

North Park University School of Music, Art,
and Theatre presents:

Performance and Service Awards

Friday, February 23

7:30pm

Anderson Chapel

3225 W. Foster Ave.

Graduate Division Performers

“Si. Mi chiamano Mimi”
from *La Bohème* Giacomo Puccini
(1858 – 1924)

Madalynn Baez, *soprano*
Teresa Kang, *piano*

“Mache dich, mein Herze, rein”
from *St. Matthew Passion* Johann Sebastian Bach
(1685 – 1750)

Keaton Payne, *baritone*
Teresa Kang, *piano*

“Och Jaky Zal”
from *The Bartered Bride* Bedřich Smetana
(1824 – 1884)

“Song to the Moon” from *Rusalka* Antonín Dvořák
(1841 – 1904)

Jasanna Tayler, *soprano*
Teresa Kang, *piano*

“De' miei bollenti spiriti”
from *La Traviata* Guiseppe Verdi
(1813 – 1901)

Samuel Varghese, *tenor*
Teresa Kang, *piano*

Undergraduate Division Performers

Strawberry Wine Noah Kahn
(b.1997)

James Cheney, *guitar and voice*

“O Isis und Osiris”
from *Die Zauberflöte* Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
(1756 – 1791)

Christopher Comanescu, *bass*
Teresa Kang, *piano*

Pier Pieta

Vincenzo Bellini
(1801 - 1835)

Joshua James, *tenor*
Teresa Kang, *piano*

“In uomini, in soldati “
from *Così fan tutte*

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
(1756 - 1791)

“O mio babbino caro”
from *Gianni Schicci*

Giacomo Puccini
(1858 - 1924)

Brooklin Kwasigroch, *soprano*
Teresa Kang, *piano*

Presentation of 2024 Service Awards
Presentation of 2024 Performance Awards

Graduate Performers (listed alphabetically)

Madalynn Baez, soprano, is an avid musician and multifaceted professional, acclaimed for her talent, poise, and servant leadership both on and off the stage. She holds bachelor degrees in engineering and mathematics from Wartburg College, where she was a leader in the internationally acclaimed Wartburg Choir and performed several opera roles and scenes. Madalynn is currently pursuing her Master of Music in Vocal Performance at North Park University. She is also a full-time engineer and an active performer throughout the midwest, having appeared as a soloist with the Galesburg Symphony, Wartburg-Waverly Community Symphony, Ottumwa Symphony, Opera Quad Cities, and more. She is looking forward to her professional role debut this summer as Mimì in Puccini's, *La Bohème*, with Opera Quad Cities.

Keaton Payne is pursuing a Master of Music Vocal Performance at North Park University. He studies voice with David Govertsen and is Assistant to the Director of Choral Activities, Dr. Julia Davids. He sings with the University Choir and Chamber Singers, and appears in the semesterly opera where he has performed the roles of Gravedigger in Myers/Long's *Buried Alive* (2014) and Colas in Mozart's *Bastien und Bastienne*. Payne is routinely featured as a soloist in North Park University's choir program, including their most recent performance of Handel's *Messiah*. Payne made his opera debut with Third Eye Theatre Ensemble's production of Menotti's *The Consul* as the Secret Police Agent. He actively performs with the renowned Music of the Baroque choir under Dr. Andrew Megill and is a chorister at Fourth Presbyterian Church of Chicago under the direction of Dr. John W. W. Sherer. Payne holds a bachelor's in vocal performance from the University of Wisconsin - Platteville where he was a three-time honor's recitalist and featured soloist for Haydn's "Lord Nelson" Mass in D minor.

Jasanna Tayler, soprano, is a recent graduate of Western Michigan University where she earned a Bachelor of Music in Vocal Performance and a Bachelor of Business Administration in Marketing. This experience has ignited her passion to advocate for the arts and aims to support the arts not only with her artistry but also with her marketing expertise. On the stage, Jasanna covered the role of Contessa in the scene production of Mozart's *Marriage of Figaro* where she also served as Assistant Stage Manager. She also sang in the chorus of *Don Giovanni*. Jasanna also debuted in the Western Michigan University production of *Doctor Miracle* as Veronica. Jasanna is currently pursuing a Master of Music in Vocal Performance degree at North Park University and is an active participant in the University Choir, Chamber Singers, and the upcoming musical, *Yeast Nation*. Additionally, Jasanna serves as the Opera Graduate Assistant and works with Alumni Engagement at North Park. Academically, Jasanna is interested in researching the performance practices and intentions of living

composers through in-depth interviews and thematic analysis. Jasanna originally hails from Grand Haven, MI. When she is not singing, she enjoys spending time at the lake, even if it is snowing.

