CLEVELAND INSTITUTE OF MUSIC

2026-27 SEASON

CONCERT SERIES













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CLEVELAND INSTITUTE OF MUSIC

CIM OPERA THEATER

Friday, November 6, 2026 at 7:30pm
Sunday, November 8, 2026 at 3pm
Kulas Hall

Florencia en el Amazonas

by Daniel Catán (1949–2011)
Libretto by Marcela Fuentes-Berain
Sung in Spanish with English supertitles

Alison Moritz, stage director
Kulas Foundation Visiting Artist
Harry Davidson, conductor

CIM Opera Theater is supported by a grant from the John P. Murphy Foundation and a generous gift from Michael Frank and the late Pat Snyder.

Cast

Florencia: Zara Renae Smith+, Hanyue Zhang*
Rosalba: Nyla Parker+, Jade Rojas*
Paula: Chenyi Huang*, Morgan Potts+
Riolobo: Davis Fischer+, Hyeondo Park*
Arcadio: Jingdian Zhou, (Tao Zhang, cover)
Alvaro: Colin DeMatteo, (Brian Keith Johnson, singing cover)
Capitán: Kwangkeun (Daniel) Oh

Chorus

Soprano: Amelia Carson, Jordan Fowler, Jingjing Ma, Yue Ma, Angel Martinez
Alto: Jessica Dugatkin, Cecelia Morrison, Abigail Tidlow-Tranel, Matilda Xu, Xuge Zhao
Tenor: Landen Kessler, Zhengheng Wu, Jianyu Yang, Tao Zhang
Bass: Gordon Beck, Gregory Karulin, Weizheng Ma, Lev Pravskii, Drew Russell

+ Performing on November 6 | * Performing on November 8

FROM THE DIRECTOR OF OPERA THEATER

Welcome!

It is a tremendous pleasure to welcome you to the 2026–27 season of CIM Opera Theater, and a particular joy for me in my first season as Director of Opera Theater.

When we began imagining this season, I wanted it to reflect something essential about opera: its extraordinary capacity for reinvention. Opera asks us to look backward and forward at the same time, engaging with centuries of tradition while discovering new ways of telling stories. That spirit of curiosity and adventure is at the heart of our season.

Our journey takes us from the lush, magical world of Daniel Catán's *Florencia en el Amazonas*, to the psychological intensity of Jonathan Sheffer's *Blood on the Dining Room Floor*, to micro-operas newly created by CIM student composers, and finally to Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte*. These works could hardly be more different, and together they ask our students to stretch themselves as singers, musicians, actors, and artists.

A priority for me is to bring outstanding professional artists to CIM, giving our students direct access to the expectations and working methods they will encounter in their careers. We are thrilled to begin with acclaimed stage director Alison Moritz leading *Florencia*, and throughout the year our students will collaborate with an exceptional roster of guest artists. These relationships bridge conservatory training and the profession, preparing our students to honor the traditions of opera while helping to shape what opera can become.

I am enormously excited about the future of Opera Theater at CIM: expanding our repertoire, deepening professional connections, creating new collaborations, and giving our students opportunities that challenge and inspire them. Above all, I want this to be a place where young artists take risks, discover what makes their voices unique, and realize their full potential.

Your presence and support are an essential part of our students' journey. Thank you for joining us, for believing in these remarkable young artists, and for sharing in the adventure of this new season.

François Germain
Director of Opera Theater

SYNOPSIS

Act I

In the early 20th century, passengers board the riverboat *El Dorado* for a journey down the Amazon to Manaus, where celebrated soprano Florencia Grimaldi is to perform at the city's opera house. Florencia herself is among the travelers, her identity concealed. After years abroad, she has returned not only to sing, but in hopes of finding Cristóbal, the butterfly hunter she once loved and left to pursue her career.

Among the passengers are Rosalba, a young journalist writing Florencia's biography; the long-married Paula and Álvaro, whose relationship has grown bitter and distant; and the captain's nephew, Arcadio. Rosalba and Arcadio are quickly drawn to one another, while Paula and Álvaro's tensions deepen.

As the boat ventures farther into the Amazon, a violent storm overtakes the *El Dorado*. Álvaro is swept overboard, suddenly transforming the lives of those aboard. Throughout the journey, the enigmatic Riolobo, part man and part spirit, moves between the human and natural worlds, presiding over the mysterious forces of the river.

Act II

After the storm, Paula mourns Álvaro and realizes how deeply she still loves him. When he is miraculously returned to the ship, the couple is given an unexpected chance to rediscover the love they thought lost.

