

Montclair State University
JOHN J. CALI SCHOOL OF MUSIC

FALL 2025
UNIVERSITY OPERA
PRESENTS

The Medium

Libretto & Music by

Gian Carlo Menotti

University Chamber Opera of the
John J. Cali School of Music

Karen Driscoll, *director*

William Hobbs, *music director and pianist*

Virginia Stephens, *pianist*

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 7, 2025

5:00 PM and 7:30 PM

ALEXANDER KASSER THEATER

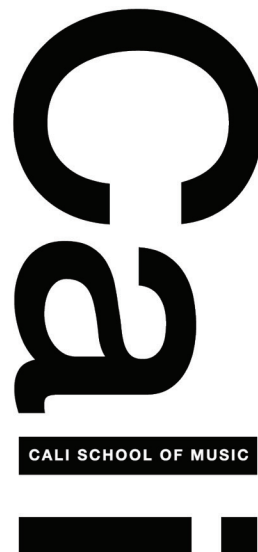
Daniel Gurskis

Dean, College of the Arts

Shea Scruggs

Director

John J. Cali School of Music



John J. Cali
School of Music

MONTCLAIR
STATE UNIVERSITY

TRAINING THE CREATIVE LEADERS OF TOMORROW

RESIDENCIES OPEN TO THE COMMUNITY FREE!

CALI IMMERSIVE RESIDENCY PROGRAM

5 YEARS

AT MONTCLAIR STATE UNIVERSITY

25/26 SEASON



ISABEL LEONARD



PAQUITO D'RIVERA



JAZZMEIA



SAMORA PINDERHUGHES



STEFAN JACKIW



LEYLA MCCALLA



KRONOS QUARTET



ANTON ARMSTRONG

EDUCATION
THERAPY
THEORY/
COMPOSITION
JAZZ STUDIES
PERFORMANCE
RECORDING ARTS +
PRODUCTION

An exceptional artistic
and academic education

Mentorship by internationally acclaimed
artists, educators, and scholars

Inspiration and preparation
to serve the community
and enrich society using
the transformative
power of music

Developing musicianship and
professional skills in ensembles,
masterclasses, clinical experiences,
internships, and teaching

Experiencing the cultural
riches of New York City nearby

DEGREES

Bachelor of Music, Bachelor of Arts,
Master of Music, Master of Arts,
Artist's Diploma

Music Education, Performance,
Jazz Studies, Music Therapy,
Theory/Composition

Graduate String Quartet
Residency Program



Join us for the fifth annual **Cali Immersive Residency** at the **John J. Cali School of Music**. Each week-long residency features acclaimed artists and ensembles, offering students opportunities to learn, collaborate, and explore the evolving landscape of music and future career paths.

[MONTCLAIR.EDU/MUSIC/CALI-IMMERSIVE-RESIDENCY](https://montclair.edu/music/cali-immersive-residency)

**John J. Cali
School of Music**

MONTCLAIR
STATE UNIVERSITY

[MONTCLAIR.EDU/MUSIC](https://montclair.edu/music)

CASTS **(in order of appearance)**

ROLE

Toby
Monica
Baba (Madame Flora)
Mrs. Gobineau
Mr. Gobineau
Mrs. Nolan
(Offstage Voice)

5:00 PM

Eoin Betancourt
Haiming Wu
Gabrielle Guida
Brianna Coppolino
Thomas Etts
Izzy Ortiz
Anna Kodak

7:30 PM

Alan Pinzon
Sonia Fortezza
Carlee Carpenter
Jacklynn Wick
Benjamin Silvesti
Gabrielle Cintrón
Anna Kodak

(2-piano version)
Presented under license from G. Schirmer, Inc., copyright owners.

PROGRAM NOTES

The Medium

Gian Carlo Menotti (1911–2007)

Premiered in 1946, Gian Carlo Menotti's *The Medium* is a gripping chamber opera in two acts that blends psychological drama with an unsettling touch of the supernatural. It tells the story of Madame Flora, known as "Baba," a fraudulent medium who conducts staged séances with the help of her daughter Monica and her mute servant Toby. When Baba suddenly feels an inexplicable, ghostly hand clutch her throat during one of her sessions, her careful charade collapses. Haunted by fear and guilt, she spirals into paranoia, unable to tell where illusion ends and reality begins.

Part of the opera's power comes from Menotti's careful use of recurring musical ideas for each character. Monica's music is lyrical and tender, often unfolding in graceful, flowing lines that express her warmth and innocence, especially in her haunting song, *The Black Swan*. Baba, by contrast, is given jagged, declamatory phrases that mirror her volatility and inner torment. Toby, though mute, is not voiceless in the score: the orchestra often supplies delicate, hesitant figures that suggest his longing and vulnerability. The séances themselves are marked by eerie, chromatic fragments that creep back into the music whenever Baba's fears resurface, pulling the audience into her unraveling state of mind.