Samuel Varghese is an Indian tenor who made his Baroque opera debut with the Chicago premiere production of Händel's, *Faramondo*, as Teobaldo. He made his recital debut at Carnegie Hall as part of its 2022-23 Season in a gala concert with Vincero Academy. He currently studies with Dr. David Govertsen at North Park University and privately with Allan Glassman. He has had a colorful and varied pedigree of vocal training, having first studied voice with Dr. Barbara Isely in Vellore, India, then with Andrey Morozov at CHRIST (Deemed to be University), and with Jonathan Beyer at Curtis Institute of Music. At Vincero Academy, Samuel has studied Italian diction with Stefano de Peppo and Stefano Baldasseroni. At North Park University he has performed roles in new operas like *The Falling and the Rising* by Zach Redler and Jerre Dye and *Buried Alive* by Jeff Myers and Quincy Long. He has also performed in an improv opera based on Mozart's *Bastien und Bastienne*. He has appeared in *Cendrillon* by Massenet and *The Tender Land* by Copeland with Chicago Summer Opera and in their 2023 Season performed in Handel's *Agrippina* and Britten's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. He was recently lauded as "notable" by the Chicago Classical Review for his turn as Assan in Third Eye Theatre Ensemble's production of Menotti's *The Consul* and will be appearing in the chorus for Concert Opera of Greater Chicago's production of *L'Italiana in Algeri* and as The Magician in Menotti's *The Consul* with Chicago Summer Opera in their 2024 season.

Undergraduate Performers (listed alphabetically)

James Cheney is a songwriter, singer, and composer from Mount Vernon, Washington. His works consist of songwriting with guitar and voice and orchestral works. He typically writes reflective and vulnerable lyrics. Musically, his songs are slow and include soft employing finger-style guitar. The use of natural world imagery consistently appears in his lyrics. He is influenced by Folk, Americana, and Pop from artist like Noah Kahn and Bob Dylan. In his orchestral works he is influenced by John Williams, Hans Zimmer, and Guy Michelmore. At North Park University he studied under Julie Goldberg with classical guitar, Scott Hesse for contemporary guitar, and Dr. Micheal McBride for composition. He just picked up french horn during fall semester of 2023 and is studying with Anna Jacobson. He has been in various ensembles at North Park including concert band, jazz band, gospel choir, and university choir. In concert band he plays percussion and french horn, jazz band plays guitar, sings tenor in gospel, and baritone in university choir. For the three years studying at North Park he has played in the Christmas performance, lessons and carols, singing in gospel choir and playing percussion. He is breaking into the world as a performing artist playing at open mics at school and holding small concerts. James sees

musical service as a diverse endeavor, embracing performance, event support, teaching, and composing, all aimed at enriching lives and fostering community. James believes in the transformative power of music to address emotional challenges and connect individuals, as seen in his compositions which often resonate deeply with listeners and offer comfort and inspiration.

Christopher J. Comanescu is a Romanian American clarinetist and bass singer. He started playing the clarinet in the sixth grade and began singing in his senior year of high school. He won the Illinois Association of Christian Schools (IACS) woodwind competition in his junior year and also performed at the competition's showcase. In his senior year, he placed third in the male vocal solo category at the IACS competition. In the same year, he won the classical voice duet competition at Illinois Music Association competition and placed third in the male vocal solo category. He is currently studies with David Govertsen at North Park University and will be featured in North Park's production of the musical *Yeast Nation* in the spring.

Joshua James is in his second year at North Park University and is pursuing a Bachelor of Music Education. Throughout Josh's time at North Park, he has been involved in University Choir, Chamber Singers, the Black Student Union, and working as a student ambassador on campus. Josh has always been involved in music whether it's at church or in his studies. Music is and will always be a passion within Josh's future. Josh has been doing classical music since his high school years and couldn't have grown without the help of the music faculty at North Park. Josh looks forward to continuing the growth of his voice especially since seeing what he's already able to accomplish at his young age. He is preparing for whatever it takes to become very successful in his musical journey.

