

*Lyric*



BEETHOVEN

**Fido**

# In this issue



Cory Weaver / San Francisco Opera

**Fidelio** | pp. 16-35

## **6 WELCOME TO YOUR LYRIC**

- 8** A letter from the Chair
- 10** Board of Directors
- 12** A conversation with John Mangum, incoming General Director, President & CEO of Lyric Opera of Chicago.

## **16 TODAY'S PERFORMANCE**

- 19** Title page and cast
- 20** Synopsis
- 24** Director's note
- 25** Opera Notes: The challenges and enduring pleasures of Beethoven's tale of hope, love, and justice.
- 29** Artist profiles
- 34** Orchestra and Chorus

## **36 THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT**

- 38** Bravissimi
- 40** Production sponsors
- 42** Supporting our future—endowments at Lyric
- 44** Ardis Krainik Society
- 48** Corporate partnerships
- 50** Aria Society
- 54** Annual individual and foundation support
- 60** Commemorative gifts
- 61** Artistic roster
- 62** Lyric staff

## **64 RYAN OPERA CENTER**

- 66** Meet the new Ensemble of The Patrick G. and Shirley W. Ryan Opera Center, now celebrating its 50th year.

## **68 LYRIC UNLIMITED**

- 70** Karen Slack, Lyric Unlimited's Artist-in-Residence, will share opera and insights all across the city this season.
- 72** People of Lyric: Lyric's Website Content Manager keeps the company's online presence lively, fresh, and informative.



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**Elizabeth Hurley**  
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*Lyric*

# Welcome to your Lyric

# A message from the Chair

Thank you for joining us!

What a thrill it is to present Beethoven's only opera, *Fidelio*, in this new-to-Chicago production, conceived and directed by our own Chief Artistic Administration Officer, Matthew Ozawa. Lyric Opera of Chicago has not performed this work in two decades, which in itself makes for a special occasion. Its political potency seems especially appropriate for the current moment.

Just as exciting are the stars we welcome into the lead roles. In the title role is acclaimed South African soprano Elza van den Heever, who dazzled at Lyric in 2018/19 as Chrysothemis in *Elektra*. She's joined by two exciting American artists. Baritone Brian Mulligan, who last sang here as Father/*Hansel and Gretel* (2012/13), has since become a star on the international stage, and will take the role of Pizarro. And our Florestan, the persecuted prisoner, is Russell Thomas, a Lyric favorite who most recently sang here as Radamès/*Aida* (2023/24) and Ernani/*Ernani* (2022/23).

The stellar cast will be conducted by our Music Director, Maestro Enrique Mazzola, again demonstrating his mastery across a range of repertoire. And Matthew is that rare breed—a skilled and caring administrator of the arts, as well as an accomplished director of international renown. This, his *Fidelio*, drew rave reviews when it premiered at San Francisco in 2021. It is indeed an opera for our time.

And speaking of the present: Our newly appointed General Director, President and CEO of Lyric, John Mangum, joins the company full time in October. A visionary performing arts executive, John is a true operaphile (not to mention a PhD in history and musicology, focused on 18th century *opera seria*). You can learn much more about him in the conversation which appears in this program.

It is the ongoing support of you, our audience, that allows Lyric to continue to increase the company's impact as one of the world's greatest producers of art and a destination for the globe's top talent. You have our enduring gratitude.



*Sylvia Neil*

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*Lyric*

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*Lyric*

# A Conversation with John Mangum

The company's newly appointed leader speaks about his love of opera, his earliest musical influences, and his deeply optimistic view of the art form's future.



**John Mangum, incoming General Director, President & CEO for Lyric Opera of Chicago, most recently served as Executive Director and CEO at the Houston Symphony.**

Kyle Flubacker

**In late July**, Lyric Opera of Chicago announced the appointment of John Mangum as the institution's fifth General Director, President & CEO. Mangum has dedicated his professional life to classical music at some of the country's foremost performing arts organizations, including the Houston Symphony, San Francisco Symphony, New York Philharmonic, and Los Angeles Philharmonic. He holds a doctorate in history and musicology, and has collaborated with many of the leading artists and conductors of today. He begins full-time duties in October.

**You've mentioned that you caught the music bug in high school. What first captivated you?**

There was always music around—the radio in the car, records at home, things like that. But in high school, I had several friends who were pretty serious about their instruments. Some of them played in the San Francisco Youth Symphony. One close friend was a very dedicated pianist, and I studied with his teacher for a while. I remember there was a phase where a bunch of us were obsessed with Glenn Gould. We were trying to get our hands on every one of his recordings. And then there was a phase where we were obsessed with German Romantic opera, like *Freischütz* and *Fidelio* and early Wagner—*Dutchman* and *Lohengrin* and *Tannhäuser*—and those kinds of works. It all really accelerated when a friend of mine brought a San Francisco Symphony brochure to school, for their Beethoven Festival in 1990. I remember I asked my parents to take me. It was the very well-known period instrument practitioner, conductor Roger Norrington. He was replicating something that he had done successfully in London, called the Beethoven Experience. The first night was symphonies, the 8th and the 9th. Then all day the second day, it was a series of lectures, chamber music, piano performances, illustrated talks about Beethoven's personality and creativity, and approaches to performance, culminating in a performance of the *Missa Solemnis*. I just had never experienced anything like it and got instantly hooked. I still have that brochure. It is framed, hanging on the wall in my office.

**Will that make the trip to Lyric?**

Of course. It's a little treasure that I've saved since my friend handed it to me when I was 15. Then the next pivotal experience for me was the Mozart year, in 1991. San Francisco Opera has a split season, and in June and July that year I saw the David Hockney *Magic Flute*, *The Marriage of Figaro* with Renée Fleming as the Countess, and a concert performance of *Lucio Silla*.

**Quite a rarity! Your career has been largely in orchestral administration, but it sounds like opera is also a passion.**

I guess I'm voraciously curious. My first encounters with Classical music were really Beethoven symphonies and Mozart symphonies. And I had a reaction—it was like a rush. There's the thrill of that initial discovery, and hearing something new that's exciting, and you say, OK, how do I get more of that? What other Beethoven is there? Well, there's *Fidelio*. What other Mozart is there? Well, there are the DaPonte operas. And *Zauberflöte*. One satisfies as much of that curiosity as one possibly can. I think that's something that remains with me. I'm still trying to capture that feeling of elated discovery, of coming across something new that is musically really exciting.

**Anything in the world of contemporary opera that you have found particularly engaging?**

Oh, yes. I saw the Met Live in HD of Terence Blanchard's *Fire Shut Up in My Bones*, and I thought that was an incredibly successful undertaking—there was a real vitality to the storytelling and the musical construction. Then there are composers who are working in what I would call opera-adjacent spaces. Julia Wolfe is a really good example of that, especially her oratorio, *Fire in my mouth*, about the Triangle Shirtwaist fire in New York. At the end of last season I heard another work of hers, *unEarth*, with the New York Philharmonic. She is working in this storytelling space. When I was on the West Coast, I experienced the work of a company called The Industry—the mastermind there is Yuval Sharon, well-known to Lyric audiences. His projects there were precursors to innovative works at Lyric—*Twilight: Gods* and *Proximity*. They did a piece that was set in the train station in downtown Los Angeles called *Invisible Cities* that was incredibly powerful. There was a project called *Hopscotch*, where the opera scenes took place in cars moving around greater Los Angeles. They built a central viewing or experiencing area downtown called The Hub, where you saw what was going on in the cars and you

could interface with or experience the different scenes. But then there was also a choice to actually start in a car and see the scene in the car, and then they would drop you off, and another car would pick you up.

**It sounds quite innovative.**

People might step back from something like that and say, *Well, is it really opera?* But it really does check those fundamental boxes of music and storytelling. I think projects that push the boundaries a little bit and subject the experience to rigorous examination and questioning can be quite interesting. Again, think about the success of *Twilight: Gods* at Lyric. Those kinds of experiments, while they're not necessarily possible in the physical structure of the Lyric Opera House, can inform the work that's done on the stage, whether it's a production of core repertoire or a commission of new work. We learn from those kinds of things and discover new ways to connect with audiences.

**In your time at Houston, there was a great deal of programming outside the concert hall. How do you see the role of a big organization like Lyric in a big city like Chicago?**

It's really important to always be thinking about how the work you're doing is relevant to your community. Ultimately, that's who you serve, and that community has many different ways to potentially interface with the work that you're doing. A primary interface is attending performances in the Opera House. But there are lots of other ways. Lyric's Millennium Park concert is an excellent example. And all the work that Lyric Unlimited, the company's Learning and Civic Engagement division, does in the community. Then also thinking about how you are being accessible—how are you demystifying, if you will, the experience so that people feel welcome? One of the things that happened in San Francisco—not when I was growing up, but later when I was working there—was around the time of the opening of the season, the first production from San Francisco Opera would be simulcast into the San Francisco Giants' baseball stadium. That was led by Drew Landmesser, who worked at Lyric for a long time. For a segment of the city, that was the opera for them. They'd never set foot inside the War Memorial Opera House, but they went to AT&T Park and got hot dogs and nachos and ice cream and sat and watched the opera, which is really a beautiful thing.

**So should we expect to see Lyric at Wrigley Field?**

I make no promises! My first many months will be spent learning—learning about Chicago, learning about the community, learning about our audience, learning about how we best serve our city. I just cite that as an example of a really unexpected, outside the box, but very successful way to serve and connect with a community that might never think about setting foot inside an opera house.

