

The Elixir of Love

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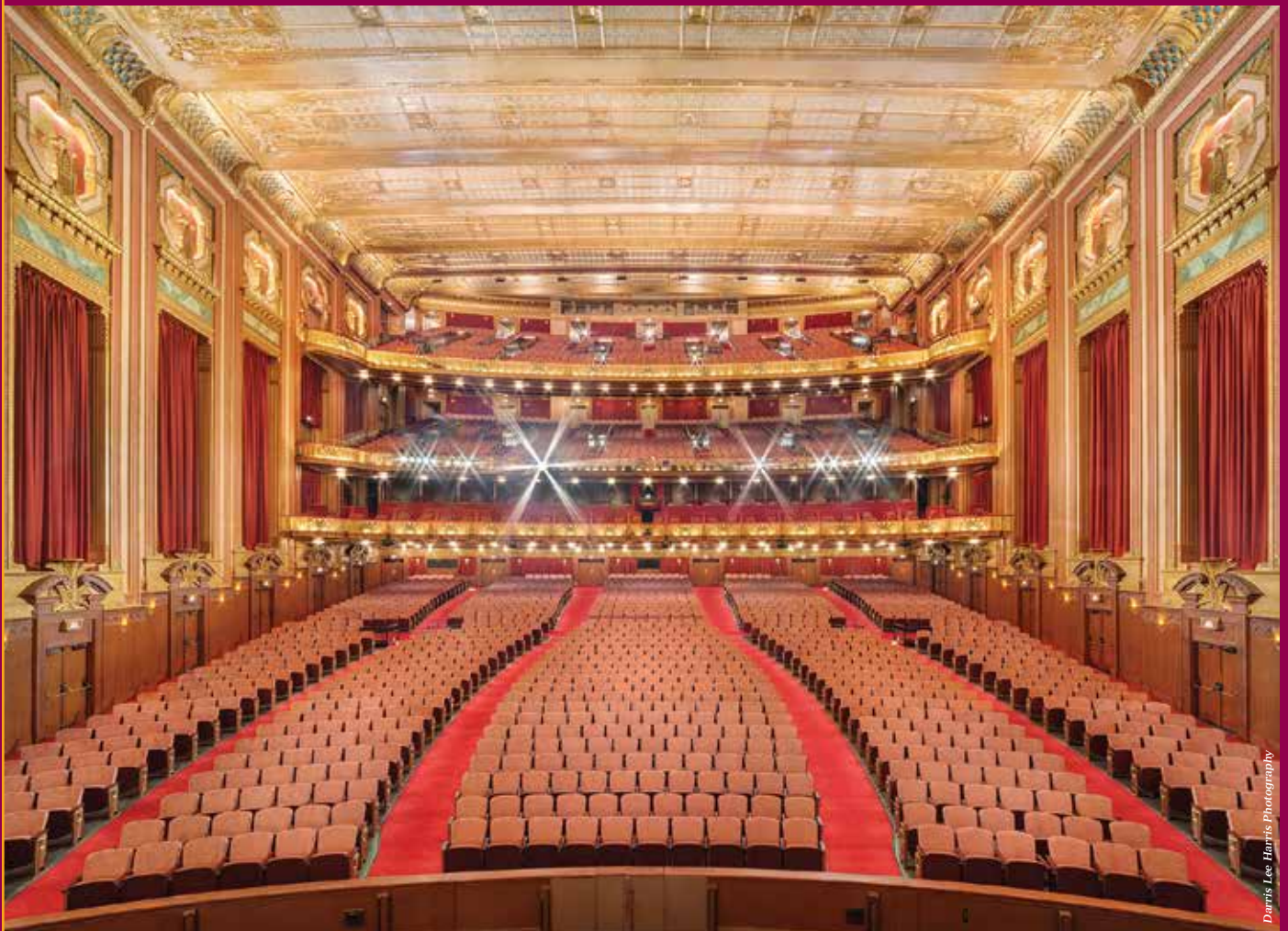
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At Lyric, you'll be amazed, replenished, and inspired with must-see, must-hear live experiences. Through the timeless power of voice, acting that brings characters to life in triumph and tragedy, the splendor of a great orchestra and chorus—coupled with theater, dance, design, and truly magical stagecraft—Lyric is devoted to immersing audiences in worlds both familiar and unexpected, creating shared experiences that resonate long after the curtain comes down.



Anthony Freud
*General Director,
President & CEO*
Enrique Mazzola
Music Director

Lyric

Welcome to your Lyric

From the Chair and the General Director

Dear Lyric Family,

We are so happy to have you with us for this extraordinary season. The long-awaited return of live performances reminds us of the unrivaled joy that live opera provides. The start of a new era of musical leadership with Music Director Enrique Mazzola brings with it a renewed sense of excitement about our work, both on stage and behind the curtain. The completed renovations of our opera house now make us more accessible and make enjoying our operas more comfortable as we welcome audiences from all over Chicago and beyond.

One of this season's thrilling firsts comes this October, as we welcome The Joffrey Ballet to its new performance home in our Lyric Opera House. The Joffrey is one of the world's premier dance companies and training institutions, and 2021 marks its 65th anniversary. We are very excited to share our home with the company members and community of The Joffrey, and look forward to the opportunity to bring opera and ballet audiences closer together through this partnership.

We hope that you've had an opportunity to explore and enjoy our digital programs created over the past year. These projects allowed us to create art, specifically for digital media, in ways that expand the possibilities of our art form. Right now, two of our most ambitious original film productions are available for free viewing. *Twilight: Gods*, our reimagining of the final chapter of Wagner's *Ring* cycle at the Millennium Park garage, is available through October. It is not to be missed! This summer, we approached Leoncavallo's *Pagliacci*, which was originally planned to open our 2020/21 Season, from an exciting new perspective: a filmed performance at the opera house featuring a stellar cast and members of the Lyric Opera Orchestra and Chorus, conducted by Enrique Mazzola. Both are available on the Lyric website.

As we return to the powerful experience of live performances, we are grateful to you for the many ways that you provide crucial support for the art form that we love. Thank you for joining us on this journey!

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Please be seated...

*This article originally appeared in mondo*dr magazine's January/February 2021 issue. Based in Britain, mondo*dr is the leading international magazine focused on technology in entertainment.*

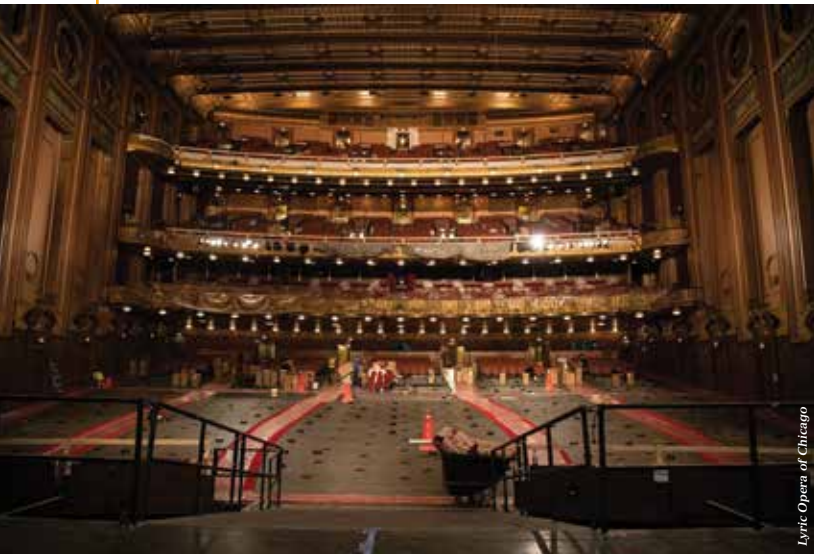
Renovations provide a more comfortable experience

Lyric is immensely grateful to the generous Anonymous Donor that funded our seating renovation project in support of Lyric's Patron Accessibility Initiative.

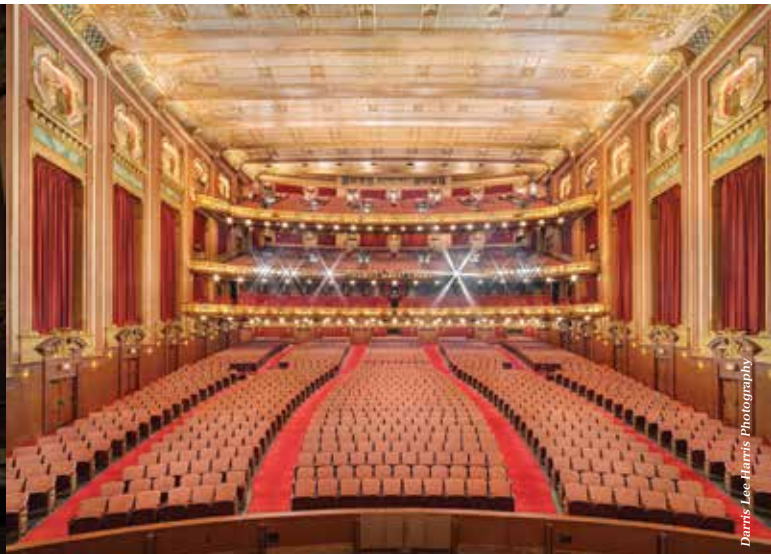
Built in 1929, the Lyric Opera House's now 3,276-seat auditorium recently completed a seating reconfiguration to increase accessibility and overall comfort, as well as improve stage sightlines. The overarching goal was to enhance audience experience while maintaining the historic building that has been a jewel within Chicago's cultural and architectural community for decades. Michael Smallwood, Lyric's vice president and technical director, explained, "We replaced the seats during our last major renovation in the 1990s, so they were in need of an upgrade. We also had been looking at the sightlines when it came to the main floor; there was no staggering, and every seat was placed directly behind another. We also needed to consider accessibility. Thanks to a very generous anonymous donor, who really cared about the project—particularly when it came to making the venue accessible for everyone—we were able to fund this renovation."

