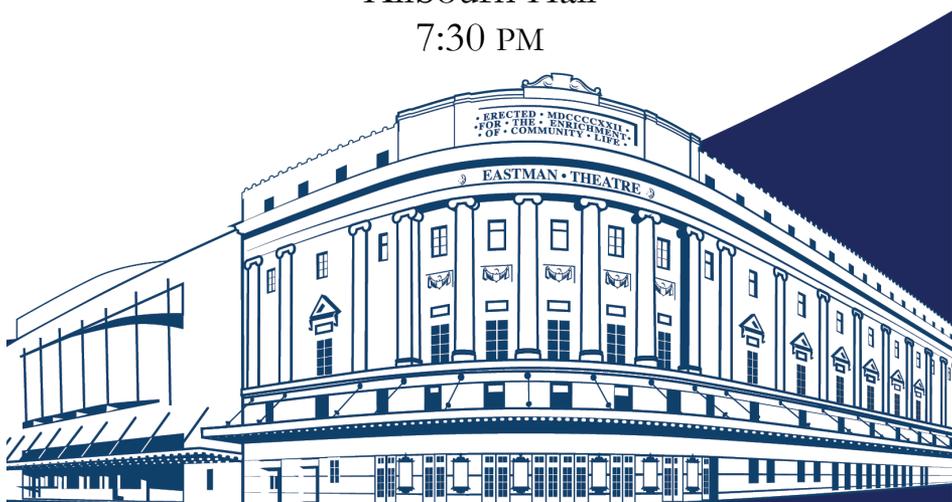


FRIENDS OF
Eastman Opera

25TH ANNUAL VOICE COMPETITION

Adjudicated by
ROBERT AINSLEY
*Artistic & General Director,
The Glimmerglass Festival*

Friday, February 20, 2026
Kilbourn Hall
7:30 PM



Eastman School of Music

PROGRAM

The 25th Annual Voice Competition is presented by the **Friends of Eastman Opera**, a group whose support and donations directly benefit Eastman vocal students. FEO's donors make this competition, as well as student travel grant funding, possible.

Opening Remarks

Timothy Long, Artistic and Music Director of Opera

Competition Program

Repertoire listed on following pages

Brief Pause

Awards Presentation

Robert Ainsley

Reception at Cominsky Promenade

Join us in Cominsky Promenade for light refreshments and to congratulate all finalists

PROGRAM

Amor ti vieta from *Fedora* Umberto Giordano
(1867-1948)

Oh, I feel cold inside from *Of Mice and Men* (1969) Carlisle Floyd
(1926-2021)

Winterstürme wichen dem Wonnemond Richard Wagner
from *Die Walküre, WWV 86B* (1813-1883)

Thomas Lynch IV, tenor
Samuel Leung, piano

Monica's Waltz from *The Medium* (1946) Gian Carlo Menotti
(1911-2007)

Wo bin ich? from *Hänsel und Gretel* Engelbert Humperdinck
(1854-1921)

Deh vieni, non tardar Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
from *Le Nozze di Figaro, K. 492* (1756-1791)

Mira Belanger, soprano
Peizhang Wu, piano

Je dis que rien ne m'épouvante from *Carmen* Georges Bizet
(1838-1875)

Czardas from *Die Fledermaus* Johann Strauss II
(1825-1899)

Ah! Fuggi il traditor! Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
from *Don Giovanni, K. 527* (1756-1791)

Karynna Moore-Sobel, soprano
Ailun Zheng, piano

PROGRAM

De' miei bollenti spiriti from *La Traviata* Giuseppe Verdi
(1813-1901)

La donna è mobile from *Rigoletto*

Kuda, kuda, kuda vi udalilis Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky
from *Eugene Onegin, Op. 24* (1840-1893)

Jason Garcia-Kakuk, tenor
Gregory Smith, piano

Près des remparts de Séville from *Carmen* Georges Bizet
(1838-1875)

Va! Laisse couler mes larmes from *Werther* Jules Massenet
(1842-1912)

Parto, parto Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
from *La Clemenza di Tito, K. 621* (1756-1791)

Yiran Guan, mezzo-soprano
Xi Huang, piano

Frère Voyez! Du gai soleil from *Werther* Jules Massenet
(1842-1912)

Ah! me!... O Jove! From *Semele, HWV 58* George Frideric Handel
(1685-1759)

