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INSTITUTE OF MUSIC

2025-26
SEASON

CONCERT SERIES



About the Cleveland Institute of Music

The Cleveland Institute of Music empowers the world's most talented classical music students to fulfill their dreams and potential. Its alumni command hallowed stages across the globe as soloists, opera leads, chamber musicians, and ensemble members; compose meaningful, award-winning music; produce Grammy Award-winning recordings; and are highly sought-after teaching artists, administrators, and thought leaders. CIM's faculty likewise hail from around the country and across the world, giving students "The CIM Advantage" as they embark on professional careers. The school's increasingly diverse collegiate and pre-college student bodies benefit from access to world-renowned visiting artists and abundant performance and outreach opportunities, and from the rich curriculum offered by CIM's partner, Case Western Reserve University. A leader among its peers, CIM is the largest presenter of free performances, masterclasses, and community concerts in the Midwest, hosting hundreds of events each year on campus and at locations regionwide, including Severance Music Center. Explore cim.edu to learn more.



CIM students are positioned for success, developing 21st-century skills to thrive musically and in life. This is possible because of the **CIM Advantage**, where students' artistic potential is unlocked in our nurturing environment, and hours of work and training are transformed into first-rate performances on professional stages and in the community.

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CLEVELAND
INSTITUTE OF MUSIC

CIM OPERA THEATER

Wednesday, February 11, 2026

Thursday, February 12, 2026

7:30pm | Mixon Hall

Blond Eckbert

By Judith Weir (b. 1954)

Libretto by Judith Weir after the short story by Ludwig Tieck

JJ Hudson, stage director

Anthony Parnter, guest conductor

Kulas Foundation Visiting Artist

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.

Bird: Jessica Bell +, Cassie Dixon #, Ro Alia (understudy)

Blond Eckbert: Davis Fischer +, Drew Russell #

Walther, Hugo, Old Woman: Connor Vrooman

Berthe: Calysta Tamara Jacobs #, Morgan Potts +

Dog: Ro Alia

+ Performing on February 11

Performing on February 12

PRODUCTION STAFF

Stage Director ... JJ Hudson
Lighting Designer ... Sierra Smith
Supertitles Creator ... JJ Hudson
Supertitles Operator ... Amelia Carson
Vocal Coaches ... François Germain & John Simmons

CIM OPERA THEATER

Interim Artistic Director ... JJ Hudson
Music Director and Conductor ... Harry Davidson
Program Director and Vocal Coach ... François Germain
Chorus Master and Vocal Coach ... John Simmons
Production Manager ... Cassie Goldbach
Opera Assistant ... Calysta Tamara Jacobs

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ABOUT THE DIRECTOR

Dr. JJ Hudson (stage director) is recognized as a dynamic and sensitive director of lyric theater in professional, university, and summer-festival opera. His directing credits include works across the spectrum of lyric theater genres, and his productions have received outstanding reviews in *The New York Times*, *Opera News*, and numerous regional and online publications.

In fall 2023, Hudson began as interim artistic director of opera at CIM. In the summers, Hudson is the artistic director of the Harrower Summer Opera Workshop, a young-artist training program based in Atlanta. Prior to joining the faculty at CIM, Hudson was the Valerie Adams Professor of Opera at Georgia State University from 2021-23.

Hudson has recently directed productions with Sarasota Opera (*Rita* and *Il Segreto di Susanna*), Mississippi Opera (*La Bohème*), Natchez Music Festival (*La Bohème*), Lakes Area Music Festival (*Ariadne auf Naxos*, *Carmen*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, *La Belle Hélène*, and *The Rake's Progress*), Tri-Cities Opera (*Tosca*, *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, and *La*

Bohème), Opera Tampa (*Così fan tutte*), Opera in the Heights (*La Fille du Régiment*), Asheville Lyric Opera (*West Side Story*), and Opera Roanoke (*South Pacific* and *La Cenerentola*).

Hudson is an in-demand guest director in university and young-artist opera programs. He has directed multiple productions at Temple University, Stony Brook University, Columbus State University, University of Kansas, and North Carolina School of the Arts. He has directed for young-artist programs including Opera in the Ozarks, Red River Lyric Opera, Opera Breve Vocal Intensive, and Miami Classical Music Festival. He has also served on the directing staffs of the Aspen Opera Theater, Oberlin in Italy, and Opera North.

