



CLEVELAND  
INSTITUTE OF MUSIC

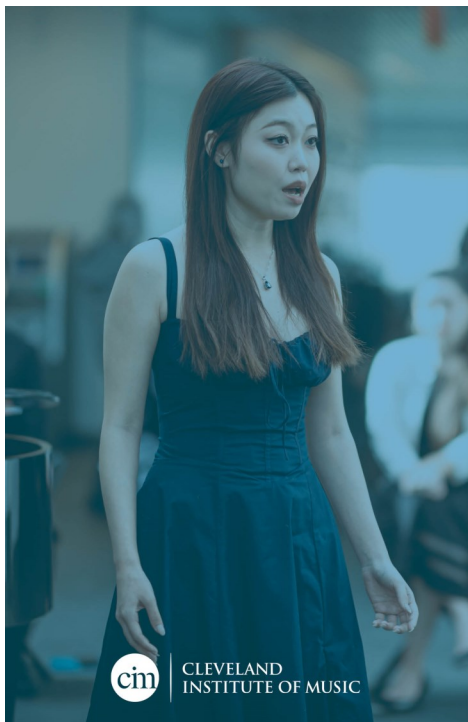
# CONCERT SERIES

2023-24 Season



## 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 graduates command the most celebrated and revered stages in the world as soloists, leading roles, chamber musicians, and ensemble members; compose meaningful, award-winning new repertoire; produce Grammy Award-winning recordings; and are highly sought-after teaching artists, administrators, and thought leaders. A testament to the excellence of a CIM education, more than half of the members of The Cleveland Orchestra are connected to CIM as members of the faculty, alumni, or both, and CIM alumni occupy hundreds of chairs in major orchestras worldwide. The school's increasingly diverse collegiate and pre-college student bodies benefit from access to world-renowned visiting artists, intensive study with CIM's stellar faculty, and 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](http://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.

Deepen your support of the **future of classical music** by making a gift to CIM's Annual Fund at:

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## CIM OPERA THEATER

Friday, November 17, 2023 at 7:30pm

Sunday, November 19, 2023 at 3pm

Kulas Hall

### **Alcina**

by George Frideric Handel (1685–1759)

Sung in Italian with English supertitles

**JJ Hudson**, stage director

**Harry Davidson**, conductor

*Funded in part by a grant from the John P. Murphy Foundation.*

*Dedicated to Michael Frank & Pat Snyder (dec'd).*

### **Cast**

**Alcina:** Mikayla Liu#, Lisl Wangermann+, Yiyu Tang (cover)

**Morgana:** Catherina Carrington#, Shira Ziv+, Ella Sobkowicz (cover)

**Ruggiero:** Heedo Park#, Jingdian Zhou+

**Bradamante:** Nola Tan, Katniss Bi (cover)

**Oronte:** Madison Hurst+, Connor Vrooman#

**Oberto:** Caroline Friend#, AJ Gauger+, Jingjing Fan (cover)

**Melisso:** Kwang Keun Oh, Junchen Wan (cover)

### **Chorus**

**Soprano:** Elizabeth Aranda, Gillian Beckman, Jingjing Fan, Laura Fisk,  
Yasmin Gerardi

**Mezzo-Soprano:** Katniss Bi, Chuting Huang, Ro Alia Mengert,  
Zara Smith, Ziqi Wang

**Tenor:** John-Joseph Haney, Yuhang Huang, Zhengheng Wu, Jinayu Yang

**Bass:** Colin DeMatteo, Ku Liang, Weizheng Ma, Junchen Wan

+ Performing on November 17

# Performing on November 19

## DIRECTOR'S WELCOME

What a joy and honor it is for me to present my first CIM Opera Theater production as the new Interim Artistic Director of Opera! When I directed *Dialogues des Carmélites* as a guest director earlier this year, I was so impressed by the diligence, talent, and exceptional training of CIM students. I was also taken by the concern of the voice/opera faculty for the success of their students cast in the opera. In my new position here at CIM, I am proud now to call these wonderful CIM performers “my students,” and these thoughtful CIM faculty members “my colleagues.”

I hope you enjoy our production of Handel's *Alcina*. It's an opera with EVERYTHING: exquisite arias, compelling dramatic situations, magical transformations, wild animals, mistaken identities, multiple disguises, and sudden reversals of fortune. And for an opera seria, it has more than a few moments of lightness and comedy! For these reasons, *Alcina* is one of Handel's most beloved dramatic works, and one of the composer's most frequently performed operas today.

