



VOL. 1
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LYRIC OPERA NEWS

*Bel Canto: A World
Premiere is Born*

*Passion and Whimsy in
The Marriage of Figaro*

Cinderella's Perfect Couple

*Susan Stroman Brings
Her Broadway Touch
to The Merry Widow*

*Wozzeck: Opera about
the Common Man*

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Bel Canto creative team: Nilo Cruz, Sir Andrew Davis,
Jimmy López, and Kevin Newbury PHOTO TODD ROSENBERG

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GENERAL DIRECTIONS

BY Anthony Freud
General Director, Lyric Opera of Chicago

Lyric Opera of Chicago is going full steam through the summer with single tickets on sale, special events being planned, sets being built, publications being written, and all the other efforts we undertake before rehearsals begin.

Our 2015/16 season has many firsts for Sir Andrew Davis, our remarkable music director: *Cinderella*, his first *bel canto* opera at Lyric; *Wozzeck*, his debut in a work he's eagerly awaited the chance to conduct; and *Bel Canto*, his first Lyric world premiere. Add *The Merry Widow* (a recent triumph for him at the Met), and you have further evidence of the astounding versatility for which Sir Andrew is so celebrated.

This season marks a new chapter in Lyric's history, with David T. Ormesher as our new board president. The company will benefit immeasurably from the intelligence, imagination, and brilliant leadership that have made David such an extraordinarily successful businessman. He also happens to be a passionately enthusiastic operagoer!

I'm hugely excited about every opera this season, beginning with Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro*. It's a source of great satisfaction to me that Barbara Gaines accepted my invitation to direct our new production. She is as delighted as I am at the prospect of seeing our marvelous cast bring this masterpiece to life on the Lyric stage.

In this issue, you can read more about *Figaro* and the four other productions in the first half of the season. Together they create a wonderful variety: *Cinderella*, both wildly comic and infinitely touching in Joan Font's captivating production; *Wozzeck*, an opera I highly recommend to audience members who may be new to opera but are attracted to powerfully emotional experiences in the theater; *The Merry Widow*, that intoxicating blend of Parisian elegance and Viennese sentiment; and *Bel Canto*, commissioned by Lyric, our first world premiere since 2004 and a production eagerly awaited throughout the entire international operatic scene.

We have many great friends of the company—all of them extraordinary, world-renowned artists—appearing in starring roles, from Renée Fleming, Thomas Hampson, and Isabel Leonard to Danielle de Niese, Sophie Koch, Alice Coote, Joseph Calleja, and Alessandro Corbelli. At the same time that we're welcoming back those marvelous performers and others who have been so successful at Lyric, we're also introducing many new artists in their company debuts.

I'll look forward to seeing you at the Civic Opera House, and to having you share in our excitement as we all enjoy this wonderful season. Long live passion!

BEL CANTO
SET DESIGN
COURTESY
DAVID KORINS

THE STARS ALIGN TO BRING

Bel Canto

TO LYRIC

BY Magda Krance



BEL CANTO CREATIVE TEAM:
KEVIN NEWBURY, DAVID KORINS,
CONSTANCE HOFFMAN,
ANTHONY FREUD (STANDING);
NILO CRUZ, SIR ANDREW DAVIS,
JIMMY LÓPEZ (SEATED)

When random events and individuals converge, the result can be a wondrous series of connections that appear cosmically predestined. The journey of *Bel Canto*, from headline news to novel to opera, is just that. This is the story behind Lyric's latest world premiere, which runs December 7 through January 17, 2016, and is already garnering international buzz.

In 1996, the world watched an international hostage crisis unfold in Lima, Peru. A diplomatic party at the Japanese ambassador's mansion had been commandeered by terrorists posing as waiters; they were trapped together for four months until a government siege rescued the hostages and killed the guerrillas. Jimmy López, then an 18-year-old composer, watched the news reports at home in Lima, never dreaming the story would inspire his first opera, commissioned by Lyric Opera of Chicago.

The crisis inspired American writer Ann Patchett, whose best-selling 2001 novel *Bel Canto* centered on an American opera diva who'd come to a fictional South American capital to perform for a visiting Japanese business mogul. The transformative power of music was a central theme. In her research Patchett had listened to Renée Fleming's recordings; after publication, the two met and became fast friends.

In 2010, Fleming toured Scandinavia with Peruvian conductor Miguel Harth-Bedoya, and asked him to suggest a composer for a possible project. "Yes—Jimmy López," who'd hung around Lima Philharmonic rehearsals as a teenager, studied at Helsinki's Sibelius Conservatory, and was getting his Ph.D. in composition at Berkeley. As Lyric's creative consultant, Fleming proposed curating an opera based on *Bel Canto*. She and music director Sir Andrew Davis considered dozens of composers before choosing López, whose instrumental music was captivating and whose serendipitous connection to the story was compelling.

They met the composer in April 2011. López recalls, "They had all my scores and CDs on the table, had gone to my YouTube channel and website, and had specific questions about my pieces." Fleming and Davis revealed Lyric's plan to commission a full-length opera, which Sir Andrew would conduct, and the subject matter. "That's when I felt the stars were aligning," López says. "I had a very personal connection with the material. Of course, the book and the opera are fictional; we're not trying to narrate a historical event, but being Peruvian, I felt a responsibility to make some elements of the story more explicit and bring some aspects of the real-life events into the opera."

Says Fleming, "Something I love about this story is there's this chaos, this danger, death even—but ultimately all of Ann's books find the good in people. In *Bel Canto* it's music and singing that bring out the best in everyone."

"Of course the book and the opera are fictional; we're not trying to narrate a historical event, but being Peruvian, I felt a responsibility to make some elements of the story more explicit and bring some aspects of the real-life events into the opera."

The search for the right librettist led to playwright Nilo Cruz, the first Latino to win the Pulitzer Prize for drama (*Anna in the Tropics*). His play, *Two Sisters and a Piano*, dramatizes the effects of extended house arrest, which convinced López he was perfect for *Bel Canto*. "Being Cuban-American, Nilo understands the reality of South America. He maintained all the psychological aspects of Ann's novel, but he's also brought us closer to the political realities of the events. Our music and words were intertwined from the beginning." Notes Fleming, "Nilo's use of language is musical in itself. The beauty of his prose has a magical-realism quality that fits this part of the world." Says Cruz, "The novel is mainly narrative;

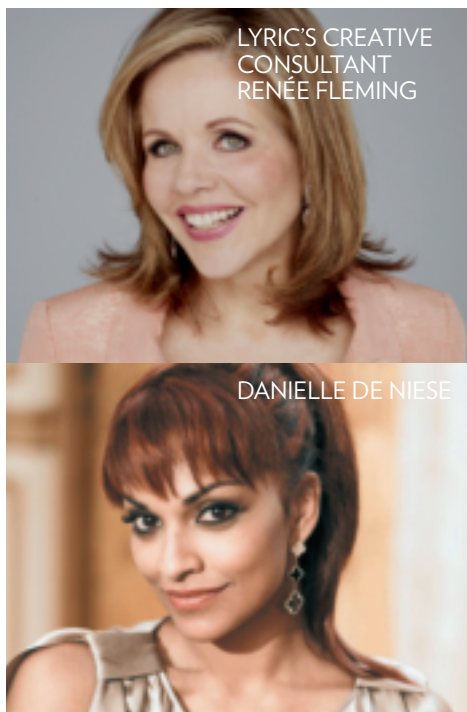
I had to go into the minds and hearts of the characters to capture dialogue and explore the subtext."

In Cruz's taut, poetic libretto, terrorists storm a high-profile international party in Lima. Trapped together for 126 days, hostages and captors form unlikely relationships. A utopian community gradually flourishes within the mansion walls. Opera diva Roxane Coss embodies their hopes and fears; the terrorists see her music as both a threat and an asset. Roxane and Hosokawa, a Japanese tycoon, fall in love, as do his interpreter, Gen, and a terrorist, Carmen. Their dreams shatter when the army storms the mansion to liberate the hostages, but their love lives on in the form of music.

Lyric announced the *Bel Canto* commission in 2012. (Patchett graciously called the libretto "much better than my novel!") López "tackled the main arias first, which served as guideposts for the rest of the piece." As with architecture, "you have to plan the whole structure. I laid out a harmonic plan, the scales and rhythms for each act. I didn't assign a melody to each character—no leitmotifs—but each has a certain musical aura."

López met with Davis in 2013, "a privilege most opera composers don't enjoy. Sir Andrew understood my intentions with the music; his suggestions improved dramatic tensions, orchestration, issues of balance, and interactions of voice and orchestra." Subsequent working sessions "provided me with feedback on what I'd written, and also about what I was going to write," López says. "I'd ask Andrew, 'How do you hear the next scene?' and he'd say, 'It has to be a chamber-music moment, just a few instruments, very intimate.'"

