

Lyric

VERDI

Rigoletto

In this issue



Dan Rees / Lyric Opera of Chicago

Courtiers surround the Duke and his jester at the start of Lyric's 2005/06 production of *Rigoletto*. | pp. 16-35

6 WELCOME TO YOUR LYRIC

- 8 A letter from the Chair
- 10 Board of Directors
- 12 Talent Central: Celebrating 50 years of The Patrick G. and Shirley W. Ryan Opera Center.

16 TODAY'S PERFORMANCE

- 19 Title page and cast
- 20 Synopsis
- 24 Director's note
- 25 Opera Notes: Looking back at Lyric's legendary *Rigolettos*—and introducing Igor Golovatenko.
- 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 The first decade: Lyric launches an innovative professional training program.

68 LYRIC UNLIMITED

- 70 *Opera in the Neighborhoods* brings original works to young audiences around the city.
- 72 People of Lyric: The company's Audience Programs Associate puts his passions to work.



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In Memoriam



Dietrich Gross
(1933-2024)

Lyric Opera of Chicago dedicates these performances of *Rigoletto* to Dietrich Gross in honor of his extraordinary generosity and service as a member of the Board of Directors from 1990 until 2022 when he was elected as a Life Director. In 2009, he was presented the Carol Fox Award recognizing his distinguished service and dedication to Lyric. He and his wife, Erika, became subscribers in the 1970s and have been a constant presence in the opera house ever since.

Please join us in expressing our deep gratitude to Erika, who is sponsoring Lyric's 2024/25 Season in loving memory of Dietrich.

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.



Elizabeth Hurley
*Interim General
Director*

Enrique Mazzola
Music Director

Lyric

Welcome to your Lyric

A message from the Chair

Welcome, everyone!

A new season at Lyric Opera of Chicago is always a cause for celebration. Artists from around the world arrive at our house and begin the long work of putting productions together. The pit hums with surging strings, backstage rings with voices in rehearsal—and onstage, hammers bang and lights glow once again. It's a breathtaking time, and this *Rigoletto* is the first work in an exceptionally strong season which will bring to life some of the greatest works in the repertoire, as well as deliver the Lyric premieres of two exciting 21st century works that have already received great critical acclaim.

This season brings with it, too, a special, extra jolt of energy. As you likely know, we are proud to announce the appointment of John Mangum as Lyric's fifth General Director, President & CEO. Renowned as an innovative visionary and collaborator with significant artistic and executive leadership roles at some of the country's foremost performing arts organizations, John comes to us from Houston Symphony where he served as Executive Director and Chief Executive Officer. He led the organization through hurricanes, the pandemic, and change with notable safety, growth, and artistic achievement, all while creating and implementing meaningful community and educational programming.

John already has had a series of productive and exciting conversations with Music Director Enrique Mazzola as they prepare to lead our world-class company into the future. He will begin full-time in October and I hope you will join me in offering him a warm welcome.

And now we have this thrilling production of *Rigoletto*. Our Maestro, beginning his fourth full season at Lyric, takes the podium for another masterpiece from Verdi, a composer at the core of his repertoire. Renowned New York-based director Mary Birnbaum makes her Lyric debut—and she's not the only one. The superb Armenian soprano Mane Galoyan debuts here as Gilda, a role she has sung with success, and joining us for the first time also is the dazzling Mexican tenor Javier Camarena, bringing his bravura voice to the feckless Duke. Taking the title role is the formidable Igor Golovatenko, among the most lauded baritones in the opera world today.

On behalf of the entire Lyric family, let me say how delighted we are to welcome you once again to the Lyric Opera House. None of the splendid work we do, onstage and off, could happen without your ongoing support. We thank you!



Sylvia Neil

SYLVIA NEIL
Chair

Lyric

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Lyric

Talent Central

This season marks the 50th anniversary of The Patrick G. and Shirley W. Ryan Opera Center. Here's a brief retrospective of highlights of this extraordinary program's evolution.

By Alana Guggenheim



As Luciano Pavarotti looks on, Ensemble soprano Marcia Cope delivers an aria during a 1983 master class.

"It's truly remarkable to look back on The Patrick G. and Shirley W. Ryan Opera Center's legacy," says Dan Novak, who has worked at the Ryan Opera Center since 2000, becoming director in 2013. Recognized globally for its standard-setting training, the Ryan Opera Center is celebrating its 50th anniversary this season, an astonishing benchmark that speaks to its innumerable successes and ongoing impact on the field. Hundreds of artists have participated in the program's Ensemble, and dozens continue to grace stages around the globe. The roster of its instructors, mentors, and visiting artists reads as a who's-who of the opera world. The Ryan Opera Center is indeed one of Lyric Opera of Chicago's most significant calling cards.

Originally named the Lyric Opera School of Chicago, what is now the Ryan Opera Center was established in 1974 under the visionary leadership of then-General Manager Carol Fox, Music Director Bruno Bartoletti, and Assistant Manager Ardis Krainik. Their goal was to attract and nurture the country's best emerging singers by providing advanced coaching and training, along with opportunities to perform in comprimario roles on the Lyric stage. The *Chicago Tribune* hailed the program as a groundbreaking development in local opera history.

Under the direction of the American lyric tenor and conductor Herbert Handt, the program enrolled its first cohort of 10 up-and-coming American singers, including the future internationally acclaimed contralto Kathleen Kuhlmann. One of the early highlights was the Ensemble's own production of Domenico Puccini's *Il Ciarlatano*, performed with orchestra at the University of Chicago and at Lake Forest's Barat College, setting a precedent for excellence, collaboration, and performance opportunities that continues to define the program today.

Notable productions including Ensemble artists have become cornerstones in the Ryan Opera Center's history. Among these, the 1990 performances and recording by New World Records of Hugo Weisgall's *Six Characters in Search of an Author* stands out, showcasing the training program's dedication to contemporary opera. In fact, Lyric's Composer-in-Residence program was overseen by the Ryan Opera Center and resulted in several world premieres, among them *The Song of Majnun* (1992) by Bright Sheng, *Between Two Worlds (The Dybbuk)* (1997) by Shulamit Ran, and *Lovers and Friends: The Chautauqua Variations* (2001) by Michael John LaChiusa.

Ryan Opera Center artists have also made remarkable contributions to Lyric's mainstage productions, often performing supporting roles as well as understudying principal roles—and, quite often, stepping in to perform them. This has not only provided invaluable experience



Former and current Ensemble members surround Denyce Graves, in Lyric's 2005/06 *Carmen*. Clockwise from left: Susanna Phillips, David Cangelosi, Rodell Rosel, and Lauren McNeese.