At just about an hour long, *The Medium* is compact but intensely dramatic. With its suspenseful pacing, memorable musical ideas, and emotional directness, it continues to draw audiences into its chilling exploration of fear, faith, and the fragile boundary between illusion and reality.

BIOGRAPHIES

CREATIVE TEAM

Karen Driscoll (Director) is John J. Cali School of Music's Head of Artistic Operations/Opera as well as a Assistant Teaching Professor of Voice. Karen has previously directed, *Hansel & Gretel*, *The Ghosts of Gatsby*, *The Beautiful Bridegroom* and led multiple scenes programs for MSU's Opera Workshop classes, as well as role preparation productions including *Sweeney Todd* (directed by James Conrad Smith) and *La Bohème* to name a few. She has also enjoyed collaborating on many occasions as not only a soprano soloist with MSU Singers and Chorale choirs but also as director of *Considering Matthew Shepard*. As a soprano, Ms. Driscoll has sung leading roles with Seattle Opera, Florida Grand Opera, Florentine Opera, L'Opéra de Montréal, Vancouver Opera, Virginia Opera, Baltimore Opera, Lyric Opera of Kansas City, National Lyric Opera, Michigan Opera Theatre, Opera Columbus, Toledo Opera, Opera Carolina, Hawaii Opera Theater, New Jersey State Opera, Palm Beach Opera, Long Beach Opera, Worcester Chorus and Masterwork Chorus to name a few. She is a native of Ohio where she began her music studies at the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music and also where she holds a Bachelor of Music in Music Education and Master of Music Degree in Vocal Performance.

William Hobbs (Music Director, Pianist) received his Bachelor's in Piano Performance summa cum laude from the University of Colorado at Boulder, and a Master of Music in Piano Performance, Research and Literature from the Eastman School of Music. Mr. Hobbs has been heard worldwide in solo and song recitals, chamber music and orchestra appearances in over a dozen countries, including the United States, England, Korea, France, Greece, Italy, Spain, Malta and Poland. He has collaborated with many of today's top performers, including Yo-Yo Ma, James Galway, Renee Fleming, Joyce diDonato, and many others. Mr. Hobbs works at many major opera houses as pianist and conductor, including the Opéra National de Paris, the Salzburg Festival, San Francisco Opera, Chicago Lyric Opera, Seattle Opera, Washington Opera and the Opéra de Monte-Carlo. Mr. Hobbs currently serves on the faculties of the John J. Cali School of Music at Montclair State University and the Peabody Institute in Baltimore, Maryland, following appointments at the Juilliard School and the City University of New York. A versatile performer, Mr. Hobbs is equally at home with the core classics of the canon and adventurous in exploring new musics. He can be heard in recordings of music by Lowell Liebermann, Xavier Montsalvage, and Dave Soldier, among others. His debut CD, "Orbiting Garden: Music of Hatzis and Sorabji," was released Summer 2025 on Blue Griffin Records. The CD features the complete piano music to date by Greek-Canadian composer Christos Hatzis alongside a masterwork by one of the most enigmatic twentieth-century composer-pianists, Kaikhosru Shapurji Sorabji.

Virginia Stephens (Musical Preparation, Pianist) is from West Chester, Pennsylvania. Early in her piano training in West Chester she studied with Miriam Gottlieb— student of Rosina Lhevinne of the Juilliard School and later with Ben Whitten— student of Leon Fleisher. She received a Bachelor of Music degree in piano from Bob Jones University and a Master of Music degree in piano from Colorado State University. While she was at Colorado State, she accompanied their 4 choirs as well as their opera theater productions and faculty voice recitals with baritone John Lueck. She was the accompanist for the Virginia Opera Chorus for several seasons. More recently, she toured the UK with the choir from Hawthorne Christian Academy. They performed in Wells Cathedral in England, in Canongate Kirk and Greyfriar Kirk in Edinburgh, Scotland and in a masterclass at Oxford University. Currently, Virginia teaches piano in her private studio at home and at Yamaha Conservatory and she is an adjunct accompanist at Montclair State. She has three grown daughters and lives in Wayne with her husband, Karl. In her spare time she enjoys cooking, baking, shopping, decorating, the beach, the mountains and cruising in the Jeep with Karl!

