ISABELLA
STEWART GARDNER
MUSEUM

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Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum Presents Holiday Music in the Courtyard 2026

Led by George Steel
Performances by Vox Vocal Ensemble, American Brass Quintet, and Special Guest Salar Nader, Tabla

Featuring a World Premiere by John Zorn



Holiday Music at the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston, available in high resolution here.

Wednesday, December 2, 2026 from 6–9 pm
Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum | Courtyard
25 Evans Way | Boston, MA
Tickets: www.gardnermuseum.org/calendar/holiday-music-courtyard-1

For press tickets, please contact Christina Jensen at christina@jensenartists.com

BOSTON, MA – The **Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum** reimagines the traditional holiday concert with its annual **Holiday Music in the Courtyard** celebration, from **6–9pm on Wednesday, December 2, 2026**. The performance will take place in the Gardner Museum's famed Courtyard,

while guests are invited to watch from the surrounding galleries, strolling through the Museum to take in the music from every angle. (Please note, this is not a seated concert.)

Led by **George Steel**, *Abrams Curator of Music*, this immersive evening will showcase music from across four centuries, celebrating a variety of cultures' winter traditions. The performance features the acclaimed **Vox Vocal Ensemble**, which Steel founded in 1990, and the all-star **American Brass Quintet**—described by *The New York Times* as the most venerable of North American brass ensembles—with additional brass and percussion. The festive event will include opportunities for everyone to sing along in familiar carols, including "O Come, All Ye Faithful," "The First Noel," "God Rest Ye Merry Gentlemen," and "Hark! the Herald Angels Sing."

This year's celebration welcomes special guest **Salar Nader**, the tabla virtuoso recognized as a global ambassador weaving South Asian arts into the musical traditions of his Afghan heritage. A student of Ustad Zakir Hussain from the age of seven, Nader has toured with Stanley Clarke, Kronos Quartet, and Wu Man. Born in Los Angeles, Nader is committed to bringing the tabla to a wide audience. He has appeared on soundtracks including the 2012 film *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* and recently scored the Broadway stage adaptation of Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner*.

The Holiday Music program ranges from Renaissance treasures including **William Byrd**'s motet *Vigilate* and dances from **Michael Praetorius**'s *Terpsichore*, to the traditional carols "Gaudete" and "Tomorrow Shall Be My Dancing Day" (arranged by David Willcocks), **Richard Wayne Dirksen**'s *Chanticleer* in a new arrangement by George Steel, and music by **David Jason Snow**. The evening features the world premiere of *tzur hanevi'im*, a new work by **John Zorn** composed expressly for the 16 singers performing, and closes with Steel's own *The Three Kings*, newly revised for this year's celebration.

The music and sing-along will run from 7–8 pm, and ticket holders can come early at 6 pm or stay late until 9 pm to enjoy the Museum galleries, shop at Gift at the Gardner, or purchase treats from Café G's holiday menu of small plates and cocktails/mocktails.

Visible from virtually any gallery in the Palace, the Courtyard is the heart and soul of the Gardner Museum, with changing horticultural displays throughout the year. In December, the festive garden features dark forest greens and shades of red and silver including masses of flowering jade trees, silver dusty miller, green aloe, and the dark red winter blooms of amaryllis, creating a magical setting for Holiday Music in the Courtyard.

George Steel's music programming for the Museum continues founder and legendary arts patron Isabella Stewart Gardner's vision of bringing together musicians and audiences for inspiring gatherings. Dating to 1927, the Gardner's Weekend Concert Series is the longest running museum music program in the country. Much like Isabella Stewart Gardner did in her time, Steel champions unknown repertoire and embraces new works, creates connections and builds community among musicians, and supports them by presenting them in new endeavors and collaborations. His programming also frequently draws on the history of the Gardner Museum, featuring instruments from the Museum's collection and music by composers who were associated with its founder. In honoring Isabella Stewart Gardner's musical legacy, Music at the Gardner remains strongly committed to broadening the repertoire of music presented to include previously overlooked and marginalized composers as well as performers of all backgrounds.

About the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum

The Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum invites you to escape the ordinary in a magical setting where art and community come together to inspire new ways of envisioning our world. Embodying the fearless legacy of its founder, the Museum offers a singular invitation to explore the past through a contemporary lens, creating meaningful encounters with art and joyful connections for all. Modeled after a Venetian palazzo, unforgettable galleries surround a luminous Courtyard and are home to masters such as Rembrandt, Raphael, Titian, Michelangelo, Whistler, and Sargent. The Renzo Piano Wing provides a platform for contemporary artists, musicians, and scholars and serves as an innovative venue where creativity is celebrated in all of its forms.

Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum • 25 Evans Way, Boston, MA 02115 • Hours: Open Weekends from 10 am to 5 pm, Weekdays from 11 am to 5 pm, and Thursdays until 9 pm. Closed Tuesdays. • General admission: Adults $25; Seniors $22; Students $15; Free Thursdays from 5 – 9 pm and for members, children 17 and under, and everyone named Isabella • Information: 617 566 1401 • Box Office: 617 278 5156 • www.gardnermuseum.org

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