Fleming recalls "talking about tessitura, variety in the vocal writing, and prosody—how to set language so it's understood. It's not easy. And every voice is different." Says López, "It was a privilege to have Renée guide me



RENOVA BUA

DECCO/RENS DOLUP



A SCENE FROM *BEL CANTO* DURING SUMMER TECHNICAL REHEARSAL



BEL CANTO SETS DURING CONSTRUCTION AT RAVENSWOOD SCENIC



TODD ROSENBERG

through my first opera, with her profound understanding of what the voice can do within a single aria and in the whole work. She has a global understanding of the piece, knowing that how you shape vocal lines can have an impact on the dramatic effect or even the narrative, and also how to tell the story through music and through the voice.”

Director Kevin Newbury’s involvement since early on has been invaluable, says López, from determining the musical time needed to move singers around onstage to working out the best way to end the opera. “When we get to rehearsals in late October we’ll have exactly what we need,” notes the composer.

At the July 2014 workshop, with Ryan Opera Center members singing through the piano-vocal score, the creative team and company finally heard

the work in progress. “It’s a macaronic opera!” Sir Andrew proclaimed, referring to its multiple languages. “It’s not a play set to music, it is operatic in form,” noted general director Anthony Freud. Newbury compared *Bel Canto* to the cable-TV hit *Orange Is the New Black*: “It’s a show about an unplanned community and confinement. No one gets to leave the stage! There’s vacillation between public captivity, private experience, and magic realism. It’s a fantastic piece of music theater.”

In December the team heard soprano Danielle de Niese sing Roxane: “It’s unusual to have the big star involved so early, but she is our pillar,” says López. “Roxane holds the whole opera together so her character has to be flawless, and has to suit Danni’s voice. We refined and polished every little thing, made changes and additions.”

With orchestration being completed over the summer, along with David Korins’s final sets, Greg Emetaz’s projections, and Constance Hoffman’s costumes, it’ll soon be time to put it all together on Lyric’s stage. *Bel Canto* is sure to astonish and enthrall Lyric audiences musically, dramatically, visually, and emotionally. The final result, says López, is “the epitome of what collaboration is. I feel that this project was made for us.”

Lyric Opera world premiere generously made possible by **The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, Helen and Sam Zell, Ethel and William Gofen, Ada and Whitney Addington, the Walter E. Heller Foundation, and Roberta L. and Robert J. Washlow**, with additional support from the **National Endowment for the Arts and Prince Charitable Trusts**.



SIR ANDREW DAVIS, RENÉE FLEMING, AND ANN PATCHETT DURING 2012 PRESS CONFERENCE.

TODD ROSENBERG
DANNIEST



SIR ANDREW DAVIS CONDUCTS *BEL CANTO*'S SUMMER WORKSHOP FEATURING SINGERS FROM THE RYAN OPERA CENTER IN JULY 2014.

Go inside the making of this world premiere with more insights from Jimmy López and director Kevin Newbury at lyricopera.org/BelCanto.

WORLD-CLASS OPERA *under the stars*



Join us for

Stars of Lyric Opera at Millennium Park Friday, September 11 at 7:30pm

Sir Andrew Davis leads the Lyric Opera Orchestra and Chorus in a spectacular program.

Hear highlights from *Cinderella*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *La Traviata*, *The Marriage of Figaro*, and more, performed by some of this season's biggest stars including Lawrence Brownlee, Amanda Majeski, Adam Plachetka, Luca Pisaroni, and Christiane Karg.



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LYRIC OPERA of CHICAGO

FIGARO

IN LIVING COLOR

BARBARA GAINES
DIRECTS A
PASSIONATE,
WHIMSICAL TAKE
ON MOZART'S
MASTERPIECE

BY Maggie Berndt



Lyric's 61st season begins in style with the return of Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro* in an all-new production from visionary director Barbara Gaines. Audiences will be treated to, as Gaines calls it, "a tsunami of love and passion and jealousy and whimsy," when the production is onstage from September 26 through October 24. Best known to Chicago audiences as the founder and artistic director of Chicago Shakespeare Theater, Gaines tackles her first non-Shakespearean opera and promises Chicago audiences a *Figaro* unlike any they have seen before.

Gaines first saw the work as a young actress, and was underwhelmed: "I remember loving the music and feeling so much joy and passion from it. And I wasn't seeing that on the stage!" She vows that her take on this classic opera will absolutely remedy that problem. "Mozart is my greatest collaborator," she notes emphatically. "I will do *Figaro* the way

that the music makes me feel. You can't get to the fourth act of this opera without feeling you're in heaven. The gods have descended—it's just a feast of joy and love and harmony."

Though based on a celebrated play by Beaumarchais, *Figaro* is not actually an opera that Gaines envisioned herself directing: "It was Anthony Freud's brilliance. He thought it'd be right up my alley because it's all about *character*."

The Marriage of Figaro is fast-paced with a story that packs an intense amount of action into one day, with a wedding, multiple mistaken identities, and several lovers' quarrels and reconciliations thrown into the mix. Gaines intends to take full advantage of the compressed time frame, noting that "the action takes place over 24 hours, so things happen with the speed of lightning, and people's passions are combustible. There the comedy lies, because we're all quite combustible when we fall in love."

Gaines's essential vision for her *Figaro* is to create a production that does justice to all the over-the-top emotions embedded in the music, while adhering to the universal emotions of the story: "I'm trying to bring out feelings that all of us feel while we're hit with extreme love, extreme jealousy, and the extreme desire to be loved. It boils down to the simplest human behavior."

To bring this vision to life, Gaines started from scratch—literally a blank canvas that turned into her concept for the set. "I thought immediately that it would be a bleached-wood set," she recalls. "The costumes will take life, and the singers will have life, against this background."

Gaines's longtime collaborator James Noone, set designer for this production, returns to Lyric after having created the sets for Verdi's *Macbeth*, which marked Gaines's acclaimed operatic debut in the 2010/11 season. He anchored the designs for all four acts with a curved white pine

BARBARA GAINES

AMANDA MAJESKI

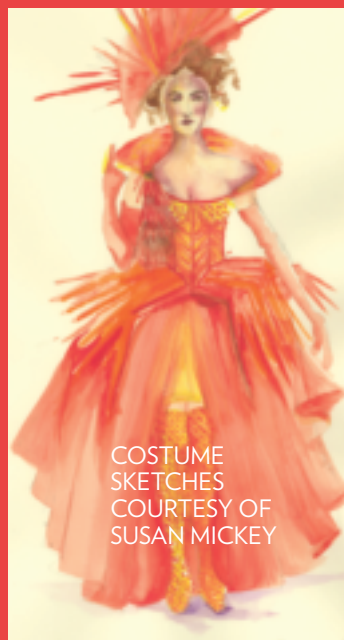
CHRISTIANE KARG

ADAM PLACHETKA

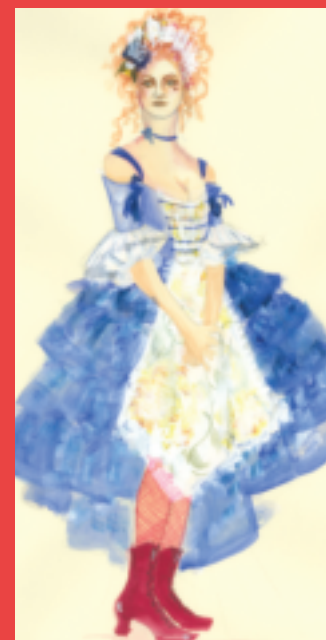
LUCA PISARONI



“You can’t get to the fourth act of this opera without feeling you’re in heaven. The gods have descended—it’s just a feast of joy and love and harmony.”



COSTUME SKETCHES COURTESY OF SUSAN MICKEY



background to let the action, costumes, and singers shine. One of the show’s highlights will surely be the 25-foot bed that is the backdrop for the entire second act, “a playground of fun and wonder” where all of the cast members will interact. “We have a headboard you can sit on, a footboard you can sit on, stairs going up to the bed, people rolling around on the bed, people standing and marching on the bed,” says Gaines. The bed is the perfect canvas for a story centered on “whether you’re sleeping with somebody or not, or whether you *will* sleep with somebody or not!”

The commitment to creating a *Figaro* “in living color” extends to the costumes, which are designed by Susan Mickey, another frequent Gaines collaborator who makes her Lyric debut with *Figaro*. The inspiration for the clothes is what Gaines calls *Runway 1789*: “I want to take the silhouette of 1789 and expand it, just the way I’m expanding the love, pain, and jealousy.” Mickey has truly

taken this concept and run with it, calling her designs “a mashup of couture runway and 18th century to capture the whimsy of contemporary colors and contemporary lines.”

Gaines is beyond thrilled to direct the young, sexy, dynamic cast who will truly bring this production to life, calling the artists “the greatest gift Anthony Freud could have given me.” *Figaro* features the highly anticipated Lyric debuts of Adam Plachetka and Christiane Karg as Figaro and Susanna, and the welcome return of Luca Pisaroni and Ryan Opera Center alumna Amanda Majeski as the Count and Countess.

