

Verna Mae Janzen

20th annual
music competition 2025



***Final Round* | March 20, 7:00 PM**

Laudamus Auditorium, Canadian Mennonite University

500 Shaftesbury Blvd., Winnipeg, MB

Jurors: David Klassen, Kelly Robinson

Pianist: Verna Wiebe

Verna Mae Janzen

MUSIC COMPETITION 2025

JACOB KENNY

“Giants in the sky” from <i>Into the Woods</i>	Stephen Sondheim (1930-2021)
“If with all your hearts” from <i>Elijah</i>	Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847)
“Il mio tesoro” from <i>Don Giovanni</i>	Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791)

JULIA NORRIS

<i>Die Mainacht</i> Op. 43 No. 2	Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)
<i>El majo discreto</i>	Enrique Granados (1897-1916)
<i>Nuits d'étoiles</i>	Jeff Smallman (b. 1965)
“On the steps of the palace” from <i>Into the Woods</i>	Stephen Sondheim (1930-2021)

SHANLEY VOGAN

<i>Autumn Leaves</i>	Joseph Kosma (1905-1969)
<i>A Winter Twilight</i>	Rosephanye Powell (b. 1962)
<i>Frühlingsglaube</i>	Franz Schubert (1797-1828)
“Mr. Snow” from <i>Carousel</i>	Richard Rodgers (1902-1979)

STEFANIE ZACHARIAS

<i>Neue Liebe</i>	Felix Mendelssohn (1809-1847)
Ständchen	Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)
<i>My House</i>	Tim Minchin (b. 1975)
“The light in the piazza” from <i>The Light In the Piazza</i>	Adam Guettel (b. 1964)

Competitor Biographies

Jacob Kenny is in his third year at Canadian Mennonite University working towards a bachelor's degree in music, with the intent of pursuing a career in music education. Originally from Ontario, Jacob has a history of performance with notable Winnipeg choirs such as the Winnipeg Boys Choir and CMU Singers. Recently, Jacob has been involved with groups such as Neil Weisensel's SummerChor and the choir at Westminster United Church as a tenor soloist, as well as participating with the Little Opera Company. Much of Jacob's interest in music has come from his involvement at church through leading worship at several churches in Manitoba and Ontario.

Julia Norris is in her third year of a Bachelor of Arts degree in Psychology at Canadian Mennonite University. Music has always been an important part of Julia's life, playing piano, guitar, flute, and participating in choirs at school and church from a young age. She began taking voice lessons for credit in the fall of 2022 with Judy Oatway. Julia frequently leads worship at church, which initially prompted her desire to study voice. Since beginning her voice studies at CMU, she has developed a passion for classical singing. Julia is excited and beyond grateful for the opportunity to sing in the Verna Mae Janzen Music Competition, and she is thankful to everyone who has helped her to develop as a musician.

Shanley Vogan was born and raised in southeastern Manitoba, where music has always been a central part of her life. She sang in school and church choirs, took piano lessons for years, and later taught herself a bit of guitar before eventually finding an incredible classical guitar teacher who helped develop her skills. Although naturally shy, music gave Shanley the confidence to put herself out there, leading to performances at local open-mic nights and busking at the Forks marketplace. Music has profoundly shaped her as a person and throughout her life it has both broken and aided in rebuilding her. Now in her third year at CMU, she is committed to deepening her knowledge and skills, both as a musician, collaborator, and as a future music teacher.

Stefanie Zacharias is a 3rd year student at CMU pursuing a Bachelor of Music in the Senior Years Instrumental stream. She has studied voice for over 14 years, piano for 11 years, and plays guitar and trumpet. She performed in the Southeastern Manitoba Festival for 10 years in the vocal, musical theatre, and piano categories, winning three vocal trophies. Stefanie has completed many vocal and theory RCM exams and was a part of concert band and jazz band in her high school. She is also involved at her church, first joining a worship team when she was 12. Stefanie hopes to get a Bachelor of Education once she graduates from CMU and become a high school band teacher. She looks forward to using the gifts that God has given her and sharing her love of music with others.

Adjudicator Biographies

DAVID KLASSEN

David Klassen holds a Bachelor of Music in vocal performance from the University of Manitoba and a Master of Music from the University of Minnesota. With nearly two decades of experience as a university educator and professional musician, he has taught at several institutions, including Canadian Mennonite University and the University of Manitoba's Desautels Faculty of Music. His students have been accepted into music programs across Canada and the U.S., including the University of Toronto, the University of Ottawa, McGill, Boston Conservatory, and the New York Film Institute.

Praised as “charismatic and enthralling” (Opera Canada) and a “vocal powerhouse” (CBC), David has performed with companies including the Royal Winnipeg Ballet, Saskatoon Opera, and the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra, singing Rossini's Largo al Factotum for a Canada Day audience of 30,000.

His connection to the Steinbach Arts Council (SAC) spans program development, concert direction, and board service. He credits SAC for shaping his career and inspiring his dedication to arts education. Recognized as a “visionary” in the Southeast, he has been acknowledged numerous times as one of the region's greatest contributors to the arts, including recent recognition by the City of Steinbach for his work.

Currently the Executive Director of SAC, David also serves on the Federation of Canadian Music Festivals Board while continuing to direct, teach, and adjudicate whenever time allows.

KELLY ROBINSON

Kelly Robinson is a singer, actor, voice teacher and vocal coach, pianist, composer, and adjudicator. Trained at the University of Manitoba Faculty of Music (voice performance/composition) with further studies through Berklee College of Music (contemporary and pop/rock vocal styles), she is the recipient of the Speake Travel and Study Scholarship for excellence in voice teaching.

