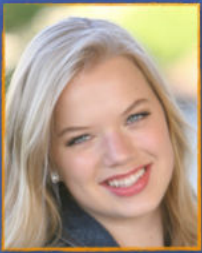


Bellissima Opera & Song's 'UNDER 30'

Showcasing Chicago's Rising Young Performers
From Classical to Cabaret

Sunday, March 29, 2026, 4pm PianoForte Chicago



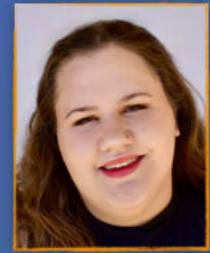
Karissa Burkhardt
soprano



Jasmine Doll
soprano



Kunying Li
soprano



Hannah Grace Weber
mezzo-soprano



Brandon Burkhardt
Tenor



Peter Lorenzo
Tenor



Chiemerie Obianom
Baritone



Harrison Mueller
Bass



Dana Brown
Collaborative Pianist



Claudia Hommel



Carl Ratner



Christine Steyer

Hosts & Master Class Teachers

Special Thanks

Kerri and Brian Burkhardt, Juliana Engel Storms, Katie Rub, Illinois Creative Accelerator Grant, Concordia University Printing & PianoForte Chicago. Working In Concert acknowledges support from the Illinois Arts Council.

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BellissimaOpera.com

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March 29, 2026

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Jasmine Doll, *soprano*
Kunying Li, *soprano*
Hannah Grace Weber, *mezzo-soprano*

Brandon Burkhardt, *tenor*
Peter Lorenzo, *tenor*
Chiemerie Obianom, *baritone*
Harrison Mueller, *bass*

Dana Brown, *Collaborative Pianist*

Claudia Hommel, Carl Ratner & Christine Steyer, *Hosts & Master Class Teachers*

Opening

If Music Be the Food of Love/It's a Grand Night for Singing Henry Purcell/William Shakespeare
Richard Rodgers/Oscar Hammerstein II

Welcome & Stories of Old

Unis dès la plus tendre enfance FROM *Iphigénie en Tauride* Christoph Willibald Gluck
Da tempeste il legno infranto FROM *Giulio Cesare* George Frederic Handel
It is Enough FROM *Elijah* Felix Mendelssohn

Spirits and the Tender-Hearted

Vilja FROM *Die lustige Witwe* Franz Lehár
La mort d'Ophélie Camille Saint-Saëns/Ernest Legouvé
Evensong Liza Lehmann/Constance Morgan

Love Rules (for Better or Worse)

Ne me quitte pas Jacques Brel
O Mistress Mine Roger Quilter/William Shakespeare
I Want to Die While You Love Me H. T. Burleigh/Georgia Douglas Johnson

Characters on the Edge

Glitter and Be Gay FROM *Candide* Leonard Bernstein/Richard Wilbur
I Am Easily Assimilated FROM *Candide* Leonard Bernstein
Lonely Room FROM *Oklahoma!* Richard Rodgers/Oscar Hammerstein II
It's My Wedding FROM *The Enchanted Pig* Jonathan Dove/Alasdair Middleton

New Stories for New Times

Who Owns This Land? FROM *Proving Up* Missy Mazzoli/Royce Vavrek
Love to Me FROM *The Light in the Piazza* Adam Guettel
The Universe Sings FROM *Future Perfect* David Shenton/Christina Lee
200 Million Cells FROM *Future Perfect* David Shenton/Christine Steyer

...All are invited to our on-site reception to celebrate with the artists...

In 2019, Bellissima Opera & Song Founder and Artistic Director Christine Steyer joined with Claudia Hommel's many cabaret projects to form the performing arts alliance Working In Concert. Carl Ratner joined as Associate Artistic Director of Bellissima in 2023.

Our goal is to reflect the great diversity of Chicago's population in the artists we work with, the audiences we entertain, the themes we embrace. As a key pillar of Working In Concert's vocal arts initiatives, Bellissima Opera produces concerts on unique themes, often showcasing newer American songs, operas, and works by women. Bellissima also creates and presents new operas from its award-winning *Tales of Transcendence*.