To help complete this project, Lyric enlisted the help of leading consultants. Theater design and planning firm Schuler Shook assisted in identifying new seats for the venue; Kirkegaard, a design firm that specializes in architectural acoustics, was brought in to ensure the incredible sound of the opera house remained the same; architects at Goettsch Partners created the new seating design; and Bulley & Andrews were the contractors tasked with the installation. Schuler Shook is no stranger when it comes to the Lyric Opera House; its history dates back to 1977 when Duane Schuler began as Lyric's resident lighting designer. Todd Hensley, partner at Schuler Shook, later became Schuler's assistant lighting designer. Schuler Shook also planned Lyric's comprehensive venue renovation in the mid-1990s.

Hensley explained the design process: "Lyric asked us to develop potential layouts to increase row-to-row spacing on the main floor, offset the rows to create staggered seating and better sightlines, and expand the number of accessible seating locations throughout the hall. With The Joffrey Ballet joining the Lyric in residence at the opera house, it was an even more logical time to address these improvements." Schuler Shook worked through approximately 30 layout options. "We visited the archives at the Chicago History Museum to see Lyric's seats from the 1970s, and to confirm their shape, end panels, and upholstery. This gave us good perspective on how we wanted the new seats to reflect past designs. We also



Lyric Opera of Chicago



Dennis Lee Harris Photography

reviewed seating layout options with client stakeholder groups, including Lyric’s box office, marketing, and development departments; met regularly with architects and acousticians to discuss improvements to the hall; and worked with Lyric’s accessibility consultant, LCM Architects, to review placement and disbursement of accessible seating locations on all levels of the theater. The final layout has up to 25 accessible wheelchair positions.”

Goettsch Partners, the architects responsible for the new seating design, also had an existing relationship with Lyric dating back more than 10 years. Prior projects included the restoration of the office building lobby, including historic ornamental plaster, decorative painting, and stone restoration; the two-year project of restoring the cast-iron storefront on four sides of the building; and historic lighting along the block-long grand portico. Leonard Koroski, principal and senior project architect at Goettsch Partners, shared, “It’s always an honor to work on a historic theater, but when you can seamlessly increase seating visibility, accessibility, and lighting improvements as well, that is especially exciting. Existing conditions in historic theaters can be challenging, as building documentation may be limited. Our team invested time upfront to laser-scan and investigate conditions. Once the old seating was removed, geospatial surveys re-checked the new slopes, grades, and concrete work, along with the updated seating layout.”

When it came to deciding on the seating, no stone was left unturned, as Smallwood explained: “We had in-depth conversations with four different seating companies. There are hundreds of little decisions that go into finding the perfect seat, and we made sure we found the one that was right for us. It began with ‘long-sit’ tests of many samples: sitting continuously for an hour or more without getting up. This test often distinguishes the winner! Lyric tested chairs from four manufacturers, and ultimately chose seats from Series Seating. Aesthetically, they work perfectly in the theater, and provide comfort for those coming to watch the productions. We wanted to be as ‘green’ as we possibly could throughout the project, too. Series Seating has environmentally responsible manufacturing at its facility in Bogotá, Colombia.”

A vital part in reconfiguring the seating was ensuring that there were no problems with regards to the acoustics, which is why Kirkegaard Associates was asked to be part of the process. The acousticians are another company with close links to Lyric; chief design officer and principal consultant Joseph Myers is a Lyric subscriber and has been a regular patron since 1988. Myers also played a huge role in the 1990s renovation; for this latest project, he was joined by his colleague, Polyana Frangetto. Myers shared, “The project brief was like a physician’s: ‘First, do no harm.’ Since the new chairs and spacing would unavoidably absorb sound differently than the house’s previous conditions, our job was to ensure that the difference did not cause acoustic problems.



Lyric Opera of Chicago



Dorris Lee Harris Photography

We also were concerned that the new chairs not generate noise—no squeaking as people shift their bodies, and no loud thumps when patrons stand up and the seat bottom swings out of the way!”

Myers added, “There was interest in slightly thicker padding on the back for comfort reasons, which meant each seat was likely to be slightly more absorptive. However, the re-spacing of the chairs on the main floor meant there were fewer chairs covering the same area, which somewhat reduces absorption. We needed to confirm that the increased absorption per chair would not result in an overall increase of absorption in the theater. Once a chair that met all the criteria had been selected, we arranged for it to be tested at Riverbank Laboratories. We measured the absorption of eight of the existing old chairs, then measured it with eight of the proposed new chairs, and then swapped out some of the preferred new backs with more thinly padded backs. For each of the occupied tests we used the same people, in the same positions, in the same clothing so the comparisons could be as accurate as possible.” Myers’s team also measured the overall reverberation in the empty house, and adjusted calculations to account for the new chairs and spacing.

When it came to the installation, Bulley & Andrews (B&A) were the ideal choice, as the company specializes in construction and renovation of performance spaces. Brendan Keane, project executive at B&A, revealed more details: “Our main focus was proper layout and coordination. Given what was to change, every inch mattered. This

project reduced the seat count by nearly 300, so it was not a ‘like-for-like’ replacement. We had to coordinate new electrical components that needed to be concealed, and this is a challenging task in an historic, 90-year-old building. Additionally, because of the new layout, more than 350 floor return grills had to be filled or relocated.”

Although this colossal renovation was certainly successful, it wasn’t without its challenges—not the least of which, a global pandemic. “We were originally planning to begin the renovations in June 2020, with everything to be completed before the opening night of our 2020/21 Season. However, the trajectory of the pandemic forced us to come up with alternative plans to continue the project. The main concern was keeping everyone safe and well throughout,” Smallwood explained. Keane added, “Similar to other projects, the pandemic threw a wrench in our initial schedule. The seat manufacturing was delayed several months. To protect both our workers and the Lyric crew, we implemented strictly enforced COVID-19 safety measures, including daily health screenings for every crew member and social-distancing protocols.” Away from the challenges brought about by COVID-19, there were other areas that required patience, as Myers revealed: “Perhaps the biggest challenge we came across was coordinating with the mechanical engineers to work out the best approach for returning air through the vents in the floors. Many of the old vents could no longer be used because of the new chair locations. Eventually, we worked out a combination of approaches for reusing and replacing vents.”



Schuler Shook also had to overcome issues with regards to the detailed laser scan of the building. “One of the biggest challenges was that while Lyric had invested in a detailed scan, it included the seats. Once the existing seats had been removed, Bulley & Andrews was able to update the existing information. Additionally, the renovation reused existing historic aisle panels by refurbishing and modifying them.

With the new seating in place, Lyric Opera of Chicago welcomes audiences back to the theater. This finished project will allow the historic venue to connect with

and grow more inclusive audiences, engage with the community, and ignite creativity across Chicago and beyond. Myers commented, “Lyric is one of the world’s great opera companies, and the Lyric Opera House is an architectural treasure. We have been honored to be part of this practical and thoughtful effort to make the space an even more accessible, comfortable, and welcoming place to see a performance. We all need to find ways to support the arts and help heal our communities.” Lyric Opera of Chicago will certainly continue to be a place of art, creativity, and inspiration for years to come. [7](#)

MAZZOLI/VAVREK

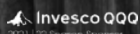
PROVING UP

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On sale September 2021

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Lyric's presentation of Mazzoli's *Proving Up* and Maestro Enrique Mazzola are generously sponsored by **Alice & John Butler**, **Sylvia Neill & Daniel Fischel**, and the **Robert & Penelope Steiner Family Foundation** as members of the Enrique Circle. The Enrique Circle is comprised of Lyric's most dedicated supporters who are committed to championing Maestro Enrique Mazzola's exciting artistic vision and legacy.

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At Lyric, your safety is our priority.

As you enjoy this performance, we appreciate your cooperation in wearing your face mask properly over your nose and mouth for the duration of your time in the opera house.



Additionally, please know that among the steps that we have taken to promote the highest standards in health and safety are:

- A mandatory vaccination policy for our administrative staff and members of all of our partner unions.
- The installation of upgraded air filters, and airflow which has been shifted to decrease recycled air and increase fresh air exchange. Ventilation systems have been thoroughly cleaned, including fogging of hard-to-reach surfaces.
- Enhanced, hospital-grade cleaning practices throughout the opera house.
- New touchless fixtures and hand-sanitizing stations.
- We kindly request that you do not bring food or drink into the theater.