**All classical organizations, orchestras and operas, are facing challenges and seeking to grow audience. What do you see as commonalities and differences?**

First and foremost, in both cases, artistic excellence has to be the goal. Making sure that what you're putting on stage is absolutely in the front rank of what's happening nationally and internationally. That's definitely a commonality. I think also the nature of the business and the sources of revenue are similar. The need to sell tickets, combined with the need to raise significant philanthropic dollars to support the work and to support the service that the organizations provide to their community. A very important difference, pretty obvious, is that with opera, you're working with singers. There's something deeply personal when your instrument is physically located inside your body. It is a much more intimate thing. I think there is a real onus on the leader, and on everybody at an opera company, to create the conditions where it's possible for singers to make their art at the absolute top level. There's a component of creating an atmosphere where people can really feel at their best so that they can perform.

**I'm sure you can't exactly play favorites—but do you have any favorite composers?**

I can tell you, quite honestly, I am a fan of great music. I get excited about anything that's good, that's engaging, that's well-crafted. I love Mozart, Verdi, Wagner. Very big soft spot for *Les Troyens* by Berlioz, with great singers. Donizetti, Bellini, Rossini. And I am fond of some esoteric things. I love Russian opera—Rimsky-Korsakov, Tchaikovsky. I was really excited when they did *Iolanta* at the Met back in 2015. I'm pretty ecumenical in my tastes.



John Mangum and Renée Fleming at the Houston Symphony's 2021 Opening Night

Priscilla Dickson / Houston Symphony

**And your scholarly work had an earlier focus.**

I love Handel operas. My specific area of academic interest was 18th-century *opera seria*. I wrote about a very narrow topic, which was *opera seria* in Berlin from 1740 to 1806, and the way that it was used to reflect and idealize political and social messages—and also then how that shifted over time as you move from a model of absolutist, enlightened monarchy to Napoleon. Handel is an example of that, *par excellence*.

**You're especially expert in this period, clearly.**

In my scholarly work, the paramount composer was Carl Heinrich Graun. He was the court composer to Frederick the Great in Berlin, and his operas were predominant there from 1740 to the mid 1780s. The other one was Johann Adolf Hasse—actually the court composer in Dresden, though his operas were also done in Berlin. His wife was one of the most famous sopranos of the day, Faustina Bordoni. She was one of the “rival queens” in Handel’s opera company in London in the 1720s. When you hear some of those Handel operas, she was who he was writing for.

**So can we expect a Graun festival at Lyric?**

That would be about me, and the work that we need to do needs to be about Chicago and about our audience and our community. I will continue to enjoy my handful of Graun recordings.

**For the curious among us, where should we start?**

*Montezuma*—that was the second to last opera he composed. Frederick the Great wrote the libretto for it. Musically, it was really interesting because Frederick thought that *da capo* arias, with all the repetition and the decoration, interrupted and impeded the dramatic flow. He insisted that Graun write a lot of cavatinas, short AB pieces or even just A pieces that get cut off, to keep things moving. Mozart had no awareness of these works, but in a way, they point toward the more economic and dramatic flow of a Mozart opera.

**So no Graun festival?**

No Graun festival. Richard Bonyngue conducted a disc of *Montezuma* highlights, with Joan Sutherland at her

absolute peak. To get the full experience, done in a historically informed way, there’s a recording of his *Cleopatra e Cesare* led by the wonderful René Jacobs.

**On a more serious note, what do you see on the horizon for Lyric and for opera?**

I’m incredibly optimistic about our art form. Why so? Well, it’s been at the aspirational peak of artistic and human expression in Western culture for more than 400 years. Incredibly creative people have turned to this art form to say fundamental things about the human condition and our shared experience. That tells me we’ve got nothing to worry about because we still have this fundamental need to tell these stories that we all share. Opera is an incredible vehicle for that—to express these fundamental truths and tell these shared stories.

**The challenges are real, though.**

There are challenges. The work gets more expensive, and audiences change their patterns of consuming what we do. It’s our job to stay on top of all that. Our job as one of the world’s leading opera companies is to make sure that we do everything to continue to bring this art form to people. If you look back at the history of the opera, and you read about particular composers or particular premieres, it seems like there’s always been a drum beat of, *Oh, we don’t have enough resources*. It’s a through-line. But somehow the art form always perseveres and thrives.

“First and foremost, artistic excellence has to be the goal.”

**We seem to have a need for it.**

In a moment where technology is increasingly and exponentially more intrusive, and it becomes harder and harder to find quiet spaces where we can have communal experiences, that’s something that opera provides. It brings us together. We’re all sharing the same moments. We’re bringing our own frame of reference to it, but in a sense, we’re together, we’re communing. I think that’s really at the root of opera’s power. That’s something that humans will fundamentally need into the future. As long as we keep our eye on the ball and continue to provide that, and continue to tell stories that resonate—whether those are stories that come from the timeless repertoire or new stories—opera’s future is bright. [L](#)

*Seeing and hearing Ludwig van Beethoven's only opera, Fidelio, onstage is a supremely moving experience. Listening to the "Prisoners' Chorus," you'll wonder if any other composer has so vividly communicated human beings' longing for freedom and sunlight. No operatic heroine is more courageous than Beethoven's Leonore, who disguises herself as a young man in order to work in the prison, hoping to rescue her husband. Music Director Enrique Mazzola conducts this timeless political thriller in Matthew Ozawa's production, and charismatic South African soprano Elza van den Heever is joined by two exciting American artists and Lyric favorites—tenor Russell Thomas and baritone Brian Mulligan.*



Corey Weaver / San Francisco Opera

Russell Thomas, imprisoned  
as Florestan



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# Fidelio

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# Fidelio

**New-to-Chicago production**

Music by **Ludwig van Beethoven** | Opera in two acts in German

Libretto by **Georg Friedrich Treitschke**

September 26, 29m and October 2m, 5, 10, 2024

## CHARACTERS IN ORDER OF VOCAL APPEARANCE

Jaquino  
Marzelline  
Rocco  
Leonore  
Don Pizarro  
1st Prisoner  
2nd Prisoner  
Florestan  
Don Fernando

**Daniel Espinal<sup>+</sup>**  
**Sydney Mancasola<sup>+</sup>**  
**Dimitry Ivashchenko**  
**Elza van den Heever**  
**Brian Mulligan**  
**Travon D. Walker<sup>•</sup>**  
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First performed at Theater an der Wien, Vienna, on November 20, 1805.  
First performed by Lyric Opera of Chicago on November 13, 1961.

<sup>+</sup> Lyric debut

<sup>•</sup> Current Member, The Patrick G. and Shirley W. Ryan Opera Center

# Synopsis

TIME | **Distant Past or Near Future**

PLACE | **Undisclosed Prison Facility**

## Background

Florestan, a fighter for freedom, has been unjustly imprisoned and silenced by his enemy, Pizarro, the governor of a state prison used to detain political prisoners. There he is slowly being tortured and starved to death. Florestan's wife, Leonore, believing her husband to still be alive, makes it her mission to find and free him. Disguised as a young man, Fidelio, she is employed by the chief jailer, Rocco, as his assistant.

## ACT I

**Scene 1.** The young prison employee Jaquino courts Marzelline in vain, for she has fallen in love with Fidelio. Her father, Rocco, also wants a union between his daughter and Fidelio and hopes for the governor's permission to use the latter as a helper with the secret prisoners. Marzelline fears that Fidelio won't be able to bear all the misery that such work entails, but Leonore knows she must have courage and strength to carry out her secret plan—the rescue of her husband.

**Scene 2.** Pizarro receives news from a friend that the minister, Don Fernando, intends a surprise inspection of the prison. Fearing that Florestan will be found, he resolves to have him killed. A soldier is posted on the guard tower to give a signal as soon as the minister is sighted. Rocco, while not willing to be a murderer, agrees to hold his tongue for money and later hide Florestan's body in a ruined cistern. Leonore, who has overheard the plan to murder a prisoner, resolves to save him, whoever he may be. At her request, Rocco allows some of the prisoners to go into the courtyard. Leonore is distressed that Florestan is not among them. Pizarro, furious at Rocco's independent actions, has the prisoners locked up again.

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APPROXIMATE TIMINGS

This production will be performed  
with one intermission.

Act I	1 hour 10 minutes
Intermission	25 minutes
Act II	50 minutes
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>2 hours 25 minutes</b>


*Lyric*

# Synopsis

continued

## ACT II

**Scene 1.** In a secret isolated cell, Florestan, weakened from torture, hunger, and thirst, has a vision: his wife appears to him as an angel of freedom. Rocco and Leonore come down into the deepest vault of the prison to open the cistern, which is to be used as a grave. Leonore recognizes the unknown prisoner as her husband. Against Pizarro's orders she hands him bread and wine, but dares do no more. When Pizarro appears and tries to stab the defenseless Florestan, she rushes to shield him. Pizarro, in a burst of rage, attempts to kill them both. Leonore draws a pistol and levels it at him. Suddenly a trumpet call is heard announcing the minister's arrival. Leonore and Florestan are saved and reunited.

**Scene 2.** Florestan's fellow prisoners have been freed by the minister, and Leonore removes Florestan's chains. Pizarro is arrested and led away, as the crowd hails Leonore for her courageous actions. 