Dan Nest

for the artists but has also enriched Lyric Opera's offerings with fresh and dynamic talent. Audience members won't soon forget the last-minute, remarkable substitution of Ensemble soprano Kathryn Henry into the title role of *Jenůfa* in its last performance during the 2023/24 Season.

Since its inception, the Ryan Opera Center has undergone several name changes and significant program evolutions, each reflecting a new phase in its development and mission. In 1981, the name was changed to the Lyric Opera Center for American Artists to better represent its mission of nurturing American talent who might otherwise have needed to go to Europe for post-graduate professional development. This period saw the introduction of master classes led by renowned stars like Luciano Pavarotti, Alfredo Kraus, Evelyn Lear, Sherrill Milnes, and more, enhancing the training experience for Ensemble artists.

In 2006, the program was renamed The Patrick G. and Shirley W. Ryan Opera Center in recognition of a transformative gift from the Ryans, reflecting the program's broadened mission and elevated status within the opera community. That year was significant also due to the appointment of Gianna Rolandi as the Ryan Opera Center's



Clockwise from top left: The 1993/94 Ensemble presented Maurice Ravel's 1911 one-act comedy, *L'heure espagnole*; Ensemble tenor Kenneth Gayle gets some hands-on encouragement from Renata Scott; the 2012/13 Ensemble strikes a pose.



new Director, a position she held until 2013. The coloratura soprano brought with her a wealth of experience on the world's stages, including her 1986 debut at Lyric as Dorinda in Handel's *Orlando*. "It was so beneficial for our young singers to work with Gianna," noted William Mason, Lyric's General Director from 1997 to 2012. "She truly understood what singing was all about and what it meant to have a career."

Between the tenures of Handt and Rolandi, the Ryan Opera Center enjoyed a series of visionary Directors: Lee Schaenen (1977-1991), Andrew Foldi (1991-1995), and Richard Pearlman (1995-2006). The administration later grew to include a Music Director and Director of Vocal Studies, positions held today by Craig Terry and Julia Faulkner. Ensemble positions of pianist, conductor, stage director, and stage manager have recently been added to reflect the training program's leadership in nurturing the talents of artists across the full spectrum of the field. The program has also evolved to include international artists, further diversifying its talent pool.

Each season, the Ryan Opera Center attracts over 600 applicants from around the globe, competing for the coveted spots in the Ensemble. This level of interest reflects the Ryan Opera Center's reputation as one of the

premier operatic training programs in the world. Lyric Music Director Enrique Mazzola provides invaluable insights and mentorship to Ensemble members, as does Ryan Opera Center Advisor-at-Large Renée Fleming.

The achievements of the Ryan Opera Center's alumni and current Ensemble members are a testament to the program's impact. Graduates have gone on to perform in leading roles at prestigious opera houses worldwide, including the Metropolitan Opera, Royal Opera House, and Vienna State Opera. It's no surprise that season after season over the past five decades, Lyric has welcomed home numerous distinguished alumni to perform in the Ardis Krainik Theater.

All the success and growth stem from the unwavering support and dedicated leadership established at the very beginning. "We owe a tremendous debt of gratitude to the hundreds of Ryan Opera Center Board members and donors, whose generosity made everything the program has accomplished possible," says Novak. "We will always be grateful for their vision, investment, and advocacy to create the Opera Center 50 years ago and guide its growth. As we look ahead, we aim to build on this strong foundation, explore new opportunities for our artists, and ensure the Ryan Opera Center remains a beacon of excellence in artist development for the next 50 years and beyond!" 

Lyric

Adapting a play by Victor Hugo, Giuseppe Verdi brought astounding intensity to the court jester Rigoletto, tragically obsessed with avenging his daughter Gilda's dishonor. The score's highlights are unforgettable, from Rigoletto's hair-raising denunciation of the Duke of Mantua's courtiers, "Cortigiani," to the immoral, philandering Duke's "La donna è mobile," to Gilda's ecstatic "Caro nome." Conducted by Music Director Enrique Mazzola, an acclaimed Verdian, Lyric's visually sumptuous production stars the sensational Russian baritone Igor Golovatenko. He's joined by two other international luminaries making eagerly awaited company debuts: Mané Galoyan, the exquisite Armenian soprano, and Javier Camarena, the spectacular Mexican tenor.



Scott Suchman - Wolf Trap Opera

Mané Galoyan as Gilda in the Wolf Trap Opera production of *Rigoletto*.

Lyric

Rigoletto

Lyric

Rigoletto

Music by **Giuseppe Verdi** | Opera in three acts in Italian

Libretto by **Francesco Maria Piave**

September 14, 18m, 22m, 25, 28, and October 1, 6m, 2024

CHARACTERS IN ORDER OF VOCAL APPEARANCE

Duke of Mantua
Borsa
Countess Ceprano
Rigoletto
Marullo
Count Ceprano
Monterone
Sparafucile
Gilda
Giovanna
Page
Usher
Maddalena

Javier Camarena⁺
Travon D. Walker^{+•}
Adia Evans^{+•}
Igor Golovatenko
Sankara Harouna[•]
Christopher Humbert, Jr.^{+•}
Andrew Manea⁺
Soloman Howard
Mané Galoyan⁺
Maire Therese Carmack⁺
Gemma Nha^{+•}
Vince Wallace
Zoie Reams

Actors

Susie Griffith
Sheena Laird

Conductor
Director
Set Designer
Costume Designer
Lighting Designer
Chorus Director
Wig Master and
Makeup Designer
Assistant Director
Stage Manager
Stage Band Conductor
Musical Preparation

Fight Director
Intimacy Director
Projected English Titles

Enrique Mazzola
Mary Birnbaum⁺
Robert Innes Hopkins
Jane Greenwood
Duane Schuler
Michael Black
John Metzner⁺

Jordan Lee Braun
Alaina Bartkowiak
Francesco Milioto
Kyrian Friedenberg[^]
Keun-A Lee
Noah Lindquist
Francesco Milioto
Jerad Mosbey
Samantha Kaufman
Samantha Kaufman
Francis Rizzo

First performed at La Fenice, Venice, on March 11, 1851.
First performed by Lyric Opera of Chicago on November 1, 1955.