As a stage director in a conservatory program, I find so much delight in seeing students grow during a production. Handel's operas pose unique challenges to young performers: lengthy and virtuosic da capo arias, challenging stretches of secco recitativo, and a dramatic/theatrical style that is not nearly as “natural” as the musical theater of Mozart, Donizetti, or Puccini. Our wonderful CIM voice students embraced these challenges very early in the process. As a result, they have risen to meet the demands of an extremely demanding work.

I wish to thank my production team, my CIM voice/opera colleagues, and the CIM administration for everything they have done to support this project and our students.

— JJ Hudson

## CIM OPERA THEATER

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 Assistants ... Elizabeth Aranda, John Haney,  
Kiana Lilly, and Ella Sobkowicz

## CIM VOICE FACULTY

Mary Schiller, Head, Voice and Opera Division and Voice Department  
Clifford Billions  
Dina Kuznetsova  
Dean Southern

## PRODUCTION STAFF

Stage Director ... JJ Hudson  
Set Designer ... Robert Sunderman  
Set Construction ... Kozbach Creatives  
Projection Designer ... Brittany Merenda  
Lighting Designer ... Dave Brooks  
Costume Designer ... Ina Blatch-Geib  
Prop Designer ... Dred Geib  
Wardrobe Supervisor ... Brielle McGrew  
Costume Assistant ... Mark Baiza  
Prop Assistant ... Ennin Geib  
Stitchers ... Donna Pedaci and Sydney DeMatteis-Geib  
Supertitles Operator ... Ella Sobkowicz  
Production Manager ... Cassie Goldbach  
Vocal Coaches ... François Germain and John Simmons

# CIM ORCHESTRA

## FIRST VIOLIN

Sebastian Orellana, concertmaster

*Chillan, Chile*

Blake Armstrong, assistant  
concertmaster

*Norfolk, VA*

Emma Johnson

*Colorado Springs, CO*

Zhaoying Feng

*Beijing, China*

Phaik Tzhi Chua

*Cleveland, OH*

## SECOND VIOLIN

Ani Sinanyan, principal

*Sherman Oaks, CA*

Miles Huang, assistant principal

*San Jose, CA*

Zili Sha

*Anqing, China*

Jeremy Foster

*Washington, DC*

## VIOLA

Mira Vaughn, principal

*Ellicott City, MD*

Nilli Tayidi, assistant principal

*Maineville, OH*

Aubrey Williamson

*Austin, TX*

Geo Brown

*West Palm Beach, FL*

## CELLO

Ben Adams, principal

*Tyngsborough, MA*

Edward Oh, assistant principal

*Nashville, TN*

Erica Garcia

*Massapequa, NY*

Fiona Tsang

*San Jose, CA*

## DOUBLE BASS

Hayley Witmore, principal

*Sidney, Australia*

Xander Degoey

*Beachwood, NJ*

## PICCOLO

Madelyn Zoller

*Cincinnati, OH*

## OBOE

Sebastian Kelzenberg, principal

*Tacoma, WA*

Stephanie Hile

*Louisville, KY*

## BASSOON

Hans Fronberg

*Farmington, UT*

## HORN

Lauren Jensen, principal

*Bay Village, OH*

Elena Miller

*Orland Park, IL*

## HARPSICHORD

John Simmons

*CIM faculty*

## 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.

Since fall 2021, Hudson has held the Valerie Adams Professor of Practice in Opera at Georgia State University in Atlanta where he produces and directs the university opera productions and opera workshop. In February 2022, Hudson was named the new Artistic Director (beginning 2023) of the Harrower Summer Opera Workshop, a long-standing young-artist program in Atlanta.

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*, *The Rake's Progress*), Tri-Cities Opera (*Tosca*, *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, *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*, *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 & MUSIC DIRECTOR

**Harry Davidson** (conductor and music director, CIM Opera Theater) is in his 17th season as music director and conductor of CIM Opera Theater with this production. Since the spring of 2006, he has conducted over a hundred performances of more than thirty 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 25th 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

**Elizabeth Aranda** (soprano) is a second-year master's student at CIM, studying with Mary Schiller. She completed her Bachelor of Music at Northern Arizona University. Her roles include: a Spirit in *Die Zauberflöte*, Emmie in *Albert Herring*, Nella in *Gianni Schicchi*, Suor Genovieffa in *Suor Angelica*, Sandrina in *La Finta Giardiniera*, a Spirit/La Fée (cover) in *Cendrillon*, Constance (cover) in *Dialogues des Carmélites*, and she performed with the Verde Valley Sinfonietta. She received third at the NATS Arizona District and the Lloyd and Sally Hanson Singer/Actor Award of Excellence Scholarship, and attended the Patti and Allan Herbert Frost School of Music Program at Salzburg.