Deh vieni, non tardar Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
from *Le Nozze di Figaro, K. 492* (1756-1791)

Emily Krasinski, soprano
Xiaoliang Qian, piano

PROGRAM

O du, mein holder Abendstern Richard Wagner
from *Tannhäuser*, *WV 70* (1813-1883)

Hai già vinta la causa! Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
from *Le Nozze di Figaro*, *K. 492* (1756-1791)

A Hundred Thousand Stars from *Out of Darkness* (2013) Jake Heggie
(b. 1961)

Owen Gavigan, baritone
Wanxin Yu, piano

To This We've Come from *The Consul* (1949) Gian Carlo Menotti
(1911-2007)

Měsíčku na nebi hlubokém (Song to the Moon) Antonín Dvořák
from *Rusalka*, *B. 203* (1841-1904)

Sì. Mi chiamano Mimì from *La bohème*, *SC 67* Giacomo Puccini
(1858-1924)

Mara Davis, soprano
Calvin Guse, piano

Je marche sur tous les chemins... Jules Massenet
Obéissons quand leur voix appelle from *Manon* (1842-1912)

Prendi, per me sei libero from *L'elisir d'amore* Gaetano Donizetti
(1797-1848)

Take Me Back (Emily's Aria) from *Our Town* (2006) Ned Rorem
(1923-2022)

Sarah Cao, soprano
Ty Taya Promreuk, piano

MEET THE SINGERS

A dual-degree student at the Eastman School of Music and the University of Rochester, **Mira Belanger** studies voice and data science. Recent operatic work includes covering Nina in EOT's *The Cure for Love* (2024) and performing in the chorus of *Ainadamar*. They currently student voice with Professor Griffey.

Canadian soprano **Sarah Cao** is a senior at the Eastman School of Music pursuing a dual-degree in vocal performance and business with a Catherine Filene Shouse Arts Leadership Certificate. At Eastman, Sarah was a soloist with the Bach Cantata Series, the cover for Mendelssohn's *Lobgesang* with Eastman Philharmonia, and "Yniold" in Eastman Opera Theatre's *Impressions de Pelléas*. This summer, she will be attending the Chautauqua Opera Conservatory as Papagena in *Die Zauberflöte* and Thérèse (cover) in *Les Mamelles de Tirésias*. Passionate about making the arts accessible to wider demographics, Sarah hopes to pursue a career in both performance and arts administration.

Soprano **Mara Davis** is a native of Henderson, Nevada and a second-year master's student at Eastman, studying under Kiera Duffy. Last year, she was a finalist in the Kneisel Lieder Competition and made her Eastman Opera Theatre Debut as the Witch in *H&G, a Great and Terrible Story*. She graduated summa cum laude from the University of Utah with a Bachelor of Music in Vocal Performance. She was a singer in the University Museum of Fine Arts' installation of Lee Ming Wei's *Sonic Blossom*. When she's not singing, Mara loves trivia, baking, photography, jigsaw puzzles, and anything Hello Kitty!

From Queenstown, MD, **Jason Garcia-Kakuk** was recently seen in North Carolina as a district winner in the Metropolitan Opera Laffont Competition. Other credits include The Steersman in *The Flying Dutchman* (Wagner) at Art Park and roles with Finger Lakes Opera as 2025 Studio Artist. Upcoming engagements include Eisenstein in *Die Fledermaus* here at Eastman, roles with the Opera Theatre of St. Louis as a Gerdine Young Artist, and as a Renée Fleming Artist at the Aspen Summer Music Festival. In his spare time, Jason enjoys reading, photography, and playing basketball.

MEET THE SINGERS

Owen Gavigan, a baritone, is a first-year Master's student in the performance and literature program with a focus in voice, studying with Professor Anthony Dean Griffey. Owen has portrayed diverse operatic and musical theatre roles, including Dom Claude Frollo in *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* and Aeneas in *Dido and Aeneas* at his alma mater William Paterson University, and Papageno in *Die Zauberflöte* at the Trentino Music Festival. Most recently, he was the cover of Old Andre in Eastman's production and world premiere of *CLICK!* Finally, Owen has competed several times at district and regional NATS auditions and placed first in the New York City chapter in 2024, first in the New Jersey chapter in 2025, and second in the Eastern Region in 2025.