⁺ Lyric debut

[•] Current Member, The Patrick G. and Shirley W. Ryan Opera Center

[^] Soliti Foundation U.S. Opera Residency

Synopsis

TIME | 16th century

PLACE | In and near Mantua, Italy

ACT I

Scene 1. In his palace, the Duke of Mantua tells a courtier, Borsa, about his newest love. The girl has enchanted the Duke, but ultimately it makes no difference to him whether he pursues one woman or the other—they're all the same (*Ballata: Questa o quella*). The Duke flirts with Countess Ceprano, as Rigoletto cruelly mocks her husband. Another courtier, Marullo, excitedly tells his friends of his surprising discovery: Rigoletto has a mistress.

Rigoletto suggests several unscrupulous methods of disposing of superfluous husbands. Realizing that he is the object of Rigoletto's sarcasm, Count Ceprano arranges for a midnight meeting with some of the courtiers to obtain vengeance.

Another nobleman, Monterone, storms in to denounce the Duke for dishonoring his daughter. He curses the Duke, and when mocked viciously by Rigoletto, Monterone turns on Rigoletto and curses him as well.

Scene 2. Brooding over Monterone's curse, Rigoletto returns to the secluded house where he shields his daughter, Gilda, away from the licentiousness of the Duke's court. He is confronted by Sparafucile, a professional assassin (*Duet: Va! Non ho niente*), who offers his services should Rigoletto ever wish to rid himself of an enemy. Rigoletto sends the man away. He muses on the similarity of their professions (*Monologue: Pari siamo*)—Rigoletto constantly wounding others with his wit, while Sparafucile uses a knife.

Gilda greets her father (*Duet: Figlia! Mio padre!*). She asks him about her mother, but he replies only that his wife was an angel who loved him. He refuses to divulge his real name and repeats his command that Gilda not leave their home, except to attend church. When her father asks if she has talked to any strangers, she evades his question. While Rigoletto is warning Giovanna, his housekeeper, to admit no one, the Duke steals in and hides. He is astonished to hear Rigoletto call Gilda his daughter. Father and daughter bid each other farewell, and Rigoletto departs.

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APPROXIMATE TIMINGS

This production will be performed
with one intermission.

Act I	1 hour
Intermission	25 minutes
Acts II & III	1 hour 10 minutes
TOTAL	2 hours 35 minutes

Lyric

Synopsis

continued

Gilda confesses to Giovanna that she is in love with a young man who has been following her home every day after church. The Duke now appears and declares his love for Gilda (Duet: *È il sol dell' anima*). He identifies himself as Gualtier Maldè, a penniless student. Hearing footsteps, he rushes off, leaving Gilda thinking lovingly of his name (Aria: *Caro nome*).

The courtiers appear, masked, ready to abduct Rigoletto's supposed mistress. Rigoletto surprises them by returning, but Marullo convinces him that they are planning to abduct the wife of Count Ceprano, who lives nearby. Rigoletto falls into their trap, permitting himself to be blindfolded and masked. Unknowingly, he assists the conspirators (Chorus: *Zitti, zitti*). Gilda cries out desperately to her father as she is carried off. Becoming suspicious, Rigoletto tears off the blindfold, realizes Gilda is gone, and cries, "Ah, the curse!"

INTERMISSION

ACT II

The Duke laments the loss of Gilda (Recitative and Aria: *Ella mi fu rapita!... Parmi veder le lagrime*). After the courtiers tell him of the abduction, he rejoices that the girl is now in the palace (Cabaletta: *Possente amor*).

When Rigoletto appears, he feigns nonchalance. Once it becomes clear to him that Gilda must be with the Duke, he tries to reach her, but the courtiers hold him back. His denunciation of their treachery dissolves into a bereft father's pleading (Aria: *Cortigiani, vil razza dannata*). Left alone with Rigoletto, Gilda confesses that she is in love with the Duke (Duet: *Tutte le feste al tempio... Piangi, fanciulla*) and begs her father to forgive him. As Monterone appears on his way to prison, Rigoletto swears that they both will be avenged.

ACT III

Rigoletto has brought Gilda to Sparafucile's inn to prove her lover's faithlessness. As they lurk in the darkness, the Duke swaggers in. After proclaiming the fickleness of woman (Canzone: *La donna è mobile*), he showers attention on Maddalena, the assassin's attractive sister. As the flirtation progresses, Rigoletto tries to comfort his despairing daughter (Quartet: *Un dì, si ben rammentomi... Bella figlia dell' amore*). He orders her to return home, disguise herself as a boy, and meet him in Verona. He strikes a bargain with Sparafucile for the Duke's murder and then departs.

Gilda overhears Maddalena begging her brother to spare the handsome stranger's life. Sparafucile agrees to deceive Rigoletto by substituting the corpse of the next person who appears at the inn. Having returned to the inn determined to sacrifice herself so the Duke may live, Gilda becomes Sparafucile's next victim.

At the stroke of midnight, Rigoletto pays the assassin. Sparafucile offers to dispose of the body, but Rigoletto reserves for himself the satisfaction of throwing the sack containing his enemy's corpse in the river. Suddenly he hears the Duke's voice. Rigoletto frantically cuts open the sack and finds his dying daughter (Duet: *V'ho ingannato... Lassù in cielo*). Begging her father's forgiveness, she dies. The despairing Rigoletto cries out once more, "Ah, the curse!" **L**

Lyric

Director's note

by Mary Birnbaum



One of the most rewarding aspects of directing standard repertoire is the opportunity to re-examine characters who were crafted before the dawn of modern dramaturgy in order to try to give voice to their stories with sufficient complexity and agency.

Is a woman a priceless treasure worth stealing, or a worthless and interchangeable commodity (“*Questa o quella*”)? The conflict within *Rigoletto* about the value of women (despite their virginity—or rather, the loss of it) exists within every courtier in the stormy, godless autocracy of Mantua in the 1550s. The repellent attitudes of the charismatic Duke and his cronies (and Rigoletto, when it comes to women who are not related to him), set to Verdi’s catchiest music makes us understand why the censors of the composer’s own day were “triggered” by the work.

Two often overlooked details of the text of the libretto fashioned after Victor Hugo’s play haunted me as I thought about telling the story of Rigoletto and his daughter to the audience at Lyric: the absence of an actual Duchess of Mantua from the stage and the story, and Gilda’s complete lack of any memory of her mother, who died when Gilda was a helpless infant. These two clues pointed me to a world where women were completely absent.