For details, visit lyricopera.org/safety. Thank you for being our partner in promoting safety during these unusual times – and thank you for being a part of our Lyric family!

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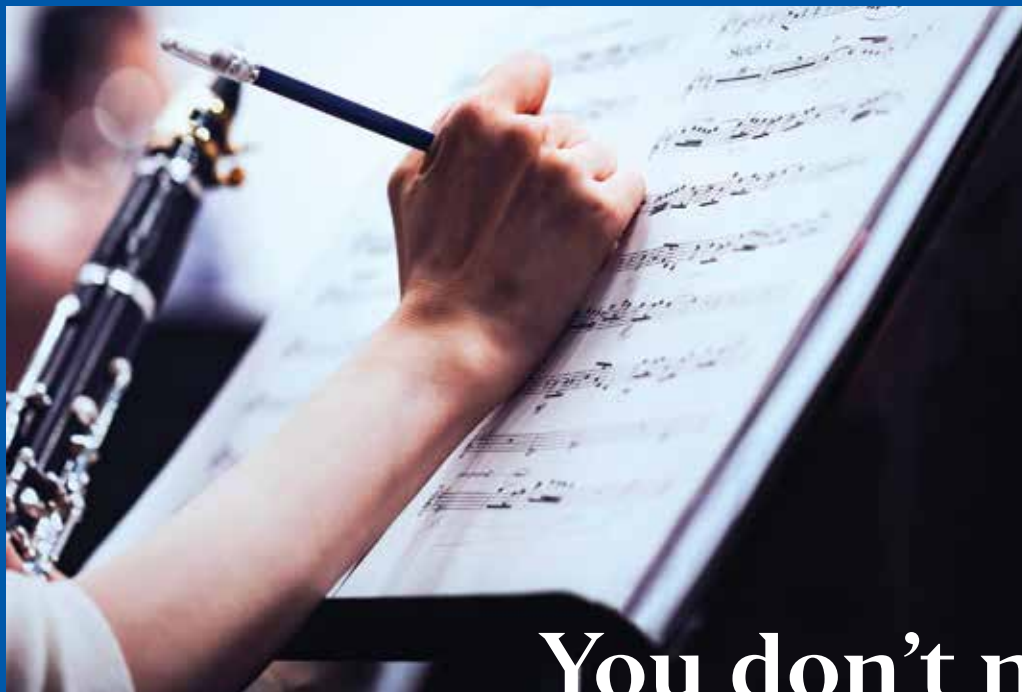
No operatic hero is more endearing than Nemorino, who pines for the flirtatious Adina. She's the owner of the town's hotel, he's her delightfully naive waiter. His only hope to win her is the "elixir" sold by the quack, Dr. Dulcamara—little does Nemorino know that it's just Bordeaux wine! From start to finish we root for Nemorino, as Adina toys with him until she finally lets him know how she really feels. The Elixir of Love is opera's most heartwarming comedy, filled with Donizetti's delectable music that brings nonstop smiles.



The Elixir of Love
(Pittsburgh Opera).

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The Elixir of Love



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The Elixir of Love (L'elisir d'amore)

New-to-Chicago Production | Opera in two acts in Italian

Music by **Gaetano Donizetti**

Libretto by Felice Romani, based on Eugène Scribe's libretto *Le philtre*

CHARACTERS IN ORDER OF VOCAL APPEARANCE

Giannetta
Nemorino
Adina
Belcore
Dulcamara

Denis Vélez⁺
Charles Castronovo
Ailyn Pérez
Joshua Hopkins
Kyle Ketelsen

Conductor
Director
Designer
Original Lighting Designer
Revival Lighting Designer
Chorus Master
Choreographer
Wigmaster and
Makeup Designer
Assistant Director
Stage Manager
Stage Band Conductor
Musical Preparation

Enrique Mazzola
Daniel Slater⁺
Robert Innes Hopkins
Simon Mills⁺
Sarah Riffle
Michael Black
Tim Claydon
Sarah Hatten

David Toulson
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Noah Lindquist
Jerad Mosbey
Susan Miller Hult
Opera North, UK

⁺ Lyric debut

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First performed at the Teatro della Cannobiana, Milan, on May 12, 1832

First performed by Lyric Opera of Chicago on November 22, 1955

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The Elixir of Love (Pittsburgh Opera)

Synopsis

TIME **1950s** | PLACE **A small Italian village**

Act one

In a small village, somewhere in Italy, a poor young man named Nemorino is hopelessly in love with the capricious and unobtainable Adina. He listens longingly as she reads aloud to her workers and guests the tale of Tristan and Isolde, whose love for one another was inflamed by the drinking of a magic potion.

A stranger arrives in the village—Captain Belcore—who immediately begins to flirt with Adina. Nemorino is miserably jealous, and appalled when Belcore precipitously asks for Adina’s hand in marriage. She does not immediately accept, but neither does she categorically refuse him. Fearful of losing Adina, Nemorino declares his love for her. Kindly, but firmly, she turns him down.

A second stranger drops in—the colorful and charismatic Doctor Dulcamara. Claiming to offer a miraculous cure for every ill, he sells his wares to the villagers. Nemorino, believing that the hand of fate is helping him, asks Dulcamara if he stocks Isolde’s love potion. Seizing the chance to make some easy money, Dulcamara instantly produces the elixir of love. It will not, he warns, take effect for 24 hours; by the time Nemorino discovers it’s nothing but cheap wine, the Doctor will have left the village.

Nemorino, who has never touched alcohol before, proceeds to drink the entire bottle. He quickly grows more cheerful and confident. Seeing Adina, he adopts an air of lofty indifference. Piqued by Nemorino’s change in attitude, she informs Belcore that she will marry him at the end of the week.

At that moment, the Captain’s officers arrive with orders to return to duty the following morning. Belcore therefore suggests they move the wedding to that very evening. Nemorino is horrified; by the time the love potion works its magic, Adina will be married. He pleads with her, but to no avail. To the joy of everyone in the village, Adina and Belcore make preparations for their nuptials.

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Sonia Florian

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Lyric Opera of Chicago thanks its Official Airline, American Airlines.

A co-production of Lyric Opera of Chicago and San Francisco Opera, originally created by Opera North, UK.

Additional costumes by Paul Chang.

Titles provided by Opera North, UK

APPROXIMATE TIMINGS

| | |
|---------------------|---------------------|
| Act 1 | 1 hour, 5 minutes |
| Intermission | 25 minutes |
| Act 2 | 1 hour |
| Total | 2 hours, 30 minutes |

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Synopsis

Continued


Act two

The pre-wedding party is in full swing. Dulcamara invites Adina to sing a duet with him. Belcore summons a lawyer to arrange the wedding contract but Adina, annoyed by Nemorino's apparent absence, decides to wait before putting pen to paper.

Nemorino, in despair at the prospect of losing the love of his life, begs Doctor Dulcamara for another dose of the love potion. The Doctor says he will be happy to oblige—in return for hard cash, of course. The penniless Nemorino is therefore easy prey for his rival Belcore, who offers him money to enlist.

What Nemorino does not know is that he has just inherited a fortune, thanks to the death of his uncle. But Giannetta, one of Adina's senior employees, has heard the news and passes it on to the women in the village. All at once, Nemorino has become the most eligible bachelor in the area. Initially bewildered, he attributes his sudden popularity with the ladies to the effects of the elixir. Dulcamara, too, starts to believe in the power of his own potion.

Adina, fearing that she is about to lose Nemorino to another woman, finally acknowledges the strength of her feelings for him and resolves to win him back. Nemorino dares to hope that his dream may be about to come true. It does: Adina, having repaid Belcore the recruitment fee, confesses to Nemorino that she loves him. When they hear of the inheritance, their happiness is complete. Belcore is obliged to leave empty-handed, but Dulcamara, attributing all this success to the power of his elixir, departs in triumph.

This synopsis is reprinted by kind permission of Opera North. 

Artist profiles



AILYN PÉREZ | ADINA

Previously at Lyric: Nedda/*Pagliacci* film (2020/21), Marguerite/*Faust* (2017/18).

The American soprano, in demand at the world's leading opera houses and cultural capitals, returned to Lyric in 2020/21 as Nedda in a special streamed performance of *Pagliacci*. She won the 2012 Richard Tucker Award, becoming the first Hispanic recipient in the award's history. Notable engagements of the 2021/22 season include the title role/*Tosca* (San Francisco), *Mimi/La bohème* (Munich), *Tatiana/Eugene Onegin* (Metropolitan Opera), and Verdi's *Requiem* in a Met Opera concert commemorating the 20th anniversary of the September 11 attacks. Career highlights include Violetta at La Scala and Covent Garden (where she returned as Manon and Liù); Thaïs, Mimi, Musetta, and Juliette (Metropolitan Opera); Adina (Munich, Berlin, Vienna, Washington); Nedda (Amsterdam); Antonia/*Les contes d'Hoffmann* (Paris); Desdemona (Houston); Mimi (Bolshoi); and Alice Ford (Glyndebourne). She has performed Verdi's *Requiem* with Montreal's Orchestre Métropolitain, Mozart's *Requiem* with Rome's Accademia Nazionale di Santa Cecilia Orchestra, and Mahler's *Symphony No. 2* with the Essen Philharmoniker. She can be heard in her debut album, *Poème d'un jour*, and in a new digital album, *Mi Corazón*.