“I know and love Amanda and Luca, and from what I hear the other singers are as wonderful as the two of them,” says Gaines. “We can really plumb the depths of lust, jealousy, pain, joy, grace, and true forgiveness and celebrate *life* in this opera.”

Gaines hopes to use the remarkable cast to tell what she views as a very

human and very simple story: “It’s about love, isn’t it? And forgiveness, and a wonderful night of madness, but love and forgiveness heal everything.”

Gaines hopes that Lyric audiences will feel the joy and passion that she and her team have put into this exciting new *Marriage of Figaro*: “I would just love everyone to leave the Civic Opera House on Cloud Nine. If people were really happy as they left this opera, there could be no greater gift.”

New Lyric Opera production generously made possible by **The Negaunee Foundation**, the **Abbott Fund**, **Randy L. and Melvin R. Berlin**, **Exelon**, **JPMorgan Chase & Co.**, and **Sylvia Neil and Daniel Fischel**.



The Countess speaks! Majeski talks about her history in this iconic role. Watch at lyricopera.org/Figaro.

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Fairytale COUPLE

and what she stands for,” declares the mezzo. In this day and age, “she may come across as weak because of all the things she puts up with. Today we’d say, ‘How can she let herself be abused this way?’” In Leonard’s opinion, Cinderella doesn’t just forgive her father and stepsisters at the end of the opera, “she forgives them on a day-to-day basis! The pain of watching her is that every day she’s dealing with this very difficult situation, yet she’s a hopeful person. She doesn’t allow herself to become entirely

The captivating Isabel Leonard and Lawrence Brownlee portray Cinderella and the Prince at Lyric

BY Roger Pines

Any opera company planning a production of Rossini’s *Cinderella* can’t succeed without two fabulous performers as the heroine and Ramiro, her prince. Lyric has them this season in two Americans who have risen to world stature – mezzo-soprano Isabel Leonard and tenor Lawrence Brownlee. They’re greatly looking forward to performing together in Chicago in *Cinderella*, onstage from October 4 through 30.

“Larry’s phenomenal,” says Leonard, who admires Brownlee’s sense of humor as much as his artistry. “The great thing about *Cinderella* is that we have an entire duet to sing together!” Brownlee clearly relishes Leonard’s attention to all aspects of her roles, noting that “you never feel she’s on autopilot. She’s always searching.”

Lyric is presenting Spanish director Joan Font’s whimsical and over-the-top *Cinderella*, a new-to-Chicago production that triumphed with Brownlee in Houston and with Leonard

in Washington, D.C. Leonard admires the way this staging defines the characters so clearly and specifically: “The sisters and the father are very big, bright, and a little edgy. Cinderella and the prince are more realistically depicted; their movements are a little more natural, more subdued, which is what visually ties the two of them together in terms of their onstage presence.”

In Font’s production Brownlee gets a kick out of his wig and his costume (“blue and white stars and pink stockings”). He especially enjoys the human-sized rats who are onstage frequently, functioning as Cinderella’s helpers and friends. “I think people fall in love with them and find them endearing. I enjoy their physicality, how much they add to the show, and the fact that Cinderella is so sweet and loving towards them.”

For Leonard, it’s easy to play Cinderella because the music clearly depicts who she is. “I love her character

sad and depressed. It’s in her *nature*, I think, to be hopeful. I think we’re all a little cynical now when we think about hope. But there’s something to it when someone really perseveres through their hope, and I think that’s a beautiful idea.”

Leonard enraptured Washington National Opera and Munich’s Bayerische Staatsoper earlier this year as Cinderella (“Cenerentola” in Italian—although the heroine’s real name in Rossini’s opera is actually Angelina!). One of today’s foremost lyric mezzos and a star of the Met and the major houses of San Francisco, Munich, and Paris, Leonard sparkled in her Lyric debut last year as Rosina in *The Barber of Seville*. She actually prefers Cinderella, “because there’s a lot more lyrical singing—Rosina doesn’t really have that.”

Brownlee’s portrayal of Ramiro marks his long-awaited debut at Lyric, the eleventh company where he’s sung the role (among the others have been



“I think we’re all a little cynical now when we think about hope. But there’s something to it when someone really perseveres through their hope, and I think that’s a beautiful idea.”

the Met, Munich, La Scala, and Pesaro’s prestigious Rossini Opera Festival). He ranks among today’s most renowned *bel canto* interpreters, and has performed seven Rossini operas. “When I was 19,” he recalls, “my teacher gave me *The Barber of Seville* and it just fit. I like to think that if I’d been born in Rossini’s time, he would have liked to write for my voice. I say that because the roles I sing were written for specific tenors. I can look at one of those roles and think, ‘Since they sang this, I probably could sing it.’”

In portraying Ramiro, Brownlee finds his greatest challenge is capturing what the prince is unable to express outright. When disguised as his own valet, “he’s saying how upset he is, and what he doesn’t like, but he doesn’t get to do what his rank and power would otherwise allow

him to do until Act Two. For all of Act One, he has to sustain that frustration of not being able to let himself go.”

All the singing in *Cinderella* is formidably difficult, but Leonard actually doesn’t mind that Rossini saves the heroine’s big showpiece until the very end. “I think it’s great! There’s something about the way the entire piece is written that allows the role to flow very nicely vocally.” Rossini intersperses *Cinderella*’s sweetly lyrical moments with a lot of very florid singing. “In some ways it’s like a vocal massage throughout the show. Whenever you change the range, the dynamics, the rhythm, you’re also allowing the flexibility to continue, which is always very helpful—and by the time you get to the end of the show, you’re thoroughly warmed up!”

Ramiro’s big aria also comes fairly late in the opera, when he’s declaring that he’ll search through woods and rivers to win the girl he loves. Here Brownlee can lavish on his audience the remarkable florid ability for which he’s celebrated. But he also loves the aria’s quiet, soulful middle verse, “where he talks about how *Cinderella* is a treasure. He must find her, he says, because of her *goodness*. That’s the moment where he gets a chance to break out and show who he is—his real colors. It’s an emotion he’s never felt before.”

There’s a freshness and a delight in Rossini’s version of the famous fairytale that make *Cinderella* enchanting onstage. Whether listeners are experiencing it for the first time or the umpteenth, says Brownlee, “they can connect with that story and feel like they had a fulfilled evening seeing the opera. When you see *Cinderella* and the goodness she feels, you want her to win.”

Lyric Opera presentation generously made possible by **Margot and Josef Lakonishok, The Nelson Cornelius Production Endowment Fund, and PowerShares QQQ**. Coproduction of Houston Grand Opera, Welsh National Opera, Gran Théâtre del Liceu, and Grand Theatre de Genève.



See the lighter side of *Cinderella* in a “Patter Up!” video interview with Isabel Leonard at lyricopera.org/Cinderella.



SUSAN STROMAN

“STRO”

and The Merry Widow

Song & Dance &
Second Chances

BY Magda Krance

To get Susan Stroman’s attention, just say “Stro!” That’s what people have called the radiant blonde dynamo since she got into show biz in New York 35 years ago, first as a dancer, then as a choreographer and director for some of Broadway’s top shows. Her hit titles include *The Producers*, *Contact*, *Crazy for You*, *Oklahoma!*, *The Music Man*, *Show Boat*, *A Christmas Carol*, and *The Scottsboro Boys*, which have all won multiple Tonys and Drama Desk awards, and she’s been nominated for dozens more. Mel Brooks has been her indefatigable cheerleader and mentor since he got her to direct and choreograph *The Producers* for its wildly successful Chicago tryout.

choreographed Mozart and Sondheim at New York City Opera) and Fleming hadn’t portrayed Hanna Glawari in a fully staged production. Sir Andrew conducted the operetta once previously at the Met.

They all had a ball, and are keen to do it again at Lyric this fall—with a few changes. Except for Fleming, the cast is new to the production, as are the orchestra, chorus, and dancers. And the show itself was fine-tuned for its second run at the Met in May. Operas get only about four weeks of rehearsal versus a few months for a Broadway show; Stroman compares an opera’s opening night to a first preview on Broadway. After the first run, Jeremy Sams (who did a brand-new translation of the libretto for this production) tweaked some of the jokes and made some cuts, inspired by audience response and performers’ feedback. With a laugh, the director calls the result “a leaner, meaner *Merry Widow*.” Julian Crouch’s gorgeous sets, William Ivey Long’s sumptuous costumes, and Paule Constable’s lovely lighting will enchant Lyric audiences.

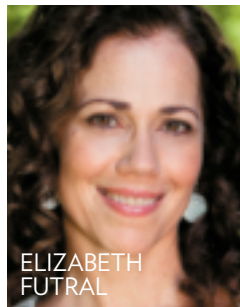
She’ll arrive at Lyric this fall to rehearse the sizeable cast of *The Merry Widow*, which runs November 14 through December 13.

