

Bellissima Opera & Song's 5th Annual International Women's Day Concert

Sunday, March 8, 2026, 7:30PM
 Good Shepherd Lutheran Church
 611 Randolph St., Oak Park, IL

#IWD2026
 #GivetoGain



Dominique Frigo
mezzo-soprano

Marissa Howard
soprano

Jennifer Kosharsky
mezzo-soprano

Christine Steyer
soprano

Lauren Sutherland
soprano

The concert features music of Ritika Bhattacharjee, Ashley Eyre, Liza Lehmann, Pauline Viardot Garcia, Dodie Morris Whitaker, set to words of Rachel E. Morris, Christine Steyer, Sara Teasdale and others



Becky Coffman
violin

Alyssa Arrigo
piano

Jennifer McCabe
piano



Lindsay Hammer, Art Teacher at Ascension School

Junior High Artists

(left to right top)
 Frances Ortiz, Charlotte Vaccaro,
 Azucena Perez, Amia Miranda

(left to right bottom)
 Jack Trapani, Ben Hall,
 Dean Waysok, Collins Flannick



BellissimaOpera.com

International Women's Day Concert Extravaganza
5th Annual Tribute to Women in the Arts
March 8, 2026

Dominique Frigo, Marissa Howard, Jennifer Kosharsky,
Christine Steyer and Lauren Sutherland, *singers*
Alyssa Arrigo and Jennifer McCabe, *pianists* Becky Coffman, *violin*
Artwork by students at Ascension School, Lindsay Hammer, *art teacher*
Christine Steyer, *emcee*

Part 1

"#GivetoGain" Christine Steyer, Bellissima Opera Artistic Director

Part 2

I Would Live in Your Love music Ashley Eyre, words Sara Teasdale
Écrin music Cécile Chaminade, words René Niverd
Les Filles des Cadix music Pauline Viardot Garcia, words Alfred de Musset
Haï luli! music P. V. Garcia, words Xavier de Maistre
The Wren music Liza Lehmann, words A.S.

Part 3

Lindsay Hammer, Art Teacher at Ascension School in Oak Park

Part 4

Lullaby Rebecca Clarke
My Windowsill words/music Paul Geiger & Christine Steyer, arr. David Shenton
The Waterfall music C. Steyer & D. Shenton, words C. Steyer

Part 5

Havanaise music P. V. Garcia, words Louis Pomey
Fleur desséchée music P. V. Garcia, words Alexandre Pushkin
Mot kveld music Agathe Backer-Grøndahl, words Andreas Jynge
Silent Angel (World Premiere) music Dodie Morris Whitaker, words rachel e. morris

Part 6

On behalf of Bellissima Opera & Song Christine Steyer

Part 7

The Infinity of Space music Ritika Bhattacharjee, words Shayla Rivera

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

In 2019, Bellissima Opera founder and director Christine Steyer joined with Claudia Hommel's many cabaret projects to form the performing arts alliance Working In Concert. Carl Ratner joined as Bellissima Associate Artistic Director 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 & Song 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's In the Classroom, has brought music to more than 26,000 students from K-12 to grow new generations of classical music lovers.

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. Christine is an avid recitalist and producer, showcasing unique works by contemporary and 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*. Christine served as librettist for these award-winning opera series. She was recently featured in *Elijah*, *Speed Dating Tonight*, and *Le dernier sorcier*, and 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*. Christine 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. Christine is thrilled to share her deep love of music with a new generation of young people and is the recipient of a 2026 Illinois Arts Council Creative Accelerator grant. She lives in Oak Park with her husband Paul and their beloved rescue dog Huckleberry.