Yiran Guan is a mezzo-soprano currently pursuing a Doctor of Musical Arts (DMA) degree in Vocal Performance and Literature at the Eastman School of Music, where she studies with Professor Nicole Cabell. Recent performances include Geneviève in *Impressions de Pelléas*, The Medium in *In a Grove*, Esther's Mom in *Silent Light*, Mother Jeanne in *Dialogues des Carmélites*, Martha Corey in *The Crucible*, and Ensemble in *Susannah*. She earned her Bachelor of Music in Music Education from the University of South Carolina School of Music, studying with Professor Janet Hopkins and completing a certificate in Vocal Performance. In 2023, she entered Eastman to pursue her Master's degree in Vocal Performance and Literature.

Soprano **Emily Krasinski** is celebrated for her clear sound and immense understanding of language and culture, which she showcases in each performance she gives. She is currently pursuing her bachelor's degree in both vocal performance and business, studying voice with Professor Anthony Dean Griffey. Emily is a skilled collaborator, focusing largely on ensemble singing large and small. Most recently, she organized, programmed and sang in a chamber concert featuring Brahms' *Liebeslieder-Waltzer* and Schumann's *Spanisches Liebeslieder*. Emily is hoping to continue her studies in music over the next two years as she is currently in the process of auditioning for graduate programs.

MEET THE SINGERS

Thomas Francis Lynch IV is a tenor from Arlington, VA. He received his Bachelor's of Music in Performance from the Sunderman Conservatory at Gettysburg College where he studied under Eastman alumnus, Dr. Susan Hochmiller. At Eastman, Thomas is a Second Year Master's of Music candidate studying with Prof. Robert Swensen. Thomas has performed in EOT's productions of *H&G, a Great and Terrible Story* (Father) and *Ainadamar* (Ruiz Alonso). He is an alumnus of the Washington National Opera Institute (2019), Opera Lucca (2022), & Musica Nelle Marche (2024). He was a National Semi-finalist at Classical Singer Convention (2024).

Karynna Moore-Sobel is a Senior Vocal Performance major at the Eastman School of Music under the study of Joshua Conyers. She attended the Netherlands Lyric Opera Festival the summer of 2025. There she performed the role of Nella and scenes of the Countess from *Le Nozze di Figaro*. She recently made her orchestral debut as a Soprano soloist in Kodak Hall singing Mendelssohn's *Lobgesang*. She was raised in Ashburn, Virginia as a classical pianist. At age 12, she discovered the opera world and began voice lessons. In her free time, she enjoys running and has run multiple half and full marathons.

MEET THE COLLABORATIVE PIANISTS

Pianist **Calvin Guse** is in his second year pursuing his MM in Piano Accompanying and Chamber Music at the Eastman School of Music, studying with Dr. Andrew Harley. A native of Wisconsin, he completed his undergraduate studies at UW-Madison in 2022, where he obtained degrees in piano performance and mathematics. He was also awarded the 2021 Lucille Kimball Scholarship award for piano from the university. Recent accomplishments include being a finalist at the 2025 Jessie Kneisel Lieder Competition and spending the summer at Brevard Music Center. At Eastman, Calvin serves as an assistant in studio accompanying.

Xi Huang is currently pursuing her doctoral study in Piano Accompanying and Chamber Music at Eastman School of Music with Dr. Andrew Harley, with a minor in Voice Performance with Professor Katherine Ciesinski. She is the recipient of the Brooks Smith Scholarship and holds graduate assistantships in vocal and instrumental accompanying as well as an assistantship with the Eastman Opera Theatre. Xi has attended numerous summer music festivals, including Bowdoin International Music Festival, Toronto Summer Music Festival Chamber Music Institute, Music Academy of the West and Songfest. In the summer of 2026, she is returning back to MAW as a vocal piano fellow.

Samuel Ka-Ming Leung is a collaborative pianist and classical saxophonist from Hong Kong whose work spans chamber music, art song, and orchestral keyboard. He has performed at major venues including the Beijing National Centre for Performing Arts, Taipei National Concert Hall, and Tokyo Opera City as a member of the Asian Youth Orchestra. Leung holds an MM in Piano Accompanying and Chamber Music from the Eastman School of Music, where he received the Barr Award in Accompanying, and is currently pursuing a DMA with graduate assistantships. He has appeared as an Orchestral Keyboard Fellow at the Aspen Music Festival.