Corey Weaver / San Francisco Opera

*Lyric*

# Director's note

by Matthew Ozawa



***Fidelio* has consistently served** as a symbol of hope for generations of people afflicted by oppression: a revival in 1814 served as a protest against Napoleon's autocratic tyranny; an Arturo Toscanini-led performance in 1937, as well as a Bruno Walter-conducted Metropolitan Opera performance in 1941, affirmed the dignity of humanity and the countless victims escaping Europe's Nazi terror; performances of *Fidelio* in 1954 following the death of Stalin became a statement of outrage for those who were unjustly condemned to the regime's prisons. Each performance reaffirmed and celebrated the power of humanity to defeat tyranny and overcome oppression. The questions we now ask ourselves are: Who is afflicted by oppression globally? What does shining a light on injustice look like? How is true freedom achieved?

Beethoven's only opera is demanding, revolutionary, and shockingly relevant. It is a story of hope, self-sacrifice, love, and liberation. At the heart of *Fidelio* is the heroism of a woman, Leonore, a vision for the modern age, whose personal sacrifice to free her husband from wrongful incarceration results in the liberation of all those imprisoned in a state facility. Far from the customary roles for women in opera, Leonore's courage and bravery are empowering. Driven by a noble and just cause, as well as immense love for her husband, Leonore fights from within the "system" and thus becomes a medium for the liberating light that frees all those from darkness. Her heroic exposure of injustice reminds us that we, too, have the power to be agents of change. Each person deserves the opportunity for their voice to be heard, and each small action carries the potential to create immense ripples in the wave of revolutionary freedom.

The frame that holds Leonore's journey is that of a prison, and the narrative sharply spotlights the many perspectives and tiers of power embedded within such a facility. On one end of the spectrum are workers in the facility, where those controlling and propping up the "system" are disconnected from the oppression they are upholding. On the other end are those completely without power: the prisoners, and at the very bottom is Florestan, Leonore's husband, who is silenced for speaking truth to power. In order to navigate such a divide, Leonore must

transform herself into *Fidelio* to keep from being othered or outed in her pursuit to find and free her husband.

Beethoven's intention to choose such a location and story perfectly reflects his revolutionary and humanistic leanings. Living during the Enlightenment era, he was impacted by Europe's renewed optimism that democratic progress would consolidate egalitarian ideals, ideals proclaiming that people deserve equal rights and opportunities. Enlightenment ethos elevated principles of freedom and civility, with the hope of creating a utopia that would decrease the disparity between the wealthy and impoverished. These ideals ignited the French Revolution in 1789. However, as in many cycles where power is threatened, they were quickly crushed by the Reign of Terror, as well as the economic and social injustices nurtured by the Industrial Revolution. Emerging from this feverish time in history were many dramas that highlighted patriotic and political themes, such as unjust imprisonment, escape, and heroic rescue. One such drama was *Léonore, ou L'Amore conjugal*, which became the basis for *Fidelio*.

Early on it became clear that our production wanted to mirror the dualities inherent in the narrative and music. How could we visually manifest Beethoven's surging expression and juxtaposition of sonorities? How could we create a structure that would depict the facility, the system, and the tiers of people who inhabit it? We were cognizant that the opera's original setting of the late 18th century was close to the time period in which it was written and premiered. It would have felt very contemporary and relevant to those that saw it. Therefore, we set our production in a recent past or near future detention facility, somewhere in the world. This setting allows us to investigate contemporary structures that remove those that are deemed an "other" and a threat and to give voice to those who have been powerless to speak. In doing so, not only do we aim to honor the rich history and spirit of the work but also recognize the countless people who have overcome oppression, fought for liberty, and have been agents of change. Might we all learn from Leonore's journey and celebrate the power of love and collective action. 🎭



# Beethoven's *Fidelio*: Reaching Toward the Light

by Martha C. Nussbaum



Corey Weaver / San Francisco Opera

In Lyric's production of *Fidelio*, the drama unfolds in a modern detention facility.

***Fidelio*, Beethoven's only opera**, is an opera like no other. A drama of ideas that makes deeply moving theater out of abstractions, it never ceases to move audiences—especially, perhaps, in times of political tumult—with its vision of freedom secured through struggle, love, and hope. Originally titled *Leonore: or The Triumph of Conjugal Love*, it is ultimately based on a French libretto by Jean-Nicolas Bouilly, which had been set as an opera by two other composers before Beethoven; it was prepared for his purposes by Joseph Sonnleithner. Its original premiere was in 1805, but revisions were made by Beethoven's friend Stephan von

Breuning in 1806, shortening the opera from three to two acts. After further revisions to the libretto by Georg Friedrich Treitschke, along with many revisions to the musical score, the opera opened again in 1814. Although the earlier versions exist and have their defenders, it is almost always the 1814 version (by convention the only one called *Fidelio*) that we hear today.

Beethoven wrote four overtures for the opera. The one standardly played today is the brief overture known as the *Fidelio Overture*. The larger symphonic works known today as *Leonore no. 2* and *Leonore no. 3* are usually thought too lengthy for overture performance.

However Gustav Mahler, who greatly admired *Leonore no. 3*, conducted it between the end of the prison scene and the finale, and other conductors have sometimes followed this idea. Today the inclusion of the lengthy overture (about sixteen minutes) is generally considered too great a distraction from the drama's onward movement; Lyric will not perform it.

Beethoven found the whole business of opera difficult, particularly in light of his advancing deafness, which made teamwork a chore. Thus, though he never stopped looking for suitable opera libretti, he never completed another opera. The magnificent one he did complete must suffice. Let us turn, then, to its mysteries and complexities.

**Fidelio poses three puzzles** for its interpreters. The first, and the most hotly debated, is the relationship between its two acts, and whether the discontinuity we experience is a flaw or part of Beethoven's intention. The opera, it seems, begins as a romantic/domestic comedy and ends as a heroic drama of ideas. There is no doubt that the relationship between the acts gave Beethoven difficulty and was a major source of his revisions of 1814, which cut a lot of dialogue and slimmed down the psychology of the romantic comedy. Occasionally this has been offered as a reason to perform the 1805 or 1806 versions rather than the one we usually hear. The 1805 version is a worthy work in its own right and worth occasional performance. Usually, however, and I think rightly, the 1814 version is preferred on grounds of its moving depiction of the struggle for freedom. This is the core of Beethoven, and he was never comfortable with the genre of domestic comedy, particularly when it involved erotic relationships. (He said that Mozart's *Marriage of Figaro* was an ignoble work.)

The opera, however, is consistent in its discontinuities. What we ought to say, indeed, is that *Fidelio* is all about discontinuity—how mundane life can offer moments of breakthrough, in which ordinary people ascend to the sublime. Some of these moments are indeed in Act II: Leonore's realization that she wants to help the prisoner, no matter who he is; the sacramental moment in which Rocco and Leonore offer the prisoner bread and wine; the famous trumpet call; the ecstatic duet; and the entirety of the finale, in which the entire people join in praising justice triumphant. But Act I already shows daily life as, so to speak, porous, offering moments of egress from the mundane world to some type of deeper or higher spirituality. One of these is the four-part canon that begins with Marzelline's words, "Mir ist so wunderbar" ("I am struck with wonder"), in which the characters step aside from their daily activities into hushed reflections. We feel that something of a different nature is happening here: people are becoming thoughtful, even spiritual. Noting the parallel with the sacramental moment of Act II,

some interpreters hold, plausibly, that the canon is also sacramental—its topic being marriage, a sacrament to which Beethoven attached great value. The opera, after all, is about the triumph of marital love. In its moments of profound moral and spiritual commitment, daily life is penetrated by something more than daily.

Furthermore, the moral core of the entire work is in Act I: the Prisoners' Chorus, which has no role in the plot and therefore must be there in order to express an idea of human freedom. We don't know who these prisoners are—whether they are all political prisoners like Florestan or whether many of them are common criminals. We do know that they are treated badly, ill nourished, not allowed fresh air and outdoor movement. As they feel the unaccustomed air on their faces and turn toward the sun, they sing, "Oh what joy! In the free air to breathe with ease! Only here, only here is life!" On the word "air" they move to their highest note, and the harmony shifts to what critic Paul Robinson rightly calls "an exalted subdominant—a move that becomes practically a harmonic code for the idea of freedom in the opera." Beethoven impresses this phrase on each listener's mind. (And we can't help thinking about the connection between breath and singing: the conditions of opera itself involve a freedom that is all too often denied.) Next a single prisoner steps forward: "With trust we will build on God's help. Hope whispers gently to me: we shall be free, we shall find rest." Again the melodic line arcs upward, illustrating the idea of aspiration; and the word "free" occupies the highest note. All too soon, this brief window onto something wonderful begins to close: "Speak softly, restrain yourselves. We are observed by ears and eyes." The beauty of freedom is shown as much by the pathos of its denial as by the beauty of its momentary sighting. The discontinuity between freedom and the prison, between ordinary life and its hopeful transcendence, between going along as usual and moments of vertiginous ascent, is the real theme of *Fidelio*: doors opening and closing, surprising bursts of light.