Brooklin KwasiGroch, is currently in her second year at North Park University and is pursuing a Bachelor of Music Education. During her time here she has been a part of University Choir, Chamber Singers, and the upcoming musical production, *Yeast Nation*. High school was Brooklin's stepping stone into becoming the musician she aims to be. Singing soprano has not only made her voice stronger but made her try things she's not used to. Musical theater has always been embedded with her, but now that she's been working with faculty at North Park University, she has been doing pieces that is not in her character but, has made her voice even stronger. Brooklin is becoming more comfortable with doing different styles of music and is now excited to see what is next to come within her musical journey.

Performance Award Judges

In addition to singing in the full-time chorus at Lyric Opera of Chicago, soprano **Desirée Hassler** has sung and covered roles at Lyric in *Four Portraits*, *Cendrillon*, *West Side Story*, *Tannhäuser*, *Oklahoma!*, *Manon*, *Macbeth*, *Boris Godunov*, *Show Boat*, *Elektra* and *Der Rosenkavalier*. Recent performances include soprano soloist in the Mozart Requiem Eastern Illinois Symphony, Bach's *B Minor* mass with Chicago Bach Project (John Nelson, conductor), Violetta in Verdi's *La traviata* with the Lake Geneva Symphony Orchestra, Ellen in *Oklahoma!* at Lyric Opera of Chicago, Kondja in *The Rose of Stambul* with Chicago Folks Operetta, soprano soloist in the Brahms *Requiem* (Los Angeles, CA), Barber's *Knoxville, Summer of 1915* with the Prairie Ensemble, Vaughan Williams' *Sea Symphony*, as well as Haydn's *Lord Nelson Mass* with the Wichita Symphony. Alongside her Lyric Opera of Chicago colleagues, Hassler won her first Emmy in 2022 for Outstanding Achievement for Arts/Entertainment—Long Form Content for *Pagliacci*.

Highly sought after as master clinician, Hassler enjoys sharing her expertise with voice and opera studios at universities across the country. Her voice can be heard on everything from commercial and film soundtracks, to oratorio, opera and operetta and even progressive heavy metal albums. Dr. Hassler has served on the faculties of Eastern Illinois University (Charleston, IL) as a Bynam fellow at Gordon College (Wenham, Mass), the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and currently serves on the voice faculty of the Moody Bible Institute in Chicago, IL where she teaches voice and music history courses. She is a member of AGMA, NATS, Musician's Club of Women and is Estill certified.

Tim DeBoer currently serves as the Director of Choral Activities at Joliet West High School, a position he has held for 21 years. He holds a Bachelor of Music Education degree from North Park University (2002) and a Master of Music Education degree from VanderCook College of Music (2007). While completing his degrees, Mr. DeBoer studied conducting with Dr. Rollo Dilworth and Dr. Robert Sinclair, as well as piano with Dr. Terree Shofner-Emrich and Dr. Rollo Dilworth. At Joliet West, Mr. DeBoer conducts five choirs, teaches AP Music Theory and Music Appreciation, and directs the spring musical. Since joining Joliet West, Mr. DeBoer has founded the Songs of the Season dinner, the Opera Scenes program, and the Joliet Choir Contest. He has been twice nominated for a Grammy Award for Outstanding Music Teacher. In addition, Mr. DeBoer was named a 'Teacher of Distinction' by the Golden Apple Foundation in 2016, a 'Celebrated Teacher' by DePaul University in 2017, and a 'Joliet Area Great Teacher' by the Joliet Chamber of Commerce in 2021.

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. She shared the stage with Lawrence Brownlee, members of the Chicago Symphony and Lyric Opera of Chicago Orchestras, and was featured on WFMT's program Music Notes: Music of Healing and Peace. 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 operas.

Steyer has brought music to 24,000 youths in underserved areas with Bellissima Opera's, In the Classroom. She 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 and teaches music at Ascension Catholic School in Oak Park, IL.

In 2024, Steyer has an active performance schedule singing *Elijah*, *Speed Dating Tonight*, *Le dernier sorcier*, songs of Florence Price and Ernst Bacon, as well as presenting excerpts from her latest opera as librettist, *Outside the Ring*.

Service Award Participants (listed alphabetically)

Osbeida Alvarez, from Chicago, IL, is a sophomore who is pursuing a Bachelor of Arts with a concentration in Music Composition. She has been a member of the Upper Voice Chorale, Jazz Ensemble, and Concert Band. She plays the oboe, saxophone, piano, and accordion for both the university and her church. She loves composing with themes and emotion, listening to music from her peers, and sharing joy and gifts to friends. Osbeida's musical service extends to event managing, mentoring others, playing multiple instruments, and fostering connections across diverse cultures, believing service not only benefits others, but also facilitates personal growth and cultural understanding.

