



## Media Announcement

### MTA Adds 24 Musicians and Musical Groups to Music Under New York Program Following Auditions Held Wednesday, June 28



*Forty Finalists Auditioned Following 128 Applications Across All Genres  
For the First Time, the Public Will Be Able to Vote for Its Favorite Performer:  
Voting Begins July 19 for 'Riders' Choice' Award*

*Enabled by WE LOVE NYC and Shutterstock*

[View Photos from This Year's Auditions](#)

[View B-Roll Video from This Year's Auditions](#)

The Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA) today announced that it is adding 24 acts to its Music Under New York program (MTA MUSIC), following auditions held last week.

The auditions were conducted by MTA Arts & Design, which provides visual and performing arts in the MTA network. Forty acts auditioned on Wednesday, June 28, at Grand Central Madison, after 128 had applied for the opportunity. Normally an annual occurrence, the auditions were the first to be held since May 21, 2019, and the 33<sup>rd</sup> to be held since the MTA MUSIC program began in 1987. Musicians were given five minutes to perform live for the public and a panel of judges consisting of musicians, music professionals, and transit representatives. The judges scored the performances based on a slate of criteria of quality, variety, and appropriateness for the transit environment.

The MTA is partnering with WE LOVE NYC and Shutterstock to introduce the "Riders' Choice" award, the first time the public has ever been invited to select their favorite MTA MUSIC performer. Beginning July 19, New Yorkers and beyond can vote on the MTA's

website for their favorite of three finalists from the June 28 audition. The first-ever Riders' Choice winner will be announced on July 27.

"Music Under New York combines two of New York's greatest loves, music and transit," **Governor Kathy Hochul said**. "This program is a model for public arts around the world, and the WE LOVE NYC partnership encourages riders of every background to get involved."

"Public transit is the lifeblood of the region, and the lifeblood of public transit can be found in the unique energy and dynamism that exists nowhere else but the New York transportation system, enhanced by great music," **said MTA Chair and CEO Janno Lieber**.

"The North Star of New York City Transit is better customer service – faster, cleaner, safer service for our riders," **said NYC Transit President Richard Davey**. "A better environment in our stations, which will be made possible by these great musicians selected for the program this year, is a big part of that. Every subway rider remembers a time when a musician stopped them in their tracks and offered a moment of joy, excitement, or calm that great music can bring."

"Music Under New York performers add warmth to the major LIRR and Metro-North hubs in New York City," **said Metro-North Railroad President and LIRR Interim President Catherine Rinaldi**. "It is exciting to know that for the first time in four years we'll be able to hear new musicians in our iconic spaces."

"The auditions are a unique New York experience; a showcase of musical performances that reflect the diversity of New York," **said MTA Arts & Design Director Sandra Bloodworth**. Hosting the Music Under New York auditions for the first time since 2019 was truly memorable – there was a plethora of talent drawn to the opportunity to perform with Music Under New York – in the greatest venue there is and where dreams can flourish."

"The only way to build on the magic of Music Under New York is to invite New Yorkers to get directly involved. We are thrilled to introduce the WE LOVE NYC Riders' Choice award and herald the return of a new cohort of performers," **said Partnership for New York City President and CEO Kathryn Wylde**. "From July 19 on, every Riders' Choice vote will be an act of love for New York City—which is precisely what WE LOVE NYC is encouraging all across the five boroughs."

This year's additions to MTA MUSIC are:

- **Afro Dominicano** – Latin fusion band
- **Augie Bello** – saxophone
- **Brass Queens** - female brass band
- **Petro Drozda aka Good Mood** - accordion
- **Antonio Figueiredo da Silva aka Tony Boka** - jazz guitar
- **Roy Futaba Jazz** – jazz trio

