

AN ARTIST'S CORNER

featuring

Karen Cubides



Karen Cubides is the passionate and engaging founder and CEO of the Karen Cubides Agency based in Nashville, Tennessee. Her holistic approach to coaching her clients allows her to serve a wide range of well-established musicians and young professionals alike in unique and personal ways. Through her intimate understanding of the relationship between personal growth and professional achievement, Karen builds up the individual, the artist, and the professional within each of her clients as they master goal setting, lifestyle balance, and the nuances of our evolving industry. Her commitment, care, and creativity have connected her with incredible individuals and organizations across the world.

Karen founded her agency early in her career out of her empathy for the people she worked with and admired. She firmly believes that musicians do not have to choose between promising careers and fulfilling personal lives. Her compassion has driven her time and again to better herself and her agency to bring out the best in each of her clients, both personally and professionally. By understanding and assessing the whole individual and not the

performer exclusively, her clients continue to thrive in their creative passions and in their personal relationships. Karen has had the privilege of working with musicians of all backgrounds, from bird land to Broadway and from the Philharmonic to the Blair School of Music.

As CEO of KCA and as an avid educator, Karen is a frequent lecturer on arts marketing and branding, appearing at the New England Conservatory, the Colburn School, the Curtis Institute of Music, Vanderbilt University, and Boston Conservatory, among other institutions. One of her greatest passions is serving young professionals as they navigate the tumultuous transition from student musician to professional artist. Karen created the Emerging Artists Program within KCA to meet this end. Her unique program allows these musicians to access mentorship, resources, and a thriving community of like-minded creatives at a fraction of the price. As such, the transition is much more tangible and attainable, and these young professionals can easily tap into the guidance they need.

Karen is also the founder and host of *The Musician's Guide to being Healthy, Wealthy, and Wise*. This podcast interviews cutting-edge, deeply personal, and wonderfully insightful professionals in the music world and serves as a platform and resource for musicians of all levels. Featured guests on the podcast include Jennifer Wharton, Christian Griego, Jeremy Wilson, Demondrae Thurman, Roxy Coss, and more.

Karen resides in Nashville, Tennessee with her brilliant husband Nick Laufer, Killebrew Coffee, and their rescue dogs, Aldo and Reina.

Karen's website: www.karencubides.com

How old were you when you began playing your instrument? Did you start playing another instrument before your current one?

I was in the 5th grade on piano and then I got into woodwinds and choir.

What equipment do you primarily use?

I play on a Custom Z Yamaha with no idea what my mouthpiece is because I was never a gearhead.

What are some of your favorite highlights of your career?

Having the privilege of working with the Boston Symphony.
Being executive director of the Bach Beethoven and Brahms chamber orchestra in my super early 20s
Starting my Company and developing the Emerging Artist Program
Co-hosting the Body Mind Spirit with Jeremy Wilson

What are some of your favorite and most influential albums that you have heard?

The latest Aries Quartet album

What are some of your favorite solos written for another instrument?

I love anything Bach. Especially the cello suites.

How have your practice habits changed from when you were a beginner until now?

I have way more fun now.

What qualities do you think are important for being successful in life?

Discipline = freedom is the motto I use. Also pursuing balance and harmony with yourself.

What do you want your legacy to be?

Love this question! I want every musician in the world to know that they matter and that they are enough. I want Emerging Artists to stop asking for permission to create and innovate. That all of our value comes from who we are NOT what we do.

How do you stay motivated? Do you have any tips to help stay motivated?

I always have a mentor/ coach/ therapist as a fundamental part of my team. Also getting good sleep helps with clarity of mind.

Who are some of your musical heroes?

My musical heroes are the people out there that put their money where their mouth is. The ones that are brave and courageous and are innovating and disrupting the status quo. Educators like Oscar Diaz and Martin McCain, Innovators like Sarah Hatler (mymutebag) and Nikki Abissi (extendabone), Creative directors like Jen Hinkle (Calliope Brass) who has learned animation and art because she loves

it and wants to help others. My husband/ touring musician/ educator Nick Laufer for showing up for others and being generous with his time and spirit. He has this gift of making people feel loved and valued and I am so blessed to be in the space of someone like him daily. Of course Jeremy Wilson for doing it all and for being so open to growing and doing whatever it takes to help and serve others.