James Cheney (see biography in performers section of this program).

Savanna Crowley, a senior at North Park University from Washington State, juggles her full-time studies with her role as a reservist in the United States Army. Despite her demanding schedule, she actively participates in university choirs, including Chamber Singers and the Gospel Choir. Her passion for music extends beyond performance, as she plans to pursue graduate studies in Music Theory and Cognition next year. Savanna hopes to inspire those around her as she continues to pursue her dreams of understanding the profound connections between music and the human mind.

Norma Gonzalez, drummer and percussionist, is pursuing a Bachelor of Arts in Music. Norma has been involved in various ensembles such as Worship Band, Concert Band, Jazz Band, choirs, etc. Norma sees musical service as an opportunity to bring joy and appreciation for different styles of music to audiences. She serves as a musician in her church as a way to honor God. She believes that musical service is always a learning experience and a way to express passion for both music and faith.

Alfredo Martinez is from Bridgeport, IL and is pursuing a Bachelor of Music in Performance. His focus is acquiring the skills and techniques to develop his dream trombone sound. He is involved in concert band and jazz band directed by Dr. Joseph Lill and other numerous ensembles on campus. At North Park University, he studied formally under Audrey Morrison and now studies with Catie Hickey. During his time here, he learned to develop skills in playing other brass instruments like tuba and baritone. This allowed him to perform freely and learn to be a multi-instrumentalist. For the past three years he's performed in Lessons and Carols, Gospel Choir, and numerous recitals. His journey here on campus is to acquire the highest knowledge and experience to become a well-rounded musician and individual to help others around him. He hopes to one day teach and share his knowledge to others. While maintaining a busy schedule and ensemble work, outside of school on weekends, he enjoys riding his bike and writes poetry for fun.

Jayde West, from Weeping Water, Nebraska is a fourth-year music general studies major, and theatre minor, a member of University Choir, and Chamber Singers, as well as the stage manager for Yeast Nation. Jayde is a composer, a Contemporary Voice student with Elena Batman and plays the guitar, piano, drums, bass guitar and ukulele in her free time. Jayde's idea of musical service centers on setting others up for success, embodying the belief that helping people improve musically translates into overall personal growth and confidence-building. Witnessing others' achievements on stage, particularly those they've supported, brings them immense joy and reinforces their belief in the transformative power of service.

Service Award Judges

We wish to thank and acknowledge our service award judges which include, various members of the Music Department faculty, former Service Award Winner, Azary Celis, and external judge, Pier Rogers, Director of the Axelson Center for Nonprofit Management

Pier C. Rogers has been director of the Axelson Center for Nonprofit Management and professor of nonprofit management at North Park University since 2007. Under her leadership, the center has expanded programs, doubled sponsorships, broadened the network of professional faculty, and its visibility and impact on the nonprofit professionals served.

Over the course of her career, she has held management positions in the New York City Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers; Associated Black Charities; New York University; United Way of Massachusetts Bay; and Massachusetts Dept. of Public Welfare. She also held academic positions at the New School University in New York City and at Yale's Divinity School and Program on Non-Profit Organizations.

Rogers currently serves on the boards of the Wellesley College Alumnae Association and the CBE Board of Advisors at Garrett Evangelical Theological Seminary at Northwestern.

School of Music, Art, and Theatre
Music Program

North Park University has been an accredited instructional member of the National Association of Schools of Music since 1940. The program seeks to complement a broad liberal arts education and to provide the intensive professional training that aspiring musicians need. Our students benefit from a relevant curriculum, attentive faculty, and programs where academic and performance studies are integrated. Two undergraduate degrees in music are offered: Bachelor of Music Education and Bachelor of Arts in Music, with concentrations in Composition, General studies, Jazz Studies (instrumental), and a Master of Music in Performance with four tracks – Vocal Arts Solo, Vocal Arts Ensemble, Keyboard Arts Vocal Coaching, and Keyboard Arts Conducting. We are also pleased to offer a Certificate in Arts Management and a Certificate in Music for Social Change and Human Values, based on the El Sistema-inspired philosophy of music instruction developed by celebrated Venezuelan economist and musician Maestro José Antonio Abreu.

SCHOOL OF MUSIC, ART, AND THEATRE
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