Meanwhile, Rosalba's growing relationship with Arcadio forces her to confront the conflict between love and independence—the same choice that shaped Florencia's life. When Rosalba dismisses Florencia's decision to sacrifice love for her art, Florencia reveals her true identity.

As the *El Dorado* reaches Manaus, the travelers discover that the opera house has been closed because of a cholera outbreak, and Florencia's hopes of finding Cristóbal seem lost. Yet the journey has changed her. Surrounded by the transformative power of the Amazon, Florencia surrenders to the enduring force of love, undergoing a mysterious metamorphosis that unites the human and natural worlds.

PRODUCTION STAFF

Stage Director … Alison Moritz
Set Designer … Dave Brooks
Scenic Construction … Hughie's Event Production Services
Shop Foreman … Shawn Holland
Carpenters … Paige Dumdie, Colin Fesz, Tyler Horstman,
Bradley Walland, & Shawn Winfrey
Scenic Charge Painter … Cait Jones
Painters … Jenny Holland & Shawn Holland
Lighting Designer … Brandon Washington
Costume Designer … Esther Haberlen
Stitcher … Cheyenne Smith
Design Assistant & Costume Crafts … Hannah Sim
Wardrobe & Hair Supervisor … Kimberley Gapinski
Production Manager … Dusten Welch
Stage Manager … Jessica Hartley
Assistant Stage Manager … Calysta Tamara Jacobs
Language Coach … Ana Paola Vergara
Supertitles Creator … Ana Paola Vergara
Supertitles Operators … Ana Paola Vergara & Emilie Williams
Chorus Master … John Simmons
Vocal Coaches … François Germain & John Simmons

Thank you to Great Lakes Theater for costume and prop rentals.

CIM OPERA THEATER

Director of Opera Theater and Vocal Coach … François Germain
Music Director and Conductor … Harry Davidson
Chorus Master and Vocal Coach … John Simmons
Production Manager … Dusten Welch
Opera Assistant … Morgan Potts

CONSERVATORY VOICE FACULTY

Mary Schiller, Head, Voice Performance
Clifford Billions
Dina Kuznetsova
Cynthia Skelley-Wohlschlager