Hudson holds a DMA in voice performance and literature and an MM in opera studies: stage direction from the Eastman School of Music, where he was a student of Steven Daigle and Carol Webber. He holds an MA in voice performance from the University of Iowa and a double BM from Stetson University in music composition and voice performance.

ABOUT THE CONDUCTOR

American conductor **Anthony Parnter** (conductor) is beginning his sixth season as music director of California's San Bernardino Symphony Orchestra. As conductor of the Gateways Music Festival Orchestra, whose members hail from leading orchestras nationwide, it was Parnter who led its sold-out Carnegie Hall debut, showcasing the world premiere of *I Can* by five-time Grammy-winner Jon Batiste.

A master of multiple genres, Parnter has conducted many of the world's preeminent artists, from Joshua Bell, Lynn Harrell, Jessye Norman, and Frederica von Stade to Imagine Dragons, Wu-Tang Clan, John Legend, Metro Boomin, Avenged Sevenfold, and Rihanna. The *L.A. Times* hailed Parnter as "The quintessential L.A. musician of our day." Parnter's recent conducting engagements include the New York Philharmonic, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Chicago Symphony, Philadelphia Orchestra, The Cleveland Orchestra, San Francisco Symphony, Cincinnati Symphony, National Symphony Orchestra, Atlanta Symphony, Houston Symphony, St. Louis Symphony, Detroit Symphony, Pittsburgh Symphony, Baltimore Symphony, Royal Scottish National Orchestra, Vancouver Symphony, Calgary Philharmonic, Los

Angeles Opera, Music Academy of the West, Sydney Symphony in Australia, and the Chineke! Orchestra, with whom he debuted at the BBC Proms.

Dedicated to amplifying traditionally underrepresented voices, Parnter has reconstructed and performed orchestral works by Margaret Bonds, Duke Ellington, Zenobia Powell Perry, Florence Price, William Grant Still, and Samuel Coleridge-Taylor. As well as leading LA Opera's world premiere of Tamar-kali Brown's oratorio *We Hold These Truths* and Long Beach Opera's revival of Anthony Davis' Pulitzer Prize-winning *Central Park Five*, Parnter has premiered and recorded works by Jon Batiste, Kris Bowers, Chanda Dancy, Philip Herbert, Daniel Kidane, George Lewis, James Newton, George Walker, and Errollyn Wallen. For his extensive championing of works by Black, Latino, and women composers, Parnter was profiled as a "Local Hero" by Los Angeles' KCET/TV.

As one of today's foremost film conductors, Parnter helms recording sessions for many of the world's top international feature films and television series, working in close collaboration with some of the most decorated media composers in the industry. On the scoring stages of Los Angeles, San Francisco, Nashville, Budapest, Glasgow, and London, he has led the scoring sessions for projects like the Oscar-winning score for *Oppenheimer*, Grammy-winning *Encanto*, Emmy-winning *The Mandalorian*, *Avatar: The Way of Water*, *Black Panther: Wakanda Forever*, *Transformers: Rise of the Beasts*, *Ghostbusters: Afterlife*, *Diaries of a Wimpy Kid: Rodrick Rules*, *Ice Age: Adventures of Buck Wild*, *Creed III*, *PAW Patrol: The Mighty Movie*, and *League of Legends*.

ABOUT THE PERFORMERS

Ro Alia (soprano) is a third-year Bachelor of Music student at CIM studying with Mary Schiller. In 2025, Alia will perform the role of Serpina from *La Serva Padrona* and La Sorella Infermiera in *Suor Angelica* (CIM). Alia's credits in opera scenes include Hänsel from *Hänsel und Gretel*, Papagena from *Die Zauberflöte*, Miles from *The Turn of the Screw*, and Susanna from *Le Nozze di Figaro*. In 2025, Alia performed at the Mirabell Palace and Schloss Leopoldskron in Salzburg, Austria as a third prize winner of the Mirabell Competition.

Jessica Bell (soprano) is a first-year Master of Music student at CIM, studying with Dina Kuznetsova. Her previous roles include Amore (cover) in *Orfeo ed Euridice* (Chicago Summer Opera), Zerlina (cover) in *Don Giovanni* (FIO Italia), and Dido in *Dido and Aeneas* (Piccola Opera). Bell was most recently awarded third prize in the 2024 NH Opera Idol Competition. She holds a Bachelor of Music in vocal performance and music education from Gordon College, where she was named the winner of the Gordon College 2022-23 Concerto Competition.

