

Curtis
100 Institute
of Music

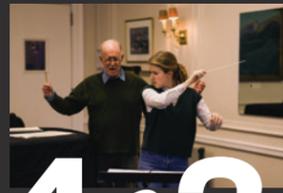
2024-25
ANNUAL REPORT



CURTIS CENTENNIAL YEAR

By the Numbers

FISCAL YEAR 2025



4:3

student to faculty ratio



MORE THAN 197

performances, including
94 free student recitals

778

SUBSCRIBERS

>100% increase over
2023–24

SOLD-OUT PERFORMANCES

EVERY Curtis Opera Theatre performance

ALL Curtis New Music Ensemble concerts

ALL Curtis Presents concerts

AND BOTH Curtis Symphony Orchestra's debut performance at Lincoln Center's **David Geffen Hall** (2,200 seats) and performance with Yuja Wang at **Marian Anderson Hall** (2,300 seats)



87%

OF THE PROSPECTIVE STUDENTS ADMITTED TO CURTIS ACCEPTED

and arrived on campus in August 2024.
(The average yield at peer conservatories is about 35%.)

That figure increases to 100% for Curtis graduate students!



839

DONORS GAVE 1,219 GIFTS

totaling more than **\$30 million!**

13 COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS IN PHILADELPHIA

School District of Philadelphia • Philadelphia High School for the Creative and Performing Arts • George Washington Carver High School of Engineering and Science • Philadelphia Performing Arts: A String Theory Charter School • William Cramp Elementary School • Children's Hospital of Philadelphia • Penn Memory Center • All-City Orchestra • Attic Youth Center • PBS WHY? TV-12 • Philly House • Philadelphia Music Alliance for Youth • William Way LGBT Center



ONLINE REACH

More than **2 MILLION VIEWERS**

on YouTube and Facebook

First Instagram reel to cross

ONE MILLION VIEWS

(Steve Reich, *Music for Pieces of Wood*)



Dear Friends,

The 2024–25 school year was an extraordinary milestone for Curtis Institute of Music, as we celebrated our centennial and reflected on the vision Mary Louise Curtis Bok set in motion a century ago. This annual report highlights a season that honored our rich history while demonstrating the creativity and purpose that continue to define Curtis today.

Curtis' centennial was marked by celebrations and achievements. Our audiences responded with unprecedented enthusiasm, as reflected in record-breaking attendance across our performance venues. From sold-out opera productions to our symphonic debut at Lincoln Center's Geffen Hall, Curtis artists captivated listeners in Philadelphia and beyond. Our digital presence reached new heights as well, connecting millions worldwide to the artistry and innovation happening daily on our campus.

The year allowed us to honor our past while actively shaping our future. Founder's Weekend brought generations of Curtis family together to commemorate the school's opening on October 13, 1924. Throughout the season, we presented the culminating works of our ambitious "100 for 100" commissioning project, ensuring that Curtis continues to champion new voices in classical music. Distinguished alumni returned to campus not merely as performers, but as mentors and collaborators, enriching our students' education through master classes, residencies, and side-by-side performances that embodied Curtis' culture of artistic generosity.

The season's grand finale in May, Centennial Weekend, offered a tapestry of experiences that captured the essence of our community—performances that pushed artistic boundaries, gatherings that renewed cherished connections, and moments that affirmed our collective commitment to the next century of musical excellence.

As we embark on our second century, we do so with profound gratitude for the extraordinary partnership of our students and alumni, trustees and donors, faculty and staff. Together, we have not simply preserved Curtis' legacy; we have lived it, reimagined it, and ensured its continued resonance for generations to come.

With deepest appreciation,

Roberto Díaz (Viola '84)

President and CEO

Nina von Maltzahn President's Chair

James and Betty Matarese Chair in Viola Studies



A Century of Excellence

CURTIS CENTENNIAL YEAR

Curtis New Music Ensemble presenting Amy Beth Kirsten's *Infernal Angel & Savior*. Photo by Margo Reed Studio.

FOUNDER'S WEEKEND: HONORING OUR LEGACY

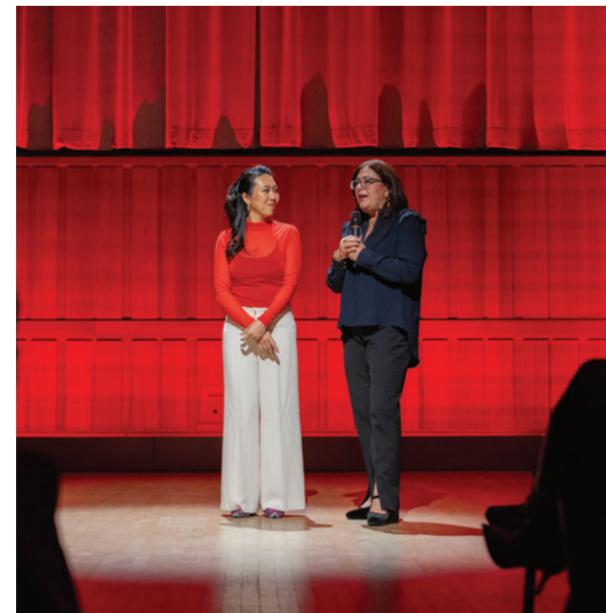
Curtis opened its doors on October 13, 1924, fulfilling the vision of Mary Louise Curtis Bok to establish a music conservatory with rigorous standards of teaching and performance. To mark the school's founding a century ago and honor Mrs. Bok's transformative legacy, Curtis launched its milestone season with Founder's Weekend from October 11-13, 2024. Generations of alumni and supporters returned to campus to celebrate the rich history and exciting future of the school through performances, festivities, and meaningful connections between past and present.

The weekend opened with a special recital in Field Concert Hall, celebrating works commissioned by renowned alumni and featuring Alvin Singleton, Curtis' 2020-21 composer in residence. The program showcased the breadth of Curtis' compositional legacy, from the world premiere of Singleton's *Argoru IX* for solo violin to works by alumni spanning decades, including Michael Djupstrom's ('11) *Two Fantasies* for string trio, Eric Sessler's ('93) playful *Shift and Riff* for guitar quartet, and Gabriella Smith's ('13) audacious *Carrot Revolution* for string quartet, inspired by influences ranging from Bach to Joni Mitchell.

Saturday's activities included tours of historic 1726 Locust Street and the newer Lenfest Hall, followed by an evening concert featuring Curtis New Music Ensemble's "Portrait of Gabriela Ortiz," celebrating the year's composer in residence. The weekend culminated on October 13—exactly 100 years after Curtis' founding—with a special Founder's Day Tea and "Hofmann to Present: The Legacy of Piano at Curtis." This unique program honored the department's storied history from its first leader through to the present day, featuring historical recordings from Josef Hofmann's legendary 1938 recital alongside live performances by current students.