*Fidelio's* second puzzle has been its politics: What idea of justice, or the just society, does its text and music embody? It is all so terribly abstract. Much has been written to little purpose about whether Beethoven liked or disliked the French Revolution. This is a pretty useless question, since one might easily love the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen while detesting the Terror, and there were many stopping points along the way from the former to the latter—one of those being the point chosen by the leaders of the American Revolution, which of course was also part of Beethoven's mental context. What Beethoven puts into his opera is what he wanted us to know: that the arbitrary, lawless tyranny of some human beings over others is always wrong; that those who blow the whistle on crimes, as did Florestan, must be protected from the vengeance of those on whom they inform; that a prison system

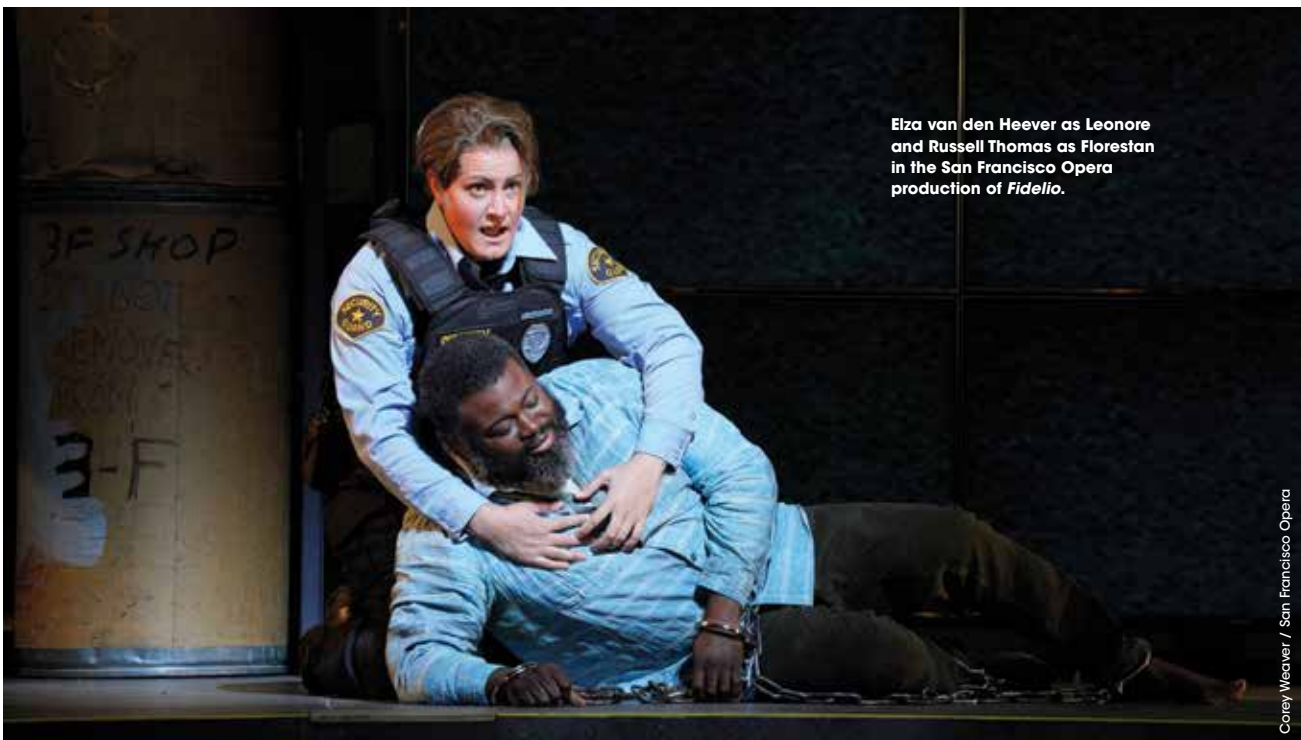
that deprives its inmates of fresh air and movement is horrible; and that the deliberate starvation of a prisoner is even more horrible. More generally, that human beings should be protected in their freedom to breathe and use their voices (Enlightenment freedoms of expression, association, and of the press are essential supports for that idea). In making Leonore the linchpin of the plot, the opera also insists strongly on the agency of ordinary people in bringing about political change. It thus has a democratic element.

Beyond this, the work is compatible—and is intended to be compatible—with many accounts of political authority, from constitutional monarchy to law-governed and not minority-oppressive democracy, and it is no surprise that it has been staged to great emotion at many different moments when the yoke of arbitrary power has been thrown off, notably at the reopening of many German opera houses after the defeat of the Nazis. One might object that *Fidelio* was also performed under the Nazi regime. Thomas Mann wrote from exile, “What obtuseness it took to listen to *Fidelio* in Himmler’s Germany without covering one’s face and fleeing the hall.” But conductor Wilhelm Furtwängler replied in a letter to Mann, “*Fidelio* never has been presented in the Germany of Himmler, only in a Germany raped by Himmler.” In other words, performing the opera was the ultimate anti-Nazi gesture, reminding everyone of the noblest values of German culture that the Nazis had suppressed. The opera is a call to conscience for

audiences wherever it is performed, whether in pretty good or pretty horrible regimes.

The work’s third puzzle is its sudden happy ending. The famous offstage trumpet call initiates an abrupt reversal in the fates of all the characters. Leonore has already foiled Pizzaro temporarily, but she succeeds only because of an event so unexpected, so almost random, that the characters would hardly be justified in relying on such an event for their future happiness. When Leonore and Florestan embrace in the duet “O namenlose Freude” (“Oh nameless joy”), their music is appropriately feverish, cascading upward with no secure basis, striving at the limits of their vocal range, with no stable confidence, with words suggesting that words have given out (“nameless” joy, “unnameable woes,” “overlarge pleasure”). The finale itself is more sedate, in the confident key of C major. Everyone joins the final chorus, and the King’s messenger seems to be all that could be wanted, although we have absolutely no idea who this monarch is or what his regime is like. Justice is done, the villain punished, Florestan unchained.

**And yet: what are we** really to make of this fairy tale, this sudden exaltation? It is a moment, an *Augenblick*. And human lives do contain surprising moments of wonder and joy. But that very word, *Augenblick*, so often repeated in the opera (as Joseph Kerman reminds us in an insightful article), can’t help reminding us that Pizzaro too has his moment: his aria of sadistic revenge begins



Eiza van den Heever as Leonore and Russell Thomas as Florestan in the San Francisco Opera production of *Fidelio*.

Corey Weaver / San Francisco Opera

“Welch’ein Augenblick” (“What a moment”), and he repeats the word later, in the dungeon, when he is about to murder Florestan. When Leonore, asked to unchain Florestan, repeats the phrase, saying “O welch’ein Augenblick,” what are we to make of this repetition?

Beethoven, like his audience, knew all too well that in real life politics is dizzyingly unstable. A promising beginning can all too quickly turn oppressive—as the early days of the French Revolution, with the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen, was followed by the arbitrary cruelty of the Terror, and as the early days of Napoleon the liberal lawgiver, once the hero of Beethoven’s Third Symphony, were followed by Napoleon the Emperor, at which point Beethoven is said to have withdrawn his dedication and titled the symphony simply “Eroica” with no real-life dedicatee. The play on the word *Augenblick* is surely a sign that we are meant to see the victory of the good as insecure and temporary, as in life it always must be. (At the end of the Bertolt Brecht/Kurt Weill *Threepenny Opera*, the hero is rescued by the King’s order, delivered by a messenger on horseback—a satirical reference to *Fidelio*, I am certain—at which point Mrs. Peachum says, “Life would be so easy and peaceful, if King’s messengers always came riding in.”)

A famous semi-staged version of *Fidelio* conducted by Daniel Barenboim in Chicago in 1998 contained added narration written by Edward Said—spoken by Waltraut Meier, who played Leonore, as if Leonore is looking back from many years later, meditating on the fact that things did not work out as she wished. This might initially seem like intrusive Regietheater, but in fact Said has written an excellent article on the opera arguing for just this sense of vulnerability and impermanence as built into its music, and I believe he is right, though perhaps too pessimistic in the conclusion he draws. Yes, power is unreliable, regimes are unreliable. We can’t count on messengers who turn up at just the right moment. What we can nonetheless love and regard with awe is the struggle of courageous human beings who refuse the easy option of despair, who strive for the right against great odds, a struggle that is beautiful in itself, whether it ultimately prevails or not. Beethoven’s music for Leonore and Florestan brilliantly depicts this difficult upward struggle.

What propels that struggle is hope, and *Fidelio* is opera’s greatest musical depiction of that emotion. Hope is slippery. It does not track the probabilities: if your loved one is very ill, you can hope even when the situation is grave; you can also abandon hope when things are going somewhat better. Hope is a way of seeing a situation, as, so to speak, half-full rather than half-empty, and it is of crucial importance for action. People of hope will strive and struggle; without hope people will put up with the worst and do nothing.

Immanuel Kant, a leading thinker of the Enlightenment and a philosopher whom Beethoven greatly admired, said that all human beings had an obligation to cultivate hope in themselves, because we all ought to struggle for the good, and only hope can propel that struggle. That idea lies at the core of *Fidelio*.

**The key arias** of both Leonore and Florestan are musical embodiments of hope. They are different. Hers moves from denunciation of Pizzaro into a gentle meditative invocation of hope, the legato phrase arcing upward. Then, when hope arrives in response to her call, she is propelled into action, and the music becomes rapid, decisive, and heroic, attempting the most difficult runs with seeming ease. In Florestan’s case, his aria’s meditative part is about his past, and he seems to have no path forward to action—and yet, suddenly, hope arrives in a fevered dream of Leonore, the vocal line leaping upward with unsteady and anxious thrusts. His hope, for the present, leads nowhere: he needs her actions to move forward.

The finale depicts justice arriving in response to the committed and courageous actions of good ordinary people. And it does not simply represent hope; it inspires it in its audiences, as unfailingly as its companion piece, Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony. Asked by the King’s messenger to free her husband from his chains, Leonore does so, exclaiming “O welch’ein Augenblick”—quoting verbatim from Pizzaro but in the opposite moral sense. At this point there is a naked oboe solo that arcs gently upward (another “exalted subdominant”) and then descends as if to touch the formerly imprisoned man. Gentle and serene, the melody was borrowed by Beethoven from an earlier never-performed cantata, written in 1790 to honor the death of the enlightened Emperor Joseph II, in which it is sung to the words, “Now mankind reaches toward the light.” It has come to be called Beethoven’s *Humanitätsmelodie*, “melody of Humanity.”