**Gillian Beckman** (soprano) is a fourth-year Bachelor of Music student at CIM studying voice with Mary Schiller. She has sung the roles of Despina from *Così fan tutte*, Frasquita from *Carmen*, Lisette from *La Rondine*, The Dewfairy from *Hansel and Gretel*, and Barbarina from *Le Nozze di Figaro* in various opera scenes programs. She has an extensive piano background and works as a substitute voice and piano teacher at the Westlake Music Academy. Beckman has held both paid and volunteer positions singing for churches within the Diocese of Cleveland and Columbus.

**Katniss Bi** (mezzo-soprano) is a first-year Professional Studies student at CIM, studying with Dina Kuznetsova. Bi's stage credits include Périchole in *La Périchole* (CIM), Third Witch in *Macbeth* (CIM), Nora in the micro-opera *A Storm We Call Progress* (CIM), Sandman in *Hansel and Gretel* (Chicago Summer Opera), Cherubino in *Le nozze di Figaro* (Wuhan Conservatory of Music), Fantine in *Les Misérables* (WHCM), and Daisy in *Side Show* (Shanghai International Musicals Festival). She also sang as a young artist at the Master Players Festival & School held by the University of Delaware. She completed her Master of Music degree at CIM.

**Catherina Carrington** (soprano) is a second-year Bachelor of Music student at CIM studying with Dina Kuznetsova. Carrington was recently awarded honorable mention at Miami Frost School of Music's Mirabell Competition in Salzburg, first prize at Ohio NATS 2022, and was a Winner of Young Arts 2022. She performed her first full roles as La Fée and Constance in CIM's 2022-23 productions of *Cendrillon* and *Dialogues des Carmélites*. She was part of CIM's Opera Scenes program in 2022 and 2023 playing Adele in *Die Fledermaus*, Amy in *Little Women*, and Mademoiselle Silberklang in *Der Schauspieldirektor*.

**Colin DeMatteo** (baritone) is a second-year undergraduate student at CIM studying with Dina Kuznetsova. He has performed with CIM Opera Theater and Delphic Forge Inc. His stage credits include Marcus/Ghost cover (*Gracchus*), Papageno/Leporello (CIM Spring Scenes 2023), Thierry/2nd Commissaire (*Dialogues des Carmélites*), and chorus/Premier Ministre (*Cendrillon*).

**Jingjing Fan** (soprano) is a second-year Master of Music student at CIM, studying with Dina Kuznetsova. Fan has performed the role of a brave girl in the contemporary musical *We are the Brave Ones* in China. She also sang as a young artist at Songfest and studied with Martin Katz

and Kathryn Cowdrick in Nashville. Fan won first prize in the Prokofiev International Music Competition. She earned her undergraduate degree in voice performance from Xinghai Conservatory of Music in China.

**Laura Fisk** (soprano) is in her first year at CIM studying with Mary Schiller, as she pursues a Master of Music in voice performance. Fisk is originally from Pasadena, Maryland, and completed her undergraduate studies at Belmont University in Nashville, Tennessee. At Belmont University, she studied with Dr. Kristi Whitten and most recently performed the role of Cendrillon in Pauline Viardot's *Cendrillon*.

**Caroline Friend** (mezzo-soprano) is a fourth-year undergraduate student from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, studying with Dina Kuznetsova at CIM. Friend's stage credits include the Spirit from the 2021 CIM Opera film production of *Dido and Aeneas*, Dorothee from Massenet's *Cendrillon*, and Mère Marie from Poulenc's *Dialogues des Carmélites*. She has also made appearances in the opera program's concerts and Opera Scenes. She performed in the 65th Annual Sewanee Summer Music Festival & Operafest in 2022. Friend recently made her debut in the Czech Republic as Cherubino from Mozart's *Le Nozze di Figaro* during the 2023 Prague Summer Nights Music Festival. Recently, she was a featured soloist for a performance marking the 100th Anniversary of the Pittsburgh Beaver Valley Choral Society in October 2023.