Cassie Dixon (soprano) is a first-year Graduate Diploma student at CIM, studying with Dina Kuznetsova. Dixon's stage credits include Tatiana de Schloezer in *The Death of Alexander Scriabin* (independent composer project), Ma Zegner in *Proving Up* (Peabody Institute), Gretel in *Hänsel und Gretel* and Tytania in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Chicago Summer Opera). Dixon also sang as a young artist at Opera in the Ozarks and won third place in the 31st Annual Darius Milhaud Performance Prize Concert. They completed their undergraduate and graduate voice performance degrees at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music and the Peabody Institute, respectively.

Davis Fischer (baritone) is a second-year Master of Music student at CIM, studying with Clifford Billions. Fischer's stage credits include Leporello in *Don Giovanni* (CIM), Siroco in *L'etoile* (CIM), Pirate King in *Pirates of Penzance* (The College of Idaho), and Falstaff in *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (The College of Idaho). He completed his undergraduate voice performance degree at The College of Idaho.

Calysta Tamara Jacobs (soprano) is a second-year Graduate Diploma student studying 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. Previous roles include: The Witch in *Hansel and Gretel*, Ottavia in *L'incoronazione di Poppea*, Mother and Dragonfly in *L'Enfant et les sortilèges*, Giovanna in *Rigoletto*, Zita in *Gianni Schicchi*, and Suor Angelica in *Suor Angelica*. Jacobs placed second in the Women's Upper-Level Classical NATS Eastern Region competition in 2023 and received a talent-based Graduate Student Award from Binghamton University in 2024.

Morgan Potts (mezzo-soprano) is pursuing her Master of Music in voice performance at CIM, where she studies with Mary Schiller. Potts made her professional debut as Young Edward Vernon/Ensemble 2 in *Blind Injustice* by Scott Davenport Richards, presented by Chagrin Arts. Her 2025 season highlights include Zita in *Gianni Schicchi*, Meg in Verdi's *Falstaff*, and Presendia in Nico Muhly's *Dark Sisters*. Other notable roles include 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*, Sherlock Holmes in Hans Bridger Heruth's *A Certain Madness*, and Hänsel in Humperdinck's *Hänsel und Gretel*. Potts has enriched her training through young artist programs such as Texas Music Festival (2022), Frost School of Music's Summer in Salzburg (2023), Opera Seme (2024), and Harrower Opera Workshop (2025). She holds a Bachelor of Music degree from Kennesaw State University.

Drew Russell (baritone) is a first-year Graduate Diploma student at CIM, studying with Cynthia Skelley-Wohlschlagel. Stage credits include 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 in AIMS in Graz, Austria. Russell completed his Master of Music and Bachelor of Music degrees at Kent State University

Connor Vrooman (tenor) is a Graduate Diploma student at CIM studying with Clifford Billions. Vrooman has been praised by Cleveland Classical Magazine for grabbing the audience's attention through his dynamic acting and vocal beauty. He has performed roles with CIM Opera Theater such as King Ouf in Chabrier's *L'Etoile*, Younger Thomson in Cipullo's *Glory Denied*, and Oronte in Handel's *Alcina*. Vrooman was also a national quarter-finalist for NATS (2021).

UPCOMING EVENTS

Sunday, February 15

4pm | Kulas Hall

New Music Ensemble

Keith Fitch, director

Andrew Rindfleisch, guest composer

Kulas Foundation Visiting Artist

William McNally, piano

Kulas Foundation Visiting Artist

Shuai Wang (BM '03, MM '05, MM '05, AD '07), piano

RINDFLEISCH *What Vibes!* (2000)

DRUCKMAN *Reflections on the Nature of Water* (1986)

RINDFLEISCH *Quiet Music* (2007)

RINDFLEISCH *Mirages* (2023)

New Music Ensemble is generously supported by the Roy Minoff Family Fund.

Tuesday, February 17

7:30pm | Mixon Hall

Andrew Hosler, saxophone

Eric Charnofsky, piano

Kulas Foundation Visiting Artist

Dylan Findley, electronics

Kulas Foundation Visiting Artist

BOULEZ *Dialogue de l'ombre double* (1985)

SEIF معاني Meanings (2022)

CONNER *Ours to Lose* (2025)

World Premiere

MACKEY *Soprano Sax Concerto* (2007)

Sunday, February 22

7pm | Mixon Hall

Black Student Union Benefit Concert

Presented by the CIM Black Student Union

Tickets: \$25 | free for students

All proceeds go to the Black Student Union's Student Assistance Fund.

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As of January 21, 2026



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