

2026 Verna and Peter Janzen Music Competition

21st annual



*Julia Norris, soprano
Winner of the 2025
Verna Mae Janzen
Music Competition*

Final Round | March 19, 7:00 PM

Laudamus Auditorium | 500 Shaftesbury Blvd. | Winnipeg, MB

The Verna and Peter Janzen Music Competition for CMU music students has been made possible through the ongoing generosity of the Verna and Peter Janzen family.

CMU

2026 Verna and Peter Janzen Music Competition

LAURYN EDEL

Vergebliches Ständchen

The Water Mill

“When he sees me” from *Waitress*

Johannes Brahms (1833-1897)

Ralph Vaughan Williams (1872-1958)

Sara Bareilles (b. 1979)

BELLA-SOPHIA ROGERS

Sonata for Violin and Piano L. 140

I. *Allegro vivo*

II. *Intermède: Fantasque et léger*

Introduction and Tarantella Op. 43

Claude Debussy (1862-1918)

Pablo Sarasate (1844-1908)

EMILY ADAMS

“Smania implacabili” from *Così fan tutte*

“Elle a fui, la tourterelle” from *Les Contes d’Hoffman*

Gretchen am Spinnrade

Good Thing He Can’t Read My Mind

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791)

Jacques Offenbach (1819-1880)

Franz Schubert (1797-1828)

Christine Lavin (b. 1952)

LARRY RUFFIN

Fantasia in D minor, K. 397

Invention No. 1 in C Major BWV 772

Prelude Op. 28 No. 4 in E Minor

Liebestraum No. 3

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791)

Johann Sebastian Bach (1685-1750)

Frédéric Chopin (1810-1849)

Franz Liszt (1811-1886)

JACOB KENNY

“No puede ser” from *La taberna del puerto*

“The Enemy Said” from *Israel in Egypt*

“Un’aura amorosa” from *Così fan tutte*

“In Summer” from *Frozen*

Pablo Sorozábal (1897-1988)

George Frederic Handel (1685-1759)

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791)

Kristen Anderson-Lopez and
Robert Lopez (b. 1972 and b. 1975)

Competitor Biographies

Lauryn Edel is a soprano in her second year of a Bachelor of Music. Her passion for music began with piano studies and was encouraged by her family to explore voice as well. Throughout her primary and secondary education, she has sung in choirs, performed in musicals, been a keyboard accompanist for ensembles, and played clarinet in concert band. She has since pursued further performance opportunities, competing in NATS and the Winnipeg Music Festival under the guidance of Alyssa Hildebrand, and now with her current teacher, Judy Oatway. Lauryn is honored to be performing in the Verna & Peter Janzen Music Competition.

Bella-Sophia Rogers is in her second year of a Bachelor of Music degree at Canadian Mennonite University. She has studied violin for over fourteen years, the last several with former WSO Concertmaster Gwen Hoebig, and played in numerous ensembles including the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra, University of Manitoba Symphony Orchestra and Mennonite Community Orchestra. Bella-Sophia made her concerto debut in 2025, performing Prokofiev’s Violin Concerto No. 2 with the Winnipeg Youth Symphony Orchestra, as the winner of the 2024 Senior Scholarship Competition. Most recently she premiered Kenley Kristofferson’s arrangement of her grandfather Stan Rogers’ “Northwest Passage” as a soloist with the CMU Concert Band. Bella-Sophia is beyond thrilled to be performing in this year’s Verna Mae Janzen competition.

Emily Adams has been singing most of her life. In her early years, she was introduced to Jazz, Classical and Opera, which she vowed to one day perform professionally. At age 9, after much pleading, Emily’s mother signed her up for voice lessons with Judy Oatway at the Community School of Music and Arts. Recently, Emily has begun studying with Matt Pauls to gain other perspectives on character analysis. Through this process, she is learning to appreciate each song’s unique character and the movement of emotions that the composers create through words, melodic lines, harmonies, and accompaniment. The dream of performing professionally is still very much alive, but now Emily also loves to share the joys of music with her young daughter.