CHARLES CASTRONOVO | NEMORINO

Previously at Lyric: Lensky/*Eugene Onegin* (2016/17), Tamino/*The Magic Flute* (2011/12).

Acclaimed internationally as one of the finest lyric tenors of his generation, Charles Castronovo has appeared at many of the world's leading opera houses, including the Opéra National de Paris; London's Royal Opera House; Teatro Real Madrid; Théâtre Royal de la Monnaie; Gran Teatre del Liceu; San Francisco Opera; and the Berlin, Bavarian, and Vienna state operas. Recent engagements include Werther in Zürich; Carlo/*I masnadieri* and Admète/*Alceste* in Munich; Alfredo/*La traviata* in London, Munich and Vienna; Rodolfo/*La bohème* in London; Gabriele Adorno/*Simon Boccanegra* (DVD) in Salzburg; and Ruggero/*La rondine* in Berlin. During the 2020/21 season, he sang Faust/*Mefistofele* at Dutch National Opera, and in the summer of 2021, made his role and house debut as Rodolfo/*Luisa Miller* at the Glyndebourne Festival Opera and returned to Salzburg as Faust/*La damnation de Faust*. Born in New York and raised in California, the tenor began his career as a resident artist at LA Opera. He was then invited to join the Met's Lindemann Young Artist Development Program, and made his house debut there in the fall of 1999 as Beppe in the opening-night performance of *Pagliacci*.



JOSHUA HOPKINS | BELCORE

Previously at Lyric: Three roles since 2014/15, most recently Guglielmo/*Così fan tutte* (2017/18), Mercutio/*Romeo and Juliet* (2015/16).

Internationally recognized as one of the finest singer-actors of his generation, the Canadian baritone recently sang Harlequin/*Ariadne auf Naxos* at the Edinburgh International Festival and will portray Orpheus in the Metropolitan Opera debut of Matthew Aucoin's *Eurydice* in November. In concert, he premiered *Songs for Murdered Sisters*, a collaboration between composer Jake Heggie and author Margaret Atwood, personally conceived by Hopkins in remembrance of his sister, Nathalie Warmerdam. The piece debuted in a film rendition directed by James Niebuhr and presented by Houston Grand Opera with Heggie at the piano. Recent career highlights include Harry Bailey/Jake Heggie and Gene Scheer's *It's a Wonderful Life* (San Francisco Opera debut), his first Malatesta/*Don Pasquale* (Pittsburgh Opera), Billy Budd (Central City Opera), and Count Almaviva/*The Marriage of Figaro* (Glyndebourne Festival Opera). His portrayal of Athanaël/*Thaïs* with the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, Sir Andrew Davis conducting, was recently released on recording.



KYLE KETELSEN | DULCAMARA

Previously at Lyric: Seven roles since 2004/05, most recently King of Scotland/*Ariodante* (2018/19), Leporello/*Don Giovanni* (2014/15).

The renowned American bass-baritone triumphed during the 2020/21 season in role debuts as Kaspar/*Der Freischütz* (Bavarian State Opera, new production by Dmitri Tcherniakov) and Adahm/Rudi Stephan's *Die ersten Menschen* (Dutch National Opera). This past spring, Ketelsen sang in Lyric's "Celebrating Sir Andrew Davis, from Mozart to Stravinsky," a special virtual concert, and in the 2021/22 season, appears in the title role/*Don Giovanni* with the Vienna State Opera and as Golaud/*Pelléas et Mélisande* at Seville's Teatro de la Maestranza. Ketelsen has scored successes during recent seasons in roles including Escamillo/*Carmen* and Golaud (both at the Metropolitan Opera, the former also at San Francisco Opera), Méphistophélès/*La damnation de Faust* (with French orchestra Les Siècles), Henry VIII/*Anna Bolena* (Toronto), and Nick Shadow/*The Rake's Progress* (Amsterdam). He has collaborated with the Los Angeles Philharmonic and Philharmonia Orchestra under Esa-Pekka Salonen and the Chicago Symphony Orchestra under Pierre Boulez and Riccardo Muti.

**DENIS VÉLEZ | GIANNETTA**

Previously at Lyric: Third Apparition/*Macbeth* (2021/22).

The soprano, a second-year Ryan Opera Center member from Puebla, Mexico, will be heard later this season as Papagena/*The Magic Flute*. She was a national winner of the Metropolitan Opera's 2020 Eric and Dominique Laffont Competition. In Mexico's most important platform for rising talent, the National Singing Contest Carlo Morelli, her performance earned her the First Prize, the French Opera award, and the Francisco Araiza Special award. Her repertoire includes the Countess and Susanna/*The Marriage of Figaro*, Bastienne/*Bastien und Bastienne*, Fiordiligi/*Così fan tutte*, Adina/*The Elixir of Love*, and Mimì/*La bohème*. Last spring she sang in the Harris Theater's *Beyond the Aria* series alongside Joyce DiDonato, and appeared in Lyric's 2020/21 virtual programs "Pasión Latina," "Sole e Amore," "Magical Music Around the World," and "Rising Stars in Concert." *Denis Vélez is sponsored by the C.G. Pinnell Family.*

**ENRIQUE MAZZOLA | CONDUCTOR**

Previously at Lyric: Four operas since 2016/17, most recently *Macbeth* (2021/22); *Luisa Miller* (2019/20).

The Italian conductor, Lyric's Music Director, is renowned as an expert interpreter and champion of bel canto opera and a specialist in French repertoire and early Verdi. He is Principal Guest Conductor at the Deutsche Oper Berlin and served as Artistic and Music Director of the Orchestre national d'Île-de-France (2012–2019). During the 2020/21 season, Mazzola appeared in Lyric's virtual programs "Sole e Amore," "The Sonata Sessions," "Attila: Highlights in Concert," and "Attila: Breaking Down the Score," and returned to London in March for much-acclaimed concerts with the London Philharmonic Orchestra. Symphonic guest work has also included the Orchestre National du Capitole de Toulouse, Philharmonia Orchestra, Vienna Symphony, London Philharmonic, and Brussels Philharmonic. Mazzola has conducted bel canto works for the Metropolitan Opera, La Scala, Paris's Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, and the major houses of Florence, Strasbourg, Berlin, Zurich, Moscow, and Tokyo, in addition to a historic Meyerbeer cycle for Deutsche Oper Berlin. Past major European festivals have included Glyndebourne (including DVD releases of *The Barber of Seville* and *Poliuto*), new productions in 2019 for Bregenz (*Rigoletto*) and Salzburg (*Orphée aux Enfers*), Pesaro (Rossini Opera Festival), Venice, and Aix-en-Provence. *Enrique Mazzola is the John D. and Alexandra C. Nichols Music Director Endowed Chair.*

**DANIEL SLATER | DIRECTOR**

Lyric debut

Among the acclaimed director's opera productions are *Belshazzar* (The Grange Festival); *Peter Grimes* (Opera Queensland); *Fidelio*, *Peter Grimes* (London Philharmonic Orchestra at London's Royal Festival Hall); *Tannhäuser* (Estonia Opera); *Nabucco* (Vlaamse Opera); *Lohengrin* (San Francisco, Houston, Geneva); *Aida*, *Eugene Onegin* (Opera Holland Park); *La traviata* (Houston Grand Opera); *Salome*, *Wozzeck* (Santa Fe); *Peter Grimes* (Geneva); *Xerxes* (Stockholm); *L'arbore di Diana* (Valencia); Prokofiev's *Betrothal in a Monastery* (Glyndebourne, Valencia); *Manon Lescaut* (Opera North, Oslo, Oviedo); *The Elixir of Love* (Opera North, Welsh National Opera, New Zealand Festival, Pittsburgh Opera); *The Cunning Little Vixen* (Bregenz, San Francisco, Geneva); and *The Barber of Seville* and *Der Vogelhändler* (Berlin). For Garsington Opera he has directed seven diverse works, among them *The Cunning Little Vixen*, *La gazza ladra*, and *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Theater work includes *The Lifespan of a Fact*, *Romeo and Juliet* (Singapore Repertory Theatre), *Making Waves* (Scarborough), *Confusions* (Salisbury), *Grab the Dog* (National Theatre Studio) and *The Mark* (Soho Theatre).

**ROBERT INNES HOPKINS | DESIGNER**

Previously at Lyric: Five productions since 2005/06, most recently *Siegfried* (2018/19), *Die Walküre* (2017/18).

