

CEDAR  
RAPIDS  
**OPERA**

SEASON  
**28**



C U P I D  
**CABARET**

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 6, 2026 | 7 pm

*Olympic South Side Theater*

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# ABOUT THE ARTISTS



## **AYGUL GARRYEVA**

CONTRALTO, UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN IOWA

Aygul Garryeva, contralto from Ashgabat, Turkmenistan, is a current graduate student at the University of Northern Iowa pursuing a Master's degree in Vocal Performance. There she is studying with Dr. Suzanne Hendrix. Her upcoming performances include Prince Orlofsky in *Die Fledermaus* with UNI Opera and a mezzo solo in Rachmaninov's *Vespers* with UNI Concert Chorale. Her past scene roles include the title role in *Carmen*, Baba in *The Medium*, Octavian in *Der Rosenkavalier*, Dorabella in *Così fan tutte*, and The Third Lady in *Magic Flute*. In her spare time, Aygul enjoys visiting the botanical gardens, and sharing time with family and friends.

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## **JIARUI MAO**

SOPRANO, UNIVERSITY OF IOWA

Jiarui Mao is a soprano from China and a Third-year Doctor of Musical Arts (DMA) candidate at the University of Iowa. She holds degrees from the Manhattan School of Music and the Wuhan Conservatory. As a versatile performer, she has sung leading roles such as Saturn (*Pluto*), Fiordiligi (*Così fan tutte*) and Suzel (*L'amico Fritz*). She covered Mimì (*La bohème*) and appeared in scenes as Giuditta (*Giuditta*), Cleopatra (*Giulio Cesare*), Mimì (*La bohème*), Zi Jun (*Shang Shi*), and Hua Mulan (*Mulan Poem*). Future credits include Angelica from *Suor Angelica* and Nella from *Gianni Schicchi*. She is passionate about performing in multiple languages and has received praise for her expressive interpretations of art songs in Czech, Portuguese, German, Italian, French, English, Chinese, and Russian. As a performer-scholar, she bridges Eastern and Western operatic traditions with a focus on historically informed performance. Outside of music, Jiarui is also a dancer and fashion model, and enjoys capturing life's moments through photography.

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## **CALVIN BOMAN**

BARITONE, MOUNT MERCY UNIVERSITY

Calvin is in his final semester at MMU for his Bachelor's in Music. He is so glad to finally be taking part in his first production with the CR Opera. He's worked with area theatre companies recently playing Bert in *Mary Poppins* (CCTC), Shakespeare in *Something Rotten!* (TCR), Gleb Vaganov in *Anastasia* (CCTC), and Link Larkin in *Hairspray* (TCR). BruceMore featured him (voice, saxophone) last summer for their "Music in the Courtyard" concert series. This year he will be performing at TCR in *Guys and Dolls* (featured dancer) and in *The Little Mermaid* (Chef Louis, a dream role of his).

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## **SONJA BLOESER**

MEZZO-SOPRANO, LUTHER COLLEGE

Sonja is thrilled to be working with CR Opera for the first time! She is a current senior at Luther College studying music with a concentration in vocal performance. She was recently in a production of *Lakmé* with Chicago Summer Opera as Mistress Bentson, and has previously done several productions with Luther College Opera, the most recent of which being selected scenes with orchestra from *The Magic Flute* as the Third Lady. This May, she will be performing in her first principal role as Miss Todd in *The Old Maid and the Thief*. She hopes you enjoy the show!

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## **JOSEPHINE KOPPES**

SOPRANO, DRAKE UNIVERSITY

Josephine Koppes is a sophomore studying vocal performance at Drake University. A soprano from Ely, Iowa, she has performed in chorus roles in Drake Opera Theatre's production of Mozart's *The Magic Flute* and Opera Quad Cities' production of Strauss's *Die Fledermaus*. In February, Josephine will be featured as a chorus member/featured dancer in Drake Opera Theatre's production of Bizet's *Carmen*. Studying most recently under Bradley Barrett and Leanne Freeman-Miller, Josephine is so excited to perform in her hometown again!