Founder's Day Tea Reception. Photo by Chris Brown.



Curtis' 2024-25 composer in residence Gabriela Ortiz at the world premiere of *Cedrus*, commissioned by marimba faculty member Ji Su Jung. Photo by Matt Godfrey.

A CENTURY OF NEW SOUNDS

Alongside Founder's Weekend, Curtis Studio released *A Century of New Sounds*, a landmark recording celebrating the school's legacy in composition. Recorded on campus and featuring faculty, alumni, and students, the album showcases chamber works by Curtis luminaries including Samuel Barber ('34), Leonard Bernstein (Conducting '41), Julius Eastman ('63), Jennifer Higdon ('88), current faculty member Jonathan Bailey Holland ('96), David Serkin Ludwig ('01), Ned Rorem ('44), Gabriella Smith ('13), and George Walker ('45). Distributed by Platoon and available on all major streaming platforms, the recording serves as both a celebration of Curtis' compositional legacy and a testament to the enduring impact of its graduates.



“As we look backward at the impact that Curtis has had on the field, we can also look forward and think about what we want to leave for the next 100 years of music.”

100 FOR 100: COMMISSIONING THE FUTURE

Throughout the centennial season, Curtis presented the culminating works of its ambitious “100 for 100” project, a multi-year initiative to commission 100 new works for the school's centennial celebration. Since 2008, Curtis has commissioned more than a hundred new works, with the final centennial commissions featuring cutting-edge original pieces by alumni composers including Paul Brantley ('85), Stephen Cabell ('08), Sebastian Chang ('07), Chelsea Komschlies ('18), and Tian Zhou ('05), among others.

As Nick DiBerardino (Composition '18), provost and dean of the conservatory and Curtis New Music Ensemble director, explains, “Curtis' 100 for 100 was designed to make sure that Curtis has commissioned one hundred works by the time it turns 100. As we look backward at the impact that Curtis has had on the field, we can also look forward and think about what we want to leave for the next 100 years of music.” This forward-thinking approach to commissioning ensures that Curtis continues to contribute meaningfully to the evolution of the art form.



Nick DiBerardino (Composition '18, CAF '19), provost and dean of the conservatory and Curtis New Music Ensemble director. Photo by Gene Smirnov.

MASTER CLASSES AND COLLABORATIONS

The centennial year brought several distinguished alumni back to campus for performances and educational residencies that enriched the student experience. Ray Chen ('10) lit up the stage in December with Samuel Barber's ('34) Violin Concerto, performed with the Curtis Symphony Orchestra under the baton of fellow alumnus Teddy Abrams ('08), in concerts at Philadelphia's Marian Anderson Hall and West Palm Beach's Kravis Center. Beyond the performance, Chen shared insights about his career trajectory with students through an informal presentation, while Abrams led professional development discussions with young composers and coached first-year Rita E. Hauser Conducting Fellow Yoann Combémorrel, who led TJ Cole's ('17) *Death of the Poet* on the concert.



Yuja Wang ('08) with the Curtis Symphony Orchestra performing at Marian Anderson Hall in April 2025. Photo by Margo Reed Studio.

In April, pianist Yuja Wang ('08) joined forces with the Curtis Symphony Orchestra and Yannick Nézet-Séguin for Rautavaara's Piano Concerto No. 1, a performance that brought Marian Anderson Hall to life with her trademark brilliance. Yuja also offered a memorable master class, guiding students through works by Brahms, Rachmaninoff, and Saint-Saëns.

Opera alumni Amanda Majeski ('09), Karen Slack ('02), John Relyea ('96), and J'Nai Bridges ('12) returned for residencies that included teaching, coaching, and collaborative performances. Bridges worked with student singers to craft a new program that they performed together at Curtis and in New York City, exemplifying the school's ongoing culture of collaboration and mentorship. Amanda Lynn Bottoms ('19), a member of *The Comet / Poppea*'s original cast, reprised her role in Curtis Opera Theatre's production of the work, providing students with the rare experience of developing a performance in partnership with an established artist directly connected to the work's creation.



J'Nai Bridges ('12) worked with students to craft a program that they performed at Curtis and in New York.



Performance of Amy Beth Kirsten's *Savior* during Centennial Weekend. Photo by Margo Reed Studio.

THE GRAND FINALE

The year-long celebration reached its crescendo with Centennial Weekend, May 8–10, 2025, as the Curtis community gathered for three days of reflection, connection, and anticipation for the future. Festivities began with the spring gala, followed by a full day of campus activities including tours, archival presentations, and the beloved Curtis Tea honoring the memory of Eleanor Sokoloff (Piano '38), Curtis' longest-serving faculty member.

The artistic centerpiece of the weekend was the world premiere of faculty member Amy Beth Kirsten's *Infernal Angel*, paired with her theatrical work *Savior*, inspired by Joan of Arc. This bold fusion of music and theater displayed Curtis' commitment to innovation grounded in tradition. The celebration concluded with an alumni reunion brunch, offering one final moment of togetherness.

Rather than a single event, Centennial Weekend offered a tapestry of experiences that honored Curtis' past while looking ahead to the next 100 years. From rediscovered archival stories to revived campus traditions, each gathering reflected the enduring bonds among alumni, students, faculty, and staff. The season closed not with nostalgia alone, but with renewed purpose, affirming that Curtis' legacy is not only preserved, but actively lived and continually reimaged.



Curtis alumni, students, and guests mingle in the Common Room. Photo by Chris Brown.



Bows following the performances of Amy Beth Kirsten's *Savior* and *Infernal Angel* during Centennial Weekend. Photo by Margo Reed Studio.



Benoit Gauthier, Rita. E Houser Conducting Fellow, leading the Curtis Symphony Orchestra at the Kimmel Center. Photo by Margo Reed Studio.

REIMAGINING THE HAUSER FELLOWSHIPS

The 2024–25 academic year marked a transformative milestone for the Rita E. Hauser Conducting Fellowships at Curtis. Thanks to Hauser's generous support, the program expanded to three fellows and adopted a three-year structure, allowing for deeper artistic development and broader professional preparation. At the heart of this evolution is a singular model built around the dual mentorship of James Ross ('89), director of orchestral studies, and Yannick Nézet-Séguin, whose leadership in both symphonic and operatic worlds shapes the program's unique approach. As Ross notes, "Our conducting fellows now graduate with meaningful operatic experience, curated education, and high-profile performance opportunities. This program is building the next generation of conductor-leaders."