Beethoven’s ending is perilous and temporary—and, I believe, intended to be heard as such. And yet it tells us that the struggle for justice is not futile, that there are “moments”—openings for decent people to struggle for change, and sometimes for a while to succeed, propelled by hope and love. There may be no solid reasons for hope, but hope is all we have to inspire us to fight for justice. And we must continue to fight because we can. We might call *Fidelio* Beethoven’s—and our own—*Humanitätsopera*, the opera of humanity, striving for the light. 📖

*Martha C. Nussbaum is Professor of Philosophy and Law at the University of Chicago. Her most recent books are Justice for Animals (2023) and The Tenderness of Silent Minds: Benjamin Britten and his War Requiem (2024).*

# Artist profiles



## ELZA VAN DEN HEEVER LEONORE

**Previously at Lyric:** Chrysothemis/*Elektra* (2018/19) and Armida/*Rinaldo* (2011/12).

This season, the South African-born soprano will appear at the Metropolitan Opera as Empress/*Die Frau ohne Schatten* and as Salome, two of her signature roles. She will make her debut at La Scala as Sieglinde/*Die Walküre* under the baton of Christian Thielemann and appear as Elettra/*Idomeneo* at the San Francisco Opera under Eun Sun Kim. Recent highlights include the Empress at the Vienna State Opera; her role debut as Elisabeth/*Tannhäuser* at the Met; Chrysothemis/*Elektra* at the Baden-Baden Easter Festival and in concert at the Philharmonie Berlin; her role debut as Sieglinde/*Die Walküre* with the Rotterdam Philharmonic; and Julia in Spontini's *La Vestale* in a new production. Van den Heever's other notable appearances include role debuts as Senta/*Der fliegende Holländer* at the Met, as Salome in Paris, as Julia in *La Vestale* at the Theater an der Wien, as Marie/*Wozzeck* at the Met, and as the Empress in *Die Frau ohne Schatten* in concert with the Rotterdam Philharmonic. The soprano was an ensemble member of the Frankfurt Opera from 2008 to 2013 and made her European debut there as Giorgetta in Puccini's *Il trittico*. Her interpretation of the role, conducted by Bertrand de Billy, has been released on CD by Capriccio.



## RUSSELL THOMAS FLORESTAN

**Previously at Lyric:** Seven roles since 2016/17, most recently Radamès/*Aida* (2023/24) and Ernani/*Ernani* (2022/23).

This season, Thomas can be seen as the Kaiser/*Die Frau ohne Schatten* (Metropolitan Opera), in *Tannhäuser* (Houston Grand Opera), and as Enée/*Les Troyens à Carthage* (Seattle Opera). The celebrated American tenor recently made his role debut as Parsifal with Houston Grand Opera, sang his first Don Carlos (five-act version in French) with the Staatsoper Hamburg, debuted at the Opéra national de Paris as Don Alvaro/*La forza del destino*, and reprised Calaf/*Turandot* and Otello with the Los Angeles Opera. At Lyric, he sang Mario Cavaradossi/*Tosca* (2021/22) and Canio/*Pagliacci* in Lyric's 2020/21 award-winning film version. The 2019/20 Season included Radamès/*Aida* (Houston Grand Opera) and his return to the title role/*Otello* (Washington National Opera). He also starred in *Il trovatore* (Bayerische Staatsoper), *Idomeneo* (Salzburg Festival, in a new Peter Sellars production), *Roberto Devereux* (San Francisco Opera), and *La clemenza di Tito* (Metropolitan Opera, LA Opera). Thomas has previously enjoyed success as Beethoven's Florestan (San Francisco); Bellini's Pollione (Lyric, San Francisco, Los Angeles, Toronto, Valencia); and Puccini's Rodolfo (Met). *Russell Thomas is sponsored by the Guild Board of Directors.*



## BRIAN MULLIGAN DON PIZARRO

**Previously at Lyric:** Father/*Hansel and Gretel* (2012/13) and Enrico/*Lucia di Lammermoor* (2011/12).

Mulligan begins the 2024/25 Season in the title role of *Der fliegende Holländer* at the Concertgebouw in Amsterdam with Jaap van Zweden conducting the Radio Filharmonisch Orkest. He will make role debuts as Der Wanderer in *Siegfried* at the Hangzhou Philharmonic in China, and as Alberich in *Das Rheingold* in a new production at the Opéra national de Paris. Next, he returns to the Teatro San Carlo di Napoli as Jochanaan in *Salome*. He will make his debut with the Philadelphia Orchestra as Kurwenal in *Tristan und Isolde* under the baton of Yannick Nézet-Séguin, before returning to the San Francisco Opera for their *Pride Gala*. He finishes the season again as the Dutchman, in his debut with the Taiwan Philharmonic in Taipei. Other recent highlights include his role debut as Telramund in a new David Alden production of *Lohengrin* at San Francisco Opera, a role and house debut as Barak in *Die Frau ohne Schatten* at the Théâtre du Capitole de Toulouse, and Wotan in *Die Walküre* on tour with the Rotterdam Philharmonic.



## DIMITRY IVASHCHENKO ROCCO

**Previously at Lyric:** Pogner/*Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* (2012/13).

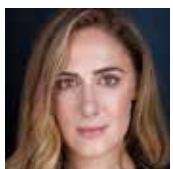
This season, the Russian bass performs Daland/*The Flying Dutchman* in Zürich and Gremin/*Eugene Onegin* in Toronto. Last season he sang Rocco/*Fidelio* in Toronto, Sarastro/*Die Zauberflöte* in Munich and Dresden, as well as Kaspar/*Der Freischütz* in Wiesbaden and Beethoven's Symphony No. 9 in Berlin. Ivashchenko has previously performed as Rocco/*Fidelio* at the Zürich Opera (2019/20) and at the Wiesbaden State Opera (2022/23). He has sung Sarastro/*Die Zauberflöte* in Berlin, Baden-Baden, Vienna, Paris, New York, and Aix-en-Provence. His Wagner roles include Daland in Geneva and Madrid, Hunding/*Die Walküre* in Toronto, Toulouse and at the Baden-Baden Festival, and Fafner/*Rheingold* and *Siegfried* in Paris. Ivashchenko made his Metropolitan Opera debut in 2015 as Sparafucile in *Rigoletto*, a role he also performed in Munich, Paris, and the Bregenz Festival. Ivashchenko sang Osmin/*Die Entführung aus dem Serail* at the Semperoper in 2017 and again in 2019/20. Other important roles include Gremin/*Eugene Onegin* at the Vienna State Opera, Konchak/*Prince Igor* and Ivan Khovanski/*Khovanshchina* at the Paris Opera, King Mark/*Tristan und Isolde* in Cottbus, and Filippo II/*Don Carlo* in Graz. He studied at the Glinka Conservatory in Russia and at Karlsruhe University of Music.



**ALFRED WALKER  
DON FERNANDO**

**Previously at Lyric:** Father/*Hansel and Gretel* (2022/23).

In the 2023/24 Season, the bass-baritone returned to the role of Enobarbus in the European premiere of John Adams's *Antony and Cleopatra* with Gran Teatre del Liceu; sang Orest in *Elektra* with Dallas Opera; returned to the Metropolitan Opera for Frère Laurant in *Roméo et Juliette* and Rambaldo in *La rondine*; and joined Vashon Opera for Iago in *Otello*. In the 2022/23 Season, Walker returned to San Francisco Opera as Enobarbus in the world premiere of *Antony and Cleopatra*; joined the Metropolitan Opera as Masetto in *Don Giovanni*; and sang Rachmaninoff's *The Bells* with the LA Philharmonic. A graduate of Dillard University, Loyola University, and the Metropolitan Opera Lindemann Young Artist Development Program, the New Orleans native is a recipient of awards from the George London Foundation, Palm Beach Opera Competition, Houston Grand Opera's Eleanor McCollum Competition, and the Sullivan Foundation.



**SYDNEY MANCASOLA  
MARZELLINE**

**Lyric debut**

This season, the California-born soprano makes house debuts at Dutch National Opera as Adele/*Die Fledermaus*, Opera Nice Côte d'Azur as Pamina/*Die Zauberflöte*, and the Seji Ozawa Matsumoto Festival in Japan as Titania/*A Midsummer Night's Dream*, reprising the role she performed last season in her company debuts at both the Fondazione Teatro Carlo Felice in Genoa, Italy, and at the Royal Opera House Muscat. Sydney also sings the role of Norina/*Don Pasquale* for her house debut at Staatsoper Hamburg and later in the season at the Opera Theatre of Saint Louis. Mancasola was previously a member of the ensemble at Oper Frankfurt, where her roles included Gilda/*Rigoletto*, Musetta/*La Bohème*, Pamina/*Die Zauberflöte*, Onoria/*Ezio*, the Italian Singer in *Capriccio*, Roxana in a new production of Szymanowski's *Król Roger*, Frasquita/*Carmen*, Susanna/*Le nozze di Figaro*, and the soprano soloist in a new production of *Betulia liberata*. Other recent highlights include the title role in Matthew Aucoin's *Eurydice* in a new arrangement of the work for Boston Lyric Opera, a return to the Metropolitan Opera as Frasquita in a new production of *Carmen*, and appearing as Mélisande in *Pelléas et Mélisande* at Des Moines Metro Opera.