The British designer's work has recently been seen at the Deutsche Oper Berlin (*Cavalleria rusticana*/*Pagliacci*), St. Petersburg's Mariinsky Theatre (*The Enchantress*), and Welsh National Opera (*Rigoletto*, the production he designed for his Lyric debut in 2005/06). Highlighting the 2018/19 season were productions of *The Lady in the Van* (Theatre Royal, Bath); *Julius Caesar* (Royal Shakespeare Company); and Prokofiev's *War and Peace* (Welsh National Opera), the latter a partnership with director Sir David Pountney. Among Hopkins's many previous collaborations with Pountney have been *Prince Igor* (Zurich Opera House), *Carmen* (Moscow's Bolshoi Theatre), and Iain Bell's *In Parenthesis* (Welsh National Opera, world premiere). Hopkins's designs have earned acclaim at many other major companies internationally, among them San Francisco Opera, Venice's Teatro La Fenice, Santa Fe Opera, Den Jyske Opera (Aarhus, Denmark), the Ruhrtriennale (Zimmermann's *Die Soldaten*, winner of the highly prestigious *Opernwelt* Award), the Royal Shakespeare Company, the Chichester Festival, and the Brooklyn Academy of Music, among other companies.



SIMON MILLS | ORIGINAL LIGHTING DESIGNER

Lyric debut

For more than two decades, the British designer has created lighting for many of the world's most distinguished opera companies, including those of Madrid, Frankfurt, Munich, Geneva, Paris, Copenhagen, San Francisco, Auckland, Oslo, Lyon, and Houston. His repertoire has extended across more than four centuries of music, from Monteverdi's *Il ritorno d'Ulisse in patria* to contemporary works such as Jonathan Dove's *L'altra Euridice*, Poul Ruders's *The Handmaid's Tale*, and Thomas Adès's *Powder Her Face*, while also including works of Rossini, Donizetti, Verdi, Wagner, Smetana, Janáček, and Britten. Mills's designs for *The Elixir of Love* have previously been seen at Opera North (Leeds), Welsh National Opera (Cardiff), Ópera de Oviedo (Spain), and Pittsburgh Opera. *Simon Mills is supported by the Mary-Louise and James S. Aagard Lighting Director Endowed Chair.*



MICHAEL BLACK | CHORUS MASTER

The Australian chorus master held this position at Opera Australia in Sydney from 2001 to 2013. Black has served in this capacity for such distinguished organizations as the Edinburgh International Festival, Opera Holland Park (London), and, in Australia, the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, the Philharmonia Choir, Motet Choir, the Cantillation chamber choir, and the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra. Other activities include preparing *The Damnation of Faust* chorus at the Grant Park Music Festival, where he has worked for two seasons. As one of Australia's most prominent vocal accompanists, Black has regularly performed for broadcasts and recordings. He has served as chorus master on four continents, and his work has been recorded and/or aired on ABC, BBC, PBS, for many HD productions in movie theaters, and on television. *Michael Black is supported by the Howard A. Stotler Chorus Master Endowed Chair.*



TIM CLAYDON | CHOREOGRAPHER

Previously at Lyric: *Parsifal* (2013/14).

The British choreographer appeared in opera at Glyndebourne (*The Queen of Spades*, *Eugene Onegin*), Covent Garden (*The Bartered Bride*), and English National Opera (*Les Troyens*, *War and Peace*) before debuting as an operatic choreographer with *The Bartered Bride* at Opera North in Leeds. Claydon's many other Opera North productions include works ranging stylistically from *La clemenza di Tito* and *I Capuleti e i Montecchi* to *La bohème*, *Rusalka*, *The Merry Widow*, and *Peter Grimes* (Olivier Award, Best Opera Production, 2007/08 season). His work has also been seen at New Zealand Opera (*The Bartered Bride*), Vlaamse Opera (*Carmen*), Houston Grand Opera (*Don Carlos*, *La traviata*), Minnesota Opera (Keiser's *The Fortunes of King Croesus*, previously produced at Opera North in the British premiere), and Malmö Opera (*Les contes d'Hoffmann*). Claydon has worked as an aerialist and choreographer for the Generating Company (an English company undertaking large-scale shows worldwide) and NoFit State Circus (a contemporary circus based in Wales).



SARAH HATTEN | WIGMASTER & MAKEUP DESIGNER

Lyric's wigmaster and makeup designer has worked in a wide repertoire at Des Moines Metro Opera and Michigan Opera Theatre, as well as Columbus Opera, Toledo Opera, the Cabrillo Music Festival, and the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music. She has also worked at the Glimmerglass Festival and the major opera companies of Los Angeles, Omaha, Cleveland, Sarasota, and Central City, as well as Wisconsin's American Players Theatre and, in Los Angeles, the Pantages Theatre and the Geffen Playhouse. *Sarah Hatten is the Marlys Beider Wigmaster and Makeup Designer Endowed Chair.* 

The Elixir of Love

Additional Members of the Company



SARAH RIFFLE | REVIVAL LIGHTING DESIGNER

Some of Sarah Riffle's most recent work includes *The Queen of Spades* (Des Moines Metro Opera), Catán's *Rappaccini's Daughter* (Chicago Opera Theater), *The Three Queens* (Lyric), and *Othello* (Babes with Blades Theatre Company). Riffle has designed and worked for such companies as the Tribeca Performing Arts Center, New York Botanical Garden, Joffrey Ballet, UrbanArias, BalletMet Columbus, Opera Orlando, and New York City and Chautauqua operas. Currently, she is in her fourth season as Lyric's assistant lighting designer.

ACTORS

Dulcamara's Assistant

Noah David Kimrey⁺

Barman

Harry Belden⁺

Belcore's Best Mate

Emerson Elias⁺

Understudies

Sammy Menapace⁺

Daniel Boughton⁺

⁺ Lyric debut

Lyric

Orchestra & Chorus

MUSIC STAFF

Elizabeth Askren
William C. Billingham
Susan Miller Hult
Noah Lindquist
Francesco Milioto
Jerad Mosbey
Matthew Piatt
Chris Reynolds
Stefano Sarzani
Eric Weimer

ORCHESTRA

Violin I

Robert Hanford, *Concertmaster*
Alexander Belavsky
Kathleen Brauer
Bing Jing Yu
Laura Miller
Liba Shacht
Heather Wittels

Violin II

Yin Shen, *Principal*
John Macfarlane, *Assistant Principal*
Diane Duraffourg-Robinson
Ann Palen
Irene Radetzky
John D. Robinson
David Volfe
Albert Wang

Viola

Carol Cook, *Principal*
Terri Van Valkinburgh,
Assistant Principal
Frank W. Babbitt
Patrick Brennan
Amy Hess
Melissa Trier Kirk

Cello

Calum Cook, *Principal*
Paul Dwyer*, *Assistant Principal*

Mark Brandfonbrener
William H. Cernota
Walter Preucil

Bass

Ian Hallas, *Principal*
Samuel Shuhan,
Assistant Principal
Andrew L. W. Anderson
Gregory Bryan Sarchet
Collins R. Trier

Flute

Marie Tachouet, *Principal*
Dionne Jackson, *Assistant Principal*
Alyce Johnson

Piccolo

Alyce Johnson

Oboe

Judith Kulb, *Principal*
Judith Zunamon Lewis,
Acting Assistant Principal

English Horn

Judith Zunamon Lewis

Clarinet

Linda A. Baker,
Acting Co-Principal,
Co-Assistant Principal
Susan Warner,
Acting Co-Principal,
Co-Assistant Principal

Bass Clarinet

Linda A. Baker

Bassoon

Preman Tilson, *Principal*
Lewis Kirk, *Assistant Principal*

Contrabassoon

Lewis Kirk

Horn

Jonathan Boen, *Principal*
Fritz Foss, *Assistant Principal/*
Utility
Robert E. Johnson, *Third Horn*
Samuel Hamzem
Neil Kimel

Trumpet

William Denton, *Principal*
Rebecca Oliverio,
Acting Assistant Principal

Trombone

Jeremy Moeller, *Principal*
Mark Fisher, *Assistant Principal*

Tuba

Andrew Smith, *Principal*

Timpani

Edward Harrison, *Principal*

Percussion

Douglas Waddell,
Acting Principal
Eric Millstein
Acting Assistant Principal

Harp

Lynn Williams*, *Principal*

Librarian

John Rosenkrans, *Principal*

Personnel Manager

Christine Janicki

Stage Band Contractor

Christine Janicki

Stage Band Musicians

David Inmon, *trumpet*
Matthew Gaunt, *tuba*
Laurann Gilley, *piano*

EXTRA MUSICIANS

Renée-Paule Gauthier, *violin*
Sheila Hanford, *violin*
Rika Seko, *violin*
Paula Kosower, *cello*
Anne Bach, *oboe*
Trevor O'Riordan, *clarinet*
Hanna Sterba, *bassoon*
Mary Fry, *bass trombone*
Jeff Handley, *timpani*
Ian Ding, *percussion*
Lauren Hayes, *harp*
Yasuko Oura, *piano*

CHORUS MASTER

Michael Black,
Chorus Master,
The Howard A. Stotler
Endowed Chair

REGULAR CHORUS

Soprano

Elisa Billey Becker*
Sharon Garvey Cohen
Cathleen Dunn
Desirée Hassler
Rachael Holzhausen*
Laureen Janeczek-Wysocki
Suzanne M. Kszastowski
Kimberly McCord
Heidi Spoor
Stephani Springer
Sherry Watkins

Mezzo

Marianna Kulikova
Colleen Lovinello
Yvette Smith
Marie Sokolova
Emma Sorenson
Maia Surace
Corinne Wallace-Crane
Pamela Williams
Michelle K. Wrighte

*On leave, 2021/2022 Season

The Lyric Opera Orchestra string sections utilize revolving seating. Players behind the front desk change seats systematically and are listed alphabetically in the roster above.

