



A program of Carnegie Hall, The Juilliard School, and the Weill Music Institute  
in partnership with the New York City Department of Education

## Visa Information for International Applicants

International applicants should be aware of the following information and procedures for obtaining a visa for participation in Ensemble Connect prior to your audition. Please make sure to read the following information thoroughly.

### Before the Audition

International applicants who are not currently residing in the US will need to obtain a B-2 visa at the United States Embassy and Consulate in their country of residence for the purpose of participating in auditions held in the US. Please make sure to have the term *prospective student* annotated on the visa. Nationals from countries under the Visa Waiver Program are not required to have a B-2 visa to enter the US.

### Upon Admission

Most international Ensemble Connect Fellows will be required to apply for an O-1 visa upon acceptance. To qualify for an O-1 visa, applicants must be able to prove that they have extraordinary ability or achievement in their instrument. This can be a very difficult visa to obtain, and you will need to gather many documents to demonstrate extraordinary ability by sustained national or international acclaim.

International applicants who are currently in the US and are engaged in post-completion Optional Practical Training (OPT) or who plan to apply for OPT upon graduation from their current school are eligible for admission in the program on their current or future OPT F-1 status. **Please note that OPT is valid for only one calendar year.** In order to continue in Ensemble Connect for the second year, you will need to obtain an O-1 visa.

Ensemble Connect Fellows receive a stipend for the duration of the program. Actually receiving the funds is contingent upon successfully applying for a US Social Security Number (SSN). Fellows can apply for the SSN and card 10 days after their arrival in the US or 10 days after the official start date on the O-1 visa, whichever occurs first. After submitting the application, it usually takes 1–2 weeks to receive a SSN and card. Unless your country has a tax treaty with the US, you will have to pay federal income tax, which will be deducted from your stipend check. You will also have to file a US federal tax return.

## **Obtaining an O-1 Visa**

Carnegie Hall agrees to be the US petitioner on behalf of any international Ensemble Connect fellow who requires an O-1 visa. In order to ensure a timely procurement, the fellow will be notified of what materials will be required as early as one year prior to the start date of the visa. This will allow time for the fellow to ask any questions and organize, gather, and submit his or her materials to the designated Carnegie Hall employee who will prepare and submit the petition. These materials include but are not limited to: a copy of the fellow's passport, concert programs, concert reviews, contracts and agreements for upcoming engagements in the US, and letters of recommendation. (Please note that if an O-1 visa is required in the first year, the timeline will be quite short and the fellow will be expected to assemble the necessary materials quite quickly.)

## **O-1 Visa Approval Timeline**

Once the petition is ready for submission (ideally 4–5 months prior to the requested start date of the visa), it will go through two levels of approval. First, a draft of the petition will be submitted to the appropriate labor union for consultation and approval. Once this consultation and approval is obtained, the petition will move to the second level of approval. A designated Carnegie Hall employee will prepare the final petition for submission to the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). Once USCIS receives the petition, it will have 15 calendar days to make a final decision due to Carnegie Hall's use of the premium processing service. The decision of USCIS and appropriate accompanying documentation will be relayed to the fellow immediately.

## **U.S. Embassy Interview**

Once USCIS has approved the O-1 visa petition, the fellow is responsible for scheduling an interview at a United States Embassy and Consulate in order to receive the visa within his or her passport. The fellow is also responsible for any costs incurred at a United States Embassy and Consulate for the interview.

## **O-1 Visa Costs**

Carnegie Hall will cover all filing fees including required union consultation fee, USCIS filing fee, USCIS premium processing fee, and mailing costs. The fellow is responsible for any costs incurred at a United States Embassy and Consulate.