CIM ORCHESTRA

FIRST VIOLIN

Max Ball, concertmaster
Portland, OR

Hsin-Yu Lin, assistant concertmaster
Kaohsiung City, Taiwan

Anna Stout
Warsaw, IN

Evita Harryson Fiorentino
Brescia, Italy

Harry Li
Oslo, Norway

SECOND VIOLIN

Roni Oved, principal
Be'er Sheva, Israel

Bangjun Xia, assistant principal
Astoria, NY

Peirong Lin
Hangzhou, China

VIOLA

David Lawrence, principal
Salt Lake City, UT

Charlotte, Lohmann, assistant principal
Cleveland, OH

Ian Hall
Columbia, SC

CELLO

Cecelia McVicker, principal
Centerburg, OH

Megan Kamysz, assistant principal
Fruitport, MI

Sean Waite
Tempe, AZ

DOUBLE BASS

John Foley, principal
West Chester, PA

Brennen Taggart, assistant principal
Lexington, KY

FLUTE

Madelyn Zoller, principal
Hamilton, OH

Hana Flood
Glasgow, Scotland

PICCOLO

Hana Flood
Glasgow, Scotland

OBOE

Gavin Joyner, principal
Cumming, GA

Pin-Ying Chen
Kaohsiung, Taiwan

CLARINET

Jisu Kang, principal
Frisco, TX

Victor Velez
Commerce, TX

BASS CLARINET

Justin Wisner
Grand Rapids, MI

BASSOON

Lucas Black, principal
Auburn, GA

Kathy Stockmaster
Mentor, OH

CONTRABASSOON

Kathy Stockmaster
Mentor, OH

HORN

Louis Roy, principal
Amherst, NY

Elena Daniel
Fairport, NY

Joey Joyce
Kensington, MD

Elena Miller
Orland Park, IL

TRUMPET

Enzo Barrett, principal
Cleveland, OH

Matt Ranieri-Morris
Lansing, MI

TROMBONE

Vidyuth Guruvayurappan, principal
Pleasanton, CA

Chenwen Zhang
Cleveland, OH

TUBA

Dylan Arner
Vandergrift, PA

HARP

Liza Viers
Murfreesboro, TN

KEYBOARD

Andrew Maskoff
Westport, CT

TIMPANI

Mitchell Beckmann
Wildwood, MO

PERCUSSION

Daniel Kinney
Evanston, IL

Hwanee Pak
Columbia, MD

Ruben Shonik
Sea Cliff, NY

Jay Walton
East Lansing, MI

ABOUT THE DIRECTOR

American stage director **Alison Moritz** (stage director), praised for her "raw, funny, surreal, and disarmingly human" directing style (*New York Observer*), brings theatrical imagination and incisive storytelling to the stage. With more than 15 years of experience in opera, theater, and classical music, Moritz has mounted original productions across the United States, including at Washington National Opera, Opera Philadelphia, Glimmerglass Festival, Opera Omaha, Austin Opera, and Cincinnati Opera. Her fresh interpretations of operatic classics have also appeared in new productions at Wolf Trap Opera, Ravinia Festival, Tanglewood, Bard Music Festival, and Lyric Opera of Kansas City. She previously served as the artistic director of Central City Opera.

Moritz also brings her industry experience and artistic vision to the development of emerging artists. She previously served as interim managing artistic director of opera at Peabody Conservatory and has guest directed and taught acting at many graduate voice and opera programs, including Juilliard, Bard Conservatory, UCLA, and Rice University. She has served on the acting faculty and directing staff at Santa Fe Opera, Seattle Opera, and Opera Theatre of Saint Louis.

Moritz's deft world-building has made her a sought-after collaborator in new work development. She has directed world premieres, American premieres, and workshops at Washington National Opera, Glimmerglass, Experiments in Opera (NYC), Opera Philadelphia, Portland Opera, and Tulsa Opera. Her interdisciplinary projects include two feature-length operas on film, live performances in virtual reality, and 10 episodes of television produced for ALL ARTS.

Moritz received her education at Washington University in St. Louis (B.A. in music history and art history) and Eastman School of Music (M.M. in stage direction, cert. arts leadership), and was a resident young artist at Minnesota Opera.

ABOUT THE CONDUCTOR

Harry Davidson (conductor and music director, CIM Opera Theater) is in his 21st season as music director and conductor of CIM Opera Theater with this production. Since the spring of 2006, he has conducted over 150 performances of more than 35 operas. In addition, Davidson supervised and conducted the score of a film of Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas* and a livestream video trilogy of operas based on Shakespeare plays. He is in his 28th year as music director and conductor of the Duke Symphony Orchestra and professor of the practice of music at Duke University.

In July 2000, he made his major orchestra conducting debut, leading the National Symphony Orchestra in concert at the Kennedy Center in Washington, DC. Davidson has guest conducted orchestras in Austria, Finland, and the US, including the Charlotte and Akron symphonies, as well as the symphony and chamber orchestras of the Oberlin College Conservatory of Music, where he has held residencies on two occasions. He has held the positions of associate conductor of the Wichita Symphony Orchestra, professor of music and director of orchestras at Wichita State University, conductor of the Cleveland Orchestra Youth Orchestra, and associate professor of music at the University of Akron. In the past, he has served as a cover conductor for the North Carolina Symphony and The Cleveland Orchestra.

Davidson was a finalist in the Detroit Symphony's Antal Dorati Conducting Competition and the Hans Swarowsky Conducting Competition in Vienna.

ABOUT THE PERFORMERS

Gordon Beck (baritone) is a first-year Bachelor of Music student at CIM, studying with Cynthia Skelley-Wohlschlager. *Florencia en el Amazonas* marks Beck's opera debut, however, he has a background in musical theater at the Goodspeed Opera House along with multiple local theaters.

Amelia Carson (soprano) is a senior at CIM, studying with Mary Schiller. Her credits include Broadway productions of *Wicked*, *Annie*, *Kinky Boots*, and *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*. She placed second in NATS and Schmidt competitions in high school and recently debuted in Berlin as Taumännchen in *Hänsel und Gretel* with Berlin Opera Academy.

Colin DeMatteo (baritone), from New York City, is a fourth-year undergraduate student at CIM currently pursuing a Bachelor of Music under the tutelage of Dina Kuznetsova. He has performed with CIM Opera Theater and Delphic Forge Inc. His previous roles include Maestro Spinelloccio/Il Notaio (*Gianni Schicchi*), Marco (*Gianni Schicchi*), Siroco (*L'étoile*), and Dr. Falke (*Die Fledermaus*). DeMatteo is also a frequent guest performer with M.U.S.i.C.'s Stars in the Classics concert series, where he performs both classical and musical theater repertoire.

