



Kotte Lenya
THE LENYA
COMPETITION

Saturday 9 May 2026 Kilbourn Hall, Rochester, NY

Kotte Lenya

THE LENYA COMPETITION

A program of The Kurt Weill Foundation for Music

Today's events are streaming **LIVE** at: kwf.org/2026-finals

- 1:00 Kim H. Kowalke, Competition Founder:** Welcome and Introductions
- 1:15 Sadie Spivey**
 "Much More" from *The Fantasticks* Schmidt/Jones
 "I bought this suitcase in New York" from *Flight* Dove/De Angelis
 "Through the Mountain" from *Floyd Collins* Guettel
 "That's Him" from *One Touch of Venus* Weill/Nash
- 1:30 Erik Grendahl**
 "She Likes Basketball" from *Promises, Promises* Bacharach/David
 "Confession Aria" from *Dead Man Walking* Heggie/McNally
 "A Rhyme for Angela" from *The Firebrand of Florence* Weill/Gershwin
 "How Glory Goes" from *Floyd Collins* Guettel
- 1:45 Ilanna Starr**
 "Do It Alone" from *Parade* Brown
 "Simple Little Things" from *110 in the Shade* Schmidt/Jones
 "Denn wie man sich bettet, so liegt man"
 from *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny* Weill/Brecht
 "Sta nell'Ircana pietrosa tana" from *Alcina* Handel/Marchi
- 2:00 Stavros Koumbaros**
 "Something's Coming" from *West Side Story* Bernstein/Sondheim
 "New York Lights" from *A View from the Bridge* Bolcom/Weinstein/Miller
 "How Much I Love You" from *One Touch of Venus* Weill/Nash
 "For Her" from *The Great Gatsby* Howland/Tysen
- 2:15 Claire Griffin**
 "Pirate Jenny" from *The Threepenny Opera* Weill/Brecht (Blitzstein)
 "Falling in Love with Love" from *The Boys from Syracuse* Rodgers/Hart
 "Quanti mi siete intorno...Padre, germani, addio!"
 from *Idomeneo* Mozart/Varesco
 "Astonishing" from *Little Women* Howland/Dickstein

15-MINUTE INTERMISSION

- 2:45 Gemma Nha**
 "Esta es su carta" from *Gigantes y cabezudos* Caballero/Echegaray/Eizaguirre
 "Der Abschiedsbrief" Weill/ Kästner
 "A Quiet Thing" from *Flora the Red Menace* Kander/Ebb
 "I'd Give My Life for You" from *Miss Saigon* Schönberg/Boublil/Maltby
- 3:00 Dominic Delzompo**
 "Si puo signore signori!" from *Pagliacci* Leoncavallo
 "It's Hard to Speak My Heart" from *Parade* Brown
 "Grabschrift" from *Die Dreigroschenoper* Weill/Brecht
 "Her Face" from *Carnival!* Merrill
- 3:15 Francesca Mehrotra**
 "Waitin' for my Dearie" from *Brigadoon* Loewe/Lerner
 "Se giunge un dispetto" from *Agrippina* Handel/Grimani
 "It Never Was You" from *Knickerbocker Holiday* Weill/Anderson
 "First You Dream" from *Steel Pier/First You Dream* Kander/Ebb
- 3:30 Matthew Dexter**
 "I'll Be Here" from *The Wild Party* Lippa
 "Lieben, Hassen, Hoffen, Zagen" from *Ariadne auf Naxos* Strauss/von Hofmannsthal
 "O Tixo, Tixo, Help Me!" from *Lost in the Stars* Weill/Anderson
 "Ol' Man River" from *Show Boat* Kern/Hammerstein
- 3:45 Lila Chrisp**
 "Disprezzata regina" from *L'incoronazione di Poppea* Monteverdi/Busenello
 "Mister Snow" from *Carousel* Rodgers/Hammerstein
 "Seeräuberjenny" from *Die Dreigroschenoper* Weill/Brecht
 "I Won't Mind" Blumenkrantz/Kessler/Saines

TONIGHT

- 7:30 Audience Choice Award Showdown!** (*YOU decide the winner!*)
 The finalists perform a collection of show-stoppers and crowd-pleasers, with the audience in the hall determining the winner of the \$3,000 "**Audience Choice Award.**"
- 8:45 Presentation of Awards for The 2026 Lenya Competition**
 See who takes home the top prize!

