Curtis
Institute of Music

2026–27 Season

Curtis Opera Theatre Launches 2026–27 Series with Carlisle Floyd's Poignant Tragedy *Susannah*

Director Mikhaela Mahony and Rita E. Hauser Conducting Fellow Mariana Corichi Gómez lead a cast of rising young opera stars and members of the Curtis Symphony Orchestra at Mainstage Theater, Philadelphia Film Center

PHILADELPHIA, PA—November 11, 2026—Curtis Opera Theatre launches its 2026–27 series with ***Susannah***, Carlisle Floyd's poignant American tragedy, at Mainstage Theater, Philadelphia Film Center on Thursday, November 19 at 7:00 p.m. and Saturday, November 21 at 2:00 p.m.

Led by multi-disciplinary director **Mikhaela Mahony**, *Susannah* features a cast of rising young stars of Curtis Opera Theatre, including soprano **Jennifer Robinson** as Susannah Polk, tenor **Jack Hicks** as Sam Polk, bass **Theo Harrah** as Olin Blitch, and tenor **Harun Ellis Tekin** as Little Bat. The production also features soprano **Abigail Arnold** as Mrs. Hayes, soprano **Juliet Renée Rand** as Mrs. Gleaton, mezzo-soprano **Maisy Parker** as Mrs. Ott, mezzo-soprano **Carlyle Quinn** as Mrs. McLean, tenor **Brett Michael Hunter** as Elder Gleaton, tenor **Henry Drangel** as Elder Hayes, baritone **Ethan Elsbernd** as Elder McLean, and bass-baritone **Sebastian Wittmoser Herrera** as Elder Ott.

Additionally, the cast includes a chorus of Curtis Opera Theatre young artists, joined by members of the **Curtis Symphony Orchestra**, under the baton of third-year Rita E. Hauser Conducting Fellow **Mariana Corichi Gómez**.

Susannah marks a milestone for Curtis' conducting program: Corichi Gómez is the first conducting fellow to lead a mainstage opera performance, helping set a new precedent for the student experience. This is part of Curtis' newly expanded, three-year conducing curriculum that incorporates training in orchestral, chamber, and opera conducting, which Corichi Gómez will be the first student to complete.

"Conducting as music director for *Susannah* is the culmination of my training, in both opera and symphonic traditions," Corichi Gómez says. "It's such a privilege working with our stellar cast who are 100% committed to their complex roles and finding their own versions of each character through Floyd's lyric writing. As a conductor, whether young or seasoned, the greatest experiences emerge from rehearsal rooms where colleagues inspire and collaborate with us. In Curtis' production of *Susannah,* all of these elements are very much there."

Written during the McCarthy era, Carlisle Floyd's *Susannah* draws loosely on the Apocryphal tale of Susannah and the Elders to explore the destructive power of religious hypocrisy,

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prejudice, and small-town suspicion. Reimagined in rural New Hope Valley, Tennessee, the opera follows a young woman whose beauty and independence make her the target of jealousy and judgment within her church community.

When the church elders discover Susannah bathing innocently in a nearby creek, they conceal their lust with outrage, turning the community against her. And when Reverend Blitch visits Susannah alone, his professed concern for her salvation gives way to a devastating betrayal of her trust. Refusing to confess to a sin she has not committed, she ultimately finds herself forced to confront the very people who have sought to destroy her.

Premiered in 1955, this landmark American opera remains a powerful and deeply moving exploration of faith, injustice, and the resilience of the human spirit.

"It is a common trope in opera that the hero, if she's a woman, dies," says director Mikhaela Mahony. "*Susannah* gives us a heroine who survives. Without compromising her values, without wavering in her beliefs, she survives. Susannah, and the opera that bears her name, stands alone."

Susannah is realized by the creative team of stage director **Mikhaela Mahony**, scenic designer **Brendan Gonzalez Boston**, costume designer **Amanda Gladu**, lighting designer **Abigail Hoke-Brady**, and hair and makeup designer **Brittany Rappise**. Choreographer **Zoe Scofield** shapes the production's physical storytelling through movement and dance.

Susannah (Reduced Version) by Carlisle Floyd presented by arrangement with B&H Music Publishing Inc., publisher and copyright owner.