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## **JACK POWER**

BARITONE, UNIVERSITY OF IOWA

Jack Power is a 6th semester student at the University of Iowa working toward a Bachelors of Arts studying vocal performance. Jack is currently studying under the tutelage of Dr. Keely Futterer. Jack has also previously studied in Salzburg, Austria, through the Frost School of Music Vocal Program, and hopes to work toward a future career in opera. Jack made his opera debut at the University of Iowa as Gasparo in Donizetti's *Rita* and was recently a principal role in the University of Iowa's 2025 Fall opera *The Classical Style* as Beethoven.

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## **SHERRY XIA**

MEZZO-SOPRANO, UNIVERSITY OF IOWA

Sherry Xia is currently a Music Therapy MA student and began studying classical voice in college two and a half years ago. She has been fascinated by the world of classical singing and opera! In this cabaret, she is honored to present “Voi che sapete,” voicing the vivid, restless emotions of young love through the words of a confused and passionate young man – Cherubino.

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## **EILEEN GAVIN**

SOPRANO, UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN IOWA

Eileen Gavin graduated from University of Northern Iowa with a Bachelor of Music in Vocal Performance, and returned to UNI to start her Masters degree in Vocal Performance in 2024. That spring, she performed as Fiordiligi from *Così fan tutte* and Contessa in *Le nozze di Figaro* as part of a Mozart scenes selection. She joined CROpera's production of *Die Fledermaus* as ensemble in January and currently anticipates appearing as Rosalinde in UNI's production of the same opera. She actively participates as soprano section leader for the Cedar Heights Community Presbyterian Church as well as avidly bakes, crochets, and puzzles.

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## **KARLEE NELSON**

SOPRANO, IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY

Karlee Nelson is a soprano from Des Moines, Iowa and a recent graduate of Iowa State University. During her time at Iowa State she participated in Opera Studio, was a winner of the Fort Dodge Area Symphony Young Artists Competition for her performance of “Les oiseaux dans la charmille” from *Les Contes d’Hoffmann*, the soprano soloist in Fauré’s Requiem for the Ames Good Neighbor Concert, and the featured vocalist for several Iowa State commencement ceremonies. Karlee has been teaching choir while preparing and auditioning for graduate programs, and plans to pursue a Masters in Vocal Performance in the fall of 2026.

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## **LYOVA MERKLE**

BARITONE, KIRKWOOD COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Lyova Merkle is from Coralville, Iowa, holding an Associate of Applied Arts degree in music and currently studying voice at Kirkwood Community College under Dr. Juan Carlos Mendoza. His recent credits include *Frozen: The Musical* (Ensemble/Hans Understudy) with Theatre Cedar Rapids and Kirkwood productions *Into the Woods* (Wolf/Cinderella's Prince), *Silent Sky* (Peter Shaw), and *Chicago* (Billy Flynn). This summer, he will work as a teaching artist with Young Footliters Traveling Playhouse in Coralville. Upcoming performances include *Guys and Dolls* and Disney's *The Little Mermaid* at TCR. Lyova will continue his music studies at the University of Iowa this fall.

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## **ISABEL MORALES**

SOPRANO, IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY

Isabel Morales is a senior at Iowa State University studying Vocal Music Education. She has carried on her passion for singing and performing into college by being part of the Iowa State Singers for now eight semesters. Besides choir, Isabel also sings regularly for the premiere jazz band at Iowa State, and has directed show choir for four years in Johnston, Iowa. In terms of solo singing, she's a four-time winner of NATS (National Association of Teachers of Singing) which she just competed in this last fall. She has also been a part of numerous musical/opera productions such as *Les Miserables* (Ensemble), *Once Upon a Mattress* (Flute/Piccolo), *Cinderella* (Marie), *Die Fledermaus* (Rosalinda), and multiple opera scenes through Iowa State's Opera Studio. While being an aspiring teacher, Isabel loves performing, and hopes to find a way to continue that passion while teaching!

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## **CAMDEN STONE**

TENOR, IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY

Camden Stone, from Ankeny, Iowa, is a senior at Iowa State University pursuing a degree in Vocal Music Education. He is a member of the ISU Opera Studio and the Iowa State Singers, the university's top choral ensemble. Through Opera Studio, Camden has performed various smaller productions and scenes programs. Last year, Camden performed the role of Eisenstein in ISU Opera Studio's production of *Die Fledermaus*. Camden recently earned first place at the NATS Central Regional competition and continues to develop under the instruction of Chad Sonka. In addition to his performance work, he holds a student position as a voice teacher at Lott Music Studio, furthering his professional experience in the field.