1st Prize \$25,000 | 2nd Prize \$20,000 | 3rd Prize \$15,000
 Discretionary Awards \$6,000

Meet the Finalists

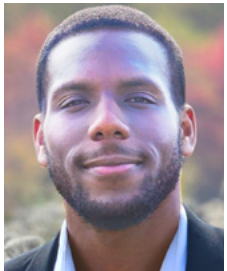


Winner of the 2023 Ton und Erklärung singing competition and nominated for “Young Artist of the Year” in *Opernwelt’s* Critics’ Survey 2025, British mezzo-soprano **Lila Chrisp** is a member of the soloist ensemble at Theater Freiburg in Germany. Her repertoire ranges from core opera roles (Charlotte, *Werther*; Hänsel, *Hänsel und Gretel*; Ruggiero, *Alcina*) to musicals and crossover projects (Amy, *Company*; Lucy, *Die Dreigroschenoper*), as well as several European and world premieres of contemporary operas. Also a keen performer of song repertoire, Lila has performed recitals at the Konzerthaus Berlin, Beethovenfest Bonn and the Münchner Künstlerhaus. Lila studied Music at Oxford University before completing an MA in Opera at the Royal Northern College of Music in Manchester.

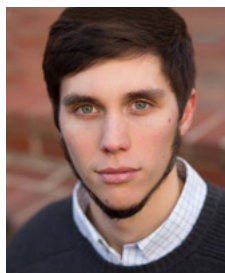
Dominic Delzompo is a bass-baritone, songwriter, composer, and music producer residing in Los Angeles, California. Dominic sang on the 2026 Grammy Award-winning recording of Gabriela Ortiz’s *Yanga*. In 2025, he released a 17-song album, *Hypomaniac God Complex*, as Intrnet [sic] Boyfriend which he supported with a 30-date tour. In 2024, Dominic returned to his alma mater, UCLA, as a Guest Artist to debut a role in *The Grand Hotel Tartarus*, and sang the roles of John F. Kennedy and Francis Crick in scenes from *LSD: The Opera* at REDCAT. In prior concert seasons, Dominic has sung at the Walt Disney Concert Hall, Carnegie Hall, Lincoln Center, the Hollywood Bowl, Pauley Pavilion, the Rose Bowl, and other venues.



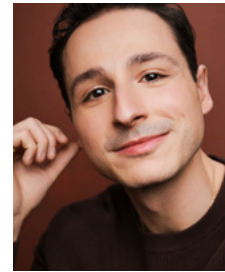
Matthew Dexter, bass-baritone from McKinney, TX, is a member of the 2026/27 Ryan Opera Center ensemble at the Lyric Opera of Chicago, and recently earned his MM degree in Early Music Voice from Yale University and the Yale Institute of Sacred Music. While at Yale he performed in *Jephtha* (Zebul), *Siddhartha*, *She* (Abinaswar), and *Il martirio di Sant’Orsola* (Guilio), and toured internationally as Raphael in *Die Schöpfung* with Yale Schola Cantorum. As a vocal fellow at Spoleto Festival USA he appeared in multiple choral concerts, the 2022 world premiere of the Pulitzer Prize-winning opera *Omar*, and *Vanessa* as the Old Doctor. Dexter toured as a soloist with Apollo’s Fire Baroque Orchestra in the winter of 2025 and recently performed with the Berkeley Community Chorus and Orchestra as an invited soloist.



Praised for his “smooth, copper-hued baritone” (*Opera News*), **Erik Grendahl** has appeared with Lyric Opera of Kansas City, Virginia Opera, Opera Baltimore, Santa Fe Opera, and Opera Theatre of Saint Louis. A graduate of The Juilliard School, his roles range from Figaro in *Il barbiere di Siviglia* to Escamillo in *Carmen* and Joseph De Rocher in *Dead Man Walking*. As an Apprentice Artist at Santa Fe Opera, he debuted as the Steersman in *Tristan und Isolde* and René Gallimard in *M. Butterfly*. An accomplished concert soloist, his repertoire includes major works by Bach, Brahms, Finzi, and Fauré. Erik is a winner of the George and Nora London Competition, a Metropolitan Opera Laffont Competition Semifinalist, and a 3rd prizewinner in the Gerda Lissner Lieder/Song Competition.



