concerto with the Miami Symphony Orchestra, led by Eduardo Marturet, *Gravity*, with the Johannesburg Philharmonic Orchestra and KwaZulu-Natal Philharmonic Orchestra; and chamber work performances by the American Composers Orchestra in New York, and by Gloriosa Piano Trio in Georgia and New York, among others.

Of Ms. LeFrak’s over 300 compositions, she has written several powerful orchestral works including a piano concerto, guitar concerto, and the multimedia children’s scores *Sleepover at the Museum*, orchestrated by Bill Ross, and *Jake the Philharmonic Dog*. The dynamic and robust works bring to life Ms. LeFrak’s children’s books by the same name with the help of a narrator. *Sleepover at the Museum* was premiered by the Miami Symphony Orchestra, [performed at Festival Napa Valley](#), received a semi-staged performance by the [Missoula Symphony](#), and was performed by the New York Philharmonic with narrator Jamie Bernstein – Leonard Bernstein’s daughter – on its first-ever family benefit, honoring Ms. LeFrak’s dedication and contribution to the Philharmonic. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the New York Philharmonic performance has been included in its “NY Phil Plays On” [digital content online](#), making it available to millions of children around the world.

The New York Philharmonic has also premiered Ms. LeFrak’s *A Bite of the Apple*, *Salute to New York* at Lincoln Center and in Shanghai to celebrate the beginning of the [Shanghai Orchestra Academy](#), paired with a video created by [NYC & Company](#). Other orchestral highlights include her *String Serenade*, premiered at the inauguration of the new Shanghai Symphony Orchestra’s Chamber Music Hall in 2014; *Questa Via*, arranged by [Bill Ross](#), premiered by the Miami Symphony and also performed at Festival Napa Valley; an orchestrated version of *Nothing Left*, arranged by conductor [Eduardo Marturet](#), premiered by the Miami Symphony; *Light*, a commission by the Miami Symphony, premiered alongside a video installation celebrating the art of [Sandra Muss](#); *Ivan’s Song* for symphony orchestra, premiered at [Mount Holyoke College](#) and also performed by the Boston Chamber Symphony; and an orchestrated version of her *Trio for Oboe, Horn, and Piano* performed by [Liang Wang](#) and [Philip Myers](#) as a double concerto with the Shanghai Symphony Orchestra.

Ms. LeFrak’s ballet scores have received wide acclaim including the pas de deux of her ballet score *Pavlovsk*, commissioned by the American Ballet Theatre – first choreographed by [Roger Van Fleteren](#) for the Studio Company of ABT and performed at the Joyce Theatre and a second setting, choreographed by [Maxim Petrov](#), received its world premiere at the Mariinsky Theatre in Saint Petersburg, Russia. The work’s success has earned a place among Mariinsky’s general repertory and has been repeated many times since. Other noteworthy performances of Ms. LeFrak’s ballet scores include: *MINIMALYRIC*, written for [Jiri Bubenicek](#) who choreographed the

work for his video project in February 2022 – *Tanzgedichte Aus Der Stille*; *Gentle Memories*, choreographed by Jiří Bubeníček and performed with [Ekaterina Kondaurova](#) at Lincoln Center's Koch Theatre, in Prague, the Mariinsky Theatre, and at the San Francisco Ballet; her ballet *Tous Les Jours*, choreographed by [Marcelo Gomes](#) performed on the main stage of the Mariinsky Theatre, at Moscow's Kremlin for the 250th anniversary of the Bolshoi Ballet School, and the Gala Crescendo Con La Musica in Geneva, Switzerland with a second setting performed by [Youth America Grand Prix](#) at the Koch Theatre; her children's ballet score, *Bark! In the Park*, choreographed by [Chase Brock](#), commissioned and performed by the [New York Theatre Ballet](#) and at the Tilles Center for the Performing Arts on Long Island; *Windy Sand*, a ballet score for the Joffrey Ballet, choreographed by [Alexei Kremnev](#), and performed at the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, the Joffrey Ballet Gala in Chicago, and by Youth America Grand Prix at the Koch Theatre; *Space*, choreographed by Antonia Franceschi at Barnard College; *Cat's Cradle*, choreographed by [Gemma Bond](#), featuring the score *The Assembly* with the New York Theatre Ballet, for Bond's Danspace Project in New York; the *Cello and Horn duet*, a commission by Youth America Grand Prix, also choreographed by Gemma Bond and performed at the Koch Theatre; and two versions of *Nothing Left*, choreographed by [Juliano Nunes](#), performed by Youth America Grand Prix at the Koch Theatre.

