



COMMENCEMENT
CONCERT
2026

COMMENCEMENT CONCERT

FRIDAY, JUNE 12, 2026 ▪ 7:30 P.M.

Chayton Behnke '26
Liam Berry '26
Isabella Cerdan '26
Isaac Epley '27
Nicole Frias '26
Ben Frueh '27
Sophie Hallé '26
Megan LaBelle-Smith '27
Qiaochuhan Li '26
Ruby March-Tormé '26
Thomas McGowan '27
Isabelle Olsen '26
Sarah Ruiz '26
Victor Sandberg '26
David Smith '26
Ava Wadia '26

Overture to Candide

Leonard Bernstein
(1918-1990)

Qiaochuhan Li, piano
Isaac Epley, piano

Villanelle

Eva Dell'Acqua
(1856-1930)

Sophie Hallé, soprano
Craig Jordan, piano

Madder and Woad

Zachary Good
(b. 1991)

Isabelle Olsen, clarinet

From *Lakmé*
Duo des fleurs

Léo Delibes
(1836-1891)

Sarah Ruiz, soprano
Ava Wadia, soprano
Isaac Epley, piano

Balkanika

Daniela Candillari

Liam Berry trombone
Thomas McGowan, bass trombone

From *Le nozze di Figaro*
Sull'aria

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart
(1756-1791)

Ruby March-Tormé, soprano
Megan LaBelle-Smith, soprano
Isaac Epley, piano

Piano Trio No. 4 in E minor, op. 90 ("Dumky")
I. Lento maestoso - Allegro quasi
doppio movimento

Antonín Dvořák
(1841-1904)

Ben Frueh, violin
David Smith, cello
Qiaochuhan Li, piano

Adagio in G minor

Tomaso Albinoni
(1671-1751)
arr. Constanze Hochwartner
& Peter Steiner

Chayton Behnke, trombone
Victor Sandberg, organ

Itulak

Ezra Escobar
(b. 2000)

Nicole Frias, cello

Con te partirò (Time to Say Goodbye)

Francesco Sartori
(b. 1957)
Lucio Quarantotto
(1957-2012)

Isabella Cerdan, soprano
Nathan Birkholz, piano

Please join us for a reception in Shattuck 163 following the performance.

*We collectively acknowledge that Lawrence University is situated on
the ancestral homelands of the Menominee and Ho-Chunk people.*

STUDENT BIOS

Chayton Behnke '26 is a trombonist from Dale, Wisconsin who is graduating with a degree in trombone performance. In his time at Lawrence, he has studied with Tim Albright, and has worked with Michael Clayville and Zach Marley in Low Brass/Trombone Ensemble. Additionally, he has performed in the orchestra, wind ensemble, jazz band, as well as the 4tes Trombone Quartet. In the fall, Chayton will be a graduate assistant at Duquesne University while pursuing a master's in trombone performance.

Liam Berry '26 is a trombonist from Manitowoc, Wisconsin who is graduating with a Bachelor of Music in trombone performance. In his time at Lawrence, he has studied with brass professors Tim Albright, Michael Clayville, Zach Marley, and Nadje Noordhuis while performing in every instrumental large ensemble and several chamber groups. Over the summer, Liam will attend the Pokorny Low Brass Seminar in DeKalb, Illinois before moving to Pittsburgh in the fall to pursue his master's degree at Duquesne University.

Isabella Cerdan '26 will graduate with a Bachelor of Music in vocal performance from the studio of John T. Gates. This past winter, Isabella premiered the role of Ruth Coker Burks in *A Nearer Mother* by composer Evan Mack and librettist Joshua McGuire. In other mainstage productions she has performed as The Foreign Women in Menotti's *The Consul* and Maguelonne in Pauline Viardot's *Cendrillon*. She has also performed in a number of opera scenes, including Annu in Kamala Sankaram's *Thumbprint*, Ilia in Mozart's *Idomeneo*, Mimi in Puccini's *La bohème*, Zweite Dame in Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte*, and a portion of Jake Heggie's *Two Remain* where she performed the role of Krystyna Żywulska. During her four years at Lawrence, Isabella has also sung in choir as a member of Viking Chorale, Cantala, and Concert Choir. After graduation, Isabella will take a gap year to further develop her vocal artistry through continued voice study and performance opportunities. During this time, she will focus on refining her skills as a singer while also preparing her applications for grad school auditions in the fall.

Isabella is so grateful for everything she has learned during her time here at Lawrence, and she looks forward to continuing her musical education and pursuing her passion for singing at the graduate level.

Isaac Epley '27 is a junior at Lawrence University pursuing a Bachelor of Music degree in piano performance with an emphasis in collaboration and a minor in pedagogy. Prior to studying piano at Lawrence under Anthony Padilla, he studied under Rachel AuBuchon, collaborative piano instructor at the University of Missouri, and Michelle Cook. As well as being an enthusiast for chamber music, Isaac enjoys solo performances as a singer and pianist, studying voice under Estelí Gomez. When not making music, Isaac likes to spend time with his cats, Cleo and Darby, and his dog Edith.