MEET THE COLLABORATIVE PIANISTS

Ty Taya Promreuk is a Thai-American pianist studying with Alan Chow at the Eastman School of Music. She is an alum of festivals such as the International Summer Academy at Mozarteum University, Gijón International Piano Festival, Bay PianoFest, and Madeline Island Chamber Music Piano Fellowship Program. Taya is active as a collaborative pianist and a performer of contemporary music. She is also a two-time first prize winner of the MTNA National Composition Competition. In addition to her musical studies, she completed her bachelor's degree in biomedical engineering from Arizona State University in 2021. She enjoys cooking and learning languages.

Pianist **Xiaoliang Qian** is celebrated for his dynamic performances and technical mastery. Currently pursuing his doctorate at the Eastman School of Music under the mentorship of Professor Marina Lomazov, Xiaoliang is a prize winner in international and domestic competitions, including the Thousand Islands Competition and MTNA Young Artist Competition. Xiaoliang actively performs recitals and concerts in various venues worldwide, both as a soloist and collaborator. In recent years, he has enjoyed working with vocalists and instrumentalists from the Eastman School of Music. He is also the accompanist of the Lyric Chorale, which presents the Greater Rochester community with a wide variety of repertoire spanning classical, jazz, traditional and Broadway, among others.

Texas native **Gregory Smith** is a current DMA candidate for piano accompanying and chamber music at the Eastman School of Music, under the direction of Dr. Andrew Harley. An avid vocal collaborator, Gregory has participated as a fellow at SongFest (2022, 2023), the Toronto Summer Music Academy's "Art of Song" Program (2023), the Cincinnati Song Initiative's "Fellowship of the Song" (2025) and the Aspen Music Festival and School (2024, 2025). He also has placed twice in Eastman's Kneisel Lieder Competition (2022, 2023). He earned his MM from Eastman (2023) and his BM from Brigham Young University (2021).

MEET THE COLLABORATIVE PIANISTS

Peizhang Wu is a pianist currently studying at the Eastman School of Music. She received her undergraduate training at the Shanghai Conservatory of Music and completed her pre-college studies at the Affiliated Secondary School of Nanjing University of the Arts. Her musical education has been guided by Ran Dank, Natalya Antonova, Mo Cheung-Yu, Pan Chun, and Sun Gang.

Wanxin Yu was born in China. She graduated from Central Conservatory of Music, studying with Dr. Jialin Zhang. She also studied with Simon Lepper, the official accompanist of the 2024 BBC Cardiff World Vocal Competition, who praised her as being “very sensitive and intelligent, with a keen sense of music.” In 2023, Wanxin participated as a vocal pianist at the National Center for the Performing Arts of China. Currently, she is pursuing the degree of Master of Music in Piano Accompanying and Chamber Music with Dr. Andrew Harley at the Eastman School of Music.

Ailun Zheng is currently pursuing her doctoral study in Piano Performance and Literature at Eastman under the guidance of Alexander Kobrin. Some of her awards include first prize of the Millersville International Piano Competition, second prize and the best duo sonata prize at the PianoArts North American Competition, second prize of the Lancaster International Piano Competition, two-time winner of the Interlochen Arts Academy Concerto Competition, and first prize of the Texas State International Piano Festival Concerto Competition. Featured as a soloist, she has performed with the Ashdod Symphony Orchestra, Interlochen Arts Academy Orchestra, and the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra.

25th ANNUAL VOICE COMPETITION ADJUDICATOR

Active as an opera fanatic and factotum for over two decades, **Robert Ainsley** has explored every facet of the art form across the country, and lives to pass on his enthusiasm to others. He is an alumnus of the University of Cambridge, Mannes College of Music, and the Lindemann Young Artist Development Program at the Metropolitan Opera. Since then, he has been Co-founder and Principal Conductor of the Greenwich Music Festival, a guest Chorus Master at English National Opera, Associate Music Director at Portland Opera, Head of Music Staff and Chorus Master at Minnesota Opera and Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, and a faculty member at Westminster Choir College's CoOPERative Program.

He is now in his fourth season as the Artistic and General Director of the Glimmerglass Festival, one of America's most renowned summer festivals and New York State's second largest opera company located in Cooperstown, New York. In addition to leading a production of his own realization of Cavalli's *La Calisto* from the harpsichord in 2024, he also presided over the Festival's celebrations of its fiftieth anniversary in 2025, when it was the proud recipient of the inaugural International Opera Award for Best Musical for its production of *Sunday in the Park with George*.