Mantua is a court without “the female touch”—the out-of-court Duchess of Mantua (in a striking parallel with the Last Duchess in the poem of Robert Browning, Verdi’s contemporary) is present only in a fresco on the wall. Rigoletto’s wife is an angel (but she is dead), and women who serve at the pleasure of the court are just trying to survive. Women don’t have a voice at the Duke’s court: Verdi didn’t include a female chorus. Even when women are dressed as men—like the Page, or Gilda in the final act—they are always lacking some critical piece of information, and, as a result, are disenfranchised.

In light of this prevalent power dynamic, it’s easy at first to imagine Gilda as a victim of sexual assault who has been brainwashed by her subservient love for the Duke. Gilda’s actions to save a despicable if vocally sweet seducer despite his disregard for her are, by modern-day standards, indefensible, a pure hangover from the trauma he has caused.

Then I started to think about Gilda’s core need, even before the Duke enjoys and then abandons her, to have her father tell her about their family, about her mother, to learn any shred of personal detail; she even begs Rigoletto to disclose his—*their*—family name. I began to think: What if, in the grand tradition of teenage girls, Gilda was a partial agent rather than a victim? What if she has been thinking of other ways to escape the perpetual and suffocating nameless present that her father has trapped her in, even as he claims that her lockdown only stems from his paternal love?

The Duke’s romancing fulfills a deep need when he gives Gilda a name to hang her dreams of a future on—a name for herself no matter how silly—Gualtier Maldè. From the Duke, Gilda receives a purpose and a mission—to make his name hers or go down trying.

I researched the history of abduction during the 16th century in Italy, which reveals that women were political property although not always and not necessarily in a purely sexual way. What if, though Gilda’s abduction was terrifying, her experience at court was not? “*Tutte le feste*,” Gilda’s confession, includes her own guilt at betraying her father’s wishes, but she shares no details of her encounter with the Duke. It may be obvious to read her omission as a confession of an act of violence, but what if her shame was not wholly due to survivor’s guilt but instead was the shame of a daughter who had ambitions—a life with a name of her own—outside of what her father demanded? How would the story change if Gilda’s consent had been given on the basis of a life of stability promised, even if falsely, to Gilda by the Duke?

These are the questions with which I started to re-stage and re-envision a 19-year-old production using the pre-existing design. For inspiration in staging the bodies within the storm, I looked to Caravaggio and, possibly more importantly, the great 17th-century artist Artemisia Gentileschi, a sexual assault victim who took matters into her own storytelling hands both by painting her rapist and calling him out in legal proceedings. I felt that Gilda, even if denied this full agency by her death, deserves her own story, and I have tried to let her tell it. L

Rigolettos at Lyric

More than a dozen baritones have taken the demanding lead role here. Allow us to re-introduce five of the giants who graced the Lyric stage in the company's first 40 years.

by Roger Pines

Over 12 seasons, 16 prominent baritones have taken on the title role in Verdi's *Rigoletto* at Lyric Opera of Chicago. Many will still be well remembered by aficionados, while others have proven less immortal. Still, all carry a piece of the company's rich history with this work, which dates back to its premiere here in 1955.

Of all Verdi's baritone roles, *Rigoletto's* protagonist is surely the most vocally, theatrically, and emotionally demanding. The role requires a sizable, warm-toned, wide-ranging instrument, capable of extraordinarily varied expressiveness. The singing must excel not only at full power but also in some of the most intimately scaled passages Verdi ever gave a singer. Any *Rigoletto* needs tremendous acting skill, as well as exceptional physical stamina. Here we take a look back at the portrayals by five titans—four Italians and an American—who graced the Lyric stage during the company's first four decades.



Nancy Sorensen

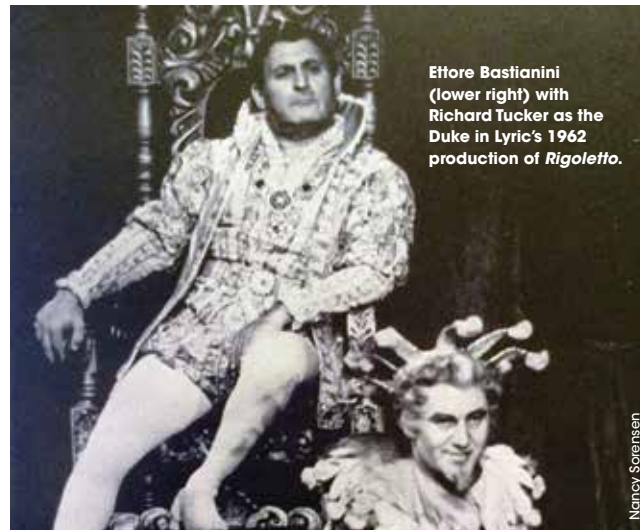
Ettore Bastianini with Gianna D'Angelo in Lyric's 1962 production of *Rigoletto*.



Tito Gobbi
The Complete Artist

This company's unofficial "godfather," Tito Gobbi provided wise counsel in many artistic matters during Lyric's first quarter-century. Backstage he exuded warmth and bonhomie, while always communicating a passionate devotion to his art. From 1955 to 1973 at Lyric, he sang 21 of the nearly 100 roles in his repertoire. The *Chicago Sun-Times* 1955 review of his performance in the company's first *Rigoletto* noted that he "gave a galvanizing performance. It was a choice piece of drama and equally honorable vocally." He would return to the role three seasons later.

Gobbi recorded *Rigoletto* in 1955, but any portrayal of his needed to be seen, not just heard. Although only 33 years old at the time, he's in commanding form throughout a 1946 television film. Achingly tender in the scenes with Gilda, he also has the biting rage for the dramatic confrontation with the courtiers. Never a luxuriant or unflinchingly effortless sound, Gobbi's voice nonetheless handles each challenge comfortably, often achieving memorable beauty (for example, when *Rigoletto* tells Gilda how his now-dead wife had loved him, Gobbi's singing is exquisitely sweet). In every moment his face, voice, and physicality work in perfect unity, with a truly complete portrayal as the gratifying result.



Ettore Bastianini (lower right) with Richard Tucker as the Duke in Lyric's 1962 production of *Rigoletto*.

Nancy Sorensen

Ettore Bastianini
The Lion

Following Titta Ruffo's vocal decline in the mid-1920s, Italians found their new baritone hero three decades later in Ettore Bastianini. Ruffo famously possessed "la voce del leone" ("the voice of a lion"), and the same could have been said of Bastianini, whose power and sheer density of sound were astonishing. He earned legions of admirers in Europe and America—including Chicago, where *Rigoletto* was the third of his seven Lyric roles from 1955 to 1965. Alas, he died in 1967, at only 43.

