

Clarice Assad

“she energetically bends music to her will and reshapes it with fascinating results.”
– Jazz Improv Magazine

2026 Full Biography

A powerful communicator renowned for her musical scope and versatility, Brazilian-American Clarice Assad is a significant artistic voice in the classical, world music, pop, and jazz genres. The Grammy Award–nominated composer, celebrated pianist, inventive vocalist, and educator is acclaimed for her evocative colors, rich textures, and diverse stylistic range. Born in Rio de Janeiro, fluent in five languages, and based in Chicago, the polyglot musician continues to attract new audiences both onstage and off—her talent sought-after by artists and organizations worldwide.

What motivates Assad? What drives her passion and creativity? Writing and playing music that inspires and encourages audiences’ imaginations to break free of often self-imposed constraints is just the beginning. She endeavors to harness the incredible and intangible power of music to connect people and transform lives through original works, commissions, and education programs that give voice to everything from the impact of climate change on the natural world to issues of social justice, gender equity, and the empowerment of young voices.

Assad’s recent accolades reflect her growing stature as one of the defining voices in American contemporary music. In February 2026, the American Academy of Arts and Letters awarded her the **Andrew Imbrie Award in Music**, recognizing a mid-career composer of demonstrated artistic merit. The previous year, she was named a recipient of the **2025 Meier Achievement Award** by the Helen Coburn Meier and Tim Meier Charitable Foundation for the Arts, which honors Chicago-area artists who push the artistic envelope for their talent, persistence, and community involvement. Also in February 2026, Assad delivered the **Kageyama-Hunt Global Speaker Series** address at Belmont Hill School—a distinguished lecture series dedicated to global citizenship. In March 2026, her new string quartet work *NEXUS* received its New York premiere at Carnegie Hall’s Zankel Hall, performed by the Takács Quartet. Praised by the *New York Classical Review* and featured in *The Strad* under the headline “Let’s Clarice It Up,” the work guides four players through a dramatic arc of individuality, collision, and dissolution—asking, through music and choreography, what it truly means to play as one.

Assad engages audiences directly, inviting them to become active participants in the music. Her 2019 work *É Gol!*, inspired by legendary Brazilian soccer player Marta Vieira da Silva, is scored for full orchestra and features audiences singing, performing body percussion, and making sound effects. This work continues her explorations with expanding the sonic palette of the voice, both acoustically and through electronic means. Classical Voice North America praised her, saying, “In other hands, the electronically altered sounds might be dismissed as a gimmick, but Assad is like one of those cooks who can turn any four random foodstuffs into a feast.”

She takes this immersive experience outside of the concert hall with VOXploration, which she created in 2015. The award-winning education program offers a creative, fun, and accessible approach to music education through meaningful, interactive experiences. In an era where digital interaction is part of daily routine, the program encourages participants to use their bodies and

voices as musical instruments in spontaneous music creation, songwriting, and improvisation. Carefully curated to work equally well with participants of any age or musical background, it has been presented around the world—at institutions including the Juilliard School, the Royal Conservatory of Brussels, and the University of Michigan—and has received grants and awards from Brazilian foundations such as CAIXA CULTURAL and SESC, as well as American organizations New Music USA and the McKnight Foundation. Assad has also extended this work into her VOXploration podcast, a series of interviews with extraordinary singers from around the world exploring beatbox, freestyle hip hop, jazz, art song, maqam, South Carnatic music, and beyond.

Assad currently holds prestigious positions as Composer-Educator in Residence with the Allentown Symphony Orchestra (2023–2027) and the Albany Symphony (2024–27), and recently concluded a residency with the University of Maryland. She has previously served as composer-in-residence for the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra’s Sandbox program, MIT, KMFA, the Cabrillo Festival of Contemporary Music, the New Century Chamber Orchestra, and the Boston Landmarks Orchestra.

With more than 130 works to her credit, Assad’s commissions span the most prominent institutions in contemporary music, including Carnegie Hall, the Philadelphia Orchestra, the LA Philharmonic, the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center, ROCO, the Grand Teton Music Festival, and the Takács String Quartet, among many others. Her recent commissions demonstrate both versatility and a commitment to pushing musical boundaries: *The Evolution of AI* (2024), co-commissioned by the American Composers Orchestra and Chicago Sinfonietta; *Terra* (2024) for the Philadelphia Orchestra; and *NEXUS* (2025) for the Takács String Quartet. Her works are published in France (Editions Lemoine), Germany (Trekkel), Brazil (Criadores do Brasil), and in the U.S. by Virtual Artists Collective Publishing (VACP), a company she co-founded with poet and philosopher Steve Schroeder.

Her music has been recorded by some of the most prominent names in classical music, including cellist Yo-Yo Ma, percussionist Dame Evelyn Glennie, and violinists Nadja Salerno-Sonnenberg, Philippe Quint, Tessa Lark, and Pekka Kuusisto. Assad has released seven solo albums and appeared on or had her works performed on another 34, with her music represented on Cedille Records, SONY Masterworks, Nonesuch, Adventure Music, Telarc, and CHANDOS. Her album *Archetypes*—recorded with her father, guitarist Sérgio Assad, and Third Coast Percussion—earned two Grammy nominations in 2022 for Best Chamber Music/Small Ensemble Performance and Best Contemporary Classical Composition. Her recent discography also includes *Window to the World: A Tribute to Milton Nascimento* (Vectordisc Records, 2022), *Soul of Brazil* (Avie Records, 2023), and *The Book of Spells* (Navona Records, 2024).

As a performer, Assad has shared the stage with Bobby McFerrin, Anat Cohen, Nadia Sirota, Paquito D’Rivera, Tom Harrell, Marilyn Mazur, and Mike Marshall, among other outstanding musicians. She has appeared at internationally renowned venues and festivals including The Netherlands’ Concertgebouw, Carnegie Hall, Belgium’s Le Palais des Beaux-Arts, Le Casino de Paris, Jazz at Lincoln Center, and the Caramoor International Jazz Festival. Assad’s music has been performed by the Philadelphia Orchestra, Tokyo Symphony, Queensland Symphony, and the Orquestra Sinfônica de São Paulo, among others.

Born in Rio de Janeiro, Clarice Assad has lived in Brazil, France, and the United States, and is fluent in Portuguese, French, and English—singing in all three languages as well as Spanish and Italian. One of the most widely performed Brazilian concert music composers of her generation, she holds a Bachelor of Music from Roosevelt University in Chicago and a Master of Music from the University of Michigan, where she studied with Michael Daugherty, Susan Botti, and Evan Chambers.