**DANIEL ESPINAL  
JAQUINO**

**Lyric debut**

A first-year Ryan Opera Center member, the Cuban-Dominican tenor from Sarasota was a national winner of the 2024 Metropolitan Opera Laffont Competition. For Lyric's 2024/25 Season he will also sing Don Curzio/*The Marriage of Figaro*. A graduate of the Manhattan School of Music, Espinal continued his studies at Yale University, where he recently received a Master of Musical Arts degree. His roles there included Tom

Rakewell/*The Rake's Progress*, Rinuccio/*Gianni Schicchi*, and Male Chorus/*The Rape of Lucretia*. Espinal has previously participated in San Francisco's Merola Opera Program for two summers, where he sang the Duke/*Rigoletto*, David/*Die Meistersinger*, and Arcadio/*Florencia en el Amazonas*. His repertoire also includes Alfredo/*La traviata* and Tamino/*Die Zauberflöte*. Daniel Espinal is sponsored by

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**TRAVON D. WALKER  
FIRST PRISONER**

**Previously at Lyric:** Borsa/*Rigoletto* (2024/25).

The second-year Ryan Opera Center tenor recently received his master's degree from Rice University, where he sang Sam Kaplan/*Street Scene*. In Lyric's 2024/25 Season, he will also appear as Son/*Blue*, and Parpignol/*La Bohème*. A native of Hinesville, Georgia, Walker completed his undergraduate studies at the Eastman School of Music. While there, he made his operatic debut in Ricky Ian Gordon's *The Tibetan Book of the Dead*. Walker has been a Studio Artist at Wolf Trap Opera and was invited to participate in Renée Fleming's 2023 SongStudio and Joyce DiDonato's 2023 Masterclass Series, both at Carnegie Hall, as well as the 2023 Britten Pears Young Artist Programme. Other engagements include the Erie Philharmonic and Houston Grand Opera (Jeremy Howard Beck's *Another City*, world premiere). Walker received an Encouragement Award from the Kansas City District in the 2023 Metropolitan Opera Laffont Competition, the 2024 Best Vocal Artist Award from the American Opera Society, and the 2024 Luminarts Cultural Foundation Men's Voice Fellowship. Travon D. Walker is sponsored by the **Robert & Isabelle Bass Foundation, Inc.** and the **Ford and Mages families.**



**CHRISTOPHER HUMBERT, JR.  
SECOND PRISONER**

**Previously at Lyric:** Count Ceprano/*Rigoletto* (2024/25).

Originally from Akron, Ohio, the second-year Ryan Opera Center bass-baritone has performed widely, including soloist appearances with Minnesota Orchestra (*The Listening Project*, 2022), Civic Orchestra of Chicago, Palm Beach Opera, Des Moines Metro Opera, Florida Grand Opera, Detroit Opera, and Boston Lyric Opera. In the 2024/25 Season, Humbert will also appear at Lyric as 3rd Policeman/*Blue*. In 2023, he was a winner in the Metropolitan Opera Laffont Competition, St. Louis District. Humbert is a former participant in the young artist programs at Palm Beach Opera (*L'elisir d'amore*, *Carmen*, *La Bohème*, *Die Zauberflöte*) and Opera Theatre of Saint Louis. Concert appearances include Carnegie Hall (a debut as baritone soloist in Vaughan Williams's *Dona Nobis Pacem*) and the Erie Philharmonic. Recipient of a 2024 American Opera Society of Chicago Scholarship Award, Humbert holds a Bachelor of Music degree from Capital University in Columbus, Ohio and a Master of Music degree from Boston Conservatory. *Christopher Humbert, Jr.* is sponsored by **Lead Sponsor Patricia Frank and cosponsor Mary Houston, in loving memory of James Houston.**



### ENRIQUE MAZZOLA CONDUCTOR

Lyric's Music Director—only the third in the company's history—is renowned as an expert interpreter and champion of *bel canto* opera and Verdi repertoire, and as a specialist in French repertoire. Lyric audiences first experienced the Italian conductor's artistry in Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor* in 2016/17, and subsequently in Bellini's *I puritani* in 2017/18. During 2019/20, he led Verdi's *Luisa Miller* to launch the company's *Early Verdi Series*. Mazzola's first opera as Lyric's music director, Sir David McVicar's new production of Verdi's *Macbeth*, opened the 2021/22 season, followed by Donizetti's *The Elixir of Love* as well as *Verdi Voices* and *Rising Stars in Concert*. Mazzola is Principal Guest Conductor at the Deutsche Oper Berlin and, since 2022, the first ever Conductor-in-Residence at the Bregenz Festival. He served as Artistic and Music Director of the Orchestre National d'Île de France from 2012 to 2019. Symphonic guest work has included the London Philharmonic, Philharmonia Orchestra, Vienna Symphony, Orchestre National de France, and Oslo Philharmonic. He has conducted at the Metropolitan Opera, La Scala, Paris's Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, and the major houses of Florence, 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 *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, *Poliuto*, and *Don Pasquale*), new productions in 2019 for Bregenz (*Rigoletto* and *Madama Butterfly*) and Salzburg (*Orphée aux Enfers*), Pesaro (Rossini Opera Festival), Venice, and Aix-en-Provence. Mazzola was born in Barcelona, Spain, into a musical family, and grew up in Milan, where he studied violin and piano, earning diplomas in composition and orchestral conducting at the Conservatorio Giuseppe Verdi in Milan. *Enrique Mazzola is supported by the John D. and Alexandra C. Nichols Endowed Chair.*



### MATTHEW OZAWA DIRECTOR

**Previously at Lyric:** Five operas since 2015/16, most recently *The Three Queens* (2019/20) and *An American Dream* (2018/19).

A multidisciplinary stage director, artistic director, and educator, Ozawa became Lyric Opera of Chicago's Chief Artistic Administration officer, a new position, in 2022. This production of *Fidelio* was originally commissioned by San Francisco Opera, where he has also directed *Orpheus and Eurydice* and *The Barber of Seville: Drive-In Opera*. Recent directorial highlights include an innovative new production of *Madame Butterfly*, which premiered at Cincinnati Opera in 2023. The opera, with a largely Asian and Asian-American creative team, subsequently received critical acclaim at Detroit Opera and will appear at Pittsburgh Opera and Utah Opera in 2025. Committed to new and modern work, his recent production highlights include Ruo's *Angel Island* (Brooklyn Academy of Music / Beth Morrison Projects) and Ruo/Hwang's *An American Soldier* (Opera Theatre of Saint Louis). Ozawa's productions have also been seen at Canadian Opera Company, Santa Fe Opera, Houston Grand Opera, Minnesota Opera, Cincinnati Opera, Wolf Trap Opera, Opera

Colorado, San Diego Opera, Des Moines Metro Opera, Arizona Opera, Kentucky Opera, North Carolina Opera, Opera Siam, Asia Society, Carnegie Hall, and the Kennedy Center, among many others. Ozawa previously served as Interim Director of Lyric Unlimited, the Learning and Civic Engagement division at Lyric, and spent three years as an Assistant Professor of Music at the University of Michigan, School of Music, Theatre & Dance. He was the Founder and Artistic Director of Mozawa, a Chicago-based incubator advancing collaborative art and artists. Raised in California and Singapore, Ozawa is a graduate of United World College of South East Asia and Oberlin Conservatory.



### ALEXANDER V. NICHOLS SET & PROJECTION DESIGNER

**Lyric debut**

Nichols's design work has been presented on Broadway, Off-Broadway, and in opera houses, concert halls, theaters, warehouses, and vacant lots throughout the world. Recent projects include scenic and projection design for *Orpheus and Eurydice* at San Francisco Opera, scenic and projection design for *The Headlands* at American Conservatory Theater, production design for Yuri Possokhov's *Swan Lake* at Hong Kong Ballet, and lighting design for Christopher Wheeldon's *Finale Finale* at San Francisco Ballet. Upcoming projects include the new musical *Prison Dancer*, Ariel Stachel's play *Out of Character*, John Leguizamo's musical *Kiss My Aztec!*, and *All That We Are* by Les 7 doigts de la main. Nichols is a recipient of a San Francisco Certificate of Honor for his work at American Conservatory Theater. He has also received four Isadora Duncan Awards, four Bay Area Critics Circle Awards and three Dean Goodman Awards as well as two nominations each for Henry Hewes Design Awards and Los Angeles Ovation Awards.



