2026 Distinguished Alum Honoree
Diego Miranda

Class of 2012



Diego Miranda, one of the most talented guitarists to come through Arizona School for the Arts, shares that talent with the world not only as a performer, but as an educator. A Performing Artist at Phoenix Conservatory of Music for several years, he and his duo partner and wife, violinist Meghan Ruel, were named Program Managers at the Conservatory in August 2022.

As the son of ASA's longtime Spanish language teacher, Señor Miranda, Diego comes by his passion for education honestly, and perhaps as inevitably as his attendance at ASA as a student. His passion for all facets of the art of performance makes him an ideal collaborator and educator because he can see the whole picture.

We asked Diego about his creative process and how he shares that with his students.

You are most known as a classical guitarist, but your collaborations -- including those with your extremely talented wife, Meghan Ruel -- run the musical gamut from folk to funk, from rock to electronic. What are your creative inspirations?

I love everything about music and I find that creative inspiration comes from all around me, in the most inconspicuous places; food, nature, relationships, objects. Patterns are a way that humans make sense of the universe to find purpose and comfort. I find creative inspiration from the fact that music is an inherently human, primal communication, a deepened sense of meaning, an abstraction that symbolizes our deepest emotions. Our ear is an extremely valuable tool and it gives me inspiration to make sounds that offer others a space for joy, excitement and reflection.

Please tell us about your band, Flat Six Fusion, and what brought you together with these musicians.



The guitar is often a misunderstood instrument. The versatility of the instrument is unmatched and carries deep cultural ties. I am proud to be well versed and passionate about expanding what I can do on the instrument, including playing jazz fusion. Flat Six Fusion is a six piece jazz fusion band that I formed with teaching artists at the Phoenix Conservatory of Music. In addition to fusing a variety of genres, we write original pieces and are obsessed with making intricate and exciting arrangements. Our goal is to have fun, be as unhinged as we like, and make people excited to see us in our element together.

You have an interest, not just in the music, but in how a performer comes across through the visual and sound production as well as the environment in which they perform through stage design. Is there another aspect of performance that you would like to explore further?

Performance is so much fun. There are a million elements that co-exist to make a performance successful. There are so many things that would be exciting to explore but this question always comes back to: Confidence is the only thing that matters after thoughtful preparation. A multi-million dollar production can be ruined by doubt and underpreparation. Sound quality is more important than visual production, but visuals add depth and another layer of abstraction, whether that is creating dissonance or consonance with the intended meaning. Anything is art once called art and you believe in it. You could play a rubberband on a tupperware once an hour in an orange costume and it has meaning, or you could play a 300 year old melody with a metal string on some wood and that has meaning too. Be prepared and be confident.

How did ASA's unique "Arts + Smarts" approach to learning help shape where you are today in life? Was there an "A-ha" moment with a particular teacher or in a particular class?

I will be eternally grateful for the time and experiences that I had at ASA. I have a great sense of self-efficacy in part due the experiences at ASA or adjacent creative experiences I had during my time there. At ASA I was able to play guitar everyday in different ensembles including solo guitar, duos trios and quartets, jazz band, play violin in orchestra, learn to be a proficient vocalist and pianist while improving my aural skills, learn French (which now helps me speak with my wife and understand her cultural background), make deep connections with other students that would provide limitless creative projects: there is no doubt that because of my experiences, I am successfully helping others pursue their dreams and take charge of their passions. There is no other way forward as a community if we do not know

how to express ourselves, believe in our skill sets and trust that there is always a better way. We can solve anything we set our mind to, all it takes is confidence and preparation.



You are now the developer of young musicians through your work with The Leading Tone, the Harmony Project Phoenix, and in your current role as Program Director at Phoenix Conservatory of Music. What advice do you give to ASA students who may want to break into music as a career?

I love helping students with this. There are so many possibilities. This is what I would tell the ASA students that want to break into music as a career: “The key is to not over specialize or over generalize your skill sets. You need to be outstanding at a specific musical task (e.g. playing guitar, songwriting, production) and piggy back those skills with finance, leadership, artistic direction, and technology; a combination of hard skills and soft skills that help you find an opportunity, make as many genuine connections as possible and repeat until you start saying no to work that doesn’t fulfill your goals. Teaching is important; who else is going to teach the next generation? Performing is important; expressing yourself through technical mastery is the starting place.”

You can catch up with Diego and his latest collaborations and gigs through the MEGHANDIEGO website, on LinkedIn, or on Instagram.