Unlike most conservatory conducting programs, Curtis gives equal weight to symphonic and operatic training. Fellows serve as assistant and cover conductors for Curtis Opera Theatre

productions and, in their final year, may earn the opportunity to lead a mainstage opera themselves. They also receive specialized coaching in keyboard skills to support their work with singers, and benefit from close collaboration with Curtis' opera faculty and staff.

On the symphonic side, each conducting fellow leads the opening work of a Curtis Symphony Orchestra concert in Marian Anderson Hall, guided by Nézet-Séguin and distinguished visiting conductors. These high-profile appearances, paired with individualized mentorship and video documentation, have proven instrumental in launching the careers of recent graduates.

Curtis' flexible curriculum allows conducting fellows to tailor their studies to their artistic goals, drawing on the full range of performance and academic resources. With access to rehearsals at the Philadelphia Orchestra and travel stipends to observe Nézet-Séguin at the Metropolitan Opera, the Hauser fellows are uniquely equipped to build dynamic, multifaceted careers in today's musical landscape.

EXPERIENTIAL OPERA-MAKING: CURTIS OPERA THEATRE'S 2024-25 SEASON

Curtis Opera Theatre showcased the transformative power of collaborative storytelling through two distinctly different yet equally compelling productions in spring 2025. Director Marcus Shields' approach to W.A. Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro* and Emma Griffin's bold vision for Leonard Bernstein's (Conducting '41) *Candide* both demonstrated how placing performers at the center of the creative process can breathe new life into beloved works, creating productions that were generated "from the inside out" through deep artistic partnership.

Shields' *Figaro*, presented at the Kimmel Center's Perelman Theater (February 27 to March 2), embodied his philosophy that "the creative process should result in something unexpected that bears the influence of all the collaborators, performers, and realities of production." Shields worked closely with his young artists (many of the roles were double cast, allowing more students to take on major roles) to explore how their characters' struggle for agency within rigid social structures mirrored the students' own journey as emerging artists.

"*Figaro* is a daunting work," said Miloš Repický, director and Hirsig Family Chair of Vocal Studies and Opera. "It's orchestrally demanding, full of detail, and difficult to balance. What made this production successful was the honesty of the performances. The characters felt human, not like stock figures, and that came from the director's trust in the students' creative instincts. The work of Maestro Nic McGegan with the singers and orchestral players encouraged all participants, not only from the stage but also from the orchestra, to have agency and ownership of the musical realization of this iconic work."



Emilio Vásquez (Count Almaviva) and the cast of Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro*. Photo by Tracie Van Auken.



Soprano Emily Damasco (Countess Almaviva) in *Le nozze di Figaro*. Photo by Tracie Van Auken.



Conductor David Charles Abell leads the cast and musicians of Bernstein's *Candide*. Photo by Wide Eyed Studios.

Griffin's *Candide*, which culminated the opera series at Philadelphia's Forrest Theatre in April, took collaborative storytelling to adventurous heights. Working with the New York Philharmonic version of Bernstein's notoriously variable operetta, Griffin and Music Director David Charles Abell chose this iteration precisely because it "offered the cleanest way of telling the story" while allowing "the performers themselves to create the content of what's happening."

Griffin's concept transformed the traditional narrator role into a form of communal storytelling, with various company members sharing the responsibility of guiding audiences through Voltaire's satirical tale. Her inventive staging, reminiscent of Marx Brothers sets and rooted in Borscht Belt comedy traditions that influenced Bernstein's original conception, created a framework where all 24 singers—regardless of role size—became fully developed characters with complete inner lives.

The technical and logistical challenges of mounting *Candide* were considerable, echoing the complex problem-solving required for Curtis Opera Theatre's ambitious production of *The Comet / Poppea* (see page 16). With no traditional

orchestra pit at the performance venue, Curtis repositioned the orchestra on the floor of the auditorium where it was visible to the audience throughout the performance. For the final number, "Make Our Garden Grow," the orchestra joined the cast on stage, culminating in a powerful *cappella* ensemble. The choice required courage and adaptability from every participant, with instrumentalists even rehearsing Palestrina motets during orchestra lab to prepare. What could have seemed like a logistical compromise instead became a moving expression of Curtis' collaborative spirit.

Both *Figaro* and *Candide* required students to take genuine artistic risks, make creative decisions, and solve complex problems in real time—precisely the kind of experiential learning that Curtis has championed for a century. As the school celebrated its centennial season, these productions served as perfect embodiments of why Curtis' approach has proven so enduring: By trusting students with real artistic agency and challenging them to rise to extraordinary occasions, the school continues to develop not just technically proficient musicians, but complete artists prepared for the collaborative demands of professional life.



How to Move an Orchestra

CURTIS SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA'S GEFFEN HALL DEBUT

Setting the Season

SPRING 2024

Each Curtis Symphony Orchestra concert begins months in advance. The special 2024–25 Centennial Season plan took shape in late spring, when repertoire and venues were finalized, including the orchestra's debut at New York's Lincoln Center in the recently renovated Wu Tsai Theater at David Geffen Hall.



Scouting the Stage

JUNE 2024

Curtis production staff toured Geffen Hall. They assessed everything from loading docks to musician holding rooms and began coordinating with Local 1 IATSE union staff to ensure a smooth experience.



Mapping the Music

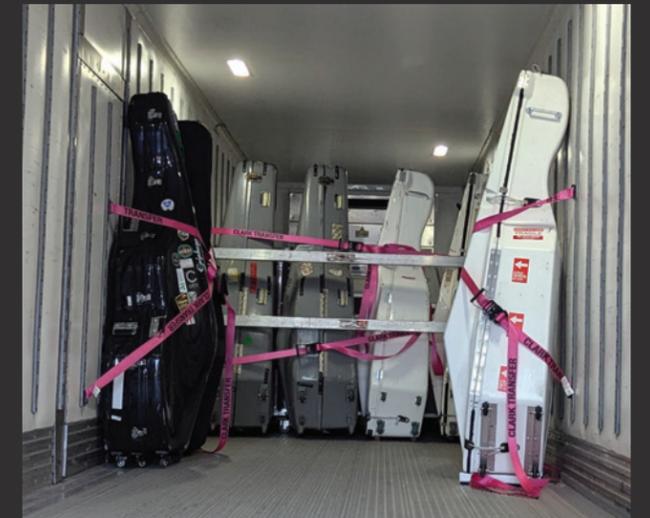
SUMMER 2024

Instrument needs were also carefully reviewed. For Florence Price's Symphony No. 1, a celesta—rarely used and easily damaged—had to be rented and transported safely to the concert hall.

Packing Instruments

NOVEMBER 23

Curtis engaged its longtime partner Clark Transfer to transport instruments and equipment from Philadelphia to New York. A climate-controlled truck was essential to protect sensitive instruments from temperature extremes.