Stroman first directed and choreographed this lavish, lively production at the Metropolitan Opera, where it opened last New Year’s Eve, starring Renée Fleming in the title role and conducted by Sir Andrew Davis. It was a big debut for the women; Stroman had never directed in an opera house (though she’d

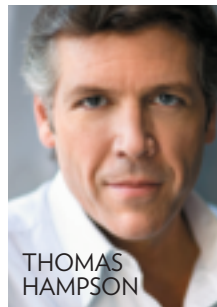
Stroman got her first real look at Lyric’s Civic Opera House in May, and returned for summer technical rehearsals. “To be inside that building—it’s so grand and beautiful!” The dance auditions “went very well. For the scene at Maxim’s, they have to do cartwheels, splits, acrobatics, and cancan, and they also have to sing! It was wonderful to see all the talent in



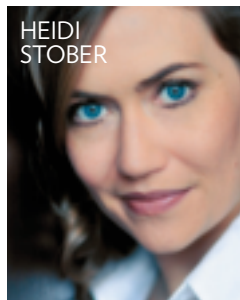
RENÉE FLEMING



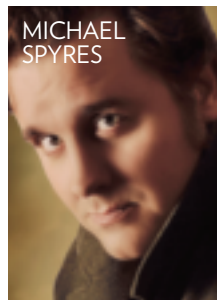
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THOMAS HAMPSON



HEIDI STOBER



MICHAEL SPYRÈS



A SCENE FROM THE MERRY WIDOW

Stroman hopes audiences will “love the sound of the singers, but I also want them to be entertained with their eyes. Hopefully at the end they’ll want to have a big glass of champagne!”

Chicago.” What attracts Stroman to *The Merry Widow* “is that it’s a mature love relationship. I love that theme of second chances. And the music makes me smile! I love all the melodies. And of course there are all those opportunities for dancing.” Davis praises the director’s “fantastic visual sense. I found her delightful to work with, very positive. This production and this operetta have a lot of energy and style.”

Stroman considers Fleming to be “perfect as the merry widow. She was born to play this part! She has a sparkle in her eye, she is very strong-willed and yet flirtatious with Danilo, and her acting in this part is wonderful.” The director-choreographer is confident that Lyric audiences “will love the sound of the singers, but I also want them to be entertained with their eyes. Hopefully at the end they’ll want to have a big glass of champagne!”

Fleming looks forward to a “second date” as Hanna Glawari with her collaborators at Lyric. Of Stroman, she enthuses, “her ability to bring a sense of fun and delight into all of her work is completely infectious. She’s incredibly imaginative when it comes to movement and amazing in the way she rehearses—she’s extremely organized and knows

exactly what she wants. You never feel for a second that you’re standing around. It’s intense!”

The soprano finds that “any time I do something new it’s always better the second time around. There’s actually a gestation period, whether we’re working on it or not. I’ve found that with language and with music. I always love coming back to something because I can enjoy it more. I can find more nuance and more refined layers in the interpretive aspects. It’s also easier because your body relaxes into it more. That this will be my second time singing Hanna within a year is also helpful.”

Fleming and Sir Andrew are frequent collaborators, most recently at Lyric for Strauss’s *Capriccio* in 2014/15. “He’s amazing—he can conduct any style! He’s such a facile musician and such a delight to work with. And he completely understands singers—he knows exactly what we need and how to help us. Operetta is so challenging; it has to be paced exactly right. That’s one of many things he’s great at.” Davis relishes *The Merry Widow*’s sense of elegance, fun, silliness, and charm. “We’ve got a really strong cast, with Elizabeth Futral singing the final three performances.” One of Lyric’s frequent leading sopranos who had

an acclaimed turn at musical theater as the Baroness in the 2014 hit *The Sound of Music*.

Fleming is great friends with her new Danilo, Thomas Hampson, although they’ve only done a few operas together: *Thais* (at Lyric), *Dangerous Liaisons*, *La Traviata* and *Arabella*. “He is so charismatic onstage! He’s quite dashing and larger than life in every way. Plus he’s funny!

“You know, *The Merry Widow* is really good,” Fleming declares. “It has a lot of depth to it. The relationship between Danilo and Hanna is complicated enough to be really interesting and sexy. And there are all these great tunes, melodies that we all love, in this one operetta. It may be one of the best, if not *the* best of them all.”

Lyric Opera presentation generously made possible by the **Donna Van Eekeren Foundation**, an **Anonymous Donor**, **Mr. and Mrs. J. Thomas Hurvis**, **Kirkland & Ellis LLP**, and the **Mazza Foundation**. Production owned by The Metropolitan Opera.

See highlights from the production and hear more from star Renée Fleming at lyricopera.org/Widow.



an opera about the common man

Sir Andrew Davis &
Sir David McVicar
tackle *Wozzeck*

BY Roger Pines

Alban Berg's *Wozzeck* pulls its audience into the tortured mind and heart of an ordinary man—downtrodden, poverty-stricken, and ultimately betrayed. His emotional disintegration is devastatingly moving thanks to the music of Berg, who produced one of the supreme masterpieces not just of the 20th century, but of the entire operatic repertoire.

Wozzeck returns to Lyric Opera this season for the first time in more than two decades from November 1 through 21. At the helm of the company's eagerly awaited new production are music director Sir Andrew Davis and director Sir David McVicar. For both conductor and director, *Wozzeck* represents a hugely important career milestone—each is undertaking this great challenge for the first time.

Davis, who has previously triumphed conducting Berg's *Lulu* and all the major Berg orchestral works, finds *Wozzeck* enthralling, whether the large-scale



SIR ANDREW
DAVIS



SIR DAVID
McVICAR



TOMASZ
KONIECZNY



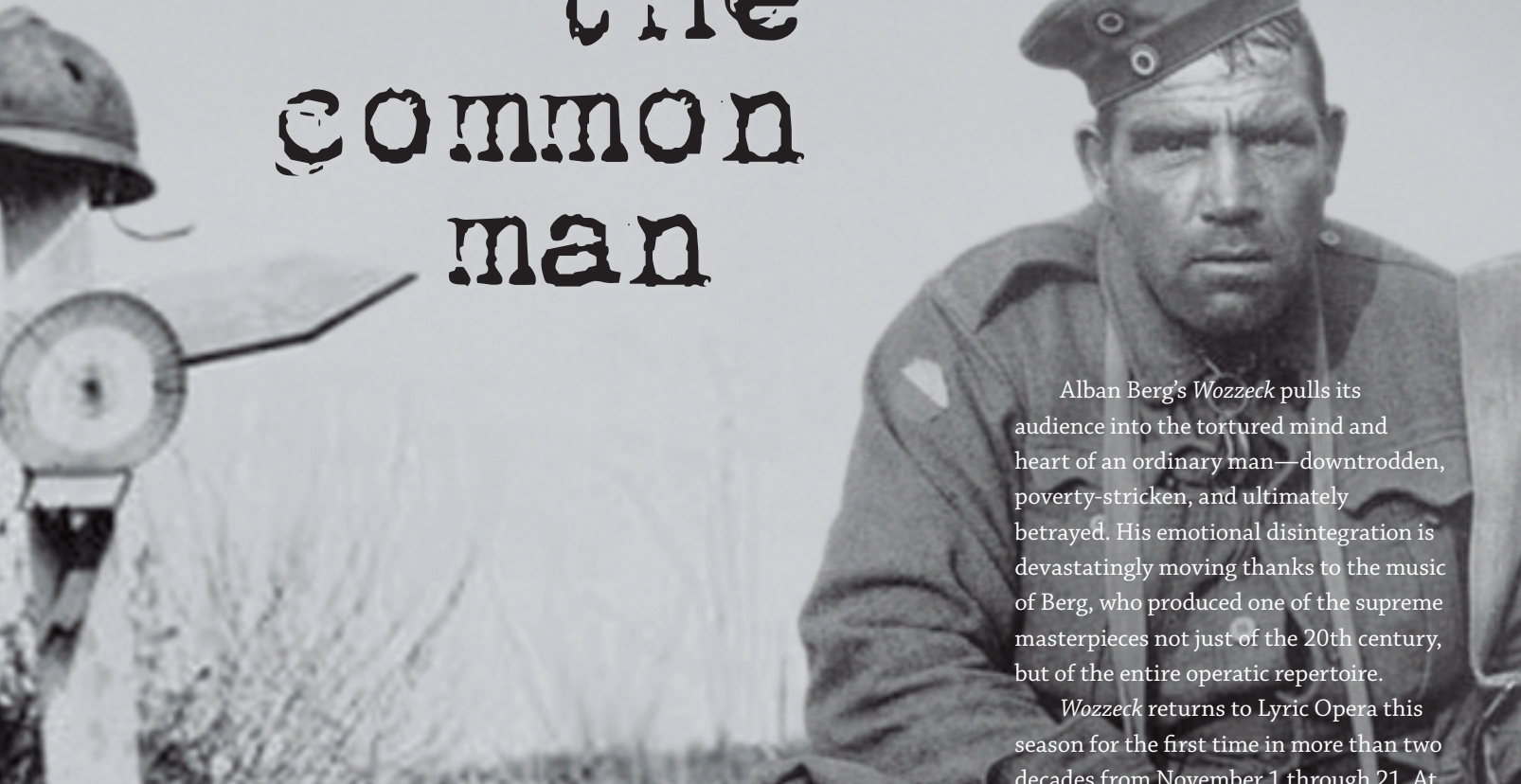
ANGELA
DENOKE



GERHARD
SIEGEL



STEFAN
VINKE



episodes or scenes of chamber-music delicacy: “It’s remarkable that Berg could write the most delicate passages for very few instruments, and then write the enormous, very moving climactic interlude, which is such a Mahlerian moment.”