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## **ANDREW COX**

BARITONE, IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY

Andrew Cox is a baritone studying under Chad Sonka at Iowa State University. Recently, he performed the role of Dr. Falke from Strauss II's *Die Fledermaus* at Lyric Opera Studio Weimar in Weimar, Germany. He will be returning there this summer to perform the role of Papageno from Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte*. He has performed other roles as part of the ISU Opera Studio, such as Dr. Falke in *Die Fledermaus* and partial roles in scenes productions of Goble's *The Miller's Daughter* (National Opera Association National Conference Performance), Gilbert and Sullivan's *The Pirates of Penzance*, and Rossini's *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*. Andrew is also a recent recipient of the Des Moines Metro Opera Guild-Ames Chapter Scholarship, which is awarded to students that show a promise in the field of opera performance.

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## **KAMRYN WHITE**

SOPRANO, KIRKWOOD COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Kamryn is a second year student at Kirkwood Community College in the process of obtaining her AAA music degree. She has done multiple theatrical productions, including *Into the Woods* and *Urinetown* at Kirkwood, *13 The Musical* at RHCR, as well as *Newsies* and *Les Mis* at Linn-Mar High School. This will be Kamryn's first professional opera credit and she is very excited for this introduction into the opera community!

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**GEORGIA LABOUNTY**  
SOPRANO, WARTBURG COLLEGE

Georgia LaBounty is a soprano from West Des Moines. She is in her third year at Wartburg College, where she is pursuing a degree in Vocal Performance. On campus, she participates in Opera Workshop, where she has had the opportunity to engage in multiple productions. These roles include “Mother” in Humperdinck’s *Hänsel und Gretel*, “Catherine” in Offenbach’s *Le mariage aux lanternes*, and “Countess Charlotte” in Sondheim’s *A Little Night Music*. Later this month, Georgia will also play “Laurie” in Aaron Copland’s *The Tender Land*.

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## **KAYLEE OXENDALE**

SOPRANO, DRAKE UNIVERSITY

Kaylee Oxendale is a soprano studying under Leanne Freeman-Miller at Drake University. During her time at Drake, Kaylee has performed on stage in Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte* (First Spirit) and J. Strauss's *Die Fledermaus*, as well as scenes from Adamo's *Little Women* (Amy) and Delibes's *Lakmé* (Rose). Upcoming performances for Kaylee include *Carmen* (Frasquita) at Drake University and *Gianni Schicchi* (Lauretta) for the Harrower Opera Program.

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## **JAY BURKEN**

TENOR, MOUNT MERCY UNIVERSITY

Jay Burken is a musician based in Cedar Rapids, Iowa. Jay is a 2006 graduate of Washington High School and currently attends Mount Mercy University, studying secondary music education. Locally, he has performed in, and directed, productions with Cedar Rapids Opera, Theatre Cedar Rapids, and Giving Tree Theater, also singing as a soloist with the Cedar Rapids Concert Chorale. Memorable roles include Bert in *Mary Poppins* and Pirelli in *Sweeney Todd*. Jay choreographed Cedar Rapids Opera's production of *The Threepenny Opera* and this is his twelfth professional opera credit, last seen in CROperá's production of *Strokes of Genius: The Grant Wood Operas*.

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**DR. NICHOLAS SHANEYFELT**

LUTHER COLLEGE

Nicholas Shaneyfelt is Associate Professor of Music in Collaborative Piano at Luther College in Decorah, Iowa, where he coaches singers, provides musical direction for the opera program, and collaborates in recitals regularly with faculty and students. He completed doctoral studies in the Collaborative Piano studio of Martin Katz at the University of Michigan. Prior to Michigan, he served as Staff Accompanist for the Department of Music and Dance at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. Dr. Shaneyfelt tours frequently with the Piatigorsky Foundation, an organization that aims to bring live classical music to underserved regions of the country.

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*Home concert tickets are limited, so be sure to get yours soon!*

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