Deborah Caney (Costume Designer & Coordinator) has been designing costumes for over 25 years. Recent productions include the 2025 Scotsman's Fringe First Award winning play *Rift* at the Traverse Theatre in Edinburgh, written by Gabriel Jason Dean and directed by Ari Laura Kreith. She also designed costumes for *Mrs. Stern Wanders the State Prussian Library* by Jenny Lyn Bader, directed by Ari Laura

Kreith, produced off Broadway at 59E59th and WP Theaters. Other credits include: The operas *Ghosts of Gatsby*, *The Beautiful Bridegroom* and *Hansel & Gretel* directed by Karen Driscoll at The Alexander Kasser Theater; *Ain't Misbehavin'* directed by 2019 TONY Award Winner André DeShields at NJPAC and Crossroads Theatre Co. She has been the resident costume designer at Luna Stage Theatre Co. since 2008. Recent Luna Stage productions: *Lonely Planet*, written by Stephen Dietz, directed by Melissa Firlit, *The Case for the Existence of God* written by Samuel D. Hunter, directed by Ari Laura Kreith, and *The Ripple the Wave that Carried Me Home*, written by Christina Anderson and directed by Adrienne D. Williams.

Lucas Pinner (Scenic Designer/ Set Construction) is an actor, fight choreographer, teaching artist, designer and production manager. Design credits include *Queen of the Night*, *Lonely Planet* and *Your Name Means Dream* at Luna Stage as well as *Parade* with Bullet Theatre Collaborative. Performance credits include Richard III, Peter and the Starcatcher, Romeo and Juliet. Lucas has taught with Paper Mill Playhouse, Luna Stage, George Street Playhouse, and Two River Theatre Company. Combat work includes Broadway's Aladdin (pre-production combat assistant), as well as choreographing performances and teaching workshops at schools throughout the state. He is the Production Manager at Luna Stage, where work includes *Queen of the Night* (director), *RIFT*, as well as the off-Broadway production of *Mrs. Stern Wanders the Prussian State Library*. Lucas graduated from Kean University. www.lucaspinner.com

CAST BIOS

Eoin Betancourt, tenor, is a first-year Bachelor of Music student in Musical Theatre ('29) studying with Jan Prokop and is excited to be making his Montclair debut in *The Medium*.

Carlee Carpenter, mezzo-soprano, is a first-year Master of Music student in Vocal Performance ('27) studying with Beth Roberts. She earned her Bachelor's in Vocal Performance with a Performing Arts minor from Iowa State University, where she performed roles including Prince Orlofsky in *Die Fledermaus* and Dater #51 in *Speed Dating Tonight*. A Milnes VOICE Studio participant, she premiered as Wise Mouse 3 in Michael Ching's *Cinderella's Royal Feast* and appeared as The Wanderer in *The Miller's Daughter* at the 2025 National Opera Association Conference. A Des Moines Metro Opera Guild Scholarship recipient, she also performs jazz and musical theatre repertoire.

Brianna Coppolino, soprano, is a second-year Master of Music student in Vocal Performance ('26) studying with Anya Fidelia at Montclair State University. She has performed in the US and Europe, recently participating in the BRIDGES Vocal Arts Intensive in Paris and Savatteri Produzioni's *Il Risveglio degli Dei* in Agrigento. At Montclair, she is a member of the University Singers and Baroque Ensemble. In addition to voice, Brianna is a

proficient cellist and writer, featured in the anthology *Performing Character: from Stage to Page*.

Gabrielle Cintrón, mezzo-soprano, is a first-year Master of Music student in Choral Conducting ('27) at Montclair State University, studying with Dr. Heather J. Buchanan while continuing her vocal studies with Dr. Lori McCann. She is also a Teaching Assistant in Choral Activities. This is her third degree from Montclair State University, following a Bachelor of Music in Music Education and a Master of Arts in Special Education. Gabrielle is thrilled to return to the stage as a performer with the Cali Opera Program.

Thomas Etts, baritone, is a fourth-year Bachelor of Music student in Music Education ('26) studying with Professor George Spitzer. He is from Centereach, New York, and this is his first opera at the Cali School of Music. Thomas hopes to be an advocate for the next generation of musicians in the classroom and is grateful to be part of this production with his cast-mates and directors.

Sonia Fortezza, soprano, is a second-year Artist Diploma student in Vocal Performance ('26) studying with Beth Roberts. An Italian-American singer from New York City, she recently debuted in the titular role of Calisto in Cavalli's *La Calisto*,

studied voice in France, and was invited to the Castleton Festival. A former member of the Metropolitan Opera Children's Chorus, Sonia discovered her passion for opera at an early age and is thrilled to bring the character of Monica to life.