The offer from Lyric to direct *Wozzeck* surprised McVicar, since “it’s very different from the repertoire that I’m often associated with—the Mozarts, the Handels, etc. (although of course I’ve taken on Strauss and Wagner as well) —and the inherent romanticism, or classicism, of my work.” Like Davis, McVicar feels very strongly attracted to the *Wozzeck* score, regarding it as both “intensely beautiful” and “supremely romantic.”

What Berg set out to do, explains Davis, was “to write an opera about a sort of ‘nobody,’ *Wozzeck* (Polish bass-baritone Tomasz Konieczny), who’s beaten down and taken advantage of. In the end he’s actually incredibly vulnerable. His lover, Marie (German soprano Angela Denoke), is being unfaithful to him, and he loses his mind with tragic consequences. It’s a very simple story, but the way it’s treated is incredibly complex.”

Unusually, this is an opera with an ordinary man at its center. *Wozzeck* is a very repressed figure, a soldier constantly demeaned by authority figures around him: “We feel empathy for him,” says Davis. “That’s why the piece is so extraordinarily affecting. We identify with this man and the burden society places on him.” McVicar agrees: “More than any other opera I can think of, *Wozzeck* is about the common man, the man in the street, the man at the bottom of the food chain. It is a universal story—the story of the eternal underdog.” To McVicar “this opera screams for compassion—not simply an emotional compassion, but a civic compassion.”

The new production will move the plot forward in time by nearly a century, to the aftermath of World War I. “Berg was in the trenches during the composition of the opera,” notes McVicar. “I can’t see how the war would not have played a great part in the genesis of his music.” The captain (German tenor Gerhard Siegel) for whom *Wozzeck* functions as a servant, and the doctor (British bass Brindley Sherratt) who uses him for medical experiments, often seem like caricatures, but McVicar will present them and everyone else onstage as real people. To accomplish this, “I needed to look for a precise location, a precise time period to explain why these people behave as they do.” The director wanted to examine “the way relationships between human beings altered and shifted immediately after that war, particularly in Germany. I wanted an intensely human *Wozzeck*—the sheer, numbing poverty of these people runs like a motif through the text.”

Although written in three acts, *Wozzeck* will be performed at Lyric with no intermission in under two hours, allowing the opera’s hair-raising dramatic momentum to continue uninterrupted right to the end. There are 15 scenes and, as Davis explains, “each scene has its very individual musical character. It flows seamlessly together.” Those scenes create an opera that, as McVicar notes, is “on an epic scale, and it tells the story of the society, as well as the story of one man. The scale of Lyric Opera allows us to explore *Wozzeck* in that way: to do it as a large-scale piece, which I feel it is, and in a way that correlates to the way I feel about the music.”

Premiered in 1925, *Wozzeck* is based on an unfinished drama written 88 years earlier by Georg Büchner, the brilliant, tragically short-lived German playwright (he died at just 23). His *Woyzeck* has often been called the first truly modern

play “because it doesn’t take a moral stance,” says McVicar. *Wozzeck* kills his unfaithful lover Marie “because of the circumstances that drive him to it. The author doesn’t stand in judgment of his character.” Although McVicar considers Berg’s adaptation “fantastic,” the scene he most looks forward to directing is the composer’s own creation and doesn’t appear in the play. It’s the opera’s conclusion, with the other children telling *Wozzeck* and Marie’s uncomprehending young son that his mother is dead. McVicar confesses that “I can’t listen to it without shivers up my spine and tears in my eyes. It’s so simple, and so profoundly sad, with the message that this kid is going to follow in his father’s footsteps. I find it one of the most utterly tragic conclusions to any opera I’m aware of.”

McVicar feels that the entire opera leads up to that scene, and Davis agrees: “So often in Greek tragedy the protagonists are being warned that some terrible thing is coming—it’s that kind of feeling, it’s present from the beginning of the opera. We’re in this claustrophobic environment, and see this poor man. Even as the first act develops, and we find out the Drum Major (German tenor Stefan Vinke) has had his way with Marie, it just piles up and up.”

Ultimately, says Sir Andrew Davis, “this opera makes you weep for humanity.” What would Sir David McVicar say to anyone who hasn’t experienced *Wozzeck* before? “I would say let it wash over you, involve you, and take you on an incredible journey.”

New Lyric Opera production generously made possible by **The Monument Trust (UK)** and **Stefan Edlis and Gael Neesen**, with additional support from **Robert L. Turner**.

“Wozzeck is about the common man, the man in the street, the man at the bottom of the food chain. It is a universal story—the story of the eternal underdog.”

Listen to an audio preview of *Wozzeck* hosted by Sir Andrew Davis at lyricopera.org/Wozzeck.



Lyric audiences fell in love with Danielle de Niese when she debuted in 2007 singing her signature role, Handel's Cleopatra. She renewed the love affair three years later as Susanna in *The Marriage of Figaro*. Danielle returns to Lyric this season to create the starring role of diva Roxane Coss in *Bel Canto*, onstage December 7 through January 17.

When the soprano was offered Lyric's world premiere, "I was completely beside myself. It's such an honor to be entrusted with this role. In a sense, it's also quite a burden to bear, because the character is the most famous singer of our age!" It was especially gratifying to have the blessing of the opera's curator, Renée Fleming: "This means so much to me – I made my Met debut with her [in *The Marriage of Figaro*], and I'm still in awe of her." For Danielle "the world premiere is a huge, huge thing for me, a milestone in my career. I'll be doing everything in my power to give this role every quality it requires."

Danielle's career has been an amazing journey, beginning in her

In Rossini's *Cinderella*, Don Magnifico, the heroine's pompous and irascible stepfather, makes his entrance with a showstopping aria he sings to his two very silly "real" daughters. In it he tells of a dream that has predicted glory for himself as the grandfather of kings. When Alessandro Corbelli sings the aria, we can savor his wonderfully colorful and distinctive baritone and his instinctive feeling for style. It's a characterization for which the



native Australia, where she won vocal competitions as a child. Her family moved to Los Angeles, where at 15 her appearances hosting a kids' television program earned her a Grammy Award. She studied in New York, debuting at the Met at 19 as the youngest-ever participant in the company's young-artist program. As a 21-year-old Cleopatra, she took Amsterdam by storm in her European debut – and the rest is history! She's now a star of the Met, Vienna, Paris, and the Glyndebourne Festival. She returned to the Glyndebourne stage this summer, after taking a little time out to give birth to a son, her first child with husband Gus Christie.

Certain artists exude the joy of communicating with an audience, and being onstage seems second nature to them. That's Danielle – she's a *giver*,

adjective "definitive" is, for once, entirely justified.

We're fortunate at Lyric to have had many wonderful opportunities to enjoy Corbelli in his signature roles. One of them is Don Magnifico, which he'll be reprising this season after a triumph with it in the company's previous *Cinderella* a decade ago.

Innumerable performers cherish any opportunity to appear onstage alongside Corbelli. He's a revered figure internationally, enjoying especially close associations with the Met, the Vienna Staatsoper, Covent Garden, Glyndebourne, and the major French and Italian houses. What is it about this legendary artist that so captivates his colleagues (not to mention his audiences)?

First of all, it's a quality that is best described as "authenticity." Corbelli is acknowledged worldwide as today's

lavishing on all her roles a vibrant, distinctive lyric soprano and exceptional musical and dramatic gifts, not to mention her ravishing face and figure. Any de Niese performance truly reaches out to listeners, as if to say, "Come share this experience with me."

LYRIC STARS

BY Roger Pines

"To be able to sing these big roles in these big opera houses is like playing ball in Yankee Stadium!"

foremost representative of the greatest traditions of Italian operatic comedy. In the comic roles of Rossini and Donizetti, he uses music, words, and movement with an authority that makes his characters instantly come alive. With Corbelli, it doesn't matter if you don't speak the language he's singing; just from the way he colors a word, you can sense exactly what he's singing about.

Corbelli doesn't play only comic parts, but it's that repertoire that has been most crucial to his exalted international reputation. He's known for playing comedy without exaggeration – in other words, totally believably -- and he takes it very seriously. "Goethe once described comedy as 'a tragedy which has been avoided at the last moment,'" he commented for *musicalcriticism.com*. "And it's true: we have to treat comedies

as serious pieces, even if the end of the story is happy for some of the characters.” Ultimately, for Corbelli “Opera is our lives - it reproduces real life as we experience it, that’s why it’s interesting.”