Claire Griffin is a soprano and actress from Brevard, NC. 2026 engagements: Mabel (*The Pirates of Penzance*), Ilia (*Idomeneo*), Soprano Soloist (Mahler, Symphony No. 4). Recent: Adina (*L’elisir d’amore*), Polly Peachum (*The Threepenny Opera*), Barbarina (*Le nozze di Figaro*), Mag (Richard Wargo’s *Ballymore*), Adele (*Die Fledermaus*), Deanna Durbin and Judy Garland u/s (*Chasing Rainbows: A New Musical*). She has sung at Goodspeed Opera House, Washington National Cathedral, Aspen Music Festival, Piedmont Opera, Greensboro Opera, and the Brevard Music Center. Claire joins The Florentine Opera’s Donald and Donna Baumgartner Studio Artist Program in the fall to sing Annina (*La traviata*), Nella (*Gianni Schicchi*), and Papagena (*The Magic Flute*). She received her PAC/MM from the A.J. Fletcher Opera Institute.



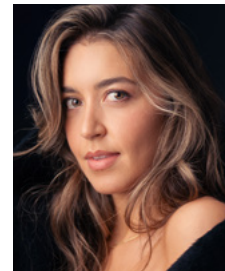
Stavros Koumbaros is honored to be back at this year’s Lenya competition after being a 2023 finalist. A Brooklyn-based singer and actor, Stavros has appeared in the national tour of *Les Misérables* (Joly, u/s Marius). Regional credits include *Beautiful* (Barry) at WPPAC, *Titanic* (Fleet) at Milwaukee Kes Rep, *West Side Story* (Tony) at Summer Rep, and *Jesus Christ Superstar* (Jesus). Stavros holds a BFA from the Cincinnati Conservatory of Music. Many thanks to his coaches Joey, Hannah, and Jen, as well as his family and friends for their constant support. stavroskoumbaros.com

Francesca Mehrotra is an Indian-American singer / actor who finds her artistic home in telling stories through song and is thrilled to return to the Lotte Lenya Competition for the third time! Francesca is currently playing Christine Daaé in *Masquerade* (NYC debut), the off-Broadway immersive revival of *The Phantom of the Opera*, directed by Diane Paulus. Recent appearances include Caroline in *Titanic* at the Marriott Theatre, *A Little Night Music* at Ogunquit Playhouse, Johanna in *Sweeney Todd* with Pacific Symphony, Mabel in *The Pirates of Penzance* at Opera Colorado, Clara (u/s) in *The Light in the Piazza* at Central City Opera, Gilda in *Rigoletto* at Opera Colorado, and *A Gentleman’s Guide to Love and Murder* at the Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey. All Glory to God. francescamehrotra.com. Instagram: @francesca.mehrotra.



Praised for her “pure musical pageantry” (*Chicago Tribune*), Korean-Australian soprano **Gemma Nha** is in the ensemble at Volksoper Wien, where she has performed Pamina (*Die Zauberflöte*), Maria (*West Side Story*), and Wendla (*Spring Awakening*). This summer Gemma makes her Sydney Opera House debut as Gilda (*Rigoletto*). Gemma trained with Lyric Opera of Chicago’s Ryan Opera Center, Wolf Trap and Santa Fe Opera, and earned an MM from Juilliard (Kovner Fellow) and a BA from Univ. of Music and Performing Arts Vienna. She was the first female vocal winner at the Seoul International Music Competition and a National Semifinalist of the Laffont Competition. Credits include Soeur Constance (*Dialogues des Carmélites*); Ruth Baldwin (*Later the Same Evening*); Zerlina (*Don Giovanni*); and Tuptim (*The King and I*).

Sadie Spivey is a singer, actor, and director who tells dynamic stories through contemporary idioms and canonic repertoire. Recent engagements include new works by Christopher Cerrone (*In a Grove*), Emma O’Halloran (*A Mass For Women In Bathrooms*), and repertory favorites *La Vie Parisienne* and *My Fair Lady*. Drawn to cross-genre work, she recently co-divided a new rock opera, *1518*, performed Poulenc’s seminal monodrama *La voix humaine*, and presented a fully staged song recital produced by City Lyric Opera. She is a graduate of the Vocal Arts Program at Bard Conservatory (MM Vocal Arts) and Penn State (BM Voice Performance, BFA Acting). @sadiespivey