Gabrielle Guida, mezzo-soprano, is a second-year Master of Music student in Vocal Performance ('26) studying with Dr. Lori McCann and serving as Graduate Assistant for Choral Activities under Dr. Heather J. Buchanan. Her opera roles include Endimione in *La Calisto*, Mère Marie in *Dialogues of the Carmélites*, Cherubino in *Le nozze di Figaro* with the Chautauqua Opera Conservatory, and appearances in *Gianni Schicchi* and *Buoso's Ghost*. She has appeared in masterclasses with John Holiday and J'Nai Bridges and performed as Alto Soloist in *Messiah* and Bernstein's *Chichester Psalms*. She also performs musical theatre and earned her Bachelor of Music from Montclair State University.

Anna Kodak, soprano, is a second year Bachelor of Music student in Education ('28) studying with Professor Karen Driscoll. Anna is thrilled to make her debut in opera!

Izzy Ortiz, mezzo-soprano, is a fourth-year Bachelor of Music student in Music Education ('26) studying with Professor Karen Driscoll. From Cherry Hill, New Jersey, she is thrilled to participate in her first opera as Mrs. Nolan. Offstage, she enjoys collecting trinkets and rooting for the Philadelphia Eagles.

Alan Pinzon, bass-baritone, is a third-year Bachelor of Music student in Vocal Performance ('27) studying with George Spitzer. He is from Saddle Brook, New Jersey, and his musical experience began in high school, performing in numerous musicals and honors choirs. This is his second opera production and his first with the Cali School of Music. Alan hopes to pursue acting and musical theatre as a career while continuing his performing arts studies.

Benjamin Silvesti, baritone, is a fourth-year Bachelor of Music student in Music Education ('26) studying with Jeffrey Gall. An aspiring music

educator and performer, he has been part of the Montclair Opera Program for the past three years, performing in *La Calisto* and *Dialogues des Carmélites*. He hopes to one day lead his own choral program.

Jacklynn Wick, soprano, is a second-year Artist Diploma student in Vocal Performance ('26) studying with Beth Roberts. She has performed roles including Madame Kirsten in Dan Shore's *The Bridegroom* (2022), Madame Lidoine in Poulenc's *Dialogues des Carmélites* (2024), and Giunone in Cavalli's *La Calisto* (2025).

Haiming Wu, soprano, is a first-year Artist Diploma student in Vocal Performance ('27) studying with Beth Roberts. A Chinese singer, she recently made her Lincoln Center debut at Alice Tully Hall with the Manhattan Philharmonic, performing *Mayila*, a variation on a traditional Kazakh folk song. Her roles include L'Ensoleillad in Massenet's *Chérubin*, Younger Alyce in Tom Cipullo's *Glory Denied*, Susanna in *Le nozze di Figaro*, and Gilda (cover) in *Rigoletto*. Haiming is excited to take the stage as Monica in her role debut.

ADDITIONAL PRODUCTION PERSONNEL

Anna Kodak (Assistant Director)
Taryn Wolckenhauer (Assistant Costume Designer)
Paige Elise Buchanan Stewart (Livestream Production)
Kailey Diggs (Titles Caller)
Taryn Spoto & Izzy Ortiz
(Hair & Make-up Assistants)
Kailey Diggs (Opera Program Graduate Assistant)

MUSIC PREPARATION/COACHES

Michael Caldwell
Peiwen Chen
William Hobbs
Mory Ortman
LeAnn Overton
Mary Pinto
Victoria Schwartzman
Virginia Stephens
Grant Wenaus

Thanks to **Shea Scruggs**, Director of the John J. Cali School of Music; **Dr. Lori McCann** and **Beth Roberts**, Co-Coordiators of the Montclair State University Vocal Program; and all of the applied voice teachers and coaches at Montclair who aided in their students' preparation to make this such a successful program. And a special thanks to our angel donor, **Marty Jeiven**, whose support of our opera program has made a huge and important impact in producing our shows. THANK YOU ALL!

FOLLOW US!

Cali Instagram: @montclair_CALI
University Opera Instagram: @CALloperaprogram
Facebook: @montclairCALI
TikTok: @montclairCALI
LinkedIn: @montclair-cali-school-of-music

JOIN OUR NEWSLETTER AND NEVER MISS A BEAT!

<https://bit.ly/Montclair-Cali-Newsletter>



UP NEXT....

**JOIN MONTCLAIR STATE UNIVERSITY OPERA
and the UNIVERSITY SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA**

for Mozart's

DIE ZAUBERFLÖTE

in ALEXANDER KASSER THEATER!

Saturday January 31, 2026 at 8:00 pm

Sunday, February 1, 2026 at 3:00 pm

Sung in German/dialogue in English with English supertitles