Tenor

Geoffrey Appalo
 Timothy Bradley
 Hoss Brock
 William M. Combs
 John J. Concepcion
 Kenneth Donovan
 Joseph A. Fosselman
 Cullen Gandy
 Cameo T. Humes
 Tyler Samuel Lee
 Thomas L. Potter
 Joe Shadday

Bass

David DuBois
 Robert Morrissey
 Kenneth Nichols
 Craig Springer
 Nicholas Ward
 Ronald Watkins
 Nikolas Wenzel
 Max Wier
 Jonathan Wilson

CORE SUPPLEMENTARY CHORUS**Soprano**

Carla Janzen
 Katelyn Lee
 Kelsea Webb

Mezzo

Katie Ruth Bieber

Tenor

Jared V. Esguerra

Bass

David Govertsen
 Nicolai Janitzky
 Vince Wallace

SUPPLEMENTARY CHORUS**Soprano**

Joelle Lamarre
 Rosalind Lee
 Rachel Ann Spund
 Diana Stoic
 Tara Wheeler

Mezzo

Christina G. Adams
 Christine Ebiling
 Megan Magsarili
 Emily Price

Tenor

Matthew Daniel
 Klaus Georg
 Alex Guerrero
 Jianghai Ho
 Christopher T. Martin

Bass

Evan Bravos
 Matthew Carroll
 Michael Cavalieri
 Christopher Filipowicz
 Kirk Greiner
 Stephen Hobe
 Brian Hupp
 Caleb Morgan
 Wilbur Pauley
 Douglas Peters
 William Powell III
 William Roberts III

Sir Andrew Davis Conducts Beethoven 9

Lyric

April 1, 2022

Beethoven Symphony No. 9

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This concert is dedicated to the memory of Lady Gianna Rolandi Davis,
 with our love and admiration.

Photo: Kyle Flubacker

Pure pleasure:

Lyric Music Director Enrique Mazzola on bel canto opera and *The Elixir of Love*

By John von Rhein



Maestro Enrique Mazzola at the piano for Lyric's 2020/21 digital performance project "Sole e Amore."

Kyle Ellmacker

THE TERM *BEL CANTO* ("BEAUTIFUL SINGING") IS GENERALLY UNDERSTOOD TO INDICATE THE ELEGANT ITALIAN VOCAL STYLE OF THE LATE EIGHTEENTH AND EARLY NINETEENTH CENTURIES. WOULD YOU AGREE THAT THE ART AND PRACTICE OF BEL CANTO ARE SOMETIMES MISUNDERSTOOD TODAY?

This is a simple but difficult question, and I'm not sure I can give a comprehensive answer. What is clear to me is that bel canto has been underappreciated. In many

of today's European opera houses, when you suggest, "Let's do a bel canto opera," the first thing people say is, "We don't need many rehearsals [because] it's so easy to perform." Wrong! Actually, to do a bel canto opera properly, you need more rehearsal than with a Wagner opera. That shocks many artistic and stage directors when I say it.

There would be no Wagner or Richard Strauss without Bellini, without early-Romantic Italian opera. The seeds of late nineteenth-century Romantic opera were sown in

the bel canto repertoire. If we fail to perform early nineteenth-century operas correctly, we can't do German Romantic opera well. We know from Wagner's writings that he appreciated the purity of Bellini's melodic lines.

THE STEREOTYPE OF THE BEL CANTO ORCHESTRA IS THAT IT SERVES AS LITTLE MORE THAN BLAND ACCOMPANIMENT FOR THE SINGERS.

It's not true that the orchestra is a mere accompanimental tool in bel canto opera; it has a very important harmonic and structural role. As an example of the former, you need only observe how Bellini uses the orchestra in the famous aria "Casta diva" from *Norma*. The melodic line is supported by a simple arpeggio that confirms the harmonic spectrum in which the soprano is singing. The orchestration here is so minimalistic that you could imagine it was written by Philip Glass! Shifts between tonic and dominant chords allow the singers and audience to feel comfortable with this steady harmonic pattern. A single note in the arpeggio can change the harmony or suggest to the singer that they have to be very careful at the end of the phrase.

BEL CANTO SINGERS OF THE EARLY NINETEENTH CENTURY ENJOYED MUCH MORE LATITUDE WITH RESPECT TO INTERPRETING WHAT'S IN THE SCORE THAN SINGERS TODAY. HOW MUCH INTERPRETATIVE FREEDOM SHOULD A CONDUCTOR ALLOW TODAY'S ARTISTS, WITHOUT SURRENDERING NECESSARY CONTROL FROM THE PODIUM?

I have a theory I've put into practice that has become my "signature" when conducting bel canto repertoire. On the first day of rehearsal, I explain to my singers that because the role of the opera conductor was not yet fully established during the bel canto era, the real conductor of the arias was the singer; they were responsible for providing the orchestra, and even the chorus, with stable tempi. In modern times, that responsibility has passed on to the conductor. In *The Elixir of Love*, when I conduct Nemorino's famous aria "Una furtiva lagrima," I have to offer the tenor a "safe" steadiness of tempo—a structure within which he can explore a certain elasticity of phrasing. When a journalist writes, "Mazzola is delivering a very modern view of bel canto," I just smile, because actually my style is to revert to the original way of reading bel canto!

LEGATO SINGING, WHICH IS THE ABILITY TO CONNECT SUNG WORDS INTO SEAMLESS LYRICAL LINES, IS BASIC TO THE ART OF BEL CANTO.

Legato also is a characteristic of how the Italian language is spoken, so it was no accident that opera was born in Italy and remained completely Italian for at least for two centuries. We probably could not have had bel canto if opera had been born in another language. Why? In Italian, we have a syllabic system of vowels interspersed with consonants, as in the word *amore*. *A*, *o*, and *e* tend to be linked by the two consonants *m* and *r*; the consonants create a connection between the vowels. All of this has to be used by the voice.

THE ELIXIR OF LOVE, ALONG WITH A HANDFUL OF OTHER BEL CANTO COMEDIES, SUCH AS DONIZETTI'S DON PASQUALE AND ROSSINI'S THE BARBER OF SEVILLE, HAS REMAINED IN THE REPERTOIRE WHILE OTHERS OF THAT GENRE HAVE FADED. ELIXIR IS A PERFECT MASTERPIECE FILLED WITH INSPIRED MUSIC, ENDEARING CHARACTERS, AND A HAPPY ENDING. WHAT'S NOT TO LOVE?

Donizetti's comedies actually represent an exception rather than a rule. *The Elixir of Love* and *Don Pasquale* really are the last examples of *opera buffa*, Italian comic opera. Neither is really an *opera buffa* in the sense of Rossini's masterpieces in that genre. When I conduct them, I tend to consider them serious comedies; there is no need to underline the *buffa* elements. As a matter of fact, "Una furtiva lagrima" would fit perfectly well in a serious opera. With Donizetti, we take a step from *opera buffa* to romantic comedy.



Mazzola during the filming of "Affila: Highlights in Concert" in Lyric's 2020/21 Season.

Kyle Fluhacker

ELIXIR IS RICH IN OPPORTUNITIES FOR SINGERS TO SHOWCASE THEIR BEL CANTO TECHNIQUE AND STYLE WHILE CREATING CHARACTERS WE CAN IDENTIFY WITH. WHAT ARE THE IMPORTANT THINGS A CONDUCTOR MUST PAY ATTENTION TO WHEN REHEARSING AND CONDUCTING THIS OPERA?

Finding the comic rhythm. You either do it right or wrong—there’s no compromise between the two. In some respects, the comedy dictates the tempo; what I call the “smiling tension” must always be kept high.

TODAY’S OPERA AUDIENCES—AT LEAST THOSE IN THE UNITED STATES—ONLY GET TO HEAR A FRACTION OF THE NEARLY 70 OPERAS THAT DONIZETTI WROTE.

The operatic industry in the U.S. tends to be a little bit more conservative and less exploratory than [the one] in Europe. Over there, one tends to hear more Donizetti operas, but it’s true that there are many operas that should enter the repertoire. Three Donizetti operas

I conduct a great deal are *Anna Bolena*, *Maria Stuarda*, and *Roberto Devereux*, all of which have entered the standard repertoire in recent decades. I’ve also conducted Donizetti’s *Poliuto*, which is quite short, very straightforward, and very direct. It’s a fantastic work.

WHAT IS YOUR ADVICE TO LYRIC OPERA AUDIENCE MEMBERS WHO MAY BE SEEING THE ELIXIR OF LOVE FOR THE FIRST TIME WITH THIS NEW-TO-CHICAGO PRODUCTION?

The Elixir of Love is the perfect first opera for newcomers to the Lyric Opera House. It’s a romantic comedy that will stir memories of your first love. You will spend 90 percent of the time smiling and laughing. The melodies are fresh and appealing and go directly to your heart. *Elixir* proves that, far from an intellectual exercise, opera can be pure pleasure!