Ms. Robinson has performed in Opera, Musical Theatre and Operetta, in film, television and radio. Kelly was praised by Opera Canada for her compassion and empathy onstage, most recently singing the role of Mother in Hansel and Gretel with “deep humanity”. Her voice students have gone on to professional successes, performing locally at Rainbow Stage, MTC, MTYP as well as across North America and overseas.

This season, Kelly was Music Director for A Year With Frog and Toad (MTYP) and Assistant Music Director for Waitress (RMTC). In spring, she looks forward to working as Music Director for Pasek & Paul's Dogfight with Dry Cold Productions.



Verna Mae Janzen

Verna Mae Janzen was born in Chicago, Illinois. Her studies and career focused on teaching gifted children and later working with children with learning disabilities. We met at the University of Illinois and married in 1966. Our life together took us to Ottawa, then to Chalk River, Ontario. Sadly, Verna died of cancer in 1989.

Although we were not always part of a Mennonite community, I followed the creation of Canadian Mennonite University with great interest. This sponsorship is my small contribution towards its success. But why a music competition? Verna and I met through our interest in choral singing, and everywhere we settled we joined or started a house-singing group. This is my way of supporting the singing we loved.

I always dreamed of someday dedicating a memorial to my wife—a wonderful loving, sensitive, intelligent and happy companion. Through the Verna Mae Janzen Music Competition at CMU, I can keep her memory alive.

Verna Mae Janzen Music Competition Over the Years

Peter Janzen's generosity has made this competition possible and provided an opportunity for many memorable performances. On this **20th Anniversary** of the competition on behalf of all past and present competitors, thank you Peter!

2024 1st – William Harder (violin) 2nd – Ava Campbell-Enns (soprano) 3rd – Vina Dimayuga (mezzo-soprano)
2023 1st – Georg Neuhofer (piano) 2nd – William Harder (violin) 3rd – Carrie Schulz (soprano)
2022 1st – Anna Schwartz (piano) 2nd – Annabelle Hollander (soprano) 3rd – Joanna Loepp Thiessen (soprano)
2021 Voice 1st – Johanna Klassen (soprano) 2nd – Michelle Fast (soprano) Piano 1st – Georgeanne Van Helden 2nd – Georg Neuhofer
2020 1st – Nathan Dyck (baritone) 2nd – Anne Kelm (piano) 3rd – Anna Schwartz (piano)
2019 1st - Stephanie Wilson (clarinet) 2nd - Nathan Dyck (baritone) 3rd - Madeleine Friesen (piano)

2018 1st – Emma Heinrichs (piano) 2nd – Riley Dyck (piano) 3rd – Katy Unruh (soprano)
2017 1st – Anneli Loepp Thiessen (piano) 2nd – Emma Heinrichs (piano) 3rd – Nolan Kehler (tenor)
2016 1st – Yunah Chin (cello) 2nd – Breanna Heinrichs (piano) 3rd – Matthew Baron (baritone)
2015 1st – Anna Bigland-Pritchard (soprano) 2nd – Anneli Loepp Thiessen (piano) 3rd – Yunah Chin (cello)
2014 1st – Rebecca Klassen-Wiebe (piano) 2nd – Deidra Borus (voice) 3rd – Breanna Heinrichs (piano)
2013 1st – Catherine Richard (piano) 2nd – Kari Chastko (voice) 3rd – Jillian Reimer (piano)
2012 1st – Rebecca Hill (soprano) 2nd – Rebecca Klassen-Wiebe (piano) 3rd – Anna Bigland-Pritchard (soprano)

2011 1st – Becky Reesor (piano) 2nd place tie Joel Peters (organ) Rebecca Hill (soprano)

2010 1st – Katie (Doke) Sawatzky 2nd – Jorge Hidalgo 3rd – Melissa (Remus) Cole

2009 1st – Amanda Bruneau-Schroeder 2nd – Katie Doke 3rd – Melissa Remus
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2008 1st – Jayme Giesbrecht 2nd – Justin Friesen 3rd – DeLayne Toews
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2007 1st – Julia Kehler 2nd – Meagan Reimer 3rd – Delia Martens

2006 1st – Rebecca Woodmass 2nd – Pamela Derksen 3rd – Julia Kehler



Upcoming CMU Events

- March 21** CMU Press Book Launch | New & Selected Poems of John Weier and David Waltner-Toews | McNally Robinson Booksellers, 1120 Grant Ave., Winnipeg
- March 25** Book Launch and Discussion | The Service of Faith: An Ethnography of Mennonites and Development, Dr. Philip Fountain
Marpeck Commons, 2299 Grant Ave.
- March 30** Handbell Ensemble Final Concert/Verna Wiebe Tribute | Great Hall, 500 Shaftesbury Blvd.
- April 3** CMU Concert Band Concert | Bethel Mennonite Church, 465 Stafford St.
- April 10** Public Lecture with Dr. Karl Koop | When the Dutch Got Worldly: The Origins of an Anabaptist Global Imagination
University of Winnipeg, Convocation Hall
- April 19** CMU Festival Chorus | St. John Passion
Westworth United Church, 1750 Grosvenor Ave.
- April 25** Spring at CMU | Loewen Athletic Centre, 500 Shaftesbury Blvd.
- April 26** CMU Graduation 2025 Convocation Ceremony
Knox United Church, 400 Edmonton St.
- June 13-15** Mennonite/s Writing Conference | CMU campus

For more on all CMU events, visit cmu.ca/events.