Jessica Dugatkin (mezzo-soprano) hails from New Paltz, New York, and is currently a first-year Master of Music student at CIM, studying with Mary Schiller. Most recently, she performed the role of Cherubino in *Le Nozze di Figaro* (Musica Proibita Management Summer Opera Program). Additional stage credits include Hansel in *Hansel and Gretel*, Old Woman/Moon in González Medina's *How Nanita Learned to Make Flan*, La Maestra delle Novizie in *Suor Angelica*, and Valletto in *L'incoronazione di Poppea*. She completed her Bachelor of Music in vocal performance at Binghamton University.

Davis Fischer (baritone), from Filer, Idaho, is a postgraduate student at CIM studying under Clifford Billions. Currently pursuing a Graduate Diploma in vocal performance, he has recently appeared as Leporello in Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, the Father in Humperdinck's *Hänsel und Gretel*, and as the title roles in Puccini's *Gianni Schicchi* and Judith

Weir's *Blonde Eckbert* with CIM. Fischer is currently a Shari Bierman Fellow with the Cleveland Orchestra Chorus for their 2026-27 season.

Jordan Fowler (soprano) is a second-year Bachelor of Music student studying with Dina Kuznetsova. Fowler has performed in the chorus of *Suor Angelica* and *Hänsel und Gretel* (CIM), and in opera scenes as the Countess in *Le Nozze di Figaro* and Dorabella in *Così fan tutte* (AAMS). Fowler was part of the AAMS Emerging Artist program, performing at the Kennedy Center and in Todi, Italy. She is a former member of the Mendelssohn Choir of Pittsburgh and has won first place in both district and regional rounds of the National Association of Teachers of Singing Competition (NATS).

Chenyi Huang (mezzo-soprano) is a fourth-year undergraduate student at CIM, studying with Dina Kuznetsova. She previously attended the Music School Affiliated to Zhejiang Conservatory of Music. Her opera credits include Rinaldo in *Rinaldo*, Maestra in *Suor Angelica*, and chorus in *Die Fledermaus*, *L'Étoile*, *Don Giovanni*, and *Hänsel und Gretel*.

Brian Keith Johnson (baritone) has appeared in operatic and musical theater roles nationwide, from Figaro in *Il barbiere di Siviglia* to Ford in *Falstaff*, and from Jim in *Big River* to Father/God in *Children of Eden*. His concert repertoire includes *Carmina Burana*, *Elijah*, the Verdi and Brahms requiems, Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, and more. He has performed with The Cleveland Orchestra, Akron and Canton symphony orchestras, Cleveland Opera, Opera Western Reserve, and Opera Theatre of Pittsburgh. A graduate of The University of Akron, he also studied at the New Opera Academy of Rome and AIMS in Graz, Austria. Recent highlights include *Sweeney Todd*, *Ragtime*, and *Highway 21*. Brian and his wife Susan recently retired from the Akron Public Schools after 67 combined years of teaching, and he remains an avid motorcyclist.

Gregory Karulin (baritone) is a senior at Solon High School and a CIM Academy student, studying with Dina Kuznetsova. He has attended the Interlochen Arts Camp, where he sang in opera scenes in the roles of Don Giovanni in *Don Giovanni*, Papageno in *Die Zauberflöte*, and Count Almaviva in *Le Nozze di Figaro*. Karulin is also a member of the Cleveland Orchestra Youth Chorus and has had a number of choral performances with The Cleveland Orchestra.

Landen Kessler (tenor) is a first-year Bachelor of Music student in vocal performance at CIM, studying with Clifford Billions. His performance credits include Odysseus in *The Odyssey* (NYOA) and Joe in *The Lovesick Skunk* (SFO). Kessler is a former member of the Santa Fe Opera Young Voices and has performed as a soloist with the Santa Fe Symphony Chorus. His honors include recognition from Schmidt Vocal Arts (2026) and CS Music (2025).

Jingjing Ma (soprano) is a second-year Master of Music student at CIM, studying with Mary Schiller. Her awards include third prize in the 2022 Korea-China Art Song Finals and second prize at the 2024 7th National College Arts Performance. Her CIM opera credits include La Maestra delle novizie in *Suor Angelica* and chorus in *Hänsel und Gretel* and *Florencia en el Amazonas*.

Weizheng Ma (bass) is a senior undergraduate student at CIM, where he studies voice with Clifford Billions. He has performed in the opera choruses of *Die Fledermaus* and *Don Giovanni* at CIM.

Yue Ma (soprano) is a first-year Master of Music student at CIM, studying with Mary Schiller. In May 2024, she participated in the CS Music Vocal Competition and Convention in Washington, DC. In August 2024, she performed the role of Ines in *Il trovatore* in Orvieto, Italy. Selected honors include first prize in the Vocal Section, Category B, at the 14th AMIGDALA International Music Competition and the Outstanding Singer Award in the Classical Vocal, University Division, at the 22nd American Classical Musician International Music Competition.