### JESSICA JAHN COSTUME DESIGNER

**Previously at Lyric:** Four operas since 2014/15, most recently *West Side Story* (2022/23 and 2018/19).

Jahn has collaborated with directors Francesca Zambello, Diane Paulus, Tina Landau, Tommy Kail, Jessica Blank, and Kenny Leon; writers Nora Ephron, Eisa Davis, Charles Busch, Charles Fuller, Tracy K. Smith, and Mark Campbell; and some of her past projects include *Gloria: A Life* (Daryl Roth Theatre), *Coal Country* (The Public Theatre), *Blue* (Glimmerglass Festival), *Orpheus and Eurydice* (San Francisco Opera), *Monodramas* (New York City Opera), *The Crucible* (Glimmerglass Festival), *The Manchurian Candidate* (Minnesota Opera, world premiere), *Dead Man Walking* (Washington National Opera), and *Moby Dick* (Utah Opera). She has taught at both NYU and Rutgers University, and is an Adjunct Costume Design Professor with Brandeis University's Theater Arts Department. She is currently working toward her Master's in Cultural Anthropology at Hunter College. *Costume Designers are supported by the Richard P. and Susan Kiphart Costume Designer endowment.*



**YUKI NAKASE LINK  
LIGHTING DESIGNER**

**Lyric debut**

Based in New York City and the Baltimore area, Link started her career as a lighting designer for Nippon Television Network Corporation in Tokyo, working with them for eight years before she moved to the United States. She has previously designed with Matthew Ozawa for Gluck's *Orpheus and Eurydice* at San Francisco Opera; Puccini's *Madame Butterfly*, a co-production of Cincinnati Opera, Detroit Opera, Pittsburgh Opera, and Utah Opera; and Huang Ruo's *Angel Island* at BAM Harvey/Prototype Festival. Recent credits include Mozart's *Così fan tutte* at Detroit Opera, John Cage's *Europas: 3 & 4* at Detroit Opera, Aaron Zigman's *Émigré* at New York Philharmonic, Monteverdi's *L'Orfeo* at Santa Fe Opera, and Christopher Cerrone's *In a Grove* at Pittsburgh Opera. *Lighting designers are supported by the Mary-Louise and James S. Aagaard endowment in honor of Duane Schuler.*



**MICHAEL BLACK  
CHORUS DIRECTOR**

The Australian Chorus Director is in his 14th season at Lyric, having 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), the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, 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 and Haydn's *Creation* at the Grant Park Music Festival, where he has worked for five seasons. He has served as chorus director for close to 140 different operas 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 Director Endowed Chair.*



**JOHN METZNER  
WIGMASTER AND MAKEUP DESIGNER**

The versatile designer first joined the staff of Lyric for the 2022/23 Season. He has previously collaborated with Chicago Shakespeare Theatre, Lookingglass Theatre, and Court Theatre. He served for nine years as Head of Wig and Makeup for Webster University's Conservatory of Theatre Arts, and designed hair and makeup for more than 50 performances at The Repertory Theatre of St. Louis. Other regional credits include work at The Muny, Great River Shakespeare Festival, and Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, where he designed for *The Pirates of Penzance*, among many other

productions. His advanced training includes wig styling at the Wig Room Training Academy and London School of Wig Making. *John Metzner is supported by the Marlys A. Beider Wigmaster and Makeup Designer Endowed Chair.*



**MELANIE BACALING  
ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR**

**Previously at Lyric:** Assistant director on *The Factotum* (2022/23) and *Fire Shut Up in My Bones* (2021/22).

A Chicago native, Bacaling is currently on the stage directing staff at the Metropolitan Opera. Recent projects include assistant directing at Santa Fe Opera and her film directing debut with Boston Lyric Opera, a concert docu-series titled *B.*, which can be found on operabox.tv. Bacaling has previously worked on productions with LA Opera, Santa Fe Opera, Detroit Opera, Des Moines Metro Opera, Opera Omaha, Washington Concert Opera, Aspen Opera Center, Sun Valley Music Festival, The Boston Conservatory, and Longy School of Music. As a producer, Bacaling worked with Boston Lyric Opera to create *We Need to Listen*, a series of conversations highlighting racial inequities in classical music and opera. With Opera Omaha, she produced and co-curated the inaugural season of *Amplifying the Black Experience* with soprano Chabrelle Williams. Bacaling holds a BM in Voice and BS in Psychology from the University of Evansville, as well as an MM in Vocal Performance and Pedagogy from Boston Conservatory.



**NICK SANDYS  
FIGHT DIRECTOR**

**Previously at Lyric:** More than 70 productions since 1995/96, most recently *Ernani* and *Carmen* (both 2022/23)

The British fight director has created choreography for many Chicago companies including Goodman Theatre (more than 25 productions, most recently *Midnight in the Garden of Good and Evil*, *Joe Turner's Come and Gone*, and *Swing State* (also Off-Broadway)), Steppenwolf Theatre Company (including the Tony-winning Broadway revival of *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*), Lookingglass, Northlight, Timeline, Remy Bumppo, First Folio, and Shattered Globe, among others. He previously worked at Lyric on *Macbeth* and *Tosca* (2021/22), and on the Emmy-winning film of *Pagliacci* (2020/21). Other opera highlights include the Metropolitan Opera (*Prince Igor*, *Giulio Cesare*, *Il trovatore*), Canadian Opera Company, Dallas Opera, Portland Opera, and Florentine Opera, as well as major theater companies in Kansas City, Baltimore, Indianapolis, Dallas, and Fort Worth, among others. Sandys has taught stage combat at The Theatre School at DePaul University since 1995, choreographing more than 80 productions. He served as the revival director for Lyric's production of Sir David McVicar's *Elektra* (2018/19), which appeared also in Houston and Dallas. [L](#)



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*Lyric*

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# Orchestra & Chorus

## MUSIC STAFF

Kedrick Armstrong  
Elizabeth Askren  
Michael Banwarth  
William C. Billingham  
Kyrian Friedenber<sup>^</sup>  
Susan Miller Hult  
Tess Jackson  
Keun-A Lee  
Chi-Yuan Lin<sup>^^</sup>  
Noah Lindquist  
Francesco Milioto  
Jerad Mosbey  
Laura Poe  
Blair Salter  
Stefano Sarzani  
Madeline Slettedahl

## ORCHESTRA

### Violin I

Robert Hanford, *Concertmaster*,  
*Mrs. R. Robert Funderburg*  
*Endowed Chair*  
Emily Nebel,  
*Assistant Concertmaster*  
Eleanor Bartsch  
Alexander Belavsky  
Kathleen Brauer  
Renée-Paule Gauthier<sup>\*\*</sup>  
Laura Miller  
Liba Shacht  
Heather Wittels  
Bing Jing Yu

### Violin II

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

### Viola

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

### Cello

Calum Cook, *Principal*  
Ana Kim, *Assistant Principal*  
Mark Brandfonbrener  
William H. Cernota  
Walter Preucil

### String Bass

Ian Hallas<sup>\*</sup>, *Principal*  
Samuel Shuhan,  
*Acting Principal*  
Andrew L. W. Anderson,  
*Acting Assistant Principal*  
Gregory Sarchet  
Collins R. Trier

### Flute

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

### Piccolo

Alyce Johnson

### Oboe

Paul Lueders, *Principal*  
Judith Zunamon Lewis,  
*Assistant Principal*

### English Horn

Judith Zunamon Lewis

### Clarinet

Heesoo Kim, *Principal*  
Susan Warner,  
*Assistant Principal*

### Bass Clarinet

Susan Warner,  
*Acting*

### 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*  
Will Baker

### Bass Trombone

Will Baker

### 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*

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## EXTRA MUSICIANS

Cristina Buçiu, *violin*  
Laura Chen, *violin*  
Injoo Choi, *violin*  
Sheila Hanford, *violin*  
Beatrice Chen, *viola*  
Rebecca Swan, *viola*  
Ethan Brown, *cello*  
Paula Kosower, *cello*  
Mara McClain, *cello*  
Jeremy Attanaseo, *bass*  
Amy Barwan, *oboe*  
Hanna Sterba, *bassoon*

## STAGE BAND

David Inmon, *trumpet*

\* On leave, 2024/25 Season

\*\* Season Substitute

<sup>^</sup> Solti Foundation U.S. Opera Residency

<sup>^^</sup> Ryan Opera Center Conductor

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.

**CHORUS DIRECTOR  
AND HEAD OF MUSIC**

Michael Black

*The Howard A. Stotler  
Endowed Chair***REGULAR CHORUS****Soprano**Cathleen Dunn  
Desirée Hassler  
Rachael Holzhausen  
Laureen Janeczek-Wysocki  
Kimberly McCord  
Heidi Spoor  
Stephani Springer  
Sherry Watkins  
Tara Wheeler**Mezzo-Soprano**Emma Dickens  
Marianna Kulikova  
Yvette Smith  
Marie Sokolova  
Maia Surace  
Corinne Wallace-Crane  
Pamela Williams  
Michelle K. Wrighte**Tenor**Geoffrey Agpalo  
Timothy Bradley  
Hoss Brock  
William M. Combs  
John J. Concepcion  
Kenneth Donovan  
Jared V. Esguerra  
Joseph A. Fosselman  
Cullen Gandy  
Cameo T. Humes  
Tyler Samuel Lee  
Joseph Shadday**Bass**David DuBois  
Christopher Filipowicz  
Robert Morrissey  
Rafael W. Porto  
Craig Springer  
Vince Wallace  
Nicholas Ward  
Ronald Watkins  
Nikolas Wenzel  
Max Wier  
Jonathan Wilson**CORE SUPPLEMENTARY  
CHORUS****Soprano**Carla Janzen  
Emily Mwila  
Kelsea Webb**Mezzo-Soprano**Christina G. Adams  
Cara Collins  
Ola Rafalo**Tenor**Joshua Benevento  
Ace Gangoso**Bass**Michael Cavalieri  
David Govertsen  
Nicolai Janitzky  
Atticus Yonnan-Rego**SUPPLEMENTARY  
CHORUS****Soprano**Nicole Besa  
Anna Donnelly  
Megan Fleischmann  
Elise Hurwitz  
Emily Louise Robinson  
Diana Stoic**Mezzo-Soprano**Sadie Cheslak  
Leah Dexter  
Miya Higashiyama  
Emily Price  
Marissa Simmons**Tenor**Esteban Cordero  
Klaus Georg  
Ernest C. Jackson Jr  
Steven Michael Patrick  
Christopher Sierra  
Brian Skoog**Bass**Samuel Dewese  
Joseph Lodato  
Douglas Peters  
Ian R. Prichard  
Dan Richardson**SUPERNUMERARIES**Angela Allyn  
Martha Cavalieri<sup>+</sup>  
Rose Cavalieri<sup>+</sup>  
James Edward Dauphin  
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Lily Tantillo<sup>+</sup>  
Claudia Urbano  
Christopher Vaughn  
Roger Warner  
Drake Wunderlich<sup>+</sup> Lyric debut

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Bryan McDonald  
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Alice Salazar  
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Pat Tomlinson  
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Ansley Hughes  
Chantelle Johnson  
Lynn Koroulis  
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Sandra Moore  
*Stage Managers*

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*The Patrick G. and Shirley W. Ryan Opera Center, this season marking its 50th anniversary, 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.*



Kyle Flubacker

The 2024/25 Ensemble takes a bow after a concert with the Civic Orchestra of Chicago in June.



