



## THE VIRGIN ISLANDS DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

### Office of Public Relations

1834 Kongens Gade, Charlotte Amalie \* St. Thomas \* U.S. Virgin Islands 00802-6746  
Telephone: 340.774.0100 Ext. 8136 (STT/STJ) 340.773.1095 Ext. 7064 (STX)

### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**February 27, 2025**

**0213-25**

#### **For More Information Contact:**

Shayla S. Solomon

Director, Public Relations & Communications

[shayla.solomon@vide.vi](mailto:shayla.solomon@vide.vi)

[www.vide.vi](http://www.vide.vi) ~ [www.facebook.com/usvi.vide](https://www.facebook.com/usvi.vide)

## **Virgin Islands Department of Education Announces 2025 Artist in Residence Program: Mentoring Through the Music Arts**

The Virgin Islands Department of Education (VIDE) announces the 2025 Artist in Residence Program, a transformative initiative that will provide music education and mentorship to up to 50 public school students in the St. Thomas-St. John School District. This year's theme, "Mentoring Through the Music Arts," emphasizes artistic development, technical training, and performance coaching across multiple musical disciplines.

The five-week program will take place at participating schools in the district, including on St. John: Julius E. Sprauve School and on St. Thomas: Lockhart K-8 School, Bertha C. Boschulte Middle School, Charlotte Amalie High School, and Ivanna Eudora Kean High School

Students will have the rare opportunity to learn from world-class musicians through group and private lessons, sectional training, and repertoire development. The program will culminate in up to two community concerts, showcasing the students' progress and talents.

### **Key Highlights of the Artist in Residence Program**

- Sessions will be held 2- 4 times per week for junior high and high school students.
- Professional development workshops will be available for music educators and band directors.
- The curriculum will focus on fundamentals, solo and ensemble development, and general music workshops.
- The program will run Monday through Friday, with optional Saturday private lessons for dedicated students.

VIDE extends its sincere gratitude to the United Jazz Foundation (UJF) for their unwavering dedication to youth development through music. Led by Founders, Dionne and Nicole Parson and Program Manager, Naysa Lynch, UJF has played a pivotal role in mentoring students and expanding music education across the U.S. Virgin Islands. UJF's commitment to fostering music literacy, cultural heritage, and community-building aligns with VIDE's mission to provide high-quality arts education. Their efforts have ensured that students have access to top-tier instruction, state-of-the-art training, and invaluable performance experiences.

The Department also recognizes and appreciates the world-renowned musicians who have generously dedicated their time and talent to teaching and inspiring our students. Each of these artists brings unparalleled expertise, international acclaim, and a passion for mentorship that will leave a lasting impact on the next generation of musicians in the Virgin Islands.

### **Meet the 2025 Artists in Residence**

This year's program features an exceptional lineup of musicians, composers, and educators who have performed on global stages, collaborated with legendary artists, and dedicated their careers to music education.

- Alejandro Avilés (Saxophonist, Educator, Composer) – Adjunct professor at Hofstra University and Hunter College; graduate of Manhattan School of Music.

- Alphonso Horne (Trumpeter) – Acclaimed by Wynton Marsalis; performer with Marcus Roberts, Rhiannon Giddens, and Rihanna; Broadway musician.
- Anthony Hailey (Percussionist, Educator) – Founder of Mosaic Steel Orchestra; global performer trained by Ellie Mannette.
- Carlton Holmes (Pianist, Composer) – Performer with Lionel Hampton, Freddie Hubbard, and Stevie Wonder; professor at the University of the Virgin Islands.
- Edward Perez (Bassist, Composer) – Co-leader of Terraza Big Band; educator at The New School and Queens College.
- Darryl Jordan (Vocalist, Conductor, Educator) – Director of LaGuardia High School’s Gospel Choir; Grammy-winning Broadway Inspirational Voices member.
- Dion Parson (Drummer, Composer, Educator) – Grammy-winning musician; Chair of the Music Department at the University of the Virgin Islands.
- Elio Villafranca (Pianist, Composer) – Grammy-nominated Steinway Artist; educator at Juilliard and Manhattan School of Music.
- Gerald Cannon (Bassist, Educator) – Performer with Art Blakey, Dexter Gordon, and Roy Hargrove; faculty at Oberlin Conservatory and The New School.
- Henry Cole (Drummer, Educator) – Grammy-winning Puerto Rican musician; faculty at Manhattan School of Music.
- Melvin Jones (Trumpeter, Arranger) – Featured artist at the 2025 Super Bowl LIX pregame show; educator at Morehouse and Spelman College.
- Mikael Darmanie (Pianist, Composer, Conductor) – NYFA Fellow; Ph.D. candidate and educator at SUNY Stony Brook.
- Mike Burton (Saxophonist) – Performer with Mary J. Blige, Jill Scott, and Patti LaBelle; Super Bowl LIX pregame artist.
- Ricky Burkhead (Percussionist, Educator) – Director of Percussion Studies at the University of Mississippi; composer for film and symphonies.
- Rob Harari (Producer, Sound Designer) – Director of Music & Technology at Stevens Institute of Technology; Emmy-winning sound engineer.
- Santi Debriano (Bassist, Composer) – Leader of world music ensemble Circlechant; contributor to jazz education at NYU.
- Tychiko Cox (Vocalist, Educator) – Acclaimed Bahamian opera singer, educator at the New Mexico School for the Arts.

### **VIDE’s Commitment to Music Education**

The Artist in Residence Program continues VIDE’s commitment to enriching student experiences through the arts, providing direct access to world-class mentorship, and nurturing the next generation of musicians. This initiative offers an unparalleled opportunity for students to learn from leading professionals, develop their technical skills, and gain valuable performance experience.

“We are excited to bring back this incredible program and to provide our students with the opportunity to learn from some of the finest musicians in the industry,” said Commissioner Dionne Wells-Hedrington. “The impact of this program goes far beyond music; it instills discipline, creativity, and confidence in our students, equipping them with skills that will benefit them for a lifetime.”

As the 2025 Artist in Residence Program unfolds, we look forward to witnessing the growth and achievements of our talented students. We invite the community to support and celebrate these young musicians at the upcoming culmination concerts, which will highlight the progress and dedication of all participants.