Back at Lyric this season is Ryan Opera Center alumnus Christian Van Horn, whose impeccable technique and authoritative presence garner consistently terrific reviews. He’s grateful for his highly successful career. “Every time the curtain goes up I know that I’m lucky,”

the tall, elegant bass-baritone told *The Huffington Post*. “If it’s over tomorrow, I have zero regrets. Every performance is special to me. I hope that comes across in my performance. To be able to sing these big roles in these big opera houses is like playing ball in Yankee Stadium.”

A native of Centereach, New York, Christian spent two years honing his craft at Lyric’s artist-development program. Since then he’s established himself at the major houses of San Francisco (no fewer than 14 roles since 2010), Munich (the house that gave Christian the springboard for his international career), Geneva, Stuttgart, and Amsterdam, as well as at the Salzburg and Glyndebourne festivals.

Wherever Christian goes, he remains grateful for his tenure at the Ryan Opera Center. During his two years, he was most inspired by “being around the *best*. When I look at the casts – phenomenal! There was a confidence instilled in me that I could work at this level. Lyric gave me the

opportunities, and what happened after that was up to me.”

Basses and baritones get more than their share of “dignified older man” roles, and Christian’s singing two of them here this season: Alidoro in *Cinderella* and Friar Laurence in *Romeo and Juliet*. Alidoro gets one of Rossini’s most thrilling arias (“It’s a barn-burner,” says Christian, remembering the audience’s enthusiasm when he sang the role in San Francisco). Lyric’s *Cinderella* will also bring Christian his sixth collaboration with Sir Andrew Davis, “one of those guys who *breathes* with the singer. He has the ability to anticipate how you’re doing in the moment – it’s a live, instant thing that’s happening between you. He’s also one of those rare conductors who *smiles*. When you feel that love and support in the pit from the person you’re staring at most of the time, it makes a big difference in your performance.”

Lyric

SPOTLIGHTS

*The Lyric Family in action—
and how you can help us
Break New Ground*



David T. Ormesher Takes Center Stage

Ormesher's love of opera aligned with his passion for business when he bought a box subscription to entertain clients of closerlook, inc., the marketing company of which he is founder and CEO. In time, he traded his box seats for the main floor where his experience could be "up close and personal," which turned into a desire to know even more about opera. He jokes, "I joined the board for very selfish reasons! I wanted to learn the art form, and how a company the size and stature of Lyric consistently produces world-class productions." He also had "benefited so much personally and professionally from what happens here, I wanted to give back." He joined the Guild Board of Directors in 1997, serving as its president from 2010 to 2012, before joining the Board of Directors in 2012.

One of Ormesher's signature accomplishments during his board tenure has been the launching of the Innovation Committee: "The committee is tasked with experimenting, testing, and piloting. Then when we find something that actually works for our audience and our art form, let's use it—even if it's never been used by opera before."

The committee also allowed him to bring some of the skills he has perfected in his business to opera. "One of our key principles at closerlook is that we have

to truly understand our audience, at the individual level, before we have the ability to reach that audience," he says. "We have a unique opportunity at Lyric to think differently, to segment our audiences differently, to talk with them differently, and to provide options in packages, seating, pricing and even ancillary experiences that are going to resonate with our audience on an individual level."

Ormesher hopes to bring the same drive and forward thinking to the board presidency. "I was fortunate to be part of the strategic planning process three years ago," he notes. "I feel like we have just scratched the surface of the potential for impact that can be experienced at Lyric. I truly believe we're on our way to becoming *the* Great North American Opera Company for the 21st century. I look forward to working closely with Anthony Freud, Sir Andrew Davis, Renée Fleming, and the entire staff to transform our strategy into reality."

In Lyric's 2015/16 season, Ormesher is looking forward with great anticipation to the world premiere of *Bel Canto*. "I'm very excited about this production that we commissioned. I loved the novel, and I'm very curious to see how it will be translated onto the stage. It has such great potential. We've got a great season planned!"

On June 30, David T. Ormesher officially became Lyric's 19th board president and CEO, taking the reins of the board from Richard P. Kiphart, who had served as interim president after the death of Kenneth G. Pigott on February 13, 2015. Kiphart remains chairman of the board.

For Ormesher, opera has always been a family affair. "Opera has been part of my life for a long time. My dad loves the art form. His mom grew up in Blackpool, England, and was an usher in the local opera house. Her sister was an opera singer in Australia," he recalls. "With that pedigree, you could say it's in my DNA."



ATTENDEES DANCE ALL NIGHT LONG AT THE OPERA BALL.

Opening Night & Opera Ball

JOIN US ON SEPTEMBER 26 FOR A MAGNIFICENT EVENING OF OPERA, DINING, DANCING, AND GLAMOUR!

Experience the magic of opening night. Enjoy an enchanting red carpet entrance to the Civic Opera House with photographers on hand to capture every moment of the excitement. Marvel at the spectacle of the Daniel F. and Ada L. Rice Grand Foyer, transformed to reflect the Spanish delights of *The Marriage of Figaro*, and revel in the atmosphere of the most glamorous party on the Chicago social calendar!

Mozart's glorious masterpiece begins at 5pm. After the opera, the festivities continue at **Opera Ball**, co-chaired by **Mrs. A. Steven Crown** and **Mrs. King Harris**. This sparkling soirée celebrates Lyric's new season at the gorgeous Hilton Chicago. Opening Night opera-only ticket prices range from \$49 to \$750. Individual tickets to Opening Night and Opera Ball start at \$1,250 with sponsorship packages ranging from \$8,000-\$50,000. Individual tickets to the Opera Ball only are \$500.

For reservations and inquiries, contact the Women's Board Office at 312-827-5681 or visit lyricopera.org/openingnight.

The Opening Night Gala 2015 is sponsored by **Aon**. The Opera Ball is cosponsored by **ITW** and **Northern Trust**, and the Opera Ball Reception is sponsored by **Liz Stiffel**.

Pau Gasol & Lyric Team Up!

Where does Pau Gasol, five-time NBA All Star power forward for the Chicago Bulls, go to escape from his daily, hectic life? Lyric Opera, of course!

The basketball star's first stop after a successful season with the Bulls was Lyric—he is gracing the cover of this year's Operathon brochure. During the 2014/15 basketball season, Pau found time to see *Don Giovanni*, *Il Trovatore*, *Tosca*, and our spring musical *Carousel*.

Pau has already held time on his calendar to attend operas at Lyric this fall. He's starting off his 2015/16 season on a high note!

Operathon is a project of Lyric Opera Chapters. All proceeds benefit Lyric Unlimited. You can go to lyricopera.org right now to make a donation.

Operathon 2015 is cosponsored by **Ardmore Associates** and **Walgreens**.



Tune in to Operathon on 98.7WFMT on Saturday, October 3 from 8am to midnight. Also be sure to follow along on social media. You never know who will stop by!

BEHIND THE SCENES WITH PAU GASOL DURING HIS OPERATHON PHOTO SHOOT

BREAKING NEW GROUND

A CAMPAIGN FOR LYRIC



Help Us Reach New Heights!

STAGE LIFT ARRAY

FRONT VIEW

WE'RE ALMOST TO THE TOP!

We are so close to our \$100 million
Breaking New Ground goal!

\$100,000,000

For 60 years, Lyric Opera of Chicago has produced world-class opera with many of the world's greatest artists. With decades of dedicated support from donors and subscribers, we have flourished, gaining global recognition for Lyric's artistic excellence and fiscal responsibility.

The **Breaking New Ground** campaign allows us to continue to produce major productions of the highest caliber while also modernizing our antiquated stage equipment. In addition to our lighting and rigging capabilities, our stage lifts are in *desperate* need of an efficient upgrade. Installing a custom-designed telescopic scissor-lift system will make the stage more easily adaptable to the demands of modern productions and enable us to share more productions with fellow companies. New lifts will streamline current ad hoc and extremely time-consuming solutions implemented by Lyric's fabulous stage crew.

Things are looking up! A thriving future for Lyric Opera relies on the support of our steadfast subscribers, enthusiastic audiences, and generous donors.

Call **312-827-5723** to donate today!



Anna Bolena at Lyric
during the 2014/15 season

TODD ROSENBERG

DEVELOPMENT
department:
details:
to:sof@lyc.org

TAIT CHICAGO LYRIC
PROJECT OVERVIEW

LIZ STIFFEL has Box #1 with an amazing view of Lyric Opera.

*And she's looking
to the future.*

In recognition of her generous gifts to the **Breaking New Ground** campaign, Lyric Opera has named Box #1 in perpetuity in her honor.

Liz knows she's investing in Lyric Opera's ability to offer major productions of the highest caliber and modernize the stage of the Civic Opera House with state-of-the-art equipment. This historic campaign is also contributing towards updated media, marketing, and audience-development programs, strengthening the company's financial position, and fortifying Lyric's endowment.