**Annalyn Gauger** (soprano) is a fourth-year undergraduate student studying with Dina Kuznetsova. Stage credits include Soeur Mathilde in Poulenc's *Dialogues of the Carmelites* and First Sprite in Massenet's *Cendrillon*, both at CIM. In the summer of 2023 they attended the Si Parla, Si Canta program in Arona, Italy, and in the summer of 2022 they attended the Miami Frost School of Music program in Salzburg, Austria. Gauger is a Shari Bierman fellowship member of the Cleveland Orchestra Chorus and has performed at Severance Music Center and Blossom Music Center.

**Yasmin Gerardi** (soprano) is a third-year undergraduate student at CIM studying under the tutelage of Dina Kuznetsova. Gerardi's stage credits include many opera scenes such as Bastienne (*Bastien und Bastienne*), Pamina (*Die Zauberflöte*), Elisetta (*Il Matrimonio Segreto*), and Bianca (*La Rondine*). Gerardi received honorable mention at the Mirabell Competition in Salzburg, Austria (2023), finalist in the Schmidt Vocal Competition (2020), and second place in the Regional Division

of the Reston James Bland Classical Competition (2019). Gerardi is in touch with her Persian culture and performs Persian traditional music at times.

**John-Joseph Haney** (tenor), hailing from Norfolk, Virginia, is currently pursuing a master's degree in voice at CIM. He completed his undergraduate studies at the Mannes College of Music. Haney is a Shari Bierman Singer Fellow with The Cleveland Orchestra. Haney has been seen at various opera companies, both nationally and internationally. Recent performances include engagements with Virginia Opera in productions of *La Bohème* and *Le Nozze di Figaro*. Past roles include Ferrando (*Così fan tutte*), Don Basilio and Don Curzio (*Le Nozze di Figaro*), Monostatos (*Die Zauberflöte*), Paolino (*Il Matrimonio Segreto*), Premiere Commissaire (*Dialogues des Carmélites*), and also as the tenor soloist in Handel's *Messiah*. He recently made his European and role debut as Don Ottavio in *Don Giovanni* at the Estates Theatre in Prague.

**Chuting Huang** (soprano) is a first-year Master of Music student at CIM, studying with Dina Kuznetsova. Huang's stage credits include Mimi in *La Bohème* (Nanjing University of Art) and Pamina in *The Magic Flute* (Nanjing University of Art). Huang also sang in Korean and China International Vocal Competition and won first prize and second prize of the aria group. She completed her undergraduate voice performance degree at Nanjing University of Art.

**Yuhang Huang** (tenor) is a second-year Master of Music student at CIM, studying with Clifford Billions. Huang was a young artist at the 2019 Singapore National Music Festival and won the gold medal and bronze medal in the 2019 Prokofiev International Music Competition (voice). He also won the gold medal in the 2022 International Music Festival for Youth in Vienna. He completed his undergraduate opera and vocal performance degree at the Central Conservatory of Music.

**Madison Hurst** (tenor) is a second-year Graduate Diploma student from Springville, Utah. He studies with Clifford Billions. His roles include Le Chevalier in *Dialogues of the Carmélites* (CIM Opera), Fenton in *Falstaff* (CIM's Shakespeare: Operatically 2022), Gastone in *La Traviata* (Utah Valley University), Ferrando in *Così fan tutte* (Utah Vocal Arts Academy), and Eisenstein in *Die Fledermaus* (UVU).

**Ku Liang** (bass) is a first-year Master of Music student at CIM, studying with Dean Southern. Liang has participated in various

competitions during his undergraduate studies, such as the Guangxi Arts University Yiyuan Cup Vocal Competition and the Preliminary Competition of Opera Group of Vocal Singing. He completed his undergraduate music education with vocal emphasis at Guangxi Arts University. Liang is also interested in Chinese folk music and opera, and has performed in several concerts and events.

**Mikayla Liu** (soprano) is currently completing her Graduate Diploma at CIM studying with Mary Schiller. She completed her MA in vocal performance at the University of Iowa where she served as a graduate voice teaching assistant. This summer she attended AIMS opera institute wherein she sang recitals throughout Graz, Austria. Recent engagements include Alcina (*Alcina*), Donna Anna (*Don Giovanni*), Violetta Valery (*La traviata*), Carolina (*Il matrimonio segreto*), and Beatrice (*3 Decembers*). In addition to opera, Liu has sung in orchestral concerts as the soprano soloist in Johann Valentin Rathgeber's *Missa in D* and Hadyn's *Missa Brevis*.