A Colorado native, soprano **Marissa Howard** has been heralded for her "silvery coloratura voice" and comedic interpretation. She was recently featured in Victory Hall Opera's Documentary *YAPs*, which was a finalist in the Albuquerque Film Festival. This season, she joins the Chicago Symphony for "An Opera Night with Riccardo Muti" and Poulenc's *Gloria*. In 2025, she toured upstate New York in *Frida Kahlo and the Bravest Girl in the World* with Opera Saratoga outreach and placed third in MIOpera's Vocal Competition. Other performances include Chicago Opera Theater's North American premiere of Pär's *Leonora*; Lita Grier's *Spoon River Anthology* in the historic home of poet Edgar Lee Masters with Bellissima Opera/Working in Concert; the title character in Evanston Opera's *Le Châlet*; *Cavalleria Rusticana* and *Ariadne auf Naxos* with Mousaverse Opera; *Pirates of Penzance* with MIOpera; and a recording artist with GIA Productions. She has also worked with Utah Festival Opera, La Musica Lirica, Memphis Light Opera, Varna International, Up North Vocal Institute, and Miami Classical Music Festival. She was a semifinalist in the NATSAA National Competition in 2022 and a finalist for the Harold Haugh Light Opera Competition. She received her bachelor's degree at Roosevelt University and master's degree at the University of Memphis.

Lauren Sutherland is thrilled to be back with Bellissima opera after singing Verveine in their Chicago premiere of Pauline Viardot's *Le Dernier Sorcier*. Previous operatic roles include Phyllis (*Jolante*), Madame Herz (*The Impresario*), Queen of the Night and Pamina (*Die Zauberflöte*), Le Feu (*L'enfant et les sortilèges*), Belinda (*Dido and Aeneas*), the Dew Fairy (*Hänsel und Gretel*), and Naiad (*Ariadne auf Naxos*). She has performed with the Midwest Opera Theatre, singing both Musetta (*La Bohème*) and La Suora Zelatrice (*Suor Angelica*). Her musical theater credits include Marian Paroo in *The Music Man*, Susan in the 2009 musical [*title of show*], and the Fairy Godmother in Rodgers and Hammerstein's *Cinderella*. Lauren holds degrees from the Wheaton College Conservatory and the University of Missouri Kansas City. She is an avid runner and recently completed her fifth half marathon. She also loves game nights, knitting, and scouring vintage stores. She resides and teaches from Oak Park, IL with her husband David, cat Leonard Bernstein, and dog Bird.

Dominique Frigo, mezzo-soprano, has sung for many venues in the Midwest. She recently sang in the premiere of *Future Perfect* with Bellissima Opera. She has performed frequently in New York with the Botti Opera Showcase. Her repertoire includes contemporary, Baroque and classical music, and she has performed the alto solos for Handel's *Messiah*, the Vivaldi *Magnificat*, the Vivaldi *Gloria*, the Bach *Magnificat*, and the Bach *B Minor Mass*, among others. She was a finalist with the Bel Canto Chorus, a semi-finalist with the Lotte Lehman Foundation's art song competition, and a semi-finalist with the Center for Contemporary Opera's International Opera Singer competition. She has also performed in numerous operatic roles in regional opera companies, including La Principessa in Puccini's *Suor Angelica*, Zita from Puccini's *Gianni Schicchi*, Suzuki from Puccini's *Madama Butterfly*, and Maddalena from Verdi's *Rigoletto*. This summer, she will enjoy performing the role of Marcellina in Bellissima Opera's new production of Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro*.

Jennifer Kosharsky has been praised by the press as "an excellent actress, with a dark-timbered, mezzo-soprano voice"... "her dark, polished tone recalls exquisite contralto voices from another continent and century." In 2025, Jennifer made her South American debut as Amneris in *Aida* with Prolifera de Antioquia in Colombia. Other performances include the Joffrey Ballet in Yuri Possokhov's *Anna Karenina* at both the Lyric Opera of Chicago and the Kennedy Center; covering Baba (*La Medium*) and La Madre (*Il prigioniero*) with Opera Festival Chicago; and Santuzza in *Cavalleria Rusticana* with the West Suburban

Symphony. Equally at home on the concert stage, Jennifer has been a soloist in Verdi's *Requiem*, Brahms' *Alto Rhapsody*, Saint-Saëns' *Le Déluge*, Handel's *Messiah*, De Falla's *El Amor Brujo* with the Park Ridge Symphony, and Beethoven's *Symphony No. 9* with the Dubrovnik Symphony. Jennifer's voice in Habenera from *Carmen* has also reached millions through her national commercial for Eli Lilly's Zepbound. A graduate of DePaul University, she was a finalist/prizewinner in the Classical Singer International Emerging Professional Competition, the Marcella Sembrich Vocal Competition, the MacAllister Awards, and the Tito Gobbi and Gian Battista Viotti International Competitions in Italy.