Since 2008, our outreach program, Bellissima Opera & Song *In the Classroom*, has brought music to more than 25,000 students from kindergarten through high school to grow new generations of classical music lovers.

Brandon Burkhardt, tenor, is honored to perform with Bellissima Opera! He is a recent graduate of the University of Iowa, with degrees in Vocal Performance, Theatre (with a certificate in Musical Theatre), and Music Education. His roles include *Frozen* (Hans), *A Little Night Music* (Henrik), *Hairspray* (Corny Collins), *Beauty and the Beast* (Gaston), *Carrie* (Tommy), *Something Rotten!* (Nick Bottom), *Wizard of Oz* (Tin Man), *Bright Star* (Billy Cane), *Light in the Piazza* (Giuseppe), *Meet Me in St. Louis* (Lon), *Sound of Music* (Rolf), *Cinderella* (Prince), *Newsies* (Race), *aMamma Mia* with Theatre Cedar Rapids; *Merrily We Roll Along* (Frank/ upcoming), *Eliot Ness in Cleveland* (Eliot Ness), *La Cage Aux Folles* (Jean-Michel), *Parade* (Young Soldier), *Titanic* (Charles Clarke/Stevedore), *Honk!* (Greytag) with Revival Theatre; *Something Rotten* (Nick), *HMS Pinafore* (Captain Corcoran) and *Sunday in the Park...* (Soldier) with UI Opera Theatre; *Camelot* (Lancelot), *Beauty and the Beast* (Beast), *Side Show* (Terry) with City Circle Theatre Co.; and Young Charles in a musical adaptation of Jane Austen's *Persuasion* with Chamber Opera Chicago tours to UK, Canada, and NYC. Brandon was also a soloist in *An Evening of Rodgers and Hammerstein* with Orchestra Iowa and Broadway performers for an outdoor audience of 6500. Big thanks to Christine, Claudia, and Carl!

Karissa Burkhardt, soprano, is excited to be singing for the first time with Bellissima Opera and looks forward to performing in this summer's upcoming production of *Le Nozze di Figaro*! She is a student at the University of Iowa, where she is majoring in Vocal Performance, Theatre, Dance, and Elementary Education. Roles performed include Elisetta/*Il Matrimonio Segreto* and Josephine/*HMS Pinafore* with UI Opera Theatre; Sarah/*Guys and Dolls* (upcoming), Queen Iduna/*Frozen*, Esther/*Meet Me in St. Louis*, Mrs. Anderssen/*A Little Night Music*, Babette/*Beauty and the Beast*, Frenchie/*Cabaret*, Tammy/*Hairspray*, Mary Delgado/*Jersey Boys*, as well as Ensemble/Featured Dancer/Dance Captain in *Carrie*, *Light in the Piazza*, *Something Rotten!*, *Wizard of Oz*, *Mamma Mia*, and *Cinderella* with Theatre Cedar Rapids; *Catch Me if You Can*, *Legally Blonde*, *Camelot*, *Beauty and the Beast*, *Newsies* with City Circle Theatre Co.; Bewick/*Winter Soloist in Honk!* with Revival Theatre; Maria/*Sound of Music*, Johanna/Sweeney Todd, Agnes/*She Kills Monsters* with Theatre West; and Amahl/*Amahl and the Night Visitors*, Abby/*Miracle*, Cassandra/*Persuasion* with Chamber Opera Chicago, which toured to England, Scotland, Wales, Canada, and NYC. Karissa was recently the soloist for Eric Whitacre's *Goodnight Moon* for Soprano & Orchestra and is a frequent choreographer. Thank you to Christine, Carl, and Claudia for this wonderful opportunity!