As a box patron, you too could name your Box in perpetuity, be a role model for the next generation of Lyric Opera's donors, and establish your legacy in the Civic Opera House forever.

**Be a part of Breaking New Ground
and ensure Lyric's future!**

If you are interested in hearing more about the Breaking New Ground campaign, please call Leslie Mastroianni at 312-827-5723.



JACQUELYN SWANSON

Ryan Opera Center Auditions Finding New Operatic Talent

RYAN OPERA CENTER DIRECTOR DAN NOVAK WELCOMES BRADLEY SMOAK TO THE 2014/15 ENSEMBLE AFTER SIGNING HIS CONTRACT.

For more than 40 years The Patrick G. and Shirley W. Ryan Opera Center has been identifying and nurturing some of the best emerging artists of the next generation. Much like a sports team, the Ryan Opera Center works hard to attract and recruit new talent, and the process of discovery centers around its audition process.

What are we listening for? A fundamental level of vocal, linguistic, and dramatic skills. A compelling artistic point of view. And then there's the "it" factor, the spark of intuitive communication with the listener. Ultimately, the Ryan Opera Center is seeking artists who possess exceptional talent, major potential, and would benefit from time in the Ryan Opera Center program.

PRELIMINARY AUDITIONS

Each spring and summer the Ryan Opera Center hosts preliminary auditions on several dates in New York City and

Chicago. At no charge, anyone is invited to submit an application, which includes a performance video. Ryan Opera Center director Dan Novak and music director Craig Terry review the applicants and determine who will be granted a live audition. Dan, Craig, and director of vocal studies Julia Faulkner also make trips to summer programs including those in San Francisco, Santa Fe, and St. Louis, and visit music schools to hear aspiring singers. Additionally, Ryan Opera Center advisor Renée Fleming recommends singers she hears in her travels.

Recently the Ryan Opera Center has expanded its search further by considering singers from abroad. Part of that effort included a recent International Residency, in which nine singers from seven countries were brought to Chicago for a week of coachings and lessons to appraise their skills and abilities, as well as to see how they might fit in an

American artist development program.

In total nearly 400 singers are considered, and ultimately approximately 20 are advanced to the Ryan Opera Center's Final Auditions.

FINAL AUDITIONS

As the culmination of the preliminary auditions, the Ryan Opera Center hosts Final Auditions in September. It is a weekend of coachings, interviews, and the auditions themselves, which take place on the Ken Pigott Stage of the Ardis Krainik Theatre.

Lyric's general director Anthony Freud, music director Sir Andrew Davis, and director of artistic planning Andreas Melinat join the Ryan Opera Center administration in the difficult task of deciding who will be invited to join the program. Generally four to six new Ensemble members are selected and are offered one-year contracts that they are asked to sign that very evening. Current Ensemble members interested in returning for a second or third year also participate in order to secure their places in the next season.

Finding new talent is a great deal of work, but also incredibly exciting. The Ryan Opera Center is proud of the many success stories of the program's alumni, and we are very grateful for the many ways our singers and program are supported by the Lyric family. We eagerly look forward to what the future holds!

Final Auditions are supported by **The Elizabeth F. Cheney Foundation** and **The Cozad Family**.

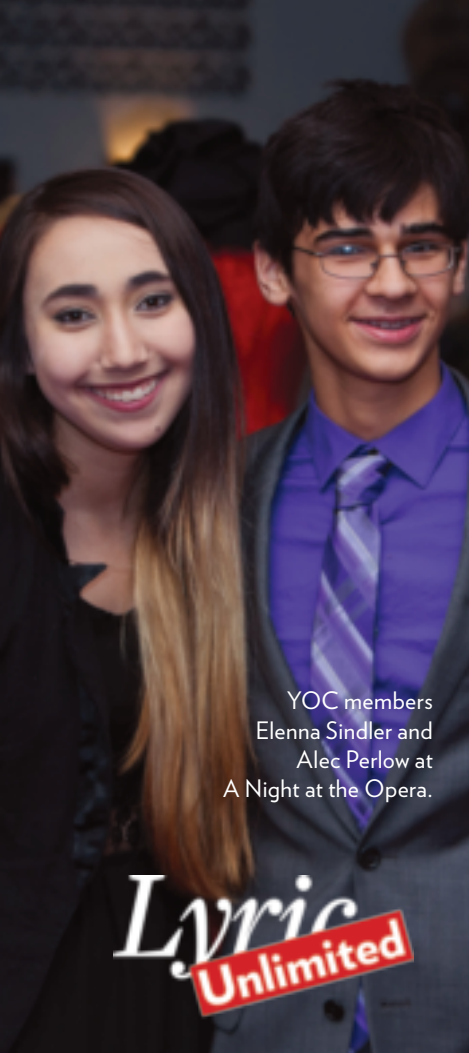


THE PATRICK G. AND SHIRLEY W. RYAN OPERA CENTER 2014/15 ENSEMBLE POSES WITH ANTHONY FREUD, CRAIG TERRY, DAN NOVAK, AND FINAL AUDITION SPONSORS JINNY COZAD AND H. SCOTT McCUE (SEATED)

JACQUELYN SWANSON

SAVE THE DATE Final Auditions on September 20

This year's Ryan Opera Center Final Auditions will take place on Sunday, September 20. See tomorrow's operatic stars today and vote for the Audience Favorite Award. All Lyric donors and subscribers are invited to attend. Want to be a part of the excitement? Subscribe or donate at lyricopera.org!



YOC members
Elenna Sindler and
Alec Perlow at
A Night at the Opera.

Lyric
Unlimited

PHOTO: JENNY GAUREAU

Youth Opera Council: Nurturing the Next Generation of Opera Fans

Lyric Unlimited's **Youth Opera Council** (YOC) is a group of Chicago and suburban high-school students with a passion for opera and the performing arts. They meet regularly at the Civic Opera House, where members deepen their knowledge of opera through up-close experiences with Lyric staff, artists, and the day-to-day workings of the company. The Council also creates and hosts events and activities for teen audiences.

Why did you join the Youth Opera Council? "I joined the YOC because I have always loved opera. Ever since I was 8 I have been going to the opera. By now it has become a major part of me! Because of this I wanted to meet other people my age who also love what I love." —Henry Lunn, 15

Youth Opera Council is supported by **Terry J. Medhurst** and **Michael Welsh and Linda Brummer**. Lyric Unlimited was launched with major catalyst funding from **The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation** and receives major support from the **Hurvis Family Foundation**.

Have you introduced any friends or classmates to opera through Youth Opera Council activities or events? "There's power in numbers. Me preaching to my friends about opera does little, but having a large event and a sizable group of peers to back me up has attracted many of my friends to the opera. And it blew their minds. Not only were they surprised at how many other teens were there, they were surprised by how much they enjoyed opera and by how emotionally visceral it is." —Stephanie Smelyansky, 18

What is the impact of the Youth Opera Council? "The work of the YOC is bringing a fresh look, insight, and energy to the rest of Lyric Opera in a youthful way. YOC also opens minds, expands horizons, and breaks stereotypes regarding what an opera is and what it means to the lives of young people." —C.J. Washington, 16

Lyric

HIGH



PRODUCTIONS

Donizetti's *Anna Bolena*

Lyric Opera coproduction generously made possible by **The Monument Trust (UK)** and the **Donna Van Eekeren Foundation**.

1. Sondra Radvanovsky/Anne Boleyn with Stewart Grimshaw of The Monument Trust (UK)
2. (L-R) Lyric Executive Committee member Donna Van Eekeren, Jamie Barton/Jane Seymour, and Dale Connelly



Puccini's *Tosca*

Lyric Opera coproduction generously made possible by the **Harris Family Foundation**, **Marlys A. Beider**, **Stefan Edlis and Gael Neeson, ITW**, and **Mr. and Mrs. Michael Polsky**.

3. Pam Szokol (L) and family representing Harris Family Foundation
4. (L-R) Marlys A. Beider with Tatiana Serjan/Tosca
5. Lyric Executive Committee member Maria Green of ITW with Dale Travis/Sacristan
6. (L-R) Brian Jagde/Mario Cavaradossi, Gael Neeson, and Lyric Board member Stefan Edlis
7. (L-R) Michael Polsky and director John Caird



NOTES



8



9

Wagner's *Tannhäuser*

Lyric Opera presentation generously made possible by an **Anonymous Donor** and the **NIB Foundation** with additional support from **Marion A. Cameron**.

