

## Presenter Biographies

Norwegian-French soprano **Caroline Bergan** made her debut with the Cleveland Orchestra in their centennial season-opening production of *The Cunning Little Vixen*. Ms. Bergan's roles include Amelia (*Amelia al ballo*), Countess (*Le nozze di Figaro*), Morgana (*Alcina*), Belinda (*Dido and Aeneas*), and Pamina (*Die Zauberflöte*). Bergan has been seen in several Pensacola Opera productions including *L'Incoronazione di Poppea*, *Rigoletto*, *Sweeney Todd*, and *Madama Butterfly*. International credits include Suor Genovieffa (*Suor Angelica*), Susanna (*Le nozze di Figaro*), and Miss Jessel (*The Turn of the Screw*). Ms. Bergan has sung in masterclasses for Renée Fleming, Renata Scotti, Julia Faulkner, Warren Jones, and Bo Skovhus. Bergan is a past winner of the Mirabell Schloss Competition in Salzburg, Austria and the recipient of the Anna Sosenko Artist Trust Fund Award. As a soloist she has performed Poulenc's *Gloria* with the Firelands Symphony Orchestra, Hendrik Andriessen's *Miroir de Peine*, and Berlioz selections from *Béatrice et Bénédicte* with the Duke Orchestra, and Rossini's *Petite messe solennelle* with Opera Project Columbus. An ambassador for art song, Ms. Bergan was a finalist in the Art Song Festival in Cleveland, Ohio. Utilising her love of languages and her culture, Ms. Bergan is publishing a language resource for singers, coaches, and teachers to make Norwegian classical music more accessible. Caroline Bergan holds a Doctor of Musical Arts degree and a Singing Health Specialization from The Ohio State University, a Master of Music and Artist Diploma from the Cleveland Institute of Music, and a Bachelor of Music degree from the University of West Florida. Ms. Bergan serves as Assistant Professor of Voice at Capital University, Conservatory of Music.

**Andrea Chenoweth Wells, DMA**, is a soprano, stage director, and intimacy director based in Dayton, Ohio. Wells has appeared with orchestras and opera companies throughout the US. She is a featured artist on an extensive discography of works with text by Shakespeare on the Parma and Albany labels. Stage directing credits include *Dido and Aeneas*, *Albert Herring*, *The Magic Flute*, *Chicago*, *The Sound of Music* and *Godspell*. She has provided intimacy direction for *Dido and Aeneas*, *Tosca*, *Aida*, *South Pacific*, *Sweeney Todd*, *Hunchback of Notre Dame*, and *Green Day's American Idiot*. Wells is Assistant Professor at the University of Dayton and is the Intimacy Director in Residence at Dayton Opera.

**Justin DeLong** is a voice teacher and music director who is passionate about the art of storytelling. He currently teaches for Tiffin University and directs their extracurricular theatre productions. He holds a master's degree in Vocal Pedagogy with emphasis in Contemporary Commercial Music from Shenandoah University and is a trained vocalist in musical theatre, pop, rock, and other commercial genres. He specializes in contemporary, evidence-based vocal pedagogy and has also been trained in gender-affirming voice care for trans and non-binary individuals. Justin has extensive experience as an accompanist, arranger, and music copyist/transcriptionist alongside his career in theatre. His favorite credits as a director and/or music director include *Next to Normal*, *tick, tick...BOOM!*, *Godspell*, and *Newsies*, for which he received a Washington Area Theatre Community Honors award for Outstanding Musical Direction.

**Tracy R. Grady** (she/her), lecturer of voice for the BW Conservatory of Performing Arts and lecturer of the theatre and dance department. Grady has been the secretary/treasurer of Ohio NATS since 2012. She is the director and co-founder of the Cleveland Transgender Choir and has a specific interest in working with transgender voices. She has reviewed several book proposals for Plural Publishing, and has an article in the Journal of Interdisciplinary Voice Studies (JIVS).

**Dr. Sarah Luebke**, soprano, has appeared in opera, musical theater, and concert. Upcoming performances include the Sorel Foundation residency with composer Jennifer Higdon, soprano soloist in Handel's *Messiah* with the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra, recitalist at the College Music Society Conference, and soprano soloist in Poulenc's *Gloria* with the BGSU Orchestra and Chorus. Dr. Luebke recently made her Carnegie Hall debut performing Vivaldi's *Magnificat*. A champion of contemporary composers, she has performed in the Sorel Foundation residency of composer Chen Yi, soprano soloist in Buffalo Philharmonic Chorus' production of James Whitbourn's *Annelies*, and has collaborated with Benjamin Moore and Missy Mazzoli in the operatic roles of Masha (*Enemies: A Love Story*), Isabelle Eberhardt (*Songs from the Uproar*).