**Weizheng Ma** (bass) is a first-year voice performance major at CIM, studying with Clifford Billions.

**Ro Alia Mengert** (soprano) is a first-year Bachelor of Music student at CIM studying with Mary Schiller. From 2022 to 2023, she was a member of the GTCC music pathway program where she studied classical and jazz vocals. From age 8, Mengert has performed in musicals such as *Annie* and *Anything Goes*.

**Kwang Keun (Daniel) Oh** (bass) is a first-year Graduate Diploma student at CIM, studying with Clifford Billions. He completed his undergraduate voice performance degree at Korea National University of Arts. Oh's stage credits include Dulcamara in Donizetti's *L'Elisir d'Amore* (Korea National University of Arts) and Emperor Kojong in Jung Yulsung's *Become Wind and Clouds* (Seoul Art Center).

**Heedo Park** (tenor) is a first-year Master of Music student at CIM, studying with Dean Southern. He completed his undergraduate vocal degree at Yonsei University.

**Zara Smith** (soprano) is a first-year Master of Music student at CIM, studying with Mary Schiller. Her previous roles include Jessie in *Mahagonny Songspiel* and Floriana in *Zazá* with the Crane Opera Ensemble. Smith participated in the Patti and Allan Herbert Frost

School of Music Program at Salzburg as well as Classical Singing and New York.

**Isabella Sobkowicz** (soprano) is a fourth-year Bachelor of Music student at CIM, studying with Mary Schiller. This coming winter, she will sing the role of Young Alyce in Tom Cipullo's *Glory Denied* with CIM Opera Theater. With CIM Opera Theater in the 2022-23 season, she has sung the role of La Fée in Massenet's *Cendrillon* and Constance in Poulenc's *Dialogues of the Carmélites*. In summer 2023, Sobkowicz sang the role of Miss Wordsworth in Britten's *Albert Herring* with the Harrower Summer Opera Program in Atlanta. In select scenes in CIM's opera scene programs, she has sung Susanna in Mozart's *Le Nozze di Figaro*, Mireille in Gounod's *Mireille*, Gretel in Humperdink's *Hansel and Gretel*, and the cover for Nannetta in *Falstaff* (Act II, Scene II). She was a student at the Miami Frost School of Music Patti and Allan Herbert Program at Salzburg during the summer of 2022.

**Ruoxuan (Nola) Tan** is a fourth-year undergraduate vocal performance student at CIM, studying with Dina Kuznetsova. Tan's stage credits include Mère Jeanne in *Dialogues des Carmélites* (CIM Opera Theater) and the 6th spirit in *Cendrillon* (CIM Opera Theater). She won the gold medal in Hongkong International Music Competition in both the regional and final rounds in 2019.

**Yiyu Tang** (soprano) is a second-year Master of Music student at CIM, studying with Dina Kuznetsova. In recent years, she has performed Noémie in Massenet's *Cendrillon*, Sœur Claire in Poulenc's *Dialogues des Carmélites*, Refugee in Jianping Tang's *The Diaries of John Rabe*, and she has played the partial roles of Donna Anna in Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, Violetta in Verdi's *La Traviata* and Marschallin in Strauss' *Der Rosenkavalier*.

**Connor Vrooman** (tenor) is a lyric tenor from Colfax, California. Vrooman studied classical voice at The College of Idaho. He performed roles such as Rinnucio from *Gianni Schicchi* and Frederick from *Pirates of Penzance*. Within his professional career, Vrooman has had solo performances with the Canyon County Symphony, Opera Elect, and Gemma Arts, as well as performed multiple works through contract with local composers. His performing is inspired by his folk singing background growing up in the rural Sierra Nevada mountains. Vrooman is currently studying with Clifford Billions at CIM.

**Junchen Wan** (baritone) is a first-year Master of Music student at CIM, studying with Clifford Billions. He received the gold medal in the Youth Group 2 (Bel Canto) at the 2021 International Art Masters World Tour Exhibition in Chengdu. He was also awarded the second prize for performers in the 16th Song Composition Competition at the Sichuan Conservatory of Music's Composition Department. His notable performances include the roles of Papageno in the first act of *Die Zauberflöte*, Notaio in *Gianni Schicchi*, and various roles in the Chinese national opera *Zhuo Wenjun*. He has actively participated as a baritone in various choirs and has contributed to multiple music salon performances and choral concerts.

