

Autumn Rewind

And let the centennial year begin.

BY BRIAN WISE

Over a three-week stretch this fall, Curtis' departments and flagship ensembles kicked off the 2024–25 season by celebrating the school's past, present, and future. First up were two events on Founder's Weekend (October 11–13), which honors the legacy of Curtis founder Mary Louise Curtis Bok.



Ji Su Jung and Gabriela Ortiz.



Ji Su Jung performs Gabriela Ortiz's *Cedrus*.

→ On October 12 Curtis New Music Ensemble presented a *Portrait of Gabriela Ortiz*. The program featured several works by this year's composer in residence, including the world premiere of *Cedrus* for solo marimba, performed by faculty member Ji Su Jung.

Ortiz, who hails from Mexico City, is having a banner year herself, also holding Carnegie Hall's Debs Composers Chair and receiving performances of her music by top orchestras across the U.S. and Europe. Her first Curtis program included on-stage discussions and concluded with students performing her *Exilios* for clarinet and string quartet.



Serena Wang performing Beethoven.



Michelle Cann, Adrian Zaragoza, Nathaniel Zhang, and Elijah Orlenko.

→ The next day (October 13) brought *From Hofmann to Present: The Legacy of Piano*. Faculty, alumni, and student pianists saluted the Polish-American virtuoso who formed Curtis' piano department in 1924 and served as the school's third president, from 1927 to 1938.

The program began with first-year student Serena Wang performing Beethoven's Piano Sonata No. 21 in C major following a 1938 Casimir Hall recording of the same piece by Hofmann. After works by Chopin and Rachmaninoff, the event ended with Eleanor Sokoloff Chair in Piano Studies Michelle Cann ('13) leading a blazing, four-pianist rendition of Saint-Saëns' *Danse Macabre*.

MATT GODFREY (ORTIZ & JUNG)



Time for Three with the Curtis Symphony Orchestra and conductor Osmo Vänskä.



Nick Kendall ('01) with the Curtis Symphony Orchestra and conductor Osmo Vänskä.

→ The Curtis Symphony Orchestra opened its series on October 27 at the Kimmel Center with conductor Osmo Vänskä and *Time for Three*, the Grammy Award-winning roots-classical string ensemble.

Formed at Curtis more than 20 years ago (see p. 9), *Time for Three* performed *Concerto 4-3*, a bluegrass-inspired work by former composition faculty member Jennifer Higdon ('88). Framing the trio's performance were Sibelius' *Finlandia* (performed on the very first Curtis Symphony concert in 1926) and Prokofiev's *Symphony No. 5*.



Jeysla Rosario Santos (Poppea) and Sam Higgins (Nero) in *Poppea*.



Joelle Lamarre (Love) in *Poppea*.



The Comet with Cedric Berry (Jim). Right: *Poppea* with Jeysla Rosario Santos (Poppea) and Sam Higgins (Nero).

→ Finally, Curtis Opera Theatre's centennial series opened on November 1–3 with the East Coast premiere of *The Comet / Poppea* at Philadelphia's 23rd Street Armory. Led by the cutting-edge director Yuval Sharon, the striking production paired two works—George Lewis' newly composed *The Comet* and Monteverdi's 1643 *Coronation of Poppea*—and positioned them on a turntable stage, with each half devoted to each opera.

The Comet / Poppea juxtaposes Baroque and high modernist styles, which were performed by the rising young stars of the Curtis Opera Theatre, original cast members from the Los Angeles production, and members of the Curtis Symphony Orchestra, all conducted by Marc Lowenstein.

The Curtis Opera Theatre changes gears (and venues) to present four performances of Mozart's comic masterpiece, *The Marriage of Figaro*, starting on February 27 in the Perelman Theater.