



2021-22 Season

What Makes Curtis Unique?

Curtis's outsized influence on musical life since its founding in 1924 can be traced to its unique approach to education and training.

Curtis maintains a small student body. With enrollment figures around 150, Curtis accepts just enough students to maintain a full symphony orchestra and an opera program, plus select programs in piano, guitar, composition, conducting, and organ; Community Artist Fellows; and a string quartet in residence. The admissions process ensures that students rehearse and perform alongside musical peers.

All Curtis students receive personalized attention throughout their studies. Students receive personalized attention from an extraordinary faculty of approximately 120 top-tier musical artists and highly credentialed classroom teachers. Most students have access to multiple teachers on their major instrument. There are no teaching assistants at Curtis. Class sizes are small and curricula are tailored to the needs of individual students.

Curtis students “learn by doing.” All students are encouraged to perform frequently. Curtis students present more than 200 public performances each year to critical acclaim and enthusiastic audiences. The Curtis Opera Theatre offers three to four productions per season, casting all voice and opera students repeatedly. The Curtis Symphony Orchestra, in which all but the very youngest students of orchestral instruments participate, gives a three-concert season in Philadelphia's Kimmel Center for the Performing Arts and performs often in Carnegie Hall. All instrumental students participate in chamber music, and Curtis offers more than one hundred student recitals each season.

Curtis promises a tuition-free education. Curtis makes an investment in each student so that no tuition is charged for their studies. As a result, artistic promise is the only consideration for admission. Generous financial and grant aid likewise ensures that no student accepted to Curtis will be unable to attend because of financial need and that each student can enter the profession without educational debt. This investment in students brings the most promising young musicians to the school—regardless of their ability to pay—and ensures that they will rehearse and perform alongside musical peers of diverse races, nationalities, and origins.

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Curtis's celebrated faculty includes a high proportion of successful performing musicians. Because their livelihood is not derived primarily from teaching, performance faculty members are free to accept students on merit alone. Their practical performing experience provides Curtis students with a direct link to life as a successful professional musician today.

Curtis's high standards attract remarkable visiting artists. Frequent master classes and residencies give students in all disciplines exposure to today's leading musical artists, some of whom participate in performances alongside students. Recent visiting artists include composer Amy Beth Kirsten, pianist Emanuel Ax, and cellist Colin Carr. Well-known stage and music directors work with the Curtis Opera Theatre on fully-staged productions to create fresh interpretations of standard repertoire and contemporary works. And ever since 1924, when Leopold Stokowski was instrumental in Curtis's founding, the school has enjoyed close ties with the music directors of the Philadelphia Orchestra. Philadelphia Orchestra Music Director Yannick Nézet-Séguin was named first mentor conductor of the school's conducting program in the 2013–14 school year.

There is no minimum or maximum age to audition for Curtis. The majority of Curtis students are of college age. However because admissions are based solely on artistic promise, some students enter Curtis while in elementary or high school, while others come to Curtis after earning bachelor's or master's degrees elsewhere. Younger students receive training from the same teachers, at the same intensive levels, as do their older colleagues. The length of a student's stay is open-ended, and students graduate when their teachers decide they are ready. In most cases this occurs after three to five years at Curtis; it may be as few as two or as many as twelve years.

All keyboard, conducting, and composition students are lent grand pianos for use throughout their studies at Curtis. Curtis currently owns 75 Steinways.

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