Angel Martinez (soprano) is a first-year Bachelor of Music student at CIM, studying with Dina Kuznetsova. She performed Mary Turner in *Of Thee I Sing* and the soprano solo in Brahms' *Ein deutsches Requiem*. Her additional credits include LaGuardia High School's Senior Chorus and Operetta ensembles and she was a finalist for the Schmidt Vocal competition.

Cecelia Morrison (soprano) is a third-year Bachelor of Music student, studying voice with Dina Kuznetsova. Morrison has performed in the chorus for CIM Opera Theater's productions of *L'Etoile* (2024), *Suor Angelica* (2025), and *Hansel and Gretel* (2026).

Kwang Keun (Daniel) Oh (baritone), born and raised in South Korea, immigrated to the United States and is currently based in Los Angeles. He is pursuing an Artist Diploma at CIM, where he studies with Clifford Billions, and is expected to complete his diploma in 2027. Oh's stage credits include Dulcamara in *L'Elisir d'Amore*, Leporello In *Don Giovanni*, Alfonso in *Cosi fan tutte*, Frank in *Die Fledermaus*, Melisso in *Alcina*, Simone in *Gianni Schicchi*, Capitán in *Florencia en el Amazonas*, Schubert's *Die Winterreise* D. 911, and Handel's *Messiah*.

Hyeondo Park (baritone) is a third-year undergraduate student at CIM, studying with Mary Schiller. Native to South Korea, Park's stage credits include Zalzal in Chabrier's *L'étoile*, Masetto in Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, Marco in Puccini's *Gianni Schicchi*, and Father (Vater) in Humperdinck's *Hänsel und Gretel.*

Nyla Parker (soprano) is in her second year of study as a Master of Music voice performance major in the studio of Mary Schiller. She received her Bachelor of Music degree in voice performance from the University of Texas at Austin. In between Parker's degrees, she taught voice professionally in Denver, Colorado, and was a teaching and touring artist at Central City Opera. This past May, she organized a Black Composer's Concert with the goal of sharing works by underrepresented composers. Parker's roles include Zelatrice from *Suor Angelica*.

Morgan Potts (mezzo-soprano) is currently pursuing her Doctor of Musical Arts degree in voice performance at CIM, where she studies with Mary Schiller. Upcoming, Potts will be seen as Gertrude in *Blood on the Dining Room Floor* at CIM. Her 2026 highlights include Paula in *Florencia en el Amazonas*, Dorabella in *Così fan Tutte*, Hansel in *Hänsel und Gretel*, and Berthe in *Blond Eckbert.* Other roles include Zita in *Gianni Schicchi*, Meg in *Falstaff*, Young Vernon/Ensemble 2 in *Blind Injustice*, Presendia in Nico Muhly's *Dark Sisters*, Hérisson de Porc-Épic in Chabrier's *L'Étoile*, Elisetta in Cimarosa's *Il Matrimonio Segreto*, Prince Orlofsky in Strauss' *Die Fledermaus*, Cherubino in Mozart's *Le Nozze di Figaro*, and Sherlock Holmes in Hans Bridger Heruth's *A Certain Madness*.

Lev Pravskii (baritone) is a second-year undergraduate voice student at CIM, studying with Dina Kuznetsova. He previously studied piano with Ilya Itin at CIM before transitioning to voice and continues to

pursue a piano minor. Prior to attending CIM, he completed four years of music college in Russia, earning a diploma in solo piano.

Jade Rojas (soprano) is a senior at CIM, studying with Mary Schiller. Her roles include Suor Genovieffa in *Suor Angelica*, Josephine in *H.M.S. Pinafore*, Second Lady in *Dido and Aeneas*, Cousin Hebe in *H.M.S. Pinafore*, and Phyllis in *Iolanthe*. She has understudied Gretel in *Hänsel und Gretel* and Zerlina in *Don Giovanni*. Rojas has attended Interlochen, ArtsBridge, Boston University Tanglewood Institute, Bel Canto in Tuscany, and the Patti and Allan Herbert Summer in Salzburg program.