The Road to New York

NOVEMBER 23–24

Timing was everything: Philadelphia Marathon weekend and strict New York loading regulations added extra layers of logistics to manage, including obtaining a street permit since the Geffen Hall dock couldn't accommodate the truck's height.

Showtime Prep

MORNING OF NOVEMBER 24

Load-in began at 7:00 a.m. as production staff set up stands and chairs. Students arrived at Lincoln Center early—by 9:00 a.m.—ready to rehearse and adjust to the acoustics of the world-class hall.



On Stage at Geffen Hall

2:00 P.M.

Rita E. Hauser Conducting Fellow Benoit Gauthier led Samuel Coleridge-Taylor’s Ballade in A minor, Op. 33, followed by Yannick Nézet-Séguin conducting Florence Price’s Symphony No. 1 and Antonín Dvořák’s Symphony No. 8 in G major, Op. 88.



Final Bow and the Journey Home

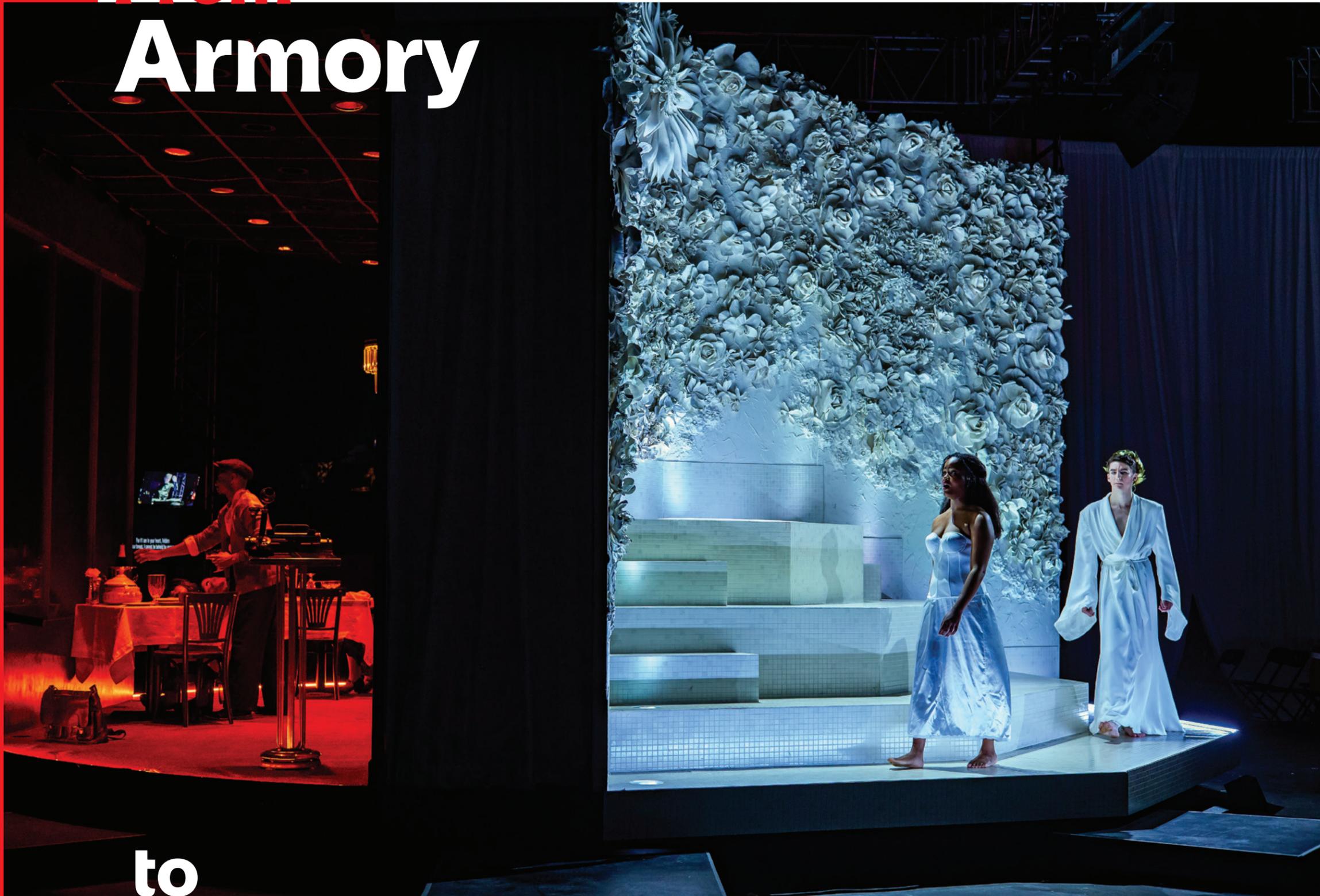
EVENING OF NOVEMBER 24

After a standing ovation in Wu Tsai Theater, the orchestra packed up once more for the return to Philadelphia, where they were greeted by every student’s favorite meal—pizza! Students, faculty, and staff shared well-earned pride in a historic performance that showcased Curtis’ renowned artistry on one of the world’s great stages before enjoying fall holiday break.



From Armory

CURTIS OPERA THEATRE



to Opera House

In November 2024, Curtis Opera Theatre presented the East Coast premiere of *The Comet / Poppea* at Philadelphia's historic 23rd Street Armory—a once-in-a-generation artistic endeavor that reimaged both space and storytelling.

The production paired George Lewis' *The Comet* (2024) with Claudio Monteverdi's *L'incoronazione di Poppea* (1643), performed on a rotating stage that alternated scenes from each work. More than an ambitious artistic statement, the project required the complete transformation of a non-theatrical military facility into a fully-functioning opera house.

Left: *The Comet* with Cedric Berry (Jim). Right: *Poppea* with Jeysla Rosario Santos (Poppea) and Sam Higgins (Nero). Photo by Wide Eyed Studios.



Nikan Ingabire Kanate (Fortune) and Amanda Lynn Bottoms (Virtue). Photo by Wide Eyed Studios.

Still an active National Guard site, the Armory lacked basic theatrical infrastructure. Curtis staff and production teams overcame significant logistical challenges to install lighting rigs, audience seating, dressing rooms, and a custom-built turntable stage. This rotating platform became the centerpiece of the production, enabling seamless transitions between the two operas while demanding complex engineering and real-time problem-solving.