8. Amber Wagner/Elisabeth with Lyric Executive Committee member Sonia Florian
9. Johan Botha/Tannhäuser with Lyric Executive Committee member Marion A. Cameron



10



11

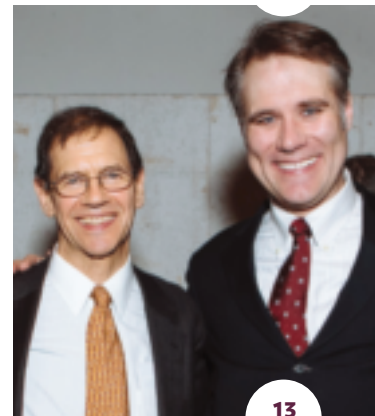
Weinberg's *The Passenger*

Lyric Opera presentation generously made possible by **Richard P. and Susan Kiphart**, **Sylvia Neil and Daniel Fischel**, the **Earl and Brenda Shapiro Foundation**, **Sidley Austin LLP**, **Manfred and Fern Steinfeld**, and **Helen and Sam Zell**, with additional support from the **Adam Mickiewicz Institute as part of the Polska Music program**.

10. Amanda Majeski/Marta with Ryan Opera Center president Susan Kiphart and Chairman of the Board Richard P. Kiphart
11. Sir Andrew Davis with Lyric Board member Sylvia Neil and Daniel Fischel
12. Lyric President and CEO David Ormesher, Jonathan Brecheen, Daveda Karanas/Liese, and Executive Committee member Brenda Shapiro
13. Lyric Board member David Carpenter with Brandon Jovanovich/Walter
14. Manfred Steinfeld, author of *The Passenger* novel Zofia Posmysz, and Fern Steinfeld
15. (L-R) Ewa Bogusz-Moore, Kelly Kaduce/Katya, Pawel Potoroczyn



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16

Rodgers and Hammerstein's *Carousel*

New Lyric Opera production generously made possible by **The Negaunee Foundation, The Davee Foundation, Robert S. and Susan E. Morrison, Mr. and Mrs. J. Christopher Reyes, Liz Stiffel, Mrs. Herbert A. Vance and Mr. and Mrs. William C. Vance, and Jim and Vicki Mills/Jon and Lois Mills.**



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16. (second-L) Lyric Board member Richard Colburn of The Negaunee Foundation and guests with Steven Pasquale/Billy Bigelow (C)
17. Trustees of The Davee Foundation with Charlotte d'Amboise/Mrs. Mullin (fifth from L) and Jenn Gambatese/Carrie Pipperidge (fourth from R)
18. Lyric Board member and Women's Board member Robert and Susan Morrison (L) and family with Abigail Simon/Louise (third from L), Laura Osnes/Julie Jordan (third from R)
19. Lyric Executive Committee member Anne N. Reyes and Lyric Board member J. Christopher Reyes
20. Ella Thomas, Denyce Graves/Nettie Fowler, and Women's Board member Liz Stiffel
21. Lyric Vice President and Executive Committee member William C. Vance with Carol Vance



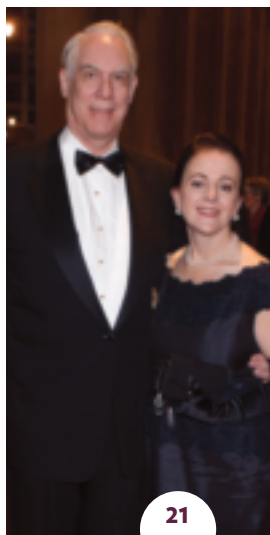
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LYRIC UNLIMITED

Lyric Unlimited was launched with major catalyst funding from **The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation** and receives major support from the **Hurvis Family Foundation**.

Memory and Reckoning and *The Property*

Memory and Reckoning and *The Property* are supported by an **Anonymous Donor**, **Goldman, Sachs & Co.**, **Mr. and Mrs. Eric L. Hirschfield**, **Seymour H. Persky**, and **Mary Stowell**, with cosponsorship by **Joyce E. Chelberg**, the **Polish Cultural Institute New York**, and the **Consulate General of the Republic of Poland in Chicago**, with additional support from the Katherine A. Abelson Educational Endowment Fund, an Anonymous Donor, Raymond and Inez Saunders, and Penelope and Robert Steiner.

22. (L-R) Translator Alek Laskowski, Zofia Posmysz (author of *The Passenger* story), and director David Pountney participate in an exploratory discussion at the Chicago Cultural Center as part of the *Memory and Reckoning* series.
23. (L-R) Jill Grove and Anne Slovin perform in the world-premiere klezmer opera *The Property* at the Logan Center for the Arts

The Magic Victrola

Major support provided by the **Nancy W. Knowles Student and Family Performances** fund. *The Magic Victrola* is supported by Lead Sponsor the **Dr. Scholl Foundation** and cosponsors **Nuveen Investments**, the **Paul M. Angell Family Foundation**, **Bulley & Andrews LLC**, **Mr. and Mrs. Sanfred Koltun**, the **Sage Foundation**, and **U.S. Bank**.

24. (L-R) Ryan Opera Center member Hlengiwe Mkhwanazi, Caroline Heffernan, Logan Neuschaefer, and Ryan Opera Center member Will Liverman in the brand-new family presentation *The Magic Victrola*





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El Pasado Nunca Se Termina

Generously made possible by **The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation**, two **Anonymous Donors**, **OPERA America**, **Exelon**, **Ken Norgan**, **United Scrap Metal, Inc.**, **Mexico Tourism Board**, **The Field Foundation of Illinois**, **Mr. and Mrs. William E. Hay**, **Dan J. Epstein Family Foundation**, **Judy Guitelman & ALAS-Wings**, and **The PrivateBank**, with additional support from Mr. and Mrs. Alejandro Silva, The McDonald's Hispanic Owner/Operators Association, Drs. Joan and Russ Zajtchuk, Maria C. Bechily and Scott Hodes, Douglas A. Doetsch and Susan Manning, and Rosy and Jose Luis Prado.

25. The cast of *El Pasado Nunca Se Termina* takes a curtain call after the world-premiere performance: Mariachi Vargas de Tecalitlán, Miguel Nuñez, Ricardo Rivera, Vanessa Alonzo, Octavio Moreno, Paul La Rosa, Sebastien E. De La Cruz, Daniel Montenegro, Abigail Santos Villalobos, Cassandra Zoe Velasco, and Luis Ledesma



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SPECIAL EVENTS

Wine Auction

Presenting Sponsor: **Northern Trust**

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Commemorative Wine Sponsor: **Abbott**

Dinner Wine Sponsor:

Mr. and Mrs. James L. Sandner

Silent Auction Reception Sponsor:

Michael and Jacqueline Ferro/Chicago Sun-Times

26. Vice Chairman Marilyn Thoma and Chairman Erica L. Sandner with honored guest David Launay of Château Gruaud Larose

27. Lyric Executive Committee member Jana Schreuder and Rick Waddell of Northern Trust

28. Women's Board member Betsy Rosenfield and Andrew Rosenfield of Guggenheim

29. Lyric Board Member Miles White of Abbott with his wife Kim



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Carousel Gala

30. Gala Chairman Nancy S. Searle with her son and daughter G.P. and Kristin



30

Lang Lang in Recital

Cosponsored by **Robert and Evelyn McCullen** and **McDonald's of Greater China**.

31. Lyric Board member Robert McCullen and his wife Evelyn with Lang Lang



31

Rising Stars in Concert

Lead Sponsor:

Donna Van Eekeren Foundation

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Cosponsored by **Susan M. Miller.**

32. The 2014/15 members of The Patrick G. and Shirley W. Ryan Opera Center ensemble take a bow after their performance at *Rising Stars in Concert*



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Board of Directors Annual Meeting

Generously sponsored by

Bartlit Beck Herman Palenchar & Scott LLP and **Strategy&**, formerly known as Booz and Company, now a part of PwC.

33. Lyric Executive Committee member Sonia Florian (C) accepts the Carol Fox Award with President and CEO David T. Ormesher (R) and General Director Anthony Freud



33

34. Lyric Board member Jane DiRenzo Pigott accepts the Carol Fox Award on behalf of her late husband, former President and CEO Kenneth G. Pigott with General Director Anthony Freud



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35. Newly-elected Lyric Opera President and CEO David T. Ormesher (L) and Lyric creative consultant Renée Fleming (R) congratulate soprano Christine Goerke following her performance at Lyric's 2015 Board of Director's Annual Meeting Dinner.



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HIGH NOTES PHOTOGRAPHERS

Robert Kusel, Dan Rest, Todd Rosenberg, Jaclyn Simpson

Lyric

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We believe in the life-changing, transformational, revelatory power of great art and opera. Lyric Opera of Chicago exists to provide a broad, deep, and relevant cultural service to the Chicago region and the nation, and to advance the development of the art form of opera by:

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- Creating a diverse, innovative, wide-ranging program of community engagement and education activities that reaches the widest possible public
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Mozart
Sep 26 – Oct 24

Cinderella
Rossini
Oct 4 – 30

Wozzeck
Berg
Nov 1 – 21

The Merry Widow
Lehár
Nov 14 – Dec 13

Bel Canto
López
Dec 7 – Jan 17

Nabucco
Verdi
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with Sir Andrew Davis
in Concert

Jan 9

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Dmitri
Hvorostovsky
in Recital
Feb 26