Drew Russell (baritone) is a second-year Graduate Diploma student at CIM, studying with Cynthia Skelley-Wohlschlager. Stage credits include Eckbert in *Blond Eckbert*, Betto in *Gianni Schicchi*, Donald Giovanni in *The Abduction of Figaro*, Bob in *The Old Maid and the Thief*, and Usher in *Trial by Jury*. In 2024, Russell participated in the Nightingale Opera Theatre YAP as Le Baron de Pictordu in Viardot's *Cendrillon* and had the honor of serving as an ensemble member for Jake Heggie's *Two Remain*. During the summer of 2025, Russell participated at AIMS in Graz, Austria, and during the summer of 2026, Russell participated in the Patti and Allan Herbert Frost School of Music Program at Salzburg. Russell completed his Master of Music and Bachelor of Music degrees at Kent State University.

Zara Renae Smith (soprano) from Bethlehem, PA, is currently a second year Graduate Diploma student at CIM (where she also completed her master's degree) with Mary Schiller. Along with portraying Florencia Grimaldi in this production, this past August Smith participated in Jennifer Rowley's Aria Bootcamp. Her other stage credits include Lazuli (*L'Étoile*), Almera (*Dark Sisters*), and La Ciesca (*Gianni Schicchi*). Smith has also participated in the Patti and Allen Herbert Frost School of Music Program in Salzburg, Austria, as well as Classical Singing and New York in June. She completed her undergraduate voice performance degree at the Crane School of Music at SUNY Potsdam.

Abigail Tidlow-Tranel (mezzo-soprano) is a third-year student at CIM and studies under Dina Kuznetsova. Tidlow-Tranel has performed in CIM Opera Theater's chorus in *Don Giovanni*, *Suor Angelica*, and *Hänsel und Gretel*.

Zhengheng Wu (tenor) is a senior at CIM, where he studies with Clifford Billions. His performance experience includes Gherardo in Puccini's *Gianni Schicchi* and Tamino in CIM's opera scenes from Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte*. He also served as a teaching assistant in voice medicine at the Fifth Affiliated Hospital of Sun Yat-sen University.

Mathilda Xu (mezzo-soprano) is a first-year Master of Music student at CIM, studying with Mary Schiller. She earned her bachelor's degree in vocal performance from Shanghai University. Xu received first prize in the Shanghai Division of the 15th International Vocal Open Competition in 2022 and a merit award in the national finals. Her performance experience includes the Shanghai Spring International Music Festival, the China-Poland Cultural Exchange Concert, and numerous choral performances with Shanghai University.

Jianyu Yang (tenor) is a senior studying vocal performance at CIM, where he studies with Cynthia Skelley-Wohlschlager. His operatic experience includes Guillot in Le *mariage aux lanternes*, Gerardo in *Gianni Schicchi*, Tapioca in *L'Étoile*, and Monostatos in *Die Zauberflöte*. He participated in the Focus Young Artist Program in 2024, 2025, and 2026. His awards include a Special Mention in the 2023 Beethoven Young Musician Competition and a Merit Prize in the Hong Kong City Opera's International Rising Star Competition.

Hanyue Zhang (soprano) is currently pursuing a Graduate Diploma at CIM, where she studies with Dina Kuznetsova. She holds a Master of Music degree from the Lamont School of Music at the University of Denver. Her recent operatic performances include Donna Elvira in *Don Giovanni* at the Estates Theatre in Prague with Prague Summer Nights, the Witch in *Hänsel und Gretel* at CIM, the title role in Puccini's *Suor Angelica* at the Newman Center for the Performing Arts in Denver, and First Lady in Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte* in Vienna, Austria. Zhang was awarded fifth prize in the Denver Lyric Opera Guild's 2025 Annual Competition.

Tao Zhang (tenor) is a first-year Master of Music student at CIM, studying with Clifford Billions.

Xuge Zhao (soprano) is a first-year Bachelor of Music student at CIM, studying with Dina Kuznetsova.

Jingdian Zhou (tenor) is a second-year Graduate Diploma student at CIM, studying with Clifford Billions. Zhou's stage credits include Ruggiero in *Alcina*, Younger Thompson in *Glory Denied* (CIM), Alfredo in *Die Fledermaus* (CIM), Don Ottavio in *Don Giovanni* (CIM), Rinuccio in *Gianni Schicchi* (CIM), and Tamino in *Die Zauberflöte* (Focus YAP). He completed his bachelor's degree at Central Conservatory of Music and his master's degree at CIM.

ABOUT THE STAFF

Dave Brooks (set designer) has been designing and building operas in Kulas Hall for over three decades. His list of favorites is long, but a few of the highlights would have to include productions of *The Rake's Progress*, *HMS Pinafore*, and *Dido and Aeneas* for director Michael McConnell; *The Medium* and *Patience* for director Gary Race; and *The Magic Flute*, *Ariadne auf Naxos*, *Hänsel und Gretel*, and *Alcina* for director David Bamberger. Brooks' work has also been seen at Lyric Opera Cleveland, Cleveland Play House, Michigan Opera Theater, Dayton Opera, and Opera Pacific. His day job is as a production designer for Hughie's Event Production Services, where he specializes in corporate event design.