Jasmine Doll is a soprano based in Rogers Park, Chicago. She is originally from Sioux Falls, South Dakota, where she studied under the direction of Jeffrey Spencer and Christopher Jacobson. This is her second performance with Bellissima, as she performed in *Le Dernier Sorcier* this past summer. Currently, she studies at the Chicago College of Performing Arts at Roosevelt University under the direction of Rebecca Schorsch and Dana Brown. She is an interdisciplinary honors student in the Bachelor of Musical Arts degree. Within her degree, she is cross-training in both the Music Conservatory and the Theater Conservatory with a primary focus in Classical Vocal Performance/ Opera and a secondary emphasis in Musical Theater/Acting. During her time at Roosevelt thus far, she has performed in works such as *Cendrillon* (Viardot), *The Tenderland*, *Der Zar lässt sich fotografieren*, *Le Nozze di Figaro*, and will be preparing for *Dialogues des Carmélites* and *Seussical* in the upcoming Spring semester. Jasmine has a background in Musical Theater and Jazz Voice and specializes in Contemporary Classical Music. Aside from her schooling, Jasmine is a vocalist for Edgewater Presbyterian Church and is hoping to expand into community operas and theater throughout the Chicagoland area.

Kunying Li is a soprano with extensive vocal experience, having engaged in choral activities since the age of four and serving in a church choir for eight years. She is currently enrolled at Roosevelt University (Chicago College of Performing Arts), where she is advancing her vocal and academic training while actively pursuing new performance opportunities. She possesses substantial experience in opera ensembles, having participated in productions such as *The Marriage of Figaro*, *The Tender Land*, and *Der Zar* during her academic tenure. She is particularly focused on and specializes in Baroque arias and art songs, working diligently with her teacher and coach to deepen her knowledge in preparation for a Baroque repertoire pack.

Peter Lorenzo, tenor, is a Miami-born second-generation Cuban American pursuing a Master of Music at the Chicago College of Performing Arts, studying with Professor Mark Crayton. Upcoming performances include the Prologue in CCPA's production of *The Turn of the Screw* and L'Aumonier Du Carmel in *Dialogues des Carmélites* this spring. Recent stage credits include Le Remendado in *Carmen* with Chicago Opera Productions, Graf/Gaston in *Die tote Stadt* with Chicago City Opera, and Basilio and Don Curzio in *Le Nozze di Figaro*, later reprising Don Curzio in CCPA's own production. Before moving to Chicago for graduate study, Peter completed a Bachelor's degree in Music at Stetson University. Stage credits during that time included Alfred in *Die Fledermaus*, the Schoolmaster in *The Cunning Little Vixen*, and the First Sailor in *Dido and Aeneas*. Performances in both undergraduate and graduate programs have emphasized a range of repertoire with roles requiring flexibility across character and ensemble work. Outside of academic and performance responsibilities, Peter is an avid reader with particular interest in cozy mysteries, often paired with tea as a way to unwind from rehearsal and study. Cooking also remains a central pursuit, especially Cuban-style cuisine rooted in family traditions.

Harry Mueller is an undergraduate student in his sophomore year at Concordia University Chicago, located in River Forest. He is a major in both the History and Director of Parish Music programs, and he takes vocal lessons with Christine Steyer. In his college musical theatre career, he was Bill Sikes in Concordia's production of *Oliver!* and he will be playing Professor Henry Higgins this coming April in the school's production of *My Fair Lady*. Prior to his time in college, his high school career consisted of him playing Mike Teevee in Roahl Dahl's *Willy Wonka*, Tevye in *Fiddler on the Roof*, and Harry and the understudy for Professor Higgins in a separate production of *My Fair Lady*. Outside of musical theatre, he has performed Tom and King Claudius in Concordia productions of *Radium Girls* and Shakespeare's *Hamlet* respectively. He also sings with Concordia Chicago's touring choir, the Kapelle, as a Bass 2. He has been in Kapelle all four semesters that he has been at Concordia Chicago. When it comes to instrumental music, Harry studies the cello and organ. He also performs as a cellist with Concordia Chicago's chamber orchestra.