Recognized for her studio teaching, Dr. Luebke was selected for the 2022 NATS Intern Program, awarded the 2022 NATS Mario Martinez Intern Prize, and awarded the 2020 Teaching Assistant Prize. Many of her students have been named winners and finalists in the National Classical Singer Competition, the Schubert Club Competition, and state, regional and national NATS Competitions, and have been accepted into The Juilliard School, Eastman School of Music, Interlochen Summer Music Program, and the Brevard Music Festival.

Dr. Luebke has presented masterclasses in French repertoire across the country, including the Eastman School of Music, University of Northern Colorado, University of Memphis, and the University of Kentucky. Dr. Luebke

received the DMA in vocal performance from the Eastman School of Music. She is an assistant professor of voice at Bowling Green State University.

**Dr. Chad R. Payton**, countertenor, made his Carnegie Hall and Kennedy Center debuts in Michael Ching's opera, *Corps of Discovery: A Musical Journey*. Internationally, he sang his Brazilian debut in *Carmina Burana*, and Italian debut with his professional ensemble, Payton and the Pipes, which has also presented at numerous conferences throughout the United States. He serves as Associate Dean for Student Success, Associate Professor of Voice, and Voice Area Head at Capital University's Conservatory of Music, where he teaches voice and vocal pedagogy. Previous to Capital University, he taught at Delta State University in Cleveland, MS.

Payton has presented audition masterclasses and career development workshops at programs such as The Boston Conservatory at Berklee, Westminster Choir College, University of Alabama – Birmingham, and Utah State University. His university students are leading their own choral programs and private studios, and are continuing their education in graduate programs of note across the country. He is honored to have received The Praestantia Award for Outstanding Teaching in 2022 and the Cotterman Award for Faculty Service to Students in 2023.

During the summers, Dr. Payton teaches in New York on the voice faculty at Seagle Festival, the nation's oldest training program for opera and musical theatre. Since 2016, his Seagle artists and his New York City private studio artists have placed in various levels of the Metropolitan Opera Laffont Competition, and are singing with Merola Opera Program, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Wolf Trap Opera Company, Chautauqua Opera Company, Sarasota Opera, Glimmerglass Opera, Central City Opera, Opera Saratoga, Opera Theatre St. Louis, Opera Philadelphia, Opera Delaware, Middlebury Opera, and have received Career Blueprint Awards from Opera America.

**Heidi Skok**, Contralto, who is renowned for her portrayal of the fake Medium Madame Flora, helped to save the Tulsa Opera's production of Gian Carlo Menotti's *The Medium* in October, 2023 by jumping in as Madame Flora (Baba) at the last minute without rehearsal, for an ailing colleague. James D. Watts of Tulsa World wrote "Skok has performed the role of Madame Flora in the past, and she gave a well-calibrated performance, carefully revealing the character's anger and madness without histrionics". Artistic Director of Tulsa Opera Aaron Beck, had this to say to the News-Herald about Skok's performance "To me, Heidi Skok is the very definition of professionalism and artistry. Tulsa Opera, like many opera companies throughout the world, is indebted to Heidi Skok." Heidi Skok made her Contralto debut in February of 2023 as Madame Flora with First Coast Opera in St. Augustine, FL to six performances of standing ovations, alongside a stellar cast.

After pursuing a twenty plus year career in the wrong vocal range as a Soprano, Heidi Skok is finding success as a Contralto. In the previous Soprano career, Skok sang mostly as a Soprano at the Metropolitan Opera in German, Czech, Russian and English operas, mostly under the direction and baton of Maestro James Levine. Heidi can also be heard from the MET archives on Sirius XM radio.

In 2024 Heidi Skok sang recitals with Cleveland Music and Drama Club, a recital at Disciples Christian Church in Mayfield Heights, and made a debut with Mid-Ohio Civic Opera singing Wagner's *Wesendonck Lieder*. Skok also debuted Mme de Croissy in *Dialogues of the Carmelites* with Opera for Earth. Upcoming engagements include a debut as Mama McCourt with Western Plains Opera in September of 2025.

Her recording of Wagner and Mahler can be found on all the streaming platforms including Apple Music and Spotify. Heidi Skok teaches other singers all over the world online and locally at Skokstudio Vocal Instruction in Mentor, OH. Please see [www.skokstudio.org](http://www.skokstudio.org) and [www.heidiskok.com](http://www.heidiskok.com) for more information on Heidi Skok, Contralto. Heidi Skok is represented internationally by Stephens Nicolson Artists Management.

**Mrs. Carrie Vail** is an Assistant Professor at Mount Vernon Nazarene University. She is Program Coordinator for the Worship Arts Degree and the Voice Coordinator for the Music Department. Carrie worked as an adjunct voice instructor for nine years before coming on full-time in 2022. She has been involved with praise and worship in multiple church settings. She directs Una Voce Chamber Ensemble and teaches private voice, class piano, and other classes as needed. Mrs. Vail is a member of the American Choral Directors Association and National Association of Teaching Singing. She graduated with her BA in Music Education from Northwest Nazarene University and her MA in Music Education from University of Nebraska-Kearney.