François Germain (director of opera theater and vocal coach) is an internationally recognized vocal coach, pianist, and educator whose work bridges performance, pedagogy, and scholarship in opera and art song. A native of Aix-en-Provence, France, he has built a career spanning Europe and North America and is widely regarded for his stylistic authority, linguistic expertise, and collaborative work with singers.

In Europe, Germain has been regularly engaged since 2017 as a vocal and language coach at the Semperoper Dresden, collaborating on major French-language productions and working closely with internationally renowned conductors, stage directors, and singers. His professional activities in the United States include an upcoming engagement with Seattle Opera for its production of Delibes' *Lakmé*, as well as his continuing work as a substitute keyboardist with The Cleveland Orchestra. He also serves on the faculty of Jennifer Rowley's Aria Bootcamp, an intensive training program for emerging professional singers founded by internationally acclaimed soprano Jennifer Rowley.

Germain is Director of Opera Theater and Professor of Voice Studies at CIM, where he oversees the Institute's opera program while maintaining an active teaching and coaching studio. His work encompasses operatic and art song repertoire, with particular expertise in French and German language, diction, style, and repertoire. He has also worked extensively with young artists and emerging professionals in conservatory, festival, and professional opera

settings in the United States and Europe. As a recitalist and collaborative pianist, Germain has appeared throughout Europe and North America, including at the American Church in Paris, Steinway Hall in New York, and the Mozarteum in Salzburg.

Germain holds a Doctor of Music degree in piano performance from the Université de Montréal and a master's-level diploma in political science from Sciences Po in France, where his research examined the cultural politics surrounding the music of Dmitri Shostakovich. His combination of musical, linguistic, and scholarly expertise informs a career devoted to the training of singers and to the performance and interpretation of vocal repertoire.

Esther Haberlen (costume designer) is thrilled to return to CIM Opera Theater with this fantastic cast and creative direction. Her work in theater, opera, and burlesque has been seen on numerous stages around NE Ohio including Cleveland Opera Theater, Baldwin Wallace University, Cleveland Play House, Beck Center for the Arts, Cleveland Public Theater (CPT), and Great Lakes Theater (GLT), where she is the costume director and resident designer. Haberlen has also worked for 19 seasons with the Idaho and Lake Tahoe Shakespeare Festivals, with which GLT is a producing partner. Recent critically acclaimed productions include *The Heart of Robin Hood*, *Peter & the Starcatcher*, *The 39 Steps*, and *Murder on the Orient Express* at GLT, and *Dialogue of the Carmelites*, *The Coronation of Poppea*, and *The Threepenny Opera* with Baldwin Wallace/Cleveland Opera Theater. Haberlen holds a BFA in theater production and design from SUNY Fredonia, with minors in art history and music. Her musical hobbies include the Cleveland Pride Band (vocalist/2nd clarinet) and burlesque performance as Hilde Häschenbetty. Upcoming productions include *Tease the Season* at CPT and *Comedy of Errors* at GLT.

Jessica Hartley (stage manager) is a recent graduate of Baldwin Wallace University and freelance stage manager from the Cleveland area. Recent credits include CLE Shakespeare Festival's 2026 Season PSM, Baldwin Wallace University's *Is He Dead*? (SM) and Dance Concert 2025 - *Polyglots* (SM), Playhouse Square's *Star Machine* (ASM) and *Broadway Come Home* (ASM), and Clague Playhouse's *25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee* (SM). Hartley would like to thank CIM for welcoming her into their process and allowing her the opportunity to re-enter the opera world! @jess.arwen

Calysta Tamara Jacobs (assistant stage manager) is a recent CIM graduate where she received a Graduate Diploma in voice and studied with Dina Kuznetsova. Jacobs received a Bachelor of Music in musical theater and vocal performance from Plymouth State University and a Master of Music in opera performance from Binghamton University. Jacobs assistant stage managed every CIM opera production over the course of her two-year Graduate Diploma program. In her second year, Jacobs assistant stage managed and sang the roles of The Witch in *Hansel and Gretel*, La Zelatrice in *Suor Angelica*, and Maestro Spinelloccio in *Gianni Schicchi*. Other Previous roles include Ottavia in *L'incoronazione di Poppea*, Mother and Dragonfly in *L'enfant et les sortileges*, Giovanna in *Rigoletto*, Zita in *Gianni Schicchi*, and Suor Angelica in *Suor Angelica*. Jacobs is a theater artist who is passionate about modern music, opera as an artform, and making opera more widely accessible.