Nicole Frias '26 is a fourth-year student from the studio of Kivie Cahn-Lipman and is a candidate for a Bachelor of Music in instrumental music education and cello performance, with a minor in English literature. Originally from Skokie, Illinois, she has taught and performed throughout the Greater Chicago Area and within the Menasha Joint School District. During her time at Lawrence, Nicole served as conductor of the Lawrence University Pep Band and assistant student conductor of the Lawrence University Symphonic Band (2025-26). As president of Lawrence's collegiate chapter of the National Association for Music Education (NAfME), she helped organize the annual NAfME Symposium on culturally responsive teaching, facilitated opportunities for student feedback within the music education program, and worked to foster a supportive and inclusive conservatory community. Nicole was selected to participate as a band conductor in the 2026 Wind Band Conducting Workshop at the University of Minnesota Twin Cities and will complete her student teaching experience in the fall. Nicole would like to thank her family—Julius, Pearl, and her twin sister, April—for their support of her musical and educational pursuits. She is especially grateful to Ceon Rumphs and Andrew Mast for their mentorship and guidance throughout her development as a

musician and educator. Finally, she dedicates this performance to the memory of Garth Bond and Danielle Joyner.

Ben Frueh '27 is presently in his third year studying for a Bachelor of Music in violin performance at the Lawrence Conservatory of Music under the tutelage of Samantha George. He is particularly passionate about collaborative and contemporary music and has been able to bring these interests together through a variety of projects. Since his early years studying violin, Ben has worked closely with his pianist brother, Kai, giving concerts in the U.S. and Switzerland and recording an EP of original works composed for them. He is presently recording an album of clarinet trios with colleagues Isaac Epley and Isabelle Olsen at Lawrence University, including a commission from composer and clarinetist, Zachary Good. Ben was the co-winner of the Lawrence Symphony Orchestra Concerto Competition in 2024 and was recently a national finalist for the Music Teachers National Association's Chamber Competition. Ben has performed under the direction of acclaimed conductors such as Carlos Miguel Prieto and Daniel Harding and gone on tour in Europe with Alisa Weilerstein.

Sophie Hallé '26 will graduate with a Bachelor of Music in vocal performance. She has studied in the studio of John T. Gates all four years. Sophie has performed in a variety of opera scenes at Lawrence, including *The Lady with the Hand Mirror* in Argento's *Postcard from Morocco*, Vera in Hoiby's *A Month in the Country*, and Friend 2 in Moore's *Ballad of Baby Doe*. She also performed in various scenes at La Musica Lirica, including Carolina from Cimarosa's *Il matrimonio segreto*, and Donna Elvira from Mozart's *Don Giovanni*. Sophie has been a part of all three Lawrence choirs during her time. She would like to give a special thanks to John T. Gates, Kristin Roach, Copeland Woodruff, and Shannon Gravelle. Sophie is taking a year off to prepare for grad school auditions.

Megan LaBelle-Smith '27 is a soprano pursuing a Bachelor of Music in voice performance and composition in the studios of Karen Leigh-Post, Asha Srinivasan, and Joanne Metcalf. At Lawrence, she has had the privilege of performing Harriet in Kirchoff's *The Clever Artifice of Harriet and Margaret*, as well as several roles in the opera scenes program including Fiordiligi in Mozart's *Così fan tutte*, Maria Corona in Menotti's *The Saint of Bleeker Street*, and Mercédès in Bizet's *Carmen*. In addition, she was the production stage manager for the spring 2025 opera scenes and the 2024 mainstage opera, *The Consul* by Menotti. Her compositions range from vocal and instrumental chamber works, choral works, and works involving electronic elements. When not creating music, she enjoys hiking, doing puzzles, cooking, and hanging out with her friends, who she wishes a very happy graduation and best of luck in all their endeavors!

Born and raised in Ürümqi, China, **Qiaochuhan Li '26** is graduating with degrees in piano performance, East Asian studies, and global studies. Her Lawrence highlights include competing in the 2026 MTNA Chamber Music Competition as a national finalist with her piano trio, performing her favorite chamber music works—such as Crumb's *Vox Balaenae*, Schubert's *Trout Quintet*, and Bach's *Concerto in A minor for Four Harpsichords*—with her friends, and running the Door County Half Marathon in the past two years. In addition to her performance work, Qiaochuhan received honors for her project on Mo Zhou's reimagining of *Madama Butterfly*. This summer, Qiaochuhan is attending the Madeline Island Chamber Music Festival as a piano fellow, and this fall, she will begin her master's degree in chamber music at the Tianjin Juilliard School on the Tianjin Juilliard Fellowship. Qiaochuhan would like to thank Anthony Padilla, Catherine Kautsky, Michael Mizrahi, Anna Reiser, Craig Jordan, Wen-Lei Gu, Samantha George, John T. Gates, Alvina Tan, Nancy Lin, and Brigid Vance for their tireless support during her time at Lawrence.