Bastianini's throat cancer was diagnosed in November 1962, the same month that he sang *Rigoletto* at Lyric. Unaware of his condition, the critics judged him harshly—in fact, one called his singing "dry" and "monochromatic," which is simply not true. Admittedly, in surviving recorded excerpts from that production his pitch is often questionable, and softer passages no longer come easily, but it's clear that this is still an impressive instrument.

No video exists of Bastianini in the role, but in a 1960 studio recording, he's simply magnificent. The voice stuns with its power and dark mahogany timbre, which are never an end in themselves—the vocalism serves the character. This is absolutely honest, unfettered singing, with the words always meaningfully inflected. The leonine sound in the "vendetta" duet with Gilda is hair-raising, but in contrast, whenever Verdi needs restraint from *Rigoletto*—for example, in his low-lying portion of the quartet—Bastianini is also ideal.



Cornell MacNeil **The American**

Minnesota-born Cornell MacNeil, Lyric's first American Rigoletto, was also the first American Verdi baritone to achieve a significant presence in Italy. Having debuted at Milan's La Scala in 1959, he subsequently starred in Verona, Palermo, Naples, Turin, and Parma, earning huge acclaim for his imposing voice and innate sense of Verdi style.

MacNeil appeared in eight operas at Lyric over a quarter century (1957 to 1982), including two runs with *Rigoletto* (1958, 1965). Following his first Lyric performance as the jester—replacing Gobbi at the last moment—the *Chicago Daily Tribune* review commented that his Rigoletto might eventually be compared with that of another American baritone, the great Leonard Warren. The promise would soon be fulfilled, with Rigoletto becoming one of his signature roles.

More than his two studio recordings of *Rigoletto*, MacNeil's 1981 Metropolitan telecast truly reveals his eminence. The 59-year-old singer's voice has retained the necessary scale, his Italian is exemplary, and he delivers all the key moments with fervor. His vast experience in the role makes even small physical gestures telling. Watch, for example, when Rigoletto suddenly grips his daughter's hand in their first duet, or when, thinking of her, he picks up a scarf in the Duke's palace and barely suppresses a sob of disappointment in seeing that it isn't Gilda's. MacNeil delivers unusual dignity in the final dialogue with Sparafucile, contrasting with his character's agonizing disbelief when he hears the Duke's voice in the distance.



Piero Cappuccilli **The Master**

Revered at La Scala and everywhere else in Europe, Piero Cappuccilli starred in 10 operas at Lyric from 1969 to 1986 (all but two were by Verdi). Critics hailed his 1971 Rigoletto for the portrayal's unfailingly beautiful vocalism. At the same time, the *Sun-Times* review mentioned the moment in Act Two when this Rigoletto “abandoned his jesting to ride fury and revenge on the courtiers”—it was “full-bodied and important and theatrically moving.”

Cappuccilli's greatest strength was always his impeccable singing. He accomplished feats of masterfully smooth phrasing, the voice inevitably flowing with incomparable consistency. Many Rigolettos overreach vocally, but that was not Cappuccilli's way. Never forcing his voice, in every instance he shows the value of truly *singing* rather than ranting through the role.

Those familiar with Cappuccilli's recordings, which aren't always sufficiently dramatic, will be surprised to watch him onscreen in a 1981 *Rigoletto* from Geneva. Even without detailed stage direction, he's totally absorbed in the role. Adopting a heavy, plodding walk, he seems a deeply pathetic figure. At the palace, singing the “La ra, la ra” passage, he's dazed, even broken, seeming hardly to know where he is. When the courtiers throw him to the floor, he begins his aria lying prostrate, singing *and* acting very movingly. In Act Three, when gazing at the sack and singing “Egli è la... morto” [“He's there...dead”], his voice is almost choked with stunned incredulity. Seconds later, seeing that it's his dying daughter and not the Duke, on the phrase “Chi t'ha colpita?” (“Who struck you?”) Rigoletto's emotional pain—indeed, his *humanity*—is all there.



Leo Nucci The Singing Actor

With a splendidly colorful instrument, plus the necessary range and style, Leo Nucci became a crucial Verdi performer beginning in the late 1970s. At Lyric he sang Verdi's Renato (1980), Don Carlo di Vargas (1988), and Rigoletto (1990). The *Chicago Sun-Times* found Nucci "superlative" as a Rigoletto who "easily dominates the stage in his big scenes." Having already sung the role nearly 150 times by then, he was still singing it at age 74 (!) at La Scala in 2016.

Onstage in a Zurich production from 2006, Nucci's Rigoletto shows exceptional physical and facial detail. Remarkably agile when cavorting in his jester costume, he's also very strong physically, even pulling the sack containing Gilda's body while sustaining a high G. He has amazingly expressive eyes, memorably reflecting the haunted quality he brings to the words "Quel vecchio maledivami" ("That old man cursed me"). There's some effortful singing occasionally, but late in his career, Nucci still has the music fully in hand.

For the Gilda/Rigoletto scenes to touch the heart, there must be truly sincere affection between them—Verdi's music demands it. In the Zurich production, Nucci gets this from Romanian soprano Elena Moşuc, and he responds in kind. How wonderful to watch his whole face and demeanor soften in their first duet (when leaving the house, he actually blows her a kiss). Later, at the palace, he's desperately sad, especially when singing his heartbroken plea to the backs of the unfeeling courtiers. Like his great predecessors, Nucci never fails to reach the truth of a role that demands everything a great baritone has to give. **L**

Roger Pines writes regularly for Opera magazine (U.K.), opera-company programs throughout America, and major recording companies. He has been a faculty member at Northwestern University's Bienen School of Music since 2019.

Now Playing: Igor Golovatenko

Baritone Igor Golovatenko demonstrated extraordinary musical versatility early on, graduating first as a cellist from the Saratov Conservatory, then as a conductor from Moscow's Tchaikovsky Conservatory before turning to vocal studies at the Moscow Academy of Choral Arts. He first wowed Chicago audiences in 2022, with his Lyric debut as Posa in *Don Carlos*. *Stage and Cinema* noted his "soaring and sinuous voice" and "gorgeously sonorous tone."