John von Rhein retired from the Chicago Tribune in July 2018 after more than 40 years as its music critic. He continues to write about classical music on a freelance basis. [L](#)



Maestro Mazzola in rehearsal for *Pagliacci*, which premiered on video in August 2021. The production was filmed and performed in the Lyric Opera House.

Kyle Fluhacker

Lyric

Director's note

Daniel Slater answers questions about *The Elixir of Love*.

WHAT MAKES *THE ELIXIR OF LOVE* A GREAT OPERA?

I'm not sure many opera comedies deserve the appellation "great," but I think *The Elixir of Love* is a shining exception. Donizetti manages to tell a winning story with believable characters whom we can relate to and recognize. It's grounded in a fundamental idea that everyone in the audience immediately "gets:" the shy boy who's in love with the impossibly glamorous (and, he thinks, unobtainable) girl. Then, Donizetti develops that tale through music that fizzes with energy, charm, and beauty.

THIS PRODUCTION TAKES PLACE DURING THE ITALIAN *LA DOLCE VITA* PERIOD OF THE 1950S, AND ILLUMINATES A PERIOD OF GLAMOUR IN ADDITION TO PROVIDING AN OPPORTUNITY FOR AUDIENCE MEMBERS TO GO ON A HOLIDAY! WHY DID YOU CHOOSE THIS SETTING TO TELL THE STORY OF *THE ELIXIR OF LOVE*?

Designer Robert Innes Hopkins and I knew we wanted to pull the story out of its nineteenth-century rustic roots and find the perfect period in which to replant it. There is an innocence (at least in our minds) associated with the 1950s, which seems to provide the ideal setting for the naïveté of the story's hero (and also perhaps the chorus). On top of that, the "*Dolce Vita*" period gave us the chance to put Adina, Giannetta, and some of the chorus ladies in rather fabulous dresses! The production first opened in the middle of a Leeds winter (which is not as cold as Chicago, but horribly damp and miserable), so we thought we'd give the audience a brief summer escape. As the curtain rose on the premiere, I recall hearing an audible sigh of longing from the Yorkshire audience! Though Chicago viewers may be basking in the glow of a warm, early autumn, I still think that, like all of us, everyone will be eager to escape the horror of the last 18 months. Hopefully we can provide that!

THE CHORUS PLAYS AN ACTIVE ROLE IN THIS PRODUCTION. COULD YOU TELL US MORE ABOUT HOW YOU UTILIZE THIS WONDERFUL ENSEMBLE?

I'm very excited to be working with the Lyric Opera Chorus, of whom director and choreographer friends have told me so many wonderful things. I'm writing this a few days before rehearsals begin, so am hoping and expecting that the ensemble will relish the chance to inhabit the various characters we've created to populate the onstage village. Rather than turning them into a unit of, say, farmers, we've given them a variety of characters: tourists, hotel staff, locals, and naval officers. There are some distinct personalities within those groupings (including some

American tourists!). This will be the biggest chorus ever for this production, so I, Robert, and choreographer Tim Claydon will be meeting some of these villagers and visitors for the first time!

IT'S BEEN SAID THAT IT'S MUCH MORE DIFFICULT TO PRODUCE COMEDY THAN DRAMA. WHAT ARE YOUR THOUGHTS ON HUMOR IN OPERA, AND HOW DOES DONIZETTI'S MUSIC SUPPORT HUMOR IN THIS STORY?

So much of comedy is about finding the right rhythm, and that's somehow easier in "straight" theater because the director and actors create their own pacing—as long as you have performers with the natural ability to time a gag. In opera, of course, that rhythm is largely set by the composer, and that person may have created a musical rhythm for a particular moment that now feels a little dated or cliché. With a good collaboration between the conductor and director, however—which Enrique Mazzola and I are looking forward to creating—many of those problems can be offset and the humor nuanced. Having done many opera comedies over the last twenty years in both translation and in the original language, I'm acutely aware of a very specific issue with opera comedy: although great music can support humor, what we primarily find funny is text. When the text is in a language the audience doesn't speak, it is reliant on the supertitles. We must get that text absolutely right, and also trust that the supertitle operator will land the joke at the right moment! For this reason, it's quite common to find directors falling back on visual gags that aren't dependent on these tricky matters, but something in me resists humor that can border dangerously on slapstick. There is a risk that "opera comedy" ends up being a kind of comedy you never see elsewhere, whereas I endeavor to base the choices that performers and I make on the greatest possible source of inspiration: real life.

ALTHOUGH *THE ELIXIR OF LOVE* IS HILARIOUS AND CHARMING, THERE ARE ALSO MOMENTS OF VULNERABILITY AND SERIOUSNESS FOR THE CHARACTERS. HOW DO YOU STRIKE A BALANCE BETWEEN THE FUNNY AND MORE CONTEMPLATIVE MOMENTS?

The wonderful thing is that, to a large extent, Donizetti has already done that for us—which goes back to why it's such a great opera! The joyous wit of the second Adina/Nemorino duet is then painfully offset by his heart-wrenching plea, "Adina, credimi," that soon follows. What I hope to achieve is to take the characters and their motivations seriously, with those intentions



Daniel Slater, director of *The Elixir of Love*

sometimes resulting in moments of pure comedy, but also in moments of vulnerability and uncertainty. This is partly why Enrique and I were keen to present *The Elixir of Love* with as few cuts as possible. Cuts to nineteenth-century comic operas tend to mean cutting repeats in fast music, which disturbs Donizetti's careful balance of fast and slow, comic and contemplative. This creates an imbalance that leans toward slower music—too much contemplation, not enough fun!—with the result that the cut piece can actually feel slower than a version without edits.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE CHALLENGES THAT PRESENT THEMSELVES WHEN BRINGING THIS OPERA TO LIFE?

I feel that the major challenges are related to presenting these nineteenth-century characters to a 2021 audience. All of them veer close—perhaps dangerously close, for twenty-first-century taste—toward archetypes: the capricious beauty, the simple farmhand, the handsome-but-dumb soldier, the quack doctor, the soprano's friend. I've seen productions in which our desire to see the hero and heroine united has been undermined by an Adina who seems insensitive and careless in comparison to a sensitive and engaging Nemorino, or a Nemorino who comes across as far too foolish to make a good match for Adina's sparkling intelligence. I'm also interested in making Belcore a genuine contender for Adina's hand. He's someone suave, sophisticated, and confident—everything that Nemorino is not. It's more engaging and less predictable if she has a believable choice. In the end, she opts for Nemorino, who is loving and faithful—everything that Belcore is not. It's also rewarding,

I think, to plot a journey for Dulcamara. Instead of remaining brazenly dishonest and money-grabbing, something about Nemorino's plight touches him and leads him to help our hero win Adina's hand. Finally, Giannetta, who is so lightly drawn by Donizetti and his librettist Romani...in her one important scene in the second half of act 2, she seems to express genuine romantic interest in Nemorino; what if that has been there since the start of the opera?

IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE YOU WOULD LIKE TO SHARE WITH OUR AUDIENCES?

Part of filling out Giannetta's role is to make her a more constant presence with Adina. This augments her pain by forcing her into the presence of a man whom she loves but who loves another, and provides someone to listen to Adina's growing frustrations with Nemorino. There is something about the *a parte* ("aside") tradition in nineteenth-century Italian comic opera that I find problematic; it's rather self-conscious and knowing. By contrast, when characters are being honest about their feelings, I encourage singers to share those thoughts directly with the audience. So, Nemorino, who is never anything but honest, is the only character in the first half of the opera who—if you like—speaks to us. Adina shares her feelings via the intermediary of Giannetta; Belcore via his best mate; and Dulcamara via his cheeky-chappy, mini-me boy assistant. In the second scene of act 2, when Adina starts to be candid about her feelings for Nemorino, she abandons Giannetta and engages immediately with the audience. [L](#)

Beyond the stage, and beyond the boundaries that often define opera companies, Lyric is igniting creativity across Chicago. Through innovative learning opportunities, creative exploration, and artistic creation and collaboration, Lyric, with your support, encourages students, educators, families, audiences, and Chicagoans from neighborhoods across the city to share their voices and embrace the power and relevance of opera as a catalyst for growth and change.



Lyric

Beyond the stage

Making their mark:

Teens reflect on their time in Lyric's Youth Opera Council

Each year, Lyric selects a group of Chicagoland students representing a broad range of backgrounds to make up the Youth Opera Council (YOC). These curious and artistically inclined teens meet biweekly to discuss important topics related to Lyric, the opera world, and the arts in Chicago. "I loved being able to talk to people my own age about art and current issues within our field," shared Council member Gwendolen Adelman. "It was very interesting to hear from people in the opera community and ask them questions about what they do and how they believe we can change opera for the better."

The goal of this group is to grow interest and participation in the arts among high school students, and foster the next generation of arts leaders and patrons through behind-the-scenes exploration and youth-focused events. Council members meet and work with Lyric artists, technicians, and staff to learn the ins and outs of the opera industry. "Youth Opera Council has been an amazing learning experience for me," said Council member Amanda Baity. "I am so grateful for the opportunity to work with so many talented artists, and to meet so many incredible composers, directors, actors, and singers. This group has truly opened my eyes to what it takes to make an opera."