Curtis' technical innovations, including refinements to the rotating stage and enhanced sound engineering, played a key role in advancing *The Comet*. The original version, first seen in Los Angeles, faced mechanical and acoustic challenges. Curtis addressed these by redesigning the turntable, improving sound infrastructure, and reworking staging to ensure a seamless experience for performers and audiences alike. The team also created the first codified piano-vocal score of the opera. These contributions strengthened later performances at Lincoln Center and beyond, affirming Curtis' role as both a training ground for artists and a creative partner in shaping contemporary opera.

For students, the unusual performance environment demanded heightened focus and adaptability. The continuous motion of the stage and antiphonal seating arrangement altered acoustics and sightlines, requiring singers to rely on their internal musicianship and heightened awareness of cues. The complexity of George Lewis' score, combined with the sparse textures of Monteverdi, made these challenges even more significant.



Jeysla Rosario Santos (Poppea) and Sam Higgins (Nero). Photo by Wide Eyed Studios.



Jeysla Rosario Santos (Poppea) and Amanda Lynn Bottoms (Ottone). Photo by Wide Eyed Studios.

By investing in *The Comet* / *Poppea*, Curtis affirmed its commitment to bold artistic exploration and hands-on learning. The Armory's reinvention as an opera house reflected the school's belief that great art can emerge from unexpected places. It was a vivid example of how Curtis prepares students to meet the demands of a changing field while enriching the cultural life of Philadelphia and beyond.

Curtis in the Community

STUDENT LEADERSHIP AND MENTORSHIP



Curtis students extend their artistry far beyond the concert hall, bringing music into classrooms, community spaces, and citywide programs. During the 2024–25 school year, three initiatives demonstrated how student leadership and mentorship are shaping the future of music in Philadelphia and beyond.

SYMPOSIUM FOR WOMEN AND NONBINARY BASSISTS

When Hanxiao Deng (Double Bass '25) noticed that she was the only woman in her Curtis studio, she set out to create change. With the support of the Community Artist Program (CAP), she launched the first Symposium for Women and Nonbinary Bassists at Curtis in April 2024. The event provided a rare space for young musicians to learn directly from leading women bassists, while also building community across generations of players.

The success of that inaugural symposium paved the way for a second gathering in May 2025, held with continued support from Curtis and Mary Javian ('99), chair of career studies. Though Deng had graduated from CAP by then, she remained the driving force behind the initiative. Over the course of four days,



Hanxiao Deng (Double Bass '25), organizer of the symposium. Photo by Nichole MCH Photography.

20 participants ranging in age from 12 to 43 received private lessons, master classes, and workshops with distinguished faculty from Curtis and beyond, including Nina DeCesare, Mary Javian, Gaelen McCormick, Lauren Pierce, and Patricia Weitzel. Workshops on career paths and audition preparation gave students practical tools, while performances—including an all-female bass recital—highlighted the depth of artistry in the field.

For Deng, the symposium was more than an event; it was the beginning of a movement. “There are no programs specifically for female bassists; the symposium was the first of its kind,” she explained. “I hope it becomes an annual tradition—a safe space where bassists can support and inspire one another.”

BUILDING MENTORSHIP AT CAPA

Curtis’ ongoing partnership with the Philadelphia High School for Creative and Performing Arts (CAPA) continued to flourish this year, with Curtis students mentoring young singers and instrumentalists on a weekly basis. Originally launched as a Community Artist Program project by opera students Juliette Tacchino ('25) and Katie Trigg ('25), the initiative has now become a sustained part of CAPA’s curriculum.

Opera students Sam Higgins ('25) and Trigg worked with CAPA’s vocal majors throughout the year, offering private lessons, master classes, and guidance on auditions, career paths, and college applications.



Participants in the second annual Symposium for Women and Nonbinary Bassists, May 2025.



Katie Trigg ('25) with students from Philadelphia High School for Creative and Performing Arts (CAPA).

Their impact was immediate: Every one of the ten students who participated last year was accepted to their first-choice college music program. In 2024–25, the program expanded to include younger students, strengthening long-term mentorship and musical growth.

The collaboration also reached CAPA's instrumental department, where bassoonist Gabriel Nishikawa-Madden ('25) and trombonist Jackson Howard rehearsed side-by-side with CAPA students, gave lessons, and offered individualized coaching. Their support helped CAPA graduates take the next steps in their musical journeys, including admission to top music schools.

Their impact was immediate: Every one of the ten students who participated last year was accepted to their first-choice college music program.

SIDE-BY-SIDE WITH ALL-CITY ORCHESTRA

Curtis also renewed its longstanding partnership with the All-City Orchestra (ACO), the School District of Philadelphia's premier ensemble program for high school students. In spring 2025, Curtis hosted ACO's annual retreat for the first time since the pandemic, bringing approximately 80 All-City students to campus for a day of intensive music-making.

Nearly 40 Curtis students participated, leading sectionals, offering master classes, and sharing their experiences as conservatory musicians. The retreat culminated in a side-by-side rehearsal in Gould Rehearsal Hall, with Curtis students performing with ACO members under the baton of guest conductor Tristan Rais-Sherman. The program continues a tradition of Curtis mentorship, building on the leadership of Curtis alumni and Philadelphia Orchestra musicians Joseph Conyers (Double Bass '04) and Don Liuzzi.



Katie Trigg ('25) and Juliette Tacchino ('25) with CAPA students.



ORGAN SCHOLAR PROGRAM

In addition to student-led initiatives, Curtis' Organ Scholar Program exemplifies how the school integrates training with community engagement. In 2024–25, each of Curtis' five organ students was placed with a Philadelphia-area church, where they contributed to worship services, special concerts, and community events.

The program provides students with invaluable professional experience, pairing them with mentors in the city's vibrant organ community while also connecting congregations with young talent. Each partnership is supported through cost-shared compensation between Curtis and the host church, ensuring that organ scholars are recognized both as students and as emerging professionals.

Through this program, Curtis organists not only refine their artistry but also serve diverse communities across the city. Their work highlights the school's deep ties to Philadelphia and its commitment to preparing students for careers that unite performance, service, and leadership.

Learning on the Road

CURTIS ON TOUR

Since its founding in 2008, Curtis on Tour (the Nina von Maltzahn Global Touring Initiative) has provided students, faculty, and alumni with invaluable opportunities to perform together around the world. More than a performance series, Curtis on Tour is an immersive educational experience that prepares young musicians for the realities of professional life. Each season, ensembles ranging from piano trios to full orchestra travel to diverse venues, often presenting newly commissioned works alongside established repertoire.

For the Erinys Quartet (String Quartet '25), one of the most profound lessons of touring has been how repeated performances deepen artistic understanding. Cellist Stergios Theodoridis notes that returning to the same repertoire requires intentional engagement: “Be careful with repertoire choices—choose music that you really love and feel you have a lot to say about.” He emphasizes that continual discovery is key, adding that “as long as we stay engaged and keep discovering new aspects, it never gets boring either for ourselves or for our audience.” Even on challenging days, he explains, trusting the ensemble and their shared preparation can lead to moments of artistic flow.