Ruby March-Tormé '26 will graduate with a Bachelor of Music in vocal performance, from the studio of Estelí Gomez. During her time at Lawrence, she has recently played the roles of Hetty in *The Clever Artifice of Harriet and Margaret* and Noémie in Massenet's *Cendrillon*. Ruby has enjoyed being choral librarian at Lawrence, where she is able to tidy and rearrange to her heart's content. This last year, she has acted as Concert Choir's soprano section leader and been featured as a student soloist in the Major Works concert. After graduation, she intends to pursue further education in voice. Ruby is very grateful for all the wonderful musical opportunities she has had at Lawrence, but is grateful most of all for the lifelong friends she has made along the way.

Thomas McGowan '27 is a third-year bass trombonist from Hortonville, Wisconsin, pursuing a Bachelor of Music in trombone performance with a minor in brass pedagogy. He has studied with Tim Albright and Zach Marley and has performed with the Lawrence Symphony Orchestra, Wind Ensemble, Jazz Ensemble, jazz combos, and a variety of chamber groups on the tenor trombone, bass trombone, and euphonium. He is grateful for the opportunities, mentorship, collaborations, and friendships he has developed with the graduating class and is looking forward to continuing to grow as a performer, educator, and musician in the years ahead.

Clarinetist **Isabelle Olsen '26** was born and raised in New York City. She began playing clarinet at age 12, and has since played in a variety of orchestras, wind ensembles, and chamber ensembles. She is currently studying clarinet performance in the studio of Andy Hudson at Lawrence University. She has attended various summer festivals including Eastern Music Festival, AlpenKammerMusik, SoundSCAPE, and Accademia Chigiana where she has performed under conductors Gerard Schwarz, José-Luis Novo, and others. Since arriving at Lawrence, Olsen has taken a particular interest in chamber music and new music. Much of her time making music is spent collaborating with her incredible colleagues, and playing works by living, underrepresented composers. In the fall of 2026,

she will be attending the Manhattan School of Music to pursue a master's degree in clarinet performance with David Krakauer.

Sarah Ruiz '26 will graduate with a Bachelor of Music in vocal performance and a Bachelor of Arts in environmental science, with a minor in biology. During her time at Lawrence, she has studied voice with Esteli Gomez and has been featured in Lawrence University's productions of *The Consul* by Gian Carlo Menotti as the Secretary and *Cendrillon* by Pauline Viardot as the title role, as well as multiple opera scenes performances. She has participated in Lawrence University's Concert Choir and Cantata during her five years here. Additionally, she has been researching the impact of *Schistosoma mansoni* infection on the expression of IL-17 and TNF in *Biomphalaria glabrata* for the last year with Judith Humphries, professor of biology. This project received honors, and Sarah was awarded the Howard and Helen Russell Award for Excellence in Biological Research in recognition of this project.

Victor Sandberg '26 grew up in Minocqua, Wisconsin and will graduate with a Bachelor of Music in organ performance and a minor in religious studies. Before coming to Lawrence, he had no experience with the organ, but with guidance under organ professor Daniel Schwandt has exemplified immense musical growth. During his time at Lawrence he has been fortunate to study abroad in the Netherlands at the Conservatorium van Amsterdam, studying organ under Matthias Havinga and Pieter van Dijk. He has also traveled with piano professor Catherine Kautsky this past summer to the city of Acqui Terme in Italy for InterHarmony International Music Festival, performing organ works by J.S Bach and Josef Rheinberger. Along with this, he was a finalist for a Watson Fellowship and has received the LaVahn Maesch prize that is awarded to an organ student who has demonstrated high standards of technical competence and artistic expression. This spring was filled with celebration for his marriage to his wonderful husband and he plans to return up-north working as a church organist and enjoying the lake as a newlywed.

David Smith '26, from Radford, Virginia, is a senior double majoring in mathematics and physics. During his time at Lawrence, he has deeply engaged with the Conservatory, studying under Kivie Cahn-Lipman and performing with various chamber ensembles. Notably, he won the 2024 LSO Concerto Competition and was featured as a soloist with the Lawrence Symphony Orchestra. Over the years, he has enjoyed multiple other competition successes and national performance opportunities, with a major highlight being his 2019 performance in Boston on NPR's classical music showcase, *From the Top*. Following graduation, David will pursue a Ph.D. in physics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Ava Wadia '26 is graduating with a Bachelor of Music in vocal performance. She has studied voice under Estelí Gomez during her time at Lawrence. She has previously been in opera productions at Lawrence such as *Alice Tierney*, *The Consul*, and most recently *The Clever Artifice of Harriet and Margaret*. This summer, Ava will be playing the role of Lisette in La Musica Lirica's production of *La Rondine*. In the fall, Ava will be continuing her studies at McGill under Tracy Smith Bessette. Besides singing, Ava spends her time doing digital art, wood carving, and spending time with her cats!