Canadian-American mezzo-soprano **Ilanna Starr** is a Studio Artist with Atlanta Opera, following a two-year residency at Opéra de Montréal’s Atelier Lyrique. Recent roles include Flora in *La traviata* (Atlanta Opera), L’enfant in *L’enfant et les sortilèges* (Tanglewood), the Baker’s Wife in *Into the Woods* (Opera North), and Nerone in *L’incoronazione di Poppea* (Opéra de Montréal). She trained at Tanglewood, SongFest, and Chautauqua, and will appear with Opera Neo, the Ravinia Steans Institute, and the Britten-Pears Young Artist Programme. A two-time Laffont Award winner and Belvedere Competition semifinalist, she has also received prizes from the National Opera Association and NSAL. A lover of dogs, rush tickets, and rage arias, Ilanna sings from her heart and laughs from her belly (and vice versa). ilanastarr.com @ilannastarr

2026 Finals Judges

Kyle Scatliffe currently appears as the Phantom in the off-Broadway production of *Masquerade* and previously played Marquis de Lafayette/Thomas Jefferson in the Broadway production of *Hamilton*. His theatrical credits include *Enjolras (Les Misérables)*, Harpo (*The Color Purple*) on Broadway, Haywood Patterson in the London premiere production of *The Scottsboro Boys* (Olivier Award Nomination), Coalhouse in *Ragtime* (Zach Theatre), Jud Fry in *Oklahoma!* (5th Avenue Theatre), Marley in *A Christmas Carol: The Concert* (Baltimore Symphony Orchestra/PBS) and Mitch Mahoney in *25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee* (Alabama Shakespeare Festival). He has appeared in television roles on "Bull" (CBS) and "Chicago P.D." (NBC). Kyle is a graduate of the American Musical and Dramatic Academy in New York and a prizewinner of the 2010 Lenya Competition.



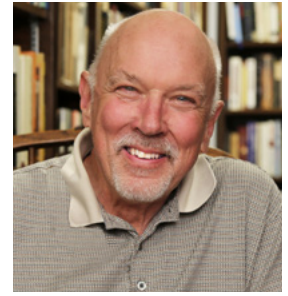
Ted Sperling is the Artistic Director of MasterVoices, was music director of the recent Broadway productions of *Floyd Collins* and *My Fair Lady*, and leads the NYU Broadway Orchestra. A long-time Kurt Weill and Lotte Lenya enthusiast, he has led MasterVoices' productions of *The Firebrand of Florence*, *Knickerbocker Holiday*, *The Road of Promise* and *Lady in the Dark*, and directed/conducted selections from *Street Scene* at NYU. Mr. Sperling enjoyed judging this competition with the legendary Teresa Stratas and Ted Chapin in 2007 and is delighted to return! Mr. Sperling won the 2005 Tony and Drama Desk Awards for his orchestrations of *The Light in the Piazza*, for which he was also music director. Broadway and off-Broadway credits: *Fiddler on the Roof*, *The King and I*, *South Pacific*, *Guys and Dolls*, *Dirty Rotten Scoundrels*, *The Full Monty*, *A Man of No Importance*, *A New Brain*, *Floyd Collins*, *Sunday in the Park with George*, and *Titanic* (as an original cast member). He has directed the premieres of four off-Broadway musicals: *Red Eye of Love*, *The Other Josh Cohen*, *See What I Wanna See*, and *Striking 12*. Mr. Sperling has conducted and/or directed *Show Boat* with the NY Philharmonic; *The Pirates of Penzance*, *A Chorus Line* and *Cabaret* for the Public Theater; *Sweet Smell of Success*, *Of Thee I Sing*, *The Grapes of Wrath*, *Dido and Aeneas*, and *Orfeo ed Euridice*, all for MasterVoices, and guest conducted major symphony orchestras worldwide including Iceland Symphony, Philadelphia Orchestra, and Toronto Symphony. He will make his Hollywood Bowl debut this summer. www.tedsperling.net.

Jeanine Tesori is a composer of musical theater, opera, and film. She is a two-time recipient of the Tony Award for Best Score and a two-time Finalist for the Pulitzer Prize for Drama. In 2015, she and Lisa Kron became the first female team to win the Tony for Best Score for *Fun Home*. Her other works include *Kimberly Akimbo* (with David Lindsay-Abaire); *Soft Power* (David Henry-Hwang); *Caroline, or Change* (Tony Kushner); *Mother Courage and Her Children* (Tony Kushner); *Twelfth Night* (LCT); *Violet* (Brian Crawley); *Thoroughly Modern Millie* (Dick Scanlan); and *Shrek The Musical* (David Lindsay-Abaire). For her opera, *Grounded* (with librettist George Brant), she became one of the first two women to be commissioned by the Metropolitan Opera, and the first woman in its history to open a season. Her operas include *A Blizzard on Marblehead Neck* (Tony Kushner); *The Lion, The Unicorn and Me* (J. D. McClatchy); and *Blue* (Tazewell Thompson), which received the MCANA Award for Best New Opera. Tesori is the founding Artistic Director of New York City Center's Encores! Off-Center Series. She is the co-creator of the Cast Album Project, with Taneisha Duggan and Anne Kauffman, and tall popPy, a mentoring and micro-financing initiative cofounded with Darren Biggart and Torya Beard. She was the Supervising Vocal Producer on Steven Spielberg's *West Side Story* and wrote the score for numerous Disney animated sequels, including *Mulan 2* (with Alexa Junge). Tesori is a graduate of Barnard College, a Professor of Practice at Yale University, and a proud member of The Dramatists Guild.