*Lyric*

*Lyric*

RYAN  
OPERA  
CENTER  
**50<sup>TH</sup>**

# The Patrick G. and Shirley W. Ryan Opera Center 2024/25 Ensemble



Front row, l to r: Marinette Gomez, Gemma DeCetra, Chi-Yuan Lin, Gemma Nha, Lucy Baker, Sophia Maekawa, Adia Evans, Emily Richter.  
Back row, l to r: Michael Banwarth, Travon D. Walker, Ian Rucker, Christopher Humbert, Jr., Finn Sagal, Sankara Harouna, Daniel Espinal.

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*Director, The Ryan Opera Center  
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*Director of Vocal Studies*

Renée Fleming  
*Advisor at Large*

Susanna McNatt  
*Manager*

Annika Donnen  
*Associate Librarian*

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Opera Center Vocal Studies  
Program Endowment*

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*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 artist and scholar residencies, Lyric, with your support, encourages students, educators, families, audiences, and Chicagoans from neighborhoods across the city to share their voices and embrace the power of opera as a catalyst for growth and change.*



Lawrence Agyei

Soprano Karen Slack, Lyric Unlimited's Artist-in-Residence for the 2024/25 Season

*Lyric*

# Lyric Unlimited: Learning and Civic Engagement

# In the House

Introducing Karen Slack, Lyric Unlimited's new Artist-in-Residence

*This season, soprano Karen Slack will act as an ambassador for the company's Learning and Civic Engagement division, fostering deeper connections between Lyric and the residents of Chicago. A series of performances and events will showcase her talent, and inspire and connect with audiences across a broad spectrum of the city.*



**What was your first exposure to opera, and what made you want to become a singer?**

I attended the Philadelphia High School for the Creative and Performing Arts as a vocal major, and my choral teacher David King loved opera. He would play albums of all the greats (Corelli, Norman, Callas, Bjorling, Flagstad) every morning at 7 a.m. I fell in love with those glorious sounds at 14 years old. The first opera I attended was the final dress rehearsal of *Carmen* starring Denyce Graves at the then Opera Company of Philadelphia when I was in the 10th grade. I believe I was 15 or 16 years old. That performance changed my life. I knew then that I wanted to become a professional opera singer.

**How do you describe opera to children and young adults who might not have had any exposure to classical music in schools?**

I do quite a bit of outreach in my personal life. I regularly visit the classrooms of my friends who

Lawrence Agyei

became public school teachers. I first start by singing for them so that I get their attention! Then I speak about how opera and classical music changed my life. I share my story and some of my favorite operas and why I chose this tremendous art form as a career. I never shy away from speaking about how big, bold, and grand our art form is. It's magical!

**What role do you believe opera can play in addressing social issues or fostering community dialogue?**

I believe if we want to keep growing audiences we can't stay focused on just maintaining the image that opera is only for certain people. Or that it is so precious and should only exist in an ivory tower. We have to stay current and competitive in building new audiences—so that means we must take off our blinders, share experiences, and tell more dynamic stories. Communication is what we do. Storytelling and passion is our business but that doesn't mean we can't lean into topics that matter to today's audiences. Making art in the 21st century requires tackling certain social issues of today. Maybe it's political to some but to me it is necessary. Mozart and Verdi were political and who can argue the greatness and sustainability of their works? Building new audiences requires us to lean into creating new visions for the stage and that they reflect the community it is supposed to serve.

**What kind of impact do you hope to make in your position as Lyric Unlimited Artist-in-Residence?**

To share my passion for our art form with the Chicago community and my commitment to the mission of Lyric Unlimited to provide quality art to the community.

**What Lyric Unlimited activities during the season are you most looking forward to?**

Sharing my curated recitals that tie into the season is what I am excited about. *Of Thee I Sing: Songs of Love and Justice* during the opening week of *Blue* will be moving. I debuted this program in 2020 shortly after the murder of George Floyd, and it has evolved into a powerful 50-minute recital that leaves audiences realizing that without love and humanity there can never be justice. *Dream Variations*, another recital for 2025 that celebrates the great American soprano Jessye Norman during her 80th birthday year, is a highlight. Also, I look forward to creating new projects that spotlight Chicago singers performing this season who have gone on to sing on



Karen Slack as Tosca at Opera Birmingham

many stages around the world and how Lyric and the Chicago music community helped shape their path.

**Let's talk about your performing career. You made your scorching Lyric debut as Serena in *Porgy & Bess* in the 2014/15 Season. What are your memories of your time in that production?**

I remember the amazing reception we received after each performance. The Chicago audience was very gracious and I always hoped to return to this theater in other repertory. Also, of course, the weather. Being here for several months, from September to December, was a complete shock to my system. Opening night was -2 degrees—unbelievable!

**You recently performed the song "Lyric for True Love" by Undine Smith Moore at the *Sunday in the Park* with Lyric concert at Millennium Park. How did you select that piece—what is its significance to you?**

I was asked to suggest a song to perform with piano and immediately thought of that composer. We rarely get to hear her incredible art songs. She, like Florence Price, writes virtuoso works for piano and equally impressively for the voice. It is a short but mighty piece so to me it was an easy choice.

**What advice would you give to young artists who are aspiring to have a career in opera?**

Never forget why you decided to pursue a career in opera. Keep yourself inspired, continue to be curious, and always hold on to your love of singing. It is YOUR gift! 🎵

# People of Lyric

A behind-the-scenes conversation



Kyle Flubacker

## Samantha Berger Website Content and Digital Experience Manager

**Hometown:** I grew up in a town called Ferndale 15 minutes outside of Detroit.

**When did you start at Lyric?**  
September 2018.

**First opera you saw live:** I went to a fine arts camp near Traverse City, Michigan, and they did a small-scale production of *La Bohème* for us. And when I came to Lyric in the 2018/19 Season, that was my first show here. Full circle!

**Go-to karaoke tune?**  
“Crazy,” by Gnarls Barkley.

**Other outside interests?**  
I have a dog. I like my dog. My dog is adorable. Her name is Ripley. She’s four. I dabble in music composition—purely a hobby, but it keeps my creative juices flowing. And I have a quirky collection of instruments, from kazoos to kalimbas.

### What was your path to Lyric?

After graduating from Western Michigan University, I took a leap of faith and moved to Chicago without a job lined up. I was a house manager for Broadway in Chicago for a couple of years, and I got to see *Hamilton* like 35 times. When I saw a listing for a digital marketing internship at Lyric, I knew I had to apply. During college, I had taken courses in Tessitura, which happens to be Lyric’s database software. I think that’s what really caught their attention—they were surprised I was already familiar with it right out of school!

### Now you are in a new role. Tell us how you got here.

I’m currently on my fifth job title at Lyric, and it’s been quite the journey. I originally joined as an intern during a major web upgrade project. My internship kept getting extended as Lyric worked towards building a solid digital team. Eventually, a digital fundraising position opened up, which I took on for two years. It was a mix of emails, social posts, analytics, and project management—honestly, I loved it. But when a role in website content opened up almost two and a half years ago, I couldn’t resist. Marketing lets me feel more connected to the art, which is where my passion truly lies.

### What are your typical, day-to-day activities?

As the Website Content Manager at Lyric Opera of Chicago, I focus on enhancing the user experience from start to finish. My role involves training staff on website updates, gathering feedback to improve the site, and ensuring all online content is accurate, professional, and accessible. I collaborate with IT and web developers to maintain functionality and improve processes, like making it easier to RSVP for events or join Lyric Young Professionals. I also manage content creation and strategy, keeping the website’s voice consistent while using analytics to guide its future growth. My goal is to create a seamless and engaging experience for all our visitors.

### Do you have a musical background?

Music runs in the family—my dad is a versatile musician who plays all woodwinds and frequently gigs with the Detroit Symphony Orchestra as a saxophone player. He’s part of jazz groups that perform every year at the Detroit Jazz Festival. I started playing piano, then picked up a clarinet in third grade, then added bassoon to the mix, which I played throughout school. My high school highlight was landing the lead role in *Thoroughly Modern Millie*. Singing is my true passion, particularly jazz. In college, I was part of an *cappella* group called No Strings Attached.

### What have you liked best at Lyric?

I have a deep appreciation for contemporary opera. While the classics are undeniably beautiful, I find myself more invested in the characters and stories of modern works. *Champion* and *Fire Shut Up in My Bones* were particularly powerful for me. I’m drawn to creative, suspenseful, and off-kilter storylines, which is why I’m especially excited about *The Listeners* this season. It’s the kind of fresh, unpredictable narrative that keeps me on the edge of my seat. **L**