Now a mainstay at his hometown Bolshoi Theatre, Golovatenko has made an indelible mark at top houses around the world in a wide variety of repertoire, including classic Russian lyric-baritone roles such as Yeletsy in *The Queen of Spades* (his Metropolitan Opera debut role in 2019) and the title role in *Eugene Onegin*. Laura Servidei of *Bachtrack*, reviewing his Zurich Onegin, called him "elegant and aristocratic, but capable of outbursts which managed to cut through [the] thick orchestral texture," adding that, "in the finale, his transformation was impressive, his desperation palpable."

Golovatenko's Italianate tone, natural *slancio*, and grand-scale theatrical presence seem made to order for the meaty dramatic roles of Giuseppe Verdi, which form the heart of his repertoire. His Verdi credentials include all the staples—Germont in *La traviata*, Rodrigue in *Don Carlos*, Renato in *Un ballo in maschera*, Iago in *Otello*, Di Luna in *Il trovatore* and, of course, his current Lyric role, Rigoletto—as well as some less often heard but equally intense characters such as Montfort in *Les vêpres siciliennes*, Seid in *Il corsaro*, and Don Carlo in *La forza del destino*, which he unveiled in a riveting performance at the Met last season.

What makes Verdi's towering figures such a perfect fit for Golovatenko? "I love his mode of writing for the voice," the baritone said during a Met intermission interview. "This is very wise, you know—he doesn't do the full energy in the first aria or first scene. He builds the role like a very good dramaturg."

In his current assignment, Golovatenko will have an opportunity to take full advantage of Verdi's careful pacing and dramatic range. A YouTube video of the embittered jester's showpiece, "Cortigiani! vil razza dannata," makes it clear that Chicago audiences are in for a treat. Golovatenko throws himself into Verdi's roiling opening phrases like a fury, figurative fists flying, then encases those angry fists in a glove of vocal velvet for the aria's pleading second half, the warmth of his tone and his smooth legato expressing the full depth of his paternal affection. After his first outing in the role, in Savona, *La Repubblica* called him "an admirable Rigoletto . . . a splendid voice, beautiful portamento, ductile phrasing, and perfect diction"—clearly a worthy successor to the great Lyric Rigolettos of the past.

—Louise T. Guinther

Artist profiles



IGOR GOLOVATENKO RIGOLETTO

Previously at Lyric: Rodrigue/*Don Carlos* (2022/23).

The Russian baritone has been acclaimed for his performances in theatres such as the Royal Opera House Covent Garden, Metropolitan Opera, Vienna State Opera, Opéra national de Paris, and his home theatre, the Bolshoi in Moscow. Recent roles include Simon Boccanegra at the Teatro Regio di Parma, Iago/*Otello* at the Teatro di San Carlo in Naples, Robert/*Iolanta* (Berlin Philharmonic), Riccardo/*I puritani* (Vienna), and the title role of Eugene Onegin at the Metropolitan Opera. Last season, Golovatenko appeared as Don Carlo/*La forza del destino* at the Met, Amonasro/*Aida* in Arena di Verona, Rodrigue/*Don Carlos* for his debut at the Vienna State Opera, where he later returned as Germont/*La traviata*, Guido di Monforte/*I Vespri Siciliani* and Iago/*Otello*. In the 2019/20 Season, he made his Met debut as Prince Yeletsy in *Pique Dame*, and in 2018/19 he made his North American debut as Eugene Onegin at Washington National Opera.



MANÉ GALOYAN GILDA

Lyric debut

This season the Armenian soprano will sing Micaëla in *Carmen* at the Royal Opera House in London, and have two more role and house debuts: as Vitellia in *La clemenza di Tito* at Opéra de Monte Carlo and as Liù in *Turandot* at the Theater Basel. Additionally, she will return to the Bayerische Staatsoper as Adina in *L'elisir d'amore*. Last season, she performed Suor Angelica and Lauretta in a new production of *Il Trittico* at the Deutsche Oper Berlin, Pamina in *Die Zauberflöte* at the Wiener Staatsoper, Donna Anna in *Don Giovanni* with the Canadian Opera Company, Violetta in *La traviata* with Santa Fe Opera and Deutsche Oper Berlin, Suor Angelica with the Bayerische Staatsoper, and the title role in *The Cunning Little Vixen* with Detroit Opera. Some concert highlights included Rachmaninoff's *The Bells* with The Hallé at the BBC Proms and a gala concert with the Detroit Opera Orchestra. Other recent highlights include her debut with Dutch National Opera as Violetta, the title role in *Luisa Miller* with the Glyndebourne Festival, and her Metropolitan Opera debut as Prilepa/Chlöe in *Pique Dame*.



JAVIER CAMARENA DUKE OF MANTUA

Lyric debut

The Mexican tenor's 2024/25 Season includes a house debut with Dallas Opera as Alfredo in *La traviata* staged by Louisa Muller; he will sing the role also at the Gran Teatre del Liceu in a David McVicar production. The tenor also returns to Bergamo to sing Ernesto in *Don Pasquale*, and to the

Teatro di San Carlo in Naples to portray Roméo in Gounod's *Roméo et Juliette*. Recent highlights include Elvino in *La sonnambula* at the Vienna Staatsoper, his signature role of Nemorino in *L'elisir d'amore* at the Staatsoper Munich, and Tonio in a new production of *La fille du régiment* at Opera de Monte Carlo. In the 2023/24 Season, he returned to Spain three times, for Miguel del Arco's new production of *Rigoletto* (Duke) at Teatro Real de Madrid, as Roméo in *Roméo et Juliette* at the Palacio Euskalduna in Bilbao, and Ramiro in *La cenerentola* at Barcelona's Liceu. Other recent highlights include a return to the Metropolitan Opera as Nemorino in *L'elisir d'amore*, Edgardo in *Lucia di Lammermoor* at the Opéra national de Paris, and a debut as Alfredo in *La traviata* at the Opéra de Monte-Carlo.



SOLOMAN HOWARD SPARAFUCILE

Previously at Lyric: Grand Inquisitor/*Don Carlos* (2022/23) and Wurm/*Luisa Miller* (2019/20).