Alyssa Arrigo is the current artist-in-residence collaborative artist at the Chicago College of Performing Arts and a Young Artist at Chicago Opera Theater. She is also an adjunct faculty member at Moraine Valley Community College where she teaches piano and lecture classes. A Chicago native, Alyssa is a graduate of the Jacobs School of Music at Indiana University. While completing her master's degree, Alyssa worked as an opera coach and rehearsal pianist for the IU Opera Theater for *Albert Herring*, *Faust*, *A View From the Bridge*, *Candide*, and the world premiere of Bernard Rand's *Vincent*. She regularly performs with small opera companies around Chicago. Alyssa is an avid collaborator. In 2011, she performed with tenor Andrew Lunsford at the Kennedy Center. She has traveled annually to Las Vegas to perform at the annual Food and Beverage Forum with acclaimed tenor, Carlos Montane. A veteran of numerous summer festivals, Alyssa has been a part of the Aspen Music Festival and School, Vladamir Feltsman's PianoSummer, and played for opera singers in Montecatini Terme, Italy as part of the Italian Operatic Experience. Alyssa maintains a small private studio and teaches at the Beverly Arts Center in Chicago.

Jennifer McCabe has been a collaborative pianist and coach for over 25 years, performing with esteemed artists from around the world and music directing both operatic and musical theater productions. Jennifer was music director for North Park University's 2023 opera production, which was awarded 2nd place in its division by the National Opera Association. Described as "an infinitely sympathetic pianist", she was pianist for several world premiere performances of local and operatic works and has performed in master classes and educational settings for Renee Fleming, Elizabeth Futral, Katelyn Lee, Jane Bunnell, Libby Larsen and Michael Ehrman. Jennifer's past contributions as managing director of Opera on Tap Chicago were hailed as "top notch...crucial to the Chapter's survival and success." Her students are consistently accepted into prestigious schools such as Interlochen and Lawrence University. Jennifer is also a worship musician who leads choirs as pianist and organist. She received her formal training at Northern Illinois and Middle Tennessee State Universities. Jennifer was the 2019 recipient of "Best of Chicago" award for Harmony Piano Studio and was honored by her hometown Sycamore Music Boosters with the 2020 Legacy Hall of Fame Award for her lifelong dedication to arts education.

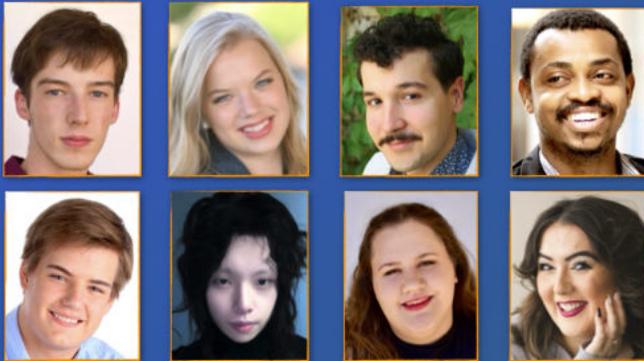
Elizabeth (Becky) Coffman is a long-time member of Chicago Sinfonietta. She teaches violin and viola at Concordia University. Before moving to Chicago, Becky was a member of the Louisville Orchestra, Indianapolis Chamber Orchestra, and the Indianapolis Symphony. For several years she was a violinist with the Indianapolis Museum of Art and the Lockerbie String Quartet, which was in-residence at Butler University. She holds degrees in violin performance from DePauw University and Indiana University, where her teachers included Herman Berg, Henryk Kowalski and Tadeusz Wronski. Later, Coffman returned to Indiana University for further study in viola with Abraham Skernick and Csaba Erdelyi. Coffman began the string program at Ascension School in Oak Park. Now in its 12th year, more than 50 students study a string instrument and play in one of the school's three orchestras under her direction. Her husband, Tim, as well as her two adult children, are all professional musicians.

