Crane Symphony Orchestra

Dr. Ching-Chun Lai, Conductor (on leave 2018-19)
Dr. Joel Schut, Interim Conductor

The Crane Symphony Orchestra is the second oldest college orchestra in the United States, and in its long legacy, students at Crane have worked with legendary conductors and musicians, such as Nadia Boulanger, Sarah Caldwell, Aaron Copland, Howard Hanson, Gunther Schuller, and Robert Shaw, to name a few.

The mission for Crane Symphony Orchestra is not only pursuing a high-standard of performance. We are also committed to providing students with an excellent ensemble experience as part of the education for future music teachers, performers, scholars, composers, and music industry leaders.

The Crane Symphony Orchestra performs a wide range orchestral repertoire, from baroque to contemporary music. Every year, the CSO performs four full symphonic concerts and two concerts in collaboration with the Crane Chorus. In 2016, the Crane Symphony Orchestra and the Crane Chorus performed at Carnegie Hall with guest conductor Duain Wolfe (director of the Chicago Symphony Chorus), and in 2012, the two ensembles took the stage at the Avery Fisher Hall in New York City, performing Verdi’s Requiem. In 2013, under guest conductor Christof Perick, in collaboration with American Boychoir, Crane Symphony Orchestra and Crane Chorus performed Benjamin Britten’s monumental War Requiem. Other recent guest conductors include JoAnn Falletta, Larry Rachleff and Joseph Flummerfelt.

The Orchestra also tours regularly. Recently, CSO performed at the NYSSMA Winter Conference, on Long Island and in the Albany area.

Crane Opera Orchestra

Dr. Kirk Severtson, Conductor

Instrumental students at Crane have opportunity to join the opera orchestra, which performs fully-staged operatic works with the Crane Opera Ensemble. The size of the ensemble depends on specific work being performed, which is drawn from Baroque through contemporary operatic and musical theatre repertoire. The Opera Ensemble’s 2011 production of Amahl & the Night Visitors was the 1st place winner of The American Prize in Operatic Performance and 2nd place in the National Opera Association’s annual Collegiate Production Competition (Division 3). In 2014, Crane presented parts of three contemporary operas as part of the first ever Domenic J. Pellicciotti Opera Composition Prize, with all six composers and librettists in residence to work with the students.

Auditions

Students wishing to perform in the orchestras must take a placement audition, scheduled during the first two days of each semester. Each studio faculty administers their own auditions, and in consultation with ensemble directors, determines ensemble
placements and seating. Information such as time, location and materials needed for auditions may be obtained from the respective studio teacher. While auditions for Crane performing ensembles are open to all students, the audition process is rigorous and competitive.

**Faculty**

**Dr. Ching-Chun Lai, Director of Orchestras**
Dr. Lai has conducted orchestras and ensembles in Asia, Europe, and the United States. A committed educator and experienced ensemble clinician, Dr. Lai has worked with youth orchestras and school ensembles in Taiwan, Canada, and United States.

Besides standard symphonic repertoire, Dr. Lai is equally comfortable with Baroque literature, contemporary music, and opera. Dr. Lai has studied with Gunther Schuller, James Smith, Charles Peltz, and Yu-Hsian Chang, and she holds a Doctor of Musical Arts degree in Orchestral Conducting from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Master of Music degrees in Conducting and Music Education with Distinguish Performance and Academic Honors from the New England Conservatory of Music; and a Master’s degree in Aeronautics and Aeronautics Engineering from the National Cheng Kung University in Taiwan.

**Dr. Joel Shut, Interim Director of Orchestras**
Dr. Shut is an active conductor for All-State, regional, and honor orchestras. His philosophy of teaching as a performing art has helped create, grow, and strengthen numerous school, community and professional programs. He served as Music Director of the Livingston Symphony Orchestra, founding director of the Detroit Medical Orchestra, and organizer of the Michigan Teachers Orchestra amongst others. He has collaborated with a wide range of professional artists including Andrés Cárdenes and Ralph Votapek and has commissioned works for both string and full orchestra.

His belief in promoting cultural diplomacy through music is evident in his work around the globe. He has taught, conducted, and performed with multiple engagements in Tunisia, Honduras, and as guest faculty at the Afghanistan National Institute of Music. He facilitated a long running music centered host exchange connecting German and American young artists and been featured as artist faculty at the Myanmar Music Festival. He is a graduate of the YOA Orchestra of the Americas Global Leaders Fellowship Program and served as a program mentor connecting innovators in youth orchestra education throughout the Americas.

He earned his DMA in Orchestral Conducting from Michigan State University and holds degrees in Orchestral Conducting from the University of Colorado-Boulder as well as Violin Performance and Music Education from the University of Michigan School of Music, Theatre and Dance where he was awarded the Albert A. Stanley Medal, the school’s highest honor.

**Dr. Kirk Severtson, Conductor, Opera Orchestra**
severtki@potsdam.edu

Dr. Severtson serves as musical director of the Crane Opera Ensemble, coaches singers and pianists, and teaches classes in art song repertoire and accompanying. He has been coach/pianist for several recent productions at The Dallas Opera. He has been a coach on the music staff of Opera Saratoga since 2006, having previously coached at Opera North (NH), the Opera Theater of Lucca (Italy), the Cincinnati Opera outreach program, the Rising Star Singers festival, Dorian Opera Theater, and as a Vocal Chamber Music Fellow at the Aspen Music Festival. Dr. Severtson is also a member of the Board of Directors of the National Opera Association. He holds degrees from the University of Cincinnati and Luther College.

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