**Ziqi Wang** (mezzo-soprano) is a second-year Master of Music student at CIM, studying with Mary Schiller. Wang's stage credits include ensemble in *Le Nozze di Figaro* (Fermo Church in Italy) and Dorabella in *Così fan tutte* (Nanyi Music Festiva). Wang won second prize of the National Vocal Music Leading Talent Training Program, second prize of the Colorado International Music Competition, and first prize of the Paris Art Society Music Competition. She completed her undergraduate voice performance degree at Nanjing University of the Arts.

**Lisl Wangermann** (soprano) is a first-year Artist Diploma student and studies with Dina Kuznetsova. Some of her previous roles include Blanche (*Dialogues des Carmélites*), Cendrillon (Massenet's *Cendrillon*), Dido (*Dido and Aeneas*), Della (*The Gift of the Magi*), and Euridice (Rossi's *Orfeo*). In 2023, Wangermann was a semifinalist for the Dallas Opera's Lone Star Vocal Competition and a finalist for the Nightingale Young Artist Competition. She won the 2021 Louis Sudler Prize in the Performing and Creative Arts from Yale University and received a 2020 Encouragement Award from the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions.

**Zhengheng Wu** (tenor) is a first-year Bachelor of Music student at CIM, studying with Clifford Billions.

**Jianyu Yang** (tenor) is a first-year Bachelor of Music student at CIM, studying with Dean Southern. Yang's stage credits include a special mention in the Beethoven Young Musician Competition 2023, second prize in The Best Singer of BRS Beijing Royal School 2021, and fourth prize in The Best Singer of BRS Beijing Royal School 2020.

**Jingdian Zhou** (tenor) is a first-year Master of Music student at CIM, studying with Clifford Billions. Zhou's stage credits include Ruzhou Zhang in *Yian* (China Conservatory of Music), Ruggiero in *Alcina* (CIM), and Nemorino in *L'elisir d'Amore* (Central Conservatory of Music). Zhou won third prize in the Hongkong International Vocal Competition. He completed his undergraduate voice performance degree at Central Conservatory of Music.

**Shira Ziv** (soprano) is a first-year master's student at CIM, studying with Mary Schiller. Ziv's most recent stage credits include Pamina in *Die Zauberflöte* (Harrower Summer Opera), Blanche in *Dialogues des Carmélites* (CIM), Ruth in *Ruth* (CIM), and Papagena in *Die Zauberflöte* (CIM). Ziv is the recipient of multiple awards and honors. Most recently, she was a competition winner of the 2023 Mirabell Palace Recital Competition in Salzburg, Austria, where she performed a recital during the highly coveted Salzburg Festival. Ziv is also the recipient of Martha Bell Sanders Excellence Award and the Dr. Samuel Baker Fund.

## ABOUT THE STAFF

**Inda Blatch-Geib's** (costume designer) work as a costume and production designer for over 1,000 theatrical, commercial, and film releases has spanned 30 years and crossed four continents. Blatch-Geib's production and costume design has included commercials for Footlocker, The West Virginia Lottery's national award winning campaigns, Microsoft, Under Armor, McDonald's, TroyBuilt, and The Original Mattress Factory, as well as the Cleveland Cavaliers' 1970s and 1980s themed videos, national spots for the team, and design for on court half-time shows including their mascot shield design. Her live performance and festival designs include Machine Gun Kelly's US and European tours as well as ESTFEST and Wolstein Arena productions, and her specialty projects include microphone stand designs for MGK and BlackBear. Print designs have included set styling for *Harper's Bazaar* UK Scarlett Johansson cover and spread as well as catalogue set styling for Foundations and Kilgore Trout. Additionally, Blatch-Geib's designs have been showcased in exhibits at The Smithsonian Institute with film projects including Ohio art direction of *The Signal* starring Laurence Fishburne, and production and costume design of the

soon to be released *The Con*. Theatrical design includes production and costume design for the special Broadway production of *Kris Kringle, The Musical*, costume design for the Cleveland Play House production of *Native Gardens*, as well as multiple productions for the Colombian National Opera. Music video production and costume design includes Machine Gun Kelly's "Alpha Omega" and "Let You Go" releases. Locally, Blatch-Geib has been the resident designer for Cleveland Public Theatre, Karamu House, Magical Theatre Company, New World Performance Lab and CIM.