Larry Ruffin is a 3rd year Honors Biblical and Theological Studies major and a Music major focusing on piano and composition. Though mostly a self-taught keyboardist within Gospel and Contemporary Christian Music, his longstanding love for classical piano led him to return to formal study last semester under the direction of Leanne Regehr Lee. Through his playing, he hopes to better express himself and better participate in the divine gift he believes music to be.

Jacob Kenny is a 4th year music student who has a passion for performing. Originally from Ontario, Jacob has a history of performance with notable Winnipeg choirs such as the Winnipeg Boys Choir, CMU Singers, CMU Voices TB, and CMU Festival Chorus. Over his four years at CMU, he has studied with Dr. Matthew Pauls, who has taught in him a love for operas and oratorios. Jacob is excited to sing the tenor solos in a performance of Mendelssohn’s Elijah this summer with SummerChör. Beyond the performance hall, Jacob is a husband, father, brother and friend who shares his music through worship, composition, and lullabies.

Adjudicator Biographies

DONNA FLETCHER

Donna Fletcher is an accomplished actor, singer, and director with a wide range of national experience. Proud of her prairie roots, Donna received her early training in Winnipeg and earned a Bachelor of Music in Vocal Performance from the University of Manitoba, a diploma in Music Theatre from The Banff Centre for the Arts, and a Master of Music in Vocal Performance from The University of Toronto. Donna is a celebrated teacher & professor whose mission is to mentor and lift up her students!

As an actor, Donna has been acclaimed in principle roles from east to west with the Charlottetown Festival, Drayton Festival, Rainbow Stage, Citadel Theatre, Theatre Calgary, Stage West Calgary, the National Arts Centre, Manitoba Opera, MTC, PTE, MTYP, WJT, the Belfry Theatre and Persephone Theatre.

In her role as director Donna has helmed productions for Opera on the Avalon, NUOVA, Dry Cold Productions, WJT, and the Manitoba Chamber Orchestra, as well as a joint Rainbow Stage/WSO concert presentation.

Donna served as First Vice President & Manitoba/Nunavut Councillor for Canadian Actor's Equity for 15 years and was inducted into the Rainbow Stage Wall of Fame in 2012.

Always seeking new challenges, she co-created Winnipeg Musical Theatre Company Dry Cold Productions which presented the Canadian Premiere of the smash musical THE PROM and is celebrating its 26th season with the Manitoba Premiere of Kimberly Akimbo Donna is a nationally respected Clinician, Voice, Musical Theatre Performance & History Instructor at the University of Manitoba Desautels Faculty of Music & University of Winnipeg Theatre Department.

Most importantly, she is mum to Amalia.

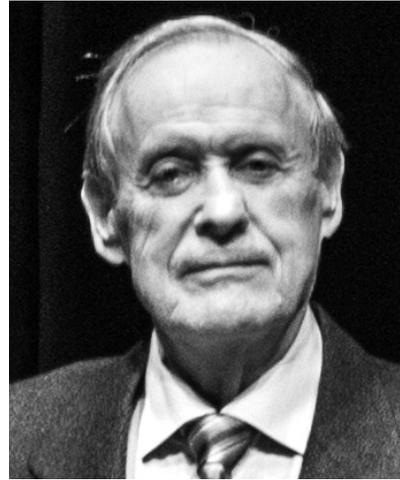
LAURA LOEWEN

Praised for expressivity, virtuosity, and committed playing, Canadian collaborative pianist Laura Loewen has appeared in concerts throughout North America, Europe, Asia and South America. Dedicated to sharing her passion for ensemble playing and coaching, she is Professor of Collaborative Piano at the University of Manitoba's Desautels Faculty of Music. She was a founding faculty artist of VISI (Vancouver International Song Institute) and has been a faculty member of the NUOVA opera training program in Edmonton, Alberta since 2003. An extremely versatile pianist, Dr. Loewen has performed extensively with singers, instrumentalists and chamber ensembles, and is equally comfortable in traditional and contemporary idioms. She has appeared in concert with artists such as Colin Ainsworth, Kimberly Barber, and Eugene Rousseau. She is a regular recital partner of fellow University of Manitoba faculty members sopranos Tracy Dahl and Monica Huisman, baritone Mel Braun, and cellist Minna Rose Chung. Loewen and duo partner, saxophonist Allen Harrington, have been performing together for more than a decade and are acclaimed for their virtuosic and electrifying performances.