Prior to this appointment, he was Director of the Washington National Opera's Cafritz Young Artists and the American Opera Initiative, seeking out and training the finest young American singers, composers, and librettists for international careers. His artists have performed on the world's leading stages, won the Metropolitan Opera National Council auditions, been finalists in Operalia, and performed with at the 2018 White House State Dinner for the President of France. A frequent recitalist, he has performed with some of the world's leading singers at many national institutions, including the White House, Supreme Court, Smithsonian Museums, National Gallery, Kennedy Center Honors, Wolf Trap National Park, embassies, and diplomatic residences. In 2020, he was featured in recital with world-famous soprano Renée Fleming as part of the Metropolitan Opera's "Met Stars Live in Concert" series.

VOICE, OPERA, AND VOCAL COACHING DEPARTMENT

Robert Swensen, *Chair of VOVC Department & Professor of Voice*

Lindsay Baker, *Instructor of Opera*

Nicole Cabell, *Associate Professor of Voice*

Octavio Cardenas, *Assistant Professor of Opera*

Katherine Ciesinski, *Martin E. and Corazon D. Sanders Professor of Voice*

Joshua Conyers, *Assistant Professor of Voice*

Kathryn Cowdrick, *Professor of Voice*

Alison d'Amato, *Associate Professor of Vocal Coaching*

Patrick Diamond, *Associate Professor of Opera & Director of Production, EOT*

Kiera Duffy, *Associate Professor of Voice*

Anthony Dean Griffey, *Professor of Voice*

Timothy Long, *Associate Professor of Opera & Artistic and Music Director, EOT*

Wilson Southerland, *Assistant Professor of Opera & Associate Music Director,
EOT*

Brock Tjosvold, *Assistant Professor of Vocal Coaching*

Chelsea Whitaker, *Assistant Professor of Vocal Coaching*

AFFILIATE VOVC FACULTY

Christina Balsam Curren, *Vocal Coach &
Associate Professor of German and German Lyric Diction*

Andrew Harley, *Associate Professor of Collaborative Piano &
Director, Piano Accompanying and Chamber Music*

Paul O'Dette, *Professor of Lute & Professor of Conducting and Ensembles*

William Weinert, *Professor of Conducting and Ensembles*

EMERITUS FACULTY

Steven Daigle, *Professor Emeritus of Opera*

UPCOMING VOICE AND OPERA EVENTS AT EASTMAN

FACULTY ARTIST SERIES

Alison D'Amato, piano

Wednesday, February 25, 2026 at 7:30 PM

Hatch Recital Hall

Music of Shostakovich, R. Nathaniel Dett for the Canadian Art Song Project (CASP), and Tom Cipullo

EASTMAN OPERA THEATRE

Die Fledermaus

April 9-11 at 7:30 PM

April 12 at 2:30 PM

Kodak Hall at Eastman Theatre

Music by Johann Strauss II

Libretto by Karl Haffner and Richard Genée

UPCOMING EASTMAN PRESENTS CONCERTS

Tickets for all series concerts can be purchased at EastmanTheatre.org

FACULTY ARTIST SERIES

Bob Sneider, jazz guitar

Sunday, February 22, 2026 at 3:30 PM

Hatch Recital Hall

FACULTY ARTIST SERIES

YooJin Jang, violin & Alexander Kobrin, piano

Tuesday, February 24, 2026 at 7:30 PM

Kilbourn Hall

FACULTY ARTIST SERIES

Juliana Athayde, violin

Sunday, March 1, 2026 at 7:30 PM

Kilbourn Hall

UPCOMING EASTMAN ENSEMBLE CONCERTS

All student performances are free unless otherwise noted.

Repertory Singers & Treble Chorus

Sunday, February 22, 2026 at 3:30 PM

Kilbourn Hall

Composers Sinfonietta

Wednesday, February 25, 2026 at 7:30 PM

Kilbourn Hall

Eastman Wind Ensemble

Friday, February 27, 2026 at 7:30 PM

Kodak Hall at Eastman Theatre

We acknowledge with respect the Seneca Nation, known as the “Great Hill People” and “Keepers of the Western Door” of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. We take this opportunity to thank the people whose ancestral lands the Eastman School of Music of the University of Rochester currently occupies in Rochester, New York.



For the most up to date information on Eastman concerts and events, scan this code to visit our online calendar.



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