Do you remember when you decided that you were going to be a professional musician?

I had known since I was in 6th grade that I wanted to play music BUT it was 2007 I was at my first Interlochen arts academy camp (before attending the high school) and I was sitting in the audience with my best friend Brian Garcia and the top student orchestra played Mahler 2. I had never heard an orchestra like that nor had I heard Mahler and I just remember sitting still holding my breath and crying for all 90 minutes. Definitely a God moment where I decided I need to be in the space of humans that can do that so we can share it with the world.

Do you have a website? If so, what is the address?

www.karencubides.com

If you could go back in time and give yourself any advice, what would it be?

To make my health a priority. That my worth and value did not come from how well I played or where I placed in my audition but who I was as a person and human being.

What is your favorite place that you have traveled to?

Colorado. I loved the mountains the air and seeing how little I am in comparison to the world and all that is out there.

Who are your main influences in your life (not just music!)?

Brene Brown everything she says and writes speak to me.

How do you suggest balancing life with music?

I think it's more of developing boundaries because balance is not a thing in my experience. So just having clarity on what the intention is with whatever you're doing and making sure your identity is not wrapped up in your music making.

Please give some tips for freelancing.

Marketing and Branding. People need to know what you have to offer and how to get a hold of you. Also your playing is not the main factor, I would asses communication style and personality.

What are your feelings about students majoring in music education versus music performance?

Trust your gut. Whatever brings you joy do that. Your body knows what's best for you don't over think it.

Is anyone else in your family a musician?

No but my dad is a music lover. He has an extensive collection of music from Latin America and I learned the folklore of pretty much any country in South America by the time I was 10.

What are some of your favorite places that you have performed?

Interlochen for sure!

What are you most proud of in your life?

I'm proud of starting my own agency and just going for it.

Where do you see yourself in 10 years?

Healed body and having reached many more creatives.

What are your favorite things to do that make you happy?

Sleep, quality with my family, Kendra Scott Jewelry, coffeeshops, collaborating on projects with my team, road trips with my husband.

What advice would you give to someone interested in majoring in music in college?

Your health needs to be your #1 priority.

Do you have any tips for preparing for auditions?

In the absence of data your mind makes up stories. It is imperative to have data in order to win a job. Practice journal and mock auditions are the key. Also we have selective memory so right after an audition make sure you take the time to write down everything that happened so you have a marker for what to do next.

Do you ever get anxious for a performance? What advice would you give for dealing with nerves?

I used to when I had big presentations. What I do is I say to myself "it's not about you Karen, how can you serve these people in front of you. Make it about being the vessel of information for them" I then get excited for the opportunity.

What advice can you give about mental wellness?

Mental health is the infrastructure of your product. Without it you have nothing.

Do you like to read? What are you currently reading?

Love to learn and reading is a way to do it. I'm currently reading The Ride of A Lifetime by Bob Iger (CEO of Disney)

If you couldn't have a career in music, what would you do instead?

Brain Surgeon

Who are your favorite composers?

Mahler, Bach, Beethoven

How could we make music education better?

Healthy teachers= healthy students

Do you like to teach? Why or why not?

I love teaching. I'm obsessed with the process and I'm so honored that I get to be a part of that with my clients.

What are some of your favorite books that are helpful for musicians?

Chopwood Carry Water by Joshua Medcalf

Do you have any tips on forming a chamber group?

Get organized and make sure everyone is a contributing member of the organization.

What advice can you share about physical wellness?

As musicians we forget that part of what we do is extraordinarily physical. Therefore being strong and feeling healthy is very high on the priority list.

What is your favorite food?

Anything my mom cooks. Colombian food.