Chiemerie E. Obianom is a Nigerian baritone hailing from Nnewi, Anambra State, whose artistry bridges classical Western repertoire and African art music. He began his musical journey in Nigeria, where he was deeply rooted in parish choral traditions and demonstrated early versatility as a singer and instrumentalist. His journey led to his admission into the Musical Society of Nigeria (MUSON) Diploma program, sponsored by the MTN Foundation, where he studied under Sir Emeka Nwokedi. He graduated with honors, earning the Bode Emmanuel Prize for Best Male Singing Graduate and winning national vocal competitions. Chiemerie has appeared in numerous operatic productions across Nigeria and the United States, with roles including Antonio (*Le Nozze di Figaro*), Der Lautsprecher (*Der Kaiser von Atlantis*), and ensemble appearances with Chicago Opera Festival and Gilbert & Sullivan Opera Company Chicago. As a concert soloist, he has performed works by Handel, Fauré, Quilter, Akin Euba, and contemporary composers, collaborating with institutions such as Ear Taxi Festival, Akojokpo Music Foundation, and the French Consulate of Nigeria. Currently pursuing a Bachelor of Music in Classical Voice Performance at Roosevelt University's CCPA, Chiemerie is also an emerging curator-artist and arts advocate committed to cultural dialogue.

Hannah Weber a junior at Concordia University Chicago. She is studying elementary education and middle grades literacy and social studies. While not working on a degree in music, she is fortunate to be involved in choral life on campus as a member of Concordia's Kapelle touring choir and Laudate treble choir. She is a vocal student of Christine Steyer and has worked with several student composers as both ensemble member and soloist. She was also selected to perform in the recent end of semester Honors Recital. Next fall, she will be performing a Senior Recital with a fellow student in Christine Steyer's studio. Hannah also serves as the alto section leader in a nearby church choir under the direction of Peter Stigdon. She has been involved in Concordia productions of *Radium Girls*, *Oliver!*, and *Hamlet*. This spring, she will be playing Eliza Doolittle in *My Fair Lady*. Hannah is thankful for this opportunity to sing with a cast of talented peers and workshop with masters of the craft, as well as her family and friends who have gotten her this far. Soli Deo Gloria!

Christine Steyer is the 2020 Honored Artist of The American Prize for outstanding contributions to the arts. The soprano has received acclaim for her portrayals of Madame Butterfly and Violetta, and has sung in 40 productions at Lyric Opera of Chicago. Steyer is an avid recitalist and producer, showcasing unique works by contemporary and by women poets and composers. In 2021, she premiered the role of the Rio de Janeiro Health Care Worker in *On Call: COVID-19* and in 2022 premiered the role of Flanna in *Future Perfect*. Steyer served as librettist for these award-winning opera series. She was recently featured in *Elijah*, *Speed Dating Tonight* and *Le dernier sorcier*. She and French pianist Jean-Claude Orfali just released videos of their original songs as well as songs by legendary French composer Henri Betti. Highlights in 2026 include a recital of music by Jake Heggie and the role of Countess in *Le nozze di Figaro*. Steyer has brought music to 26,000 youths in underserved areas with Bellissima Opera's In the Classroom and is co-founder of the vocal alliance Working in Concert, and Artistic Director of its Bellissima Opera initiative. She is on the music faculty at Concordia University in River Forest. Steyer is thrilled to share her deep love of music with a new generation of young people. She lives in Oak Park with her husband Paul and their beloved rescue dog Huckleberry. In her free time she loves to garden, paint and travel around the world.