A graduate of Washington National Opera's Cafritz Young Artist Program, Howard's recent highlights include appearances with the Metropolitan Opera (*La forza del destino*, *Turandot*, *Aida*, *The Magic Flute*), Royal Opera House (*Aida*, *Das Rheingold*), Teatro Real (*Don Carlos*), LA Opera (*Don Carlos*), Opéra National de Bordeaux (*Simon Boccanegra*), Staatsoper Hamburg (*Rigoletto*), San Francisco Opera (*Turandot*), and the Santa Fe Opera (*La Bohème*, *Don Giovanni*). At Washington National Opera, he performed in *The Magic Flute*, *Show Boat*, *Don Giovanni*, *Approaching Ali*, *The Lion*, *The Unicorn*, and *Me, Nabucco*, and Philip Glass's *Appomattox*. Future performances include the roles of Hunding in Wagner's *Die Walküre* with both the Royal Opera House and the Santa Fe Opera, Sparafucile/*Rigoletto* and Sarastro/*Die Zauberflöte* with the Metropolitan Opera, Colline in *La Bohème* with the Santa Fe Opera, and Banquo in *Macbeth* with Washington National Opera. Future performances include Washington National Opera, as well as English National (*Luisa Miller*), Gran Teatre del Liceu (*The Barber of Seville*), and the Met (*The Magic Flute*).



ZOIE REAMS MADDELENA

Previously at Lyric: Chief's Daughter #2 and Sibly/*Proximity* (2022/23) and Ragonde/*Le Comte Ory* (2022/23).

Recent engagements for the American mezzo-soprano include Mandane/*Idaspe* at Quantum Theatre, Beggar Woman/*Sweeney Todd* at Austin Opera, and soloist in *Messiah* at Washington National Cathedral. Other recent highlights include Lily in the Metropolitan Opera's *Porgy and Bess*, Jane in Cincinnati Opera's *Castor and Patience*, the title role/*Carmen* (Opéra Louisiane), Margret/*Wozzeck* (Des Moines Metro Opera), and Bernstein's Symphony No. 1: *Jeremiah* (Staatstheater Cottbus Philharmonic Orchestra). She has also been heard as Maddalena/*Rigoletto* (Wolf Trap Opera), in Beethoven's Symphony No. 9 (National Symphony

Orchestra), and in Handel's *Messiah* (Las Vegas Philharmonic). An alumna of the Houston Grand Opera Studio, Reams appeared in HGO productions of *La traviata*, *Elektra*, *West Side Story*, *Nixon in China*, and in world premieres of Jake Heggie's *It's a Wonderful Life* and Laura Kaminsky's *Some Light Emerges*. Other notable appearances include Clarice/*La pietra del paragone* (Wolf Trap Opera), Tituba/Robert Ward's *The Crucible* (The Glimmerglass Festival), and Sandman/*Hansel and Gretel* (Opéra Louisiane).



**ANDREW MANEA
MONTERONE**

Lyric debut

The Romanian American baritone recently made his role debut as the Duke of Nottingham in *Roberto Devereux* with San Francisco Opera. Last season, he made house debuts with Nashville Opera, singing Tonio in *Pagliacci*; North Carolina Opera as Germont in *La traviata*; Sarasota Opera as Escamillo in *Carmen*; and The Grange Festival in Hampshire, U.K. singing Scarpia in *Tosca*. He also returned to Maryland Opera for Scarpia, joined the Indianapolis Symphony for Handel's *Messiah*, and participated in the Metropolitan Opera's workshop of Mason Bates's *The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier and Clay*. This season, he returns to North Carolina Opera to sing Don Carlo in *Ernani*. Recent highlights include Ford in *Falstaff* with Palm Beach Opera, and soloist for *Carmina Burana* at Carnegie Hall and for the *Bravissimo Bel Canto* concert at Maryland Opera. Previously, Manea debuted with Arizona Opera as Escamillo in *Carmen* and Opera Omaha as Lorenzo in *I Capuleti e i Montecchi*, performed the role of Montano in Pacific Symphony's *Otello*, and returned to Palm Beach Opera as Danilo in *The Merry Widow*.



**TRAVON D. WALKER
BORSA**

Lyric debut

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 1st Prisoner/*Fidelio*, 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 2024 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 and a 2024 Luminarts Cultural Foundation Men's Voice Fellowship. *Travon D. Walker is sponsored by the Robert & Isabelle Bass Foundation, Inc.*



**SANKARA HAROUNA
MARULLO**

Previously at Lyric: Benny Paret and Benny Jr./*Champion* (2023/24).

A Chicago native and first-year Ryan Opera Center baritone, Harouna joined Portland Opera as a Resident Artist in the 2023/24 Season, where he was seen in *Le nozze di Figaro* and *The Snowy Day*. A former apprentice artist at Des Moines Metro Opera, he performed there as Moralès/*Carmen* and Homecoming Soldier/Redler's *The Falling and the Rising*. Other previous engagements include Greensboro Opera, Atlanta Opera, Dayton Opera, Kentucky Opera, and Cincinnati Opera. In concert, he performed Mozart's *Missa Brevis* with the Dayton Philharmonic Orchestra. Harouna previously participated in the artist-development programs of Atlanta Opera, Kentucky Opera, and Dayton Opera. He received his Bachelor of Arts in Music in Vocal Performance at Kentucky State University. *Sankara Harouna is sponsored by Lead Sponsors Michael Steinberg and Salme Harju Steinberg.*



**CHRISTOPHER HUMBERT, JR.
COUNT CEPRANO**

Lyric debut

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 2nd Prisoner/*Fidelio* and 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.*



**ADIA EVANS
COUNTESS CEPRANO**

Lyric debut

A first-year Ryan Opera Center soprano from Baltimore, Evans will also appear this season as Girlfriend 2/*Blue* and Theresa Alvarez/*The Listeners*. In the 2023/24 Season, the soprano debuted at The Cliburn in Recital with Jake Heggie, the Dayton Philharmonic (Handel's *Messiah*), and Annapolis Opera (First Lady/*The Magic Flute*). Other recent highlights include Mimi/*La bohème* with the Borderland Arts Foundation and Beethoven's 9th with the National Orchestral Institute and Marin Alsop. Evans has performed with the Santa Fe Opera, Merola Opera Program, Fort Worth Opera, Dallas Opera Guild, Opera

Columbus, Tulsa Opera, and Knoxville Opera, among others. Her numerous honors include an Encouragement Award from the 2024 London Foundation Competition, third place in the 2023 and 2024 Metropolitan Opera Laffont Competition, Midwest Region, second place and the soprano prize in the 2023 George Shirley Vocal Competition, and first place in the 2023 Dallas Opera Guild Lonestar Vocal Competition. *Adia Evans is sponsored by Lead Sponsor the H. Earl and Miriam U. Hoover Foundation and cosponsors Peggy and Ron Beata.*