Dodie Whitaker is a dynamic song leader, performer, composer, and educator. She has sung with the Chicago Symphony, Grant Park Symphony, and Lyric Opera choruses, and as soloist and chorister with Music of the Baroque. She brings 40 years of musical expertise and infectious joy to song circles, master classes, and workshops worldwide. An independent artistic DEIB consultant and co-author of "Who is Community Singing For?," she has been a featured song leader at Singing in Love, Dayenu Climate Action, Sisters in Harmony Global Singing Summit, and Song Leader Boot Camp International Conference. She currently serves as Assistant Conductor of the Ridgetones Community Choir and holds degrees from Oberlin College and New England Conservatory.

Lindsay Hammer is the Ascension K-8 Art teacher and is passionate about introducing students to the wide world of art. She loves teaching about diverse artists and styles, from the bold flowers of Georgia O'Keeffe to the imaginative surrealism of René Magritte. In her classroom, students explore creativity through hands-on projects inspired by art history and contemporary techniques. Lindsay strives to help every young artist discover their unique voice and build confidence through creative expression.

Bellissima Opera & Song's 'UNDER 30'

Showcasing Chicago's Rising Young Performers
From Classical to Cabaret



TOP Harrison Mueller, Karissa Burkhardt, Peter Lorenzo, Chiemerie Obianom
BOTTOM Brandon Burkhardt, Kunying Li, Hannah Grace Weber, Jasmine Doll
Dana Brown, Collaborative Pianist
Claudia Hommel, Carl Ratner & Christine Steyer, Hosts

Sunday, March 29, 2026, 4pm
PianoForte Chicago, 1335 S. Michigan Ave, Chicago

TIX: \$12-\$35
workinginconcert.org/under30



Welcome Spring

Saturday, April 18, 6:30-9:00pm
at the Oak Park home of Mila Tellez & Nile Wendorf

Enjoy music, trivia, raffles, sing-alongs!
Substantial cocktail fare, hors d'oeuvres & small plates.

Prize for best
Spring-Themed
attire!

Spend an exclusive evening
with Bellissima Artistic Directors
Christine Steyer, Carl Ratner,
and guest musicians **Don Skoog,**
Claudia Hommel and others...



\$60 per person



Space is limited.
Reservations required at
workinginconcert.org/operaspring
or call Claudia at 773 509-9360
or with the QR code

Funds underwrite Bellissima Opera & Song's *In The Classroom*,
and our July 30-31, 2026 production of Mozart's *Marriage of Figaro*
at the Nineteenth Century Charitable Association.
Bellissima Opera is an initiative of Working In Concert 501(c)(3)

Mozart's Marriage of Figaro

1786 Vienna.
Mozart and librettist DaPonte
must convince Emperor Joseph II
to greenlight Beaumarchais'
revolutionary play into an opera.

Hear the opera. Get the scoop.

Directed by Carl Ratner
Concept by Christine Steyer

Thursday, July 30, 7PM
Friday, July 31, 7PM

Nineteenth Century Charitable
Association, Oak Park

Tickets starting March 15, 2026
Bellissimaopera.com/figaro

Romantic
Progressive
Incendiary
Revolutionary
Enlightening
Comedic
Timeless



Special Thanks

Kimberly Adami-Hasegawa, Kerri Burkhardt, Mark Ellis,
Judy Gaietto-Grace, Lindsay Hammer, Kimberly Huizinga,
Laura Rodriguez, Larry Ritsert, Rana Segal, Eleanor Sharpe,
Mila Tellez, Lynn Zamora, Concordia University Printing
and Good Shepherd Lutheran Church

Major Supporters

Dominique Frigo, Judy Gaietto-Grace,
Jethra Kapp and Illinois Arts Council



Bellissima Opera & Song Artistic Directors
Christine Steyer & Carl Ratner