Touring also teaches adaptability. Violinist Joosep Reimaa reflects that Curtis on Tour offered early exposure to skills most musicians do not acquire until later in their careers. Among the most valuable, he says, is “being aware of the acoustics of different halls and adapting my playing,” as well as “sensing the audience’s energy and finding ways to create an intimate atmosphere, even in bigger venues.” These experiences mirror the demands of professional life on the road.



Erinys Quartet (L-R): Stergios Theodoridis (cello), Marija Räisänen (viola), Elizabeth Stewart (violin), and Joosep Reimaa (violin). Photo by Nichole MCH Photography.



The Erinys Quartet performs on the Field Concert Hall stage. Photo by Micah Gleason.

Beyond the stage, Curtis on Tour highlights the importance of self-care and balance. Violinist Elizabeth Stewart describes touring as “a unique skill that we’ve gotten to fine-tune while in residence at Curtis,” noting that daily routines help ground her in unfamiliar places. Simple rituals—like walking each morning and finding a favorite local café—help combat jet lag, while time spent with presenters and colleagues fosters meaningful connections. “At the end of the day,” she reflects, “those memories and connections are some of the most special things about getting to be on tour.”

Equally important is learning how to build lasting relationships with audiences and communities. Violist Marija Räisänen emphasizes that Curtis on Tour demonstrated

“how a meaningful and long-term audience building is created,” reinforcing the importance of trust and consistency. She believes strongly in personal connection, from speaking with audiences after concerts to engaging with local schools, ultimately “breaking down the barrier and mystification of our craft.”

Curtis on Tour continues to embody the school’s mission of preparing students for meaningful careers in music. Through repeated performance, adaptability, self-discipline, and authentic audience engagement, the initiative ensures that Curtis musicians—like the members of the Erinys Quartet—emerge not only as exceptional performers, but as thoughtful professionals ready for the realities of life on the road.

JUNE 2024

Teng Li (Viola '05) named principal viola of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra; viola student Emad Zolfaghari won the 2024 Primrose International Viola Competition

JULY 2024

Curtis on Tour in NYC, Nantucket, and the Hamptons



AUGUST 2024

Curtis welcomed 41 new students from 11 countries

SEPTEMBER 2024

Angela Chan ('20) and Jacques Forestier both won the 12th Joseph Joachim Violin Competition and shared first prize



OCTOBER 2024

Johnny Gandelsman (Violin '99) announced as 2024 MacArthur Fellow; Hilary Hahn (Violin '99) won Recording of the Year and the Instrumental Award at the 2024 Gramophone Classical Music Awards

NOVEMBER 2024

Rosamunde String Quartet joined Curtis Artist Management. The quartet's members are Noah Bendix-Balgley, first concertmaster of the Berlin Philharmonic; Shanshan Yao ('08), member of the Kammerakademie Potsdam and former violinist in the New York Philharmonic; Teng Li ('05), principal viola of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra; and Nathan Vickery ('13), cellist in the New York Philharmonic.



DECEMBER 2024

Curtis Presents *Nate's World*, an innovative concert programmed by Nate Farrington (Double Bass '06) along with Teddy Abrams (Conducting '08) and Gabriel Globus-Hoenich (Timpani and Percussion '08)

JANUARY 2025

Curtis purchased the Art Alliance building on Rittenhouse Square, expanding our campus for the first time since 2011

FEBRUARY 2025

Grammy Awards: Karen Slack (Opera '02) and Michelle Cann (Piano '13, ArtistYear '15) won the Best Classical Solo Vocal Album Grammy this weekend for *Beyond the Years - Unpublished Songs of Florence Price*; Yannick Nézet-Séguin won Best Compilation Soundtrack for Visual Media for the film *Maestro*, about Leonard Bernstein (Conducting '41), and Curtis' 2024 composer in residence, Gabriela Ortiz, won two Grammys: Best Classical Compendium and Best Contemporary Classical Composition for *Revolución Diamantina*.

MARCH 2025

Viano Quartet (String Quartet '23) announced as one of the recipients of the 2025 Avery Fisher Career Grant