MAIRE THERESE CARMACK GIOVANNA

Lyric debut

This season, the American mezzo-soprano will make her house debut at Houston Grand Opera as Dodo in Missy Mazzoli's *Breaking the Waves* and return to the Metropolitan Opera for *The Magic Flute—Holiday Presentation* (Second Lady). She also makes her San Francisco Opera debut in *Die Zauberflöte* (Dritte Dame) and returns to Deutsche Oper Berlin to reprise Der Missmut in Rued Langgaard's *Antikrist*, which will be released on DVD in a collaboration with NAXOS. In concert, Carmack makes debuts with the Oregon Bach Festival as alto soloist in Beethoven's 9th Symphony and with UF Symphony Orchestra as alto soloist in Mahler's *Resurrection Symphony*. Carmack joined the Metropolitan Opera for the 2023/24 Season as a member of the Lindemann Young Artist Development Program. The 2022/23 Season marked her European debut with Deutsche Oper Berlin, where she opened the season in the title role of *Carmen*. During her year-long tenure with the company, she was seen in *Don Quichotte* (Dulcinée), *Rigoletto* (Giovanna/Maddalena), *Die Zauberflöte* (Dritte Dame), *Lucia di Lammermoor* (Alisa), *Manon Lescaut* (Singer), *Salome* (Page), and *Antikrist* (Der Missmut).



GEMMA NHA PAGE

Lyric debut

The Korean-Australian soprano and first-year Ryan Opera Center member was a national semi-finalist for the 2024 Metropolitan Opera Laffont Competition and a winner in the 2024 Gerda Lissner Foundation Vocal Competition. In the 2022/23 Season, Nha made her house and role debut at Volksoper Wien as Barbarina/*Le nozze di Figaro*, a role she will perform this season at Lyric. She will also appear at Lyric this season as Jess/*The Listeners*. Nha recently received her Master of Music degree from The Juilliard School, where she was a Toulmin Scholar and recipient of the Kovner Fellowship. Roles there included Ruth Baldwin/John Musto and Mark Campbell's *Later the Same Evening* and Florida/Cavalli's *Erismena*. Other operatic credits include Zerlina/*Don Giovanni* and Esmeralda/*Die verkaufte Braut* with the University of Music and Performing Arts Vienna, where she completed undergraduate studies. In concert, Nha has sung Handel's *Dixit Dominus* and *Messiah*, and she performed with Patti Lupone on her 2018 *Don't Monkey with Broadway* tour at the Sydney Opera House. *Gemma Nha is sponsored by Lead Sponsor Peter Scheuermann and cosponsors Drs. George and Sally Dunea.*



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.*



MARY BIRNBAUM DIRECTOR

Lyric debut

Birnbaum has directed opera and music theater around the world, including staging critically acclaimed productions of Rossi's *L'Orfeo*, Missy Mazzoli's *Proving Up*, and Britten's *The Rape of Lucretia* at The Juilliard School and *The Classical Style* at Ojai and Carnegie Hall. In 2019, her production of Puccini's *La Bohème* opened the Santa Fe Opera season, and her production of Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas* toured to Opera Holland Park and Opéra de Versailles. Birnbaum has also directed productions at Opera Philadelphia, The New York Philharmonic, Seattle Opera, Bard Music Festival, Virginia Opera, Virginia Arts Festival, Ojai Festival, Montclair Peak Performances, and Boston Baroque in the US, as well as in Taiwan (with the National Symphony Orchestra), Central America (National Theatre of Costa Rica and Guatemala), Australia, and Israel. World premieres include *In a Grove* by Christopher Cerrone and Stephanie Fleischmann and *The Classical Style* by Steven Stucky and Jeremy Denk. On the faculty of The Juilliard School since 2011, Birnbaum also coaches acting in the Lindemann Young Artist Development Program at the Metropolitan Opera. She was named general and artistic director of Opera Saratoga in 2023.



ROBERT INNES HOPKINS SET DESIGNER

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

The renowned British designer has earned equal acclaim in opera and theater. Recent highlights at the Royal Shakespeare Company include this season's *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, *All's Well That Ends Well* (2022), and *Pericles* (2020). Last season, he designed *Dalibor*, *Orfeo ed Eurydice*, and *Dido and Aeneas* at The Grange Festival. At San Francisco Opera, he recently designed *La traviata* (2022) and *Tosca* (2021). In the 2018/19 Season, Innes Hopkins designed for a new production of *War and Peace* (Welsh National Opera), the latter a collaboration with his frequent colleague, director David Pountney. Among Hopkins's many previous productions with Pountney have been *Prince Igor* (Zurich Opera House), *Carmen* (Bolshoi Theatre), and most recently Iain Bell's *In Parenthesis* (Welsh National Opera, world premiere). Among the designer's most important operatic achievements are works of Verdi (*Rigoletto*, Welsh National Opera), Wagner (*The Flying Dutchman*, WNO; *Lohengrin*, San Francisco Opera; *Tristan und Isolde*, Venice), Janáček (*The Cunning Little Vixen*, San Francisco Opera), Britten (*Peter Grimes*, *Billy Budd*, both at The Santa Fe Opera), and Bernd Alois Zimmermann (*Die Soldaten* for the Ruhr Triennale, which won Germany's highly prestigious Opernwelt Award).



JANE GREENWOOD COSTUME DESIGNER

Previously at Lyric: Four productions since 1981, most recently *Nabucco* (2015/16) and *Rigoletto* (2012/13).

Originally from Liverpool, England, Greenwood has done extensive work at the Metropolitan Opera, including *Dialogue of the Carmelites*; Center Theatre Group, the Guthrie Theater, Shakespeare Theatre Company, Manhattan Theatre Club, the Dallas Opera, including the premiere of *Moby Dick*; Opera Theatre of St. Louis, and Shakespeare in the Park for the Public Theater. She has worked on more than 125 productions for Broadway since *The Ballad Of The Sad Café* in 1963. Recent Broadway credits include *Saint Joan*, *The Little Foxes*, *The Parisian Woman*, *Thérèse Raquin*, *You Can't Take It With You*, *Act One*, *The Snow Geese*, *Harvey*, *The House of Blue Leaves*, *That Championship Season*, *Driving Miss Daisy*, *Million Dollar Quartet*, and *A View From The Bridge*. Film credits include *Arthur*, *Glengarry Glen Ross*, *Oleanna*, and *Can't Stop the Music*. Greenwood has received 21 