Dr. Loewen served as the Associate Dean (Undergraduate Programs) at the Desautels Faculty from 2020-2025. A fundamental aspect of this role was developing and promoting health and wellness initiatives for the Faculty. This work gave her the opportunity to continue and expand the work she has done with students across Canada; teaching and mentoring are important elements of Dr. Loewen's career.

Dr. Loewen holds a Doctorate of Musical Arts degree in Accompanying/Coaching from the University of Minnesota, where she was a fellowship student of Margo Garrett and Karl Paulnack.





The Verna and Peter Janzen Music Competition

The competition was established at Canadian Mennonite University in 2006 and was originally named in memory of Verna Mae Janzen. The competition has been renamed to honour both Verna and her husband, Peter, recognizing their shared love of music and the legacy of support that made the competition possible.

Verna Mae Janzen was born in Chicago, Illinois. Her studies and career focused on teaching gifted children and later on working with children with learning disabilities. She met Peter while both were students at the University of Illinois, and they were married in 1966. Their life together took them to Ottawa and later to Chalk River, Ontario. Sadly, Verna died of cancer in 1989.

Music played an important role in Peter and Verna's life together. They first met through their shared interest in choral singing, and wherever they lived they

joined — or helped start — house-singing groups, building community through their love of singing.

Although they were not always part of a Mennonite community, Peter followed the creation of CMU with great interest. He established the competition as a way of encouraging CMU music students to pursue the kind of music-making and musical community that had meant so much to Peter and Verna in their lives. He had always dreamed of someday dedicating a memorial to Verna — a wonderful loving, sensitive, intelligent, and happy companion. The Verna Mae Janzen Music Competition was his way of keeping her memory alive.

Through the Verna and Peter Janzen Music Competition, their legacy continues to support and inspire students pursuing musical excellence at CMU.

Verna Mae Janzen Music Competition Winners Over the Years

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

2025

Julia Norris (soprano)

2024

William Harder (violin)

2023

Georg Neuhofer (piano)

2022

Anna Schwartz (piano)

2021

Voice
Johanna Klassen (soprano)

Piano
Georgeanne Van Helden

2020

Nathan Dyck (baritone)

2019

Stephanie Wilson (clarinet)

2018

Emma Heinrichs (piano)

2017

Anneli Loepp Thiessen (piano)

2016

Yunah Chin (cello)

2015

Anna Bigland-Pritchard (soprano)

2014

Rebecca Klassen-Wiebe (piano)

2013

Catherine Richard (piano)

2012

Rebecca Hill (soprano)

2011

Becky Reesor (piano)

2010

Katie Doke Sawatzky

2009

Amanda Bruneau-Schroeder (soprano)

2008

Jayne Giesbrecht (soprano)

2007

Julia Kehler (soprano)

2006

Rebecca Woodmass (soprano)

Upcoming CMU Events

- March 23** Living Resistance: hands-on nonviolent resistance training with CMU faculty member Karen Ridd
- March 26** Discover Weekend: all the excitement of a Discover Day, plus two nights in residence and an off-campus excursion
- March 30** Living Resistance: hands-on nonviolent resistance training with CMU faculty member Karen Ridd
- April 24** Spring at CMU: a celebratory event featuring graduating student presentations and CMU choirs
- April 25** Class of 2026 Convocation
- July 13 – August 28** Mini CMU Summer Day Camps: a summer day program for children ages 6–12
- July 20 – August 28** CMU Sports Camps: half-day basketball and volleyball camps for athletes in grades 6–12

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



**CANADIAN MENNONITE
UNIVERSITY**

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