Carl Ratner, President of Working In Concert and Associate Artistic Director of Bellissima Opera, has a distinguished career assisting directors at renowned opera houses such as Covent Garden, the Metropolitan Opera, Munich Opera, Spoleto Festival, and Lyric Opera of Chicago. He served as Artistic Director of Chicago Opera Theater (1994-1999) and Chamber Opera Chicago (1985-1993). An accomplished baritone, Ratner has performed title roles in Verdi's *Falstaff*, Puccini's *Gianni Schicchi*, Britten's Noye's *Fludde*, and leading roles in *Madama Butterfly* and *Turandot*. He frequently performs as a soloist in oratorios like Handel's *Messiah* and Orff's *Carmina Burana*. He has sung in 14 languages across 7 countries, 10 states, and the District of Columbia. Ratner created roles in world premieres such as Oxóssi in *Future Perfect* and Lebanon Health Care Worker in *On Call: COVID-19* for Bellissima Opera, and he performed the role of the Doctor for South Bend Lyric Opera. Recently, he directed *La Traviata* and directed and sang in *Speed Dating Tonight!* and *Le dernier sorcier*. His studies include Oberlin, Northeastern Illinois University, Northwestern, Juilliard, and the Saint Petersburg Conservatory in Russia.

Claudia Hommel— Actor-singer, teacher, cabaret promoter. Born in Paris, raised in Detroit, and seasoned in New York, Claudia moved to Chicago in 1990 to "do the work." She initiated the founding of Chicago Cabaret Professionals in 1997 and joined the faculty of the DePaul Community Music Division with the award-winning SongShop for song interpretation in 2003. In 2017, she launched the now-annual international exchange of Chicago Paris Cabaret Connexion in France. These programs and more were integrated into the performing arts alliance Working In Concert with Claudia as Executive Director in 2019. A favorite from the Cabaret Lapin Agile in Paris to the Frick Museum of Pittsburgh, Claudia specializes in *chanson* and theatre songs. She loves transporting her audiences to Paris, imagined and real, with Cabaret InTourludes to France and French-themed cabaret programs for elementary and high school classrooms. Her Maison Clobert recordings of *Paris/Paree*, *Paris in the Jazz Age*, *Romance Language: French Songs for Lovers*, and the crossover *Jazz Fauré Project* are a reflection of her Paris-centric repertoire. Her *Vocal Canvas* concerts include projections of artwork to "hear the painting and see the song". In 2024, she was presented La Renaissance Française *Médaille d'Or pour les valeurs francophones* (Gold Medal for francophone values). **WorkingInConcert.org** and **Cabaret-Paree.com**

Dana Brown is Professor of Opera at the Chicago College of Performing Arts at Roosevelt University. As a pianist, he has been heard many times on 98.7 WFMT Radio, in addition to performances at the Ravinia Festival, the Tanglewood Festival, the Chicago Cultural Center, the Grant Park Music Festival, and the Chicago Humanities Festival. His recent CD with soprano Michelle Areyzaga *Were I With Thee* received rave reviews: ... "One of the finest art song CDs ever, a tour-de-force of expression ... remarkable collection of American songs ... accompanied by Mr. Brown who has been a superb collaborator in this 74-minute musical exploration." —John Campbell, Artsong Update. Mr. Brown has musically directed over fifty operas at Roosevelt University, and just recently won the Innovative Course Design Award for his course, The Met Live in HD. For ten years, he was Chair of the Board of Directors of Chicago's Fourth Coast Ensemble, a professional vocal quartet. His playing with Fourth Coast Ensemble is featured on the group's CD 2021 release, *Human to Human*, which features world premieres written for the ensemble by Andrea Clearfield and Wayland Rogers.

Dr. Carl J. Ratner, baritone
Voice Teacher & Director

All ages and levels welcome!

Former Assistant Stage Director,
Metropolitan Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago

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Christine Steyer, soprano
Voice Teacher & Librettist

All ages and levels welcome!

Faculty at Concordia University
Artistic Director of Bellissima Opera & Song

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THE PERFORMANCE

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Mozart and librettist DaPonte
must convince Emperor Joseph II
to greenlight Beaumarchais'
revolutionary play into an opera.

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Directed by Carl Ratner

Concept by Christine Steyer

Presented by Bellissima Opera

Tickets starting March 15, 2026
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Unwrapped

Romantic
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Incendiary
Revolutionary
Enlightening
Comedic
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