While Lyric's 2020/21 Season was different than most, the Youth Opera Council not only continued to meet, it grew exponentially. The program's new virtual format allowed Lyric to extend its membership range and welcome newcomers from outside the Chicagoland area. Throughout the year, the cohort gathered virtually to discuss everything from the future of the arts to what digital programming they most enjoy. For some members, like Julia Szostak, the biweekly meetings were a constant in unpredictable times. "Even with the immense difficulties this past year has brought us, the Youth Opera Council was always the highlight of my day," said Szostak. "Seeing people laugh and smile was such a welcome surprise. I loved meeting new people and talking about one of my favorite things in the world: opera."

"I loved getting into deep conversations about music with people who share the same passion that I have for it and hearing their views and what they have to say. It was so much fun to hear the stories of some of the best of the best, and to hear their views on the pandemic and how our generation is affecting the future of classical music," shared Council member Hayes Foster.

Returning Council members often shared their favorite memories of performances and in-person activities with new members,



The Youth Opera Council gathered via Zoom in January 2021.



Members of the Youth Opera Council enjoying a night at the opera.




Youth Opera Council members were joined by family and friends for a conversation with *Don Giovanni* star Ben Bliss during the group's annual event, *A Night at the Opera* (2019).

which further ignited everyone's excitement to resume in-person meetings and events. For Grace Maramba, being part of the Youth Opera Council was truly life changing. "If I had never been a part of the Council, my life would be so different. I am so grateful for the amazing opportunities to speak to professionals at Lyric and to learn about their experiences and contributions to opera. I also loved seeing the operas with my fellow members pre-COVID. Being surrounded by other people my age who enjoyed opera and the arts felt so good, and I loved hearing their thoughts and opinions in our discussions. The Youth Opera Council has changed my life and showed me the amazing music and opera communities."

If Lyric were to poll its audience, one may be surprised to learn how (and when) patrons first discovered their love of opera. While many members join the Council because they have an interest in the art

form, no previous knowledge or experience is required. The only prerequisite is that teens come in with an open mind. For Council member Aine Hynes, joining the YOC is a great way to learn about Lyric and opera in general. She admitted, "I'm not very well versed in opera, so it was cool to learn about it. It was amazing to meet all these great people, and everything was so interesting!"

"Something that I appreciated about the Youth Opera Council was that I was able to talk to different people around my age that shared a similar passion and interest in the arts," said Council member Kesley Frazier. "Everyone was able to voice their own opinions when discussing different topics, such as expanding diversity within opera, making opera more accessible to everyone, getting more people our age interested in opera, and more." These passionate teens are the future of opera, and that future is bright. 



Youth Opera Council members at the 2019 concert, "Stars of Lyric Opera at Millennium Park."

If you or someone you know is interested in joining the Youth Opera Council, contact Lyric Unlimited at [@lyricopera.org](https://www.lyricopera.org).

To keep opera a must-see, must-hear experience, the art form needs outstanding artists who can convey through singing and acting the emotional range and engaging storytelling that are opera's hallmarks. Lyric, through The Patrick G. and Shirley W. Ryan Opera Center, identifies exceptionally talented emerging artists from around the world and provides them with comprehensive training and performance opportunities. On the world's stages, the Center's impressive roster of alumni continually proves the value of training at Lyric.



Standing: Leroy Davis, Kathleen Felty, Lunga Eric Hallam, Katherine Beck, Martin Luther Clark, Katherine DeYoung, Anthony Reed, Mathilda Edge
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Baritone

Leroy Davis

Basses

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Ryan Opera Center alumni around the world

ERIC FERRING

Previously at Lyric: 7 roles since 2018/19, most recently Beppe/*Pagliacci* film (2020/2021), Chaplitsky/*The Queen of Spades* (2019/20). Also this season: Pong/*Turandot*, Tamino/*The Magic Flute*, and Arturo/*Lucia di Lammermoor*, all at the Metropolitan Opera.

My time in the Ryan Opera Center was filled with the greatest challenges and biggest triumphs of my life. From singing small roles, to understudying large roles, or—in the case of *Ariodante* in 2018/19, taking over a principal role for the entire run—I was given monumental opportunities and inspiration. I also received the gifts of lifelong friends, mentors, and memories. I am unbelievably thankful that the Ryan Opera Center took a chance on this Iowa boy and helped turn him into a man who was not only ready, but excited to enter a scary, yet exhilarating career as an operatic artist.



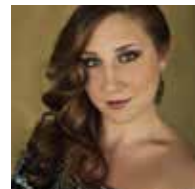
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Lawrence Brownelee

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*Wig and Makeup
Department*

People of Lyric

Bill Billingham - Assistant Conductor



WHAT IS YOUR ROLE AT LYRIC, AND HOW LONG HAVE YOU HELD THE POSITION?

I'm an assistant conductor and have been in this position since the fall of 1995. They call us assistant conductors because we assist the conductor in any matters musical, like playing piano for rehearsals, conducting

rehearsals when the conductor can't be there, listening critically from the house during stage/orchestra rehearsals, coaching singers, prompting, or conducting backstage.

WHAT LED YOU TO WORK AT LYRIC?

I started my opera career in Germany. After my wife and I had two sons there, we wanted to return to the U.S., so I wrote to many opera houses asking about job opportunities. Philip Morehead, who was head of music staff and music administrator at Lyric at that time, wrote back with the most complete and encouraging information. I knew Lyric had a great reputation, so when they offered me a position after my audition, it was a "no-brainer."

WHAT'S A TYPICAL DAY LIKE FOR YOU?

Every day is different, but I'd say most typical is a six-hour day, either 10 a.m.–1 p.m. and 2–5 p.m. or 2–5 p.m. and 6–9 p.m. One of those slots would most likely be a staging rehearsal, and the other some individual coachings with singers. So sometimes I'm working with just one person at a time, while other times involve many people in a big rehearsal. I'm most often at the piano, but always needing to keep my ears open to answer, or ask, any questions that might benefit the overall product.

WHAT'S THE MOST CHALLENGING ASPECT OF YOUR JOB?

I think these questions go together. It's most challenging to consistently perform at a high enough level to satisfy those with whom I'm working—singers and conductors. But likewise, the constant demand to perform at a high level is very stimulating. When you're surrounded by highly motivated, highly talented colleagues, it keeps you on your toes!

WHAT'S SOMETHING ABOUT YOUR JOB THAT PEOPLE MIGHT NOT KNOW?

Something that is very hard to describe is what exactly happens in the music-making between singer and conductor and orchestra. Leaving aside the complication of how an orchestra plays together, just playing piano for a rehearsal in a way that supports both conductor and singer can demand

a lot of sensitivity and discretion. People might think that the conductor sets the tempo and the singer follows along, but the reality is that when two or more people are making music together, each is contributing and listening, acting and reacting, giving and taking. This, of course, is the magic of music, and being able to be in the middle of so much great music-making on a daily basis makes for a great job!

A FAVORITE LYRIC MOMENT?

There are so many! One of my earliest, meaningful moments came during my very first production at Lyric (*Xerxes*, 1995)—when I was feeling insecure, I remember Ann Murray [the English mezzo-soprano title-role star] saying, "If you're here, you're ready!" I also have fond memories watching backstage at the old Grant Park bandshell while Renée Fleming, Elizabeth Futral, and Susan Graham joked around like school girls, or observing [composer] Bill Bolcom during rehearsals for *A Wedding* (2004) add or edit music as needed while [director] Robert Altman dealt with that all-star cast. Some fond moments would fall under the "fun" category: conducting a small offstage band for *Macbeth*, when for a Halloween performance many dressed in costume though no one could see us; or waiting backstage in my dress (literally) with Jill Grove for our cue to enter in *Wozzeck*. Other moments belong more to the "inspiring" category: watching Christian Thielemann conduct the overture to *Die Meistersinger* (2012) on my monitor while sitting at the organ waiting for my entrance, or getting to prompt *Der Rosenkavalier* and experience the beauties and complexities of that piece with an up-close view from the prompter's box.

I'll never forget trying to coach bungee-jumping Rheinmaiden supers (*Das Rheingold*, 2005 *Ring* cycle) to mouth the words, though none of them were musicians or linguists; the excitement of listening to the incredible riches of the "Chicago Voices" concert; or watching the front-row audience members sing along to some of the songs in *Jesus Christ Superstar* (2018). Another unusual memory is being a score-reader for the video director in the trailer parked outside the stage door during the taping of *Orpheus et Eurydice* (2017) for "Great Performances." Most recently, conducting the little orchestra for the Rheinmaiden scene in the Millennium Park parking garage for *Twilight: Gods* was certainly unique and memorable (it was always such a relief to come up from underground afterwards!), and getting to perform a two-piano version of *Attila* with Maestro Mazzola and Lyric's great cast was a thrill. It has been a fascinating and rewarding career!

BEYOND OPERA, WHAT ARE YOUR OTHER PASSIONS?

Loving God and loving neighbor, wife and family, chamber music and art song, genealogy and coin-collecting! 

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