John Simmons (vocal coach and chorus master) received a Master of Music degree in piano performance from Peabody Conservatory as a student of Yoheved Kaplinsky. He also holds an Artist Diploma in piano performance from the Hochschule für Musik und Darstellende Kunst, Vienna, Austria, where he was a student of Paul Badura-Skoda. He was appointed to the CIM opera faculty in 2005.

Simmons has appeared in numerous recitals in Austria, Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, Italy, and in the US at Weill Recital Hall, Merkin Hall, and the Austrian Cultural Forum in New York City. He has performed with artists and ensembles including Jonas Kaufmann, Christopher Maltman, John Aler, London Symphony Chorus, Westminster Choir, Joffrey Ballet of Chicago, Spoleto Festival Orchestra, and The Cleveland Orchestra in the Beyond the Score Series. Simmons has coached, taught and performed at AIMS, Spoleto Festival USA, Centro Studi Italiani, Amalfi Coast, Shaker Mountain, and Lincoln Center festivals. He was pianist/coach for two seasons at the Graz Oper and teaching assistant at the Hochschule für Musik in Graz, an associate coach at the Juilliard Opera Center for three years, and on the coaching faculty at the CW Post campus of Long Island University for six years. In 2004-05, he was guest professor of collaborative piano at Rutgers University.

While in New York, Simmons played in the voice studios of many well-known teachers including Doris Yarick Cross and Anna Moffo. He was music director and pianist for New York Opera Project's production

of Barber's *Vanessa* in 2004 and assistant conductor for the Lincoln Center Festival and University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, productions of *The Silver River* by Bright Sheng in 2002 and 2007. Simmons is music director and conductor for Nightingale Opera Theater in Hudson, Ohio.

Brandon Washington (lighting designer) works in theater, dance, ballet, and opera. Past lighting design credits include *An Enemy of the People* (New York University – Grad Acting), *A Conversation with the Brat* (Second Avenue Dance Company), Jenn Freeman's *The Soloist* (Idaho Dance Theatre), *Middle Name* (Second Avenue Dance Company), *A Pair of Fools* (Columbia University), *Fugue/State* (New York University – Grad Acting), *All Is Calm* (Boise Contemporary Theater), *Cinderella* (Ballet Idaho), and *As One* (Opera Idaho). Washington as an MFA from NYU Tisch School of the Arts - Design for Stage & Film.

Dusten Welch (production manager) is an award-winning artist, fight choreographer, director, and educator, currently serving as the opera production manager at CIM. In addition to his work with CIM, Welch teaches stage combat for Case Western Reserve University's MFA acting program and Baldwin Wallace University's acting and directing programs, and is the art director for *The Fight Master* magazine. A multi-recipient of the Kennedy Center American College Theater Festival Achievement Award for Fight Direction (2007, 2016), his work has been seen at Cleveland Play House, Great Lakes Theater, Idaho Shakespeare Festival, Beck Center for the Arts, Karamu House, and Cleveland Shakespeare Festival, among others. He previously served as artistic director of Cleveland Shakespeare Festival (2020–24) and as administrative coordinator at the Academy for the Performing Arts (2014–20). He is a certified teacher with the Society of American Fight Directors and holds a BA in theater and performance from Ashland University.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Tuesday, November 10
7:30pm | Kulas Hall

Jazz Lab Final Concert

Featuring original compositions and arrangements by students, including the music of George Gershwin, Miles Davis, Charlie Parker, and more.

Friday, November 13
7:30pm | Mixon Hall

Sibbi Bernhardsson, violin
Chad Hoopes (YAP '13), violin
Eun-song Koh (BM '16), violin
Igor Pikayzen, violin
Sheila Browne, viola
Tom Landschoot, cello
Jeffrey Lastrapes, cello

Meet the newest members of the CIM faculty in a concert showcasing the artistry, experience, and extraordinary talent they bring to the Conservatory. Join us in welcoming these new voices to our community of artists and educators whose collective creativity and collaboration are shaping the future of classical music.

Sunday, November 15
4pm | Mixon Hall

Composition Department Recital

New music by CIM student composers

Friday, November 20
7:30pm | Kulas Hall

CIM Orchestra
Anthony Parnther, conductor

Relive the magic of *E.T. The Extra-Terrestrial* on the big screen, accompanied by a magnificent, live performance of the CIM Orchestra.

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