- **Jerald Graham aka FlyBayJay** – R&B singer
- **Rorie Kelly** – vocals, keys, guitar, beatboxing, looping
- **Davide Laura** – violin looping
- **Corcel Magico** – folk rock band
- **Gabriel Mayers** – singer-songwriter
- **Von Middleton** - entertainer
- **Jeremiah Moore aka Jem Bleu** – R&B, pop, singer-songwriter
- **Alejo Portela** -Vallenato accordion
- **Sean Rosenberry** – Irish & folk fiddle
- **Raphael Batista Silva aka Raphael Batista** – violin
- **Edgar Suarez** – salsa & merengue vocalist
- **Subterranean Jazz** – jazz band
- **Triad Brass** – brass band
- **Villagers Brass Band** – brass band
- **Devon Webster aka Maestro Kaiso** - violin
- **Denise Weeks** – gospel & soul singer
- **Samoa Wilson aka Fatboy Wilson** – folk & blues singer
- **Mehmet Akif Yuksel aka Yosoya Kif** - violin

Amid the excitement of the day, Rinaldi kicked off the event with opening remarks. Bob Holman, proprietor of the Bowery Poetry Club and Master of Ceremonies, served as emcee throughout the day and special guest, Cyré, an artist of music and the film-making mediums, joined the many esteemed panel of judges.

The judges and the public were treated to performances during the breaks by existing members of the MTA MUSIC roster that included Eganam Segbefia, a trumpet player; Azusa SHESHE Dance, a gospel/blues singer; and a spontaneous performance by Jonathan Green, baritone, and member of the Opera Collective.

MTA Arts & Design typically adds up to 25 acts each year to the MTA MUSIC roster, which includes more than 350 performers representing a wide variety of musical genres and cultures as diverse as New York City itself. Once accepted, MTA MUSIC performers are hosted at approximately 40 high-traffic locations throughout the transit network, including MTA subway stations and commuter rail terminals, with schedules revised every two weeks. They can be spotted by a bold magenta Music Under New York banner with the name of each act. The program was put on hold in March 2020 with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, and [resumed](#) on June 4, 2021.

Applications for MTA MUSIC open each year in January with a deadline for completed submissions online in March. Finalists are invited to audition before judges, and performers are chosen based on their scores from the auditions. Music Under New York is one of many visual and performing arts programs administered by MTA Arts & Design to enhance the station environment for customers.

MTA MUSIC has [more than 350 performers](#) showcasing classical strings, jazz ensembles, world music bands, folk, a cappella groups, singer-songwriters and more,

featuring a wide range of instruments such as the Gambian kora, Korean drum, West Indian steel drums, Andean pipes, Cajun cello, Celtic and Baroque harps, guitars, violins, hammered dulcimers and musical saws. Performers are programmed at approximately 40 MTA MUSIC locations throughout the transit system, including subway stations and MTA commuter rail terminals and the Staten Island Ferry terminal. MTA Arts & Design presents more than 7,500 musical performances in the transit system every year. The musicians perform in designated locations with a Music Under New York banner that features their name and the Music Under New York logo.

### **About MTA Arts & Design**

MTA Arts & Design encourages the use of public transportation by providing visual and performing arts in the New York metropolitan area. The Percent for Art program is one of the largest and most diverse collections of site-specific public art in the world, with more than 350 commissions by world-famous, mid-career and emerging artists. Arts & Design produces Posters, Digital Art, photographic Lightbox exhibitions, as well as live musical performances in stations through its Music Under New York (MTA MUSIC) program, and the Poetry in Motion program in collaboration with the Poetry Society of America. It serves the millions of people who rely upon MTA subways and commuter trains and strives to create meaningful connections between sites, neighborhoods, and people. To learn more, visit [mta.info/art](http://mta.info/art) or follow on Twitter at [@MTAArtsDesign](https://twitter.com/MTAArtsDesign).

### **About WE LOVE NYC**

WE LOVE NYC is a cross-sector campaign to showcase the city's strengths and mobilize New Yorkers to make sure this remains the greatest city in the world. The citywide campaign celebrates New Yorkers who are making a difference — the “Do-ers” — and features opportunities for civic engagement that everyone can join. No taxpayer dollars were used for this effort, and all New Yorkers are invited to get involved at [welovenyc.nyc](http://welovenyc.nyc).

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