**Dave Brooks** (lighting 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, The 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** (program director, CIM Opera Theater, and vocal coach) has performed extensively in Europe, the US, and Canada as soloist and accompanist. Originally from Aix-en-Provence, France, he is the recipient of many awards, including first prizes in the Radio-France Competition and the Paul and Verna Gelinias Competition. He studied at the Conservatoire Darius Milhaud and holds master's and doctoral degrees in piano performance from the University of Montreal as well as a master's degree in political science from the Institut d'Etudes Politiques in France.

He is a founder and editor of the website [dictionpolice.com](http://dictionpolice.com), a leading language resource for classical singers and institutions. He has given masterclasses and workshops on French vocal repertoire in Europe and throughout the US.

Since 2017, he has been on the music staff of the Semperoper in Dresden, Germany, as a guest vocal and language coach for new French productions. For the past 12 years, Germain has also been on the faculty of the University of Miami Frost School of Music Summer Program in Salzburg, Austria, one of Europe's longest running and most respected programs of its kind for singers and vocal pianists.



Prior to his engagement at CIM as vocal coach in 2019, Germain was an associate professor of piano and vocal coaching at the Crane School of Music at SUNY Potsdam in New York, where he was the head of the piano department and on the music staff of the Crane Opera Ensemble.

**Brittany Merenda** (projection designer) is an award-winning projection designer working in theater, opera, and dance throughout the country. Previous opera productions include *Our Town* (Georgia State University), *La Bohème* (Columbus Symphony, Jacksonville Symphony, and Cleveland Opera Theatre), *Come Home Gala* (The Washington National Opera), *Thérèse Raquin* (University of Alabama), *The Light In The Piazza* (Columbus State University), *Barber of Seville* and *Madama Butterfly* (Cleveland Opera Theatre), *La Finta Giardiniera* and *The Marriage of Figaro* (University of Tennessee Opera Theatre), *Alcina*, *Glory Denied*, and *Dialogues of the Carmelites* (Baldwin Wallace Conservatory and Penn State), *Little Women* and *Alcina* (Hawaii Performing Arts Festival), Verdi's *Macbeth* (Opera Tampa), *Carmen* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (The Lakes Area Music Festival), and *Tosca* (Opera Grand Rapids). Merenda received her Master of Arts in digital arts and sciences from the University of Florida

**John Simmons** (vocal coach and chorus master) received a Master of Music 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 6 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.

**Robert Sunderman** (set designer) graduated from the University of Iowa with a BFA, MA, and MFA 1982. He is a fine artist, scenic designer, scenic artist, and Iowa State University associate professor emeritus of theatre for 21 years. Prior to his work at ISU, he was the scenic designer at Iowa Public Television for 16 years. Sunderman has been teaching art classes at the Des Moines Art Center for over 30 years. He has designed and scenic painted over 284 shows during his career. He has received Iowa Film, National Broadcasting Designers, and Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival awards for his scenic designs and many fine art awards. He has been a fine artist throughout his life and has exhibited his work in over 288 exhibitions regionally and nationally. Sunderman's artwork is best described by this quote from him, "Not limiting materials is so important in my work. I use whatever best conveys the subject or story that I am addressing. I recently have been working on pieces dealing with renewal, fleeting moments, human intervention of natural cycles in a variety of medium. I want the work to convey a sense of beauty, but also confront the challenges we are faced with our environment, be hopeful and propose creative solutions." Sunderman recently exhibited an interactive sculpture as one of the artists, in a "Climate Change Planning Through Art" project. His work was recently included in the book *Chunghi Choo and Her Students*. Sunderman recently exhibited his work in national exhibitions in the September Exhibition at the Jones Gallery in Kansas City, Instant Inspiration online exhibition New York City, and the Vessel exhibition at the Dairy Art Center in Boulder, Colorado. He also has been in many other online exhibitions as well. He recently created scenic designs for Opera Iowa's (Des Moines Metro Opera) touring production of *Sid the Serpent Who Wanted to Sing*, Revival Theatre's production of the *Million Dollar Quartet* and Iowa PBS Studio 3 Live. In 2024 he will be scenic designing the set for Theatre Cedar Rapid's production of *School of Rock*.

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