Curtis Opera Theatre returns to the stage on February 18, 2027, at 7:00 p.m. and February 20, 2027, at 2:00 p.m. at the Philadelphia Film Center's Mainstage Theater for *Orlando Paladino*, Haydn's heroic comedy inspired by Ludovico Ariosto's 16th-century epic poem. The 2026–27 opera series concludes with Debussy's modernist masterpiece *Pelléas et Mélisande* on April 30, 2027, at 7:00 p.m. and May 2, 2027, at 2:00 p.m. at the Kimmel Center's Perelman Theater. To learn more about these performances, as well as the Curtis Symphony Orchestra, Curtis Recital Series, and more, visit curtis.edu/calendar.

TICKETS
Tickets for both performances of *Susannah* are currently sold out. To be notified when additional tickets become available, join the wait list for the November 19 and November 21 performances.

Susannah Curtis Opera Theatre
Thursday, November 19, 2026, 7:00 p.m.
Saturday, November 21, 2026, 2:00 p.m.
Mainstage Theater, Philadelphia Film Center

Carlisle Floyd, music and libretto
Based on a story from the Apocrypha

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CAST

Susannah Polk	Jennifer Robinson
Sam Polk	Jack Hicks
Olin Blitch	Theo Harrah
Little Bat	Harun Ellis Tekin
Mrs. Hayes	Abigail Arnold
Mrs. Gleaton	Juliet Renée Rand
Mrs. Ott	Maisy Parker
Mrs. McLean	Carlyle Quinn
Elder Gleaton	Brett Michael Hunter
Elder Hayes	Henry Drangel
Elder McLean	Ethan Elsbernd
Elder Ott	Sebastian Wittmoser Herrera

Chorus: Eva Capron, Maya Mor-Mitrani, Jeysla Rosario Santos, Isabella Hincksman, Kate Li, Judy Zhuo, Emilio Vásquez, Yulin Yan, Edward Smith, Ryan Jester

Mariana Corichi Gómez, conductor
Mikhaela Mahony, stage director
Curtis Symphony Orchestra

Susannah is performed in English with English supertitles.

Content advisory: This production contains mature themes—including coercive sex and implied sexual violence—which may not be suitable for younger audiences. There is also a loud gunshot sound effect.

Curtis is committed to maintaining a community free from violence, discrimination, harassment, hate, and bias. To learn more about this commitment and our resources, visit **curtis.edu/CampusWellbeing**.

Curtis Opera Theatre is generously supported by the Ernestine Bacon Cairns Trust and the Horace W. Goldsmith Foundation.

Curtis received funding from Pennsylvania Creative Industries, powered by the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts, a state agency funded by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and the National Endowment for the Arts.

About Curtis Opera Theatre
Through innovative productions and extraordinary musicianship, the promising young artists of Curtis Opera Theatre work alongside renowned conductors, directors, and designers to present audiences with fresh and compelling performances from across the operatic repertoire. Under the visionary leadership team of Miloš Repický, Karen Slack, Amanda Majeski, and John Matsumoto Giampietro, Curtis' voice and opera students are cast regularly throughout the

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season, providing a unique level of performance experience to draw upon throughout their careers with top opera companies across the United States and Europe, including La Scala, Covent Garden, Paris Opera, the Vienna Staatsoper, Zurich Opera, Houston Grand Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, the San Francisco Opera, and the Metropolitan Opera.

About the Curtis Institute of Music

At Curtis, the world's great young musicians develop into exceptional artists, creators, and innovators. With a tuition-free foundation, Curtis is a unique environment for teaching and learning. A small school by design, students realize their artistic potential through intensive, individualized study with the most renowned, sought-after faculty. Animated by a learn-by-doing philosophy, Curtis students share their music with audiences through more than 100 performances each year, including solo and chamber recitals, orchestral concerts, and opera—all free or at an affordable cost—offering audiences unique opportunities to participate in pivotal moments in these young musicians' careers. Curtis students experience a close connection to the greatest artists and organizations in classical music, and innovative initiatives that integrate new technologies and encourage entrepreneurship—all within an historic campus in the heart of culturally rich Philadelphia. In this diverse, collaborative community, Curtis' extraordinary artists challenge, support, and inspire one another—continuing an unparalleled legacy of musicians who have led, and will lead, classical music into a thriving, equitable, and multidimensional future. Learn more at **curtis.edu**.

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