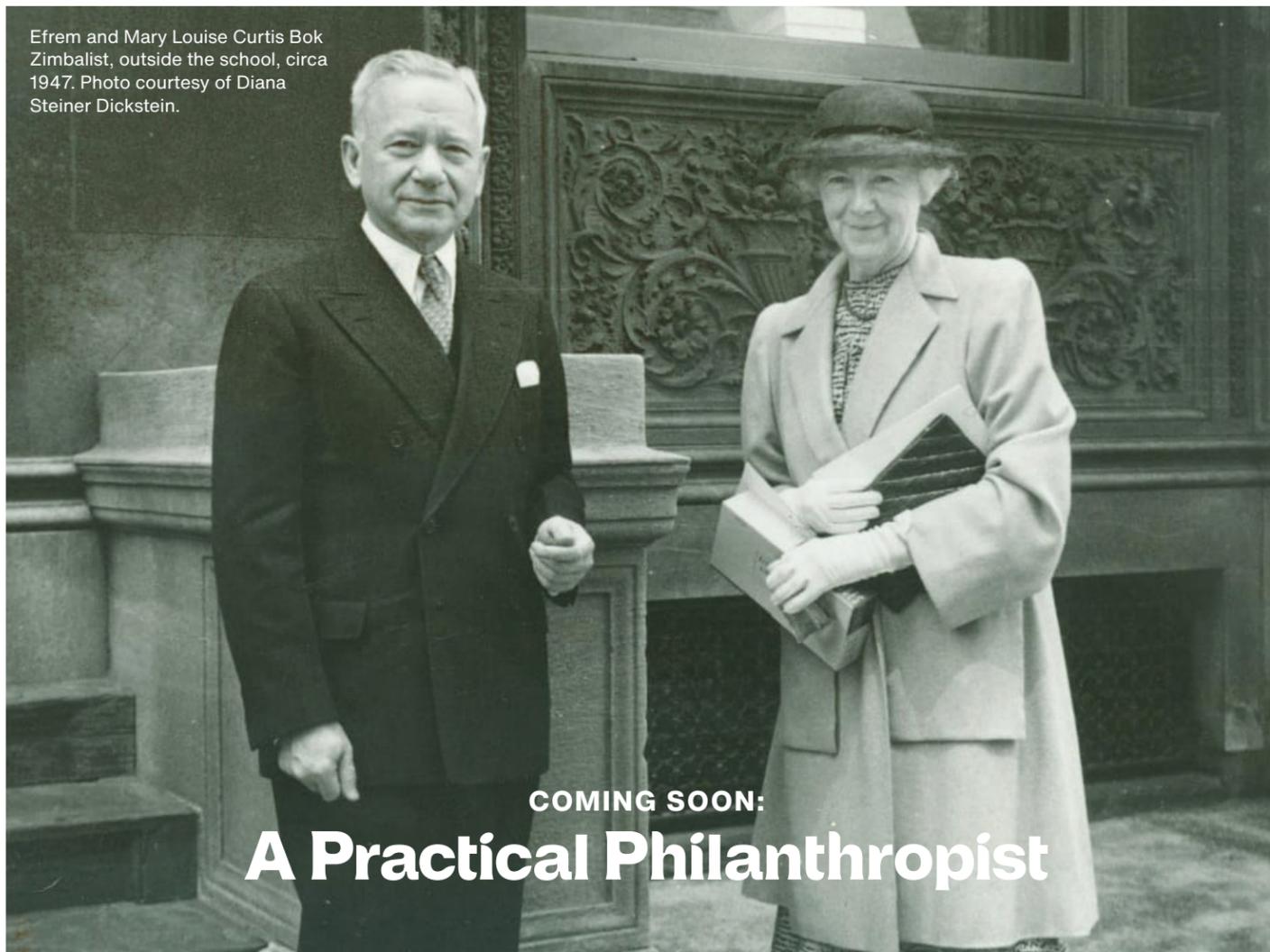
APRIL 2025

World premiere of *Woman with Eyes Closed* by Jennifer Higdon (Composition '88) at Pittsburgh Opera

MAY 2025

Curtis releases special preview chapter excerpts of *A Practical Philanthropist* (see facing page)

Efrem and Mary Louise Curtis Bok Zimbalist, outside the school, circa 1947. Photo courtesy of Diana Steiner Dickstein.



COMING SOON:
A Practical Philanthropist

In late summer 2026, Curtis will release *A Practical Philanthropist: The Life of Mary Louise Curtis Bok Zimbalist*—the first published biography of our founder. Written by Curtis Senior Archivist Barbara Benedett, the book draws on two years of research across major archives and libraries nationwide.

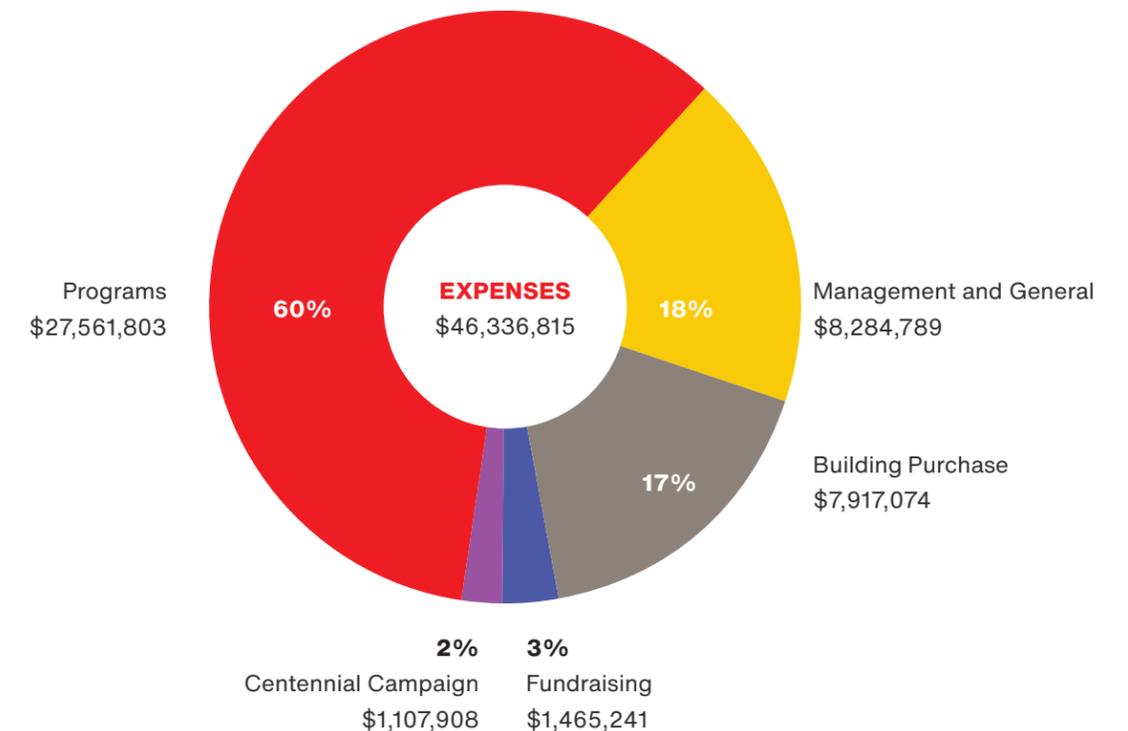
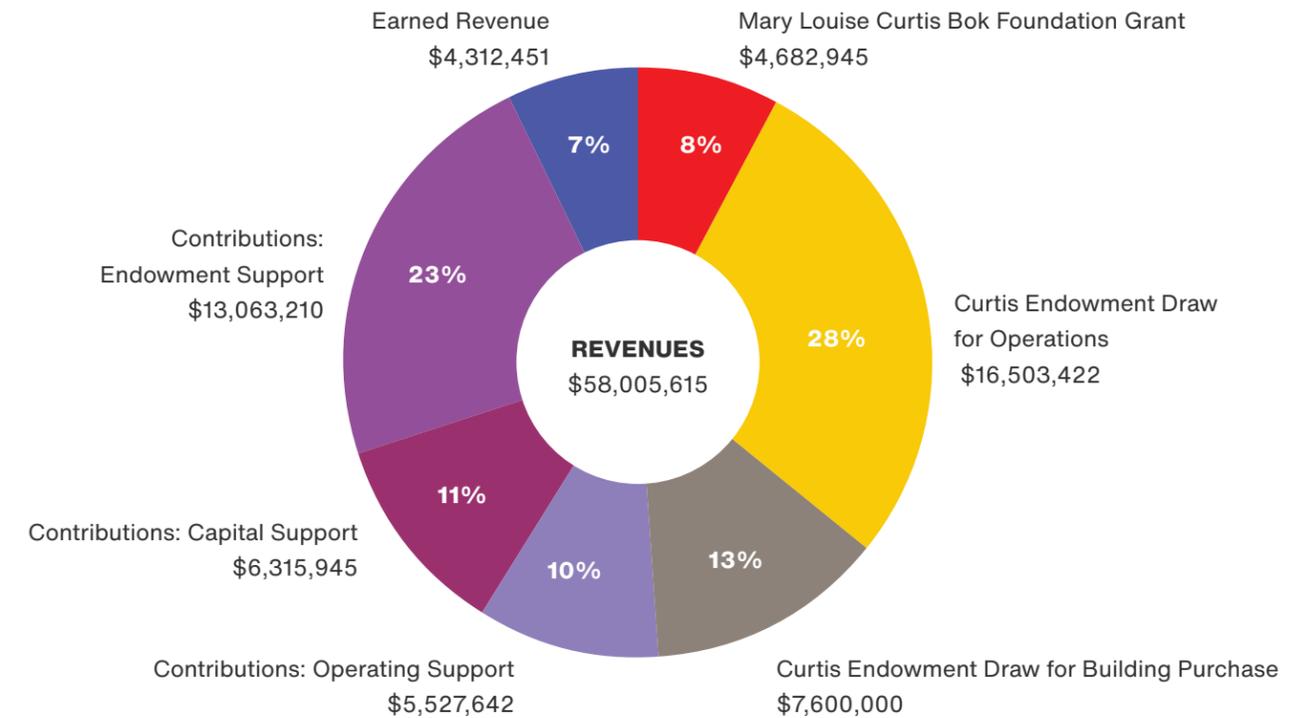
Mary Louise Curtis Bok Zimbalist's story unfolds against the backdrop of the Progressive Era, tracing her deep commitment to music, education, and social reform. Her founding of the Curtis Institute of Music was rooted in a philosophy of "practical philanthropy," a hands-on, human-centered approach to giving that shaped every aspect of the school.