Ms. LeFrak's chamber works include a wide variety of ensemble configurations from her *Five Brass Pieces*, performed by the New York Philharmonic Principal Brass at Make Music New York, to *Five Pieces for Percussion* performed by the New York University and Juilliard School Percussion Ensembles. The Gloriosa Trio premiered *Gloriosa*, a piano trio, at the New Jersey City University and have continued to feature the work on their programs around the world including at the [Harvard Club](#) in New York and the [Boulder Chamber Orchestra's](#) Chamber Music Series. The ensemble has also performed Ms. LeFrak's piano trio, the *New Yorker Trio*, at Friends of Music in Stamford, the Harvard Club, New Jersey City University, and at the Parrish Art Museum. Other chamber works by Ms. LeFrak include *Schubertia* premiered by the [1B1](#) string ensemble of Norway at National Sawdust; *We'll Never Say Goodbye* for violin and horn, commissioned by New York Philharmonic cellist Eileen Moon and performed by New York Philharmonic's former concertmaster [Glenn Dicterow](#) and New York Philharmonic's former Principal Horn Philip Myers at the Bethel Woods Chamber Music Series; *Trio for Oboe, Horn, and Piano* performed at the Warwick Music Series by former New York Philharmonic Principal players Liang Wang and Philip Myers with pianist John Novacek, as well as at the Bethel Woods Chamber Music Series, with pianist [Joyce Yang](#); *Prelude for 8 Celli*, premiered by the Sejong Soloists at a benefit concert at Alice Tully Hall; *Should I Stay or Should I Go* for flute and string quartet, performed at the [Rhinebeck Chamber Music Society Concert Series](#) with flutist Eugenia Zukerman; *Hungarian Folk Song* for clarinet, viola, and piano, premiered at the [Chelsea Music Festival](#) of New York; *Duettino* for violin and piano, performed at Bethel Woods Center for the Arts; *Urban Tango* for piano and violin, premiered at the [Cutting Edge Concerts New Music Festival](#) at Symphony Space; and *Clarinet Plus One* and *Twilight* for clarinet and piano, performed at the [Concert Artists Guild](#) Gala at the Tribeca Rooftop; along with a myriad of others.

Among her many solo piano works, her *3/4 Suite* – a collection of piano miniatures – was performed by Anne-Marie McDermott on the Bethel Woods Chamber Music Series and several piano solo works including *Ombres d'été* were performed by [Yoonie Han](#) of the Gloriosa Trio at Symphony Space's piano series and recorded by her for Steinway's Spirio, the world's finest high resolution player piano.

Inspired by her passion for classical piano, which began when she started playing the instrument at age three, Ms. LeFrak launched her career as a composer around the same time she introduced young people to the worlds of music and dance in her first two acclaimed children's books – *Jake the Philharmonic Dog* and *Jake the Ballet Dog*. Her next book, *Best in Show* – in which she shares her passion for raising Standard Poodles and breeding many champions – and her fourth and most recent book, *Sleepover at the Museum* (published by Random House in 2019) received similar high praise. *Sleepover at the Museum* was named a 2020 International Literacy Association CBC [Children's Choice Title](#). Ms. LeFrak has been invited to speak and read at museums, bookstores, and concert halls throughout the United States including the [Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County](#), [Miami's Frost Museum of Science](#), and [New York City's famed public library](#) among many others.

Ms. LeFrak is a member of the President's Council of the [Society of Memorial Sloan-Kettering](#). She previously served on the [New York State Council on the Arts](#) and as President of the [Women's Committee of the Central Park Conservancy](#). She graduated *magna cum laude* from Mt. Holyoke College and received her master's degree in musicology from [Hunter College](#) winning the Dean's Award in Arts and Humanities for her thesis, "In Search of the New Classics," which surveyed the commissioning activity of the New York Philharmonic from 1842-1986. In recognition of outstanding achievement, she was elected to the Hunter College Hall of Fame in 2010 by the college's Alumni Association. She was featured in *Good Housekeeping's* "[10 Amazing Women In The Arts Over 50](#)" in 2017. Ms. LeFrak studied composition privately with Robert DeGaetano, [Jonathan Anderson](#), and [Daniel Boico](#). She is married to Richard LeFrak, president of The LeFrak Organization, one of the world's largest land development and building firms. They currently reside in Manhattan, Southampton, and Miami and have two sons, five grandchildren, and two poodles.