Competition Founder

In 1981 **Kim H. Kowalke** succeeded Lotte Lenya as President of the Kurt Weill Foundation and has now served as its CEO for 45 years. In 1986 he joined the faculty of the Eastman School of Music and founded the music department in the College of the University of Rochester. He also founded the Kurt Weill Edition (1993) and the Lenya Competition (1998), while teaching full-time as Professor of Musicology and the Turner Professor in Humanities. He also established the musical theater workshop at the University, and conducted dozens of productions, including three for Eastman Opera. In 2020, he received the Erwin Piscator Award for his contributions to international musical theater.



Accompanists



Lyndon Meyer has served as chorus master, assistant conductor, principal pianist, and vocal coach for Tulsa Opera since 2014. Recent and upcoming conducting credits include *Tosca* (Tulsa Opera), *South Pacific* (The Will Rogers Stage Foundation), *La Bohème* and *Rigoletto* (Heartland Opera Theatre) and *The Barber of Seville* (Opera Santa Barbara). He has held vocal coach positions at the Univ. of Oklahoma, Michigan State Univ., ESM, Florida Grand Opera, and the OK Mozart International Festival. He is an in-demand recitalist and Director of Music at Tulsa's Church of St. Mary. Mr. Meyer is a graduate of the Univ. of Arkansas (BM) and ESM (MM) and has served as staff accompanist for the Lenya Competition since 2009.

Shane Schag is a member of the Vocal Arts and Musical Theater Depts. at the Manhattan School of Music, where he music directed *And the World Goes 'Round*, *Godspell*, *Ragtime*, *A Little Night Music*, *Moving Right Along*, *Defying Gravity* and *September Songs*. He has also served as an associate conductor to David Loud on *Nine*, *Cabaret*, *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*, and *The Drowsy Chaperone*. Shane has also been a faculty member of OperaWorks, International Vocal Arts Institute, Chautauqua Opera, Vocal Coach Asia (Singapore), and the Creative Voice Institute (Taiwan). He premiered with Lisa Vroman and William Sharp a revue showcasing music of Weill and Marc Blitzstein.



ABOVE: 2026 Semifinals Coach/Adjudicators: Two-time Tony Award-winning actress and director, **Victoria Clark** (L) with Galilei Njembo, and Broadway music director and conductor, **Andy Einhorn** (R) with Madelin Morales. The eighteen semifinalists, representing five countries (Australia, Namibia, Netherlands, UK, and USA), each received a travel stipend and a prize of \$1,250.

Join us Tonight!

LIVE AT KILBOURN HALL

7:30 PM

AUDIENCE
CHOICE
AWARD
SHOWDOWN

YOU choose
the winner!

\$3,000 PRIZE

8:45 PM

AWARDS
PRESENTATION

PRIZES TOTALING
OVER \$90,000

TOP PRIZES

1ST \$25,000

2ND \$20,000

3RD \$15,000

You can also watch **LIVE** at [kwf.org/2026-finals](https://www.kwf.org/2026-finals)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Kurt Weill Foundation is grateful to the University of Rochester's Eastman School of Music for hosting today's events in Kilbourn Hall. In particular, Katharine Schimmer, Associate Dean for Artistic Planning; Julia Ng, Artistic Administration Director; Jess Green, House Manager; Deirdre Graves, Kilbourn Hall Stage Manager; Jason Milton, Video Producer. The KWF would also like to thank the Opera Guild of Rochester and David Runzo.

Competition Administration

Kim H. Kowalke, President & CEO

Brady Sansone, Director of Programs, Competition Administrator

Ed Harsh, Publicity

[kwf.org](https://www.kwf.org)