The biography reveals a multifaceted life: pianist, patron, mother, Red Cross volunteer, and friend to artists and activists including Eleanor Roosevelt, Helen Keller, and Jane Addams. Readers will discover her influence beyond Curtis, from artist colonies to libraries and playhouses.

Published by Bauer and Dean with support from the Bok Foundation, the book features rare photographs and a foreword by Arnold Steinhardt (Violin '59), and a personal reminiscence by Mary's great-granddaughter, Victoria Bok, a lifelong music lover and current trustee of Curtis.

Financial Summary

2024-25



Young Alumni Fund EXPANSION

DANIEL W. DIETRICH II YOUNG ALUMNI FUND

Curtis' Daniel W. Dietrich II Young Alumni Fund continues to grow as a vital source of support for recent graduates navigating the transition from student to professional life. Established in 2020, the fund provides project-based and career development grants to alumni within ten years of graduation, empowering them to take artistic risks, launch new initiatives, and build sustainable careers.

In 2024-25, Curtis received a record 112 applications and awarded grants to 19 alumni, with funding totaling \$104,800. Supported projects ranged from nonprofit launches and inclusive performance models to global pedagogy tools and climate justice initiatives. Twelve alumni also received career support grants for instruments, travel, and/or professional development.

This year's expansion was made possible by a new grant from the Daniel W. Dietrich II Foundation which was awarded in September 2024 that builds on their original investment

In 2024-25, Curtis received a record 112 applications and awarded grants to 19 alumni, with funding totaling \$104,800.

in the Young Alumni Fund in 2021. These meaningful commitments from the foundation will dramatically increase the fund's reach over time, allowing Curtis to grow both the number of recipients and the average grant amount in future cycles.

The Daniel W. Dietrich II Young Alumni Fund reflects Curtis' enduring commitment to its graduates, supporting their growth not only as artists, but as leaders and changemakers in the global music community. We are deeply grateful to the Daniel W. Dietrich II Foundation for its continued partnership and visionary support.

Curtis Institute of Music
Board of Trustees 2024–25

Deborah M. Fretz, *chair*
 Victoria Bok, *vice chair*
 Edward A. Montgomery Jr., *vice chair*
 Andrew Jacobs*, *treasurer*

Louis P. Barbarin
 William R. Brody
 Anthony B. Creamer III
 Roberto Díaz*
 Nick DiBerardino*
 Gordon Fowler
 Judith D. Freyer
 Mignon Groch
 William Horn*
 Marsha Hunter*
 Brian Jandrucko
 Linda E. Johnson
 Erin Keefe*
 Lisa Liem^
 Yuen Sung “Y.S.” Liu
 Connie B. McCann
 John H. McFadden
 Frank J. Mechura
 John J. Medveckis
 Robert H. Mundheim
 C. Richard Neu
 Geoffrey W. S. Okamoto
 Robert H. Rock
 Mark E. Rubenstein
 Jay H. Tolson
 Penelope P. Watkins
 Jerry Wind
 Chiona Xanthopoulou-Schwarz
 Amy Yang*
 Nadia Zerhouni

Mary Claire Sullivan, *secretary*

Trustees Emeriti

Nina Baroness von Maltzahn‡, *chair emerita*
 H. F. “Gerry” Lenfest‡, *chairman emeritus*

Peter A. Benoliel‡
 Sheldon M. Bonovitz
 Carolyn S. Burger‡
 Joseph M. Field
 Bruce Jay Gould, M.D.
 Alan R. Hirsig‡
 Scott M. Jenkins
 Bobby Ellen Kimbel, Ph.D.
 James R. “Robin” Ledwith‡
 Bong S. Lee, M.D.
 Christina Weiss Lurie
 David G. Marshall
 Betty H. Matarese
 John A. Nyheim‡
 Albert E. Piscopo
 Robert Pollack
 Samuel R. Shipley III
 Amanda W. Smoot

Mary Louise Curtis Bok Foundation
Board of Directors

Bayard R. Fiechter, *president*
 Victoria Bok, *vice president*
 Joseph M. Field, *secretary*
 Scott M. Jenkins, *treasurer*

A. Margaret “Stormy” Bok‡
 Tomas J. Bok, Ph.D.
 Gary Graffman**
 James R. “Robin” Ledwith‡
 Milton L. Rock, Ph.D.‡
 Robert H. Rock
 Brett Rubinson
 Samuel R. Shipley III

‡ deceased * alumni ^ Curtis parent



Ray Chen with Curtis students backstage after orchestra concert at Kimmel Center. Photo by Margo Reed Studio.



Yuja Wang with students after piano master class. Photo by Margo Reed Studio.



Orchestra students outside of Lincoln Center. Photo by Fadi Kheir.



Yannick Nézet-Séguin and Judy Zhuo with Curtis Symphony Orchestra. Photo by Margo Reed Studio.



Eriny's Quartet performing during Curtis New Music Ensemble's Bold Experiment concert. Photo by Margo Reed Studio.



1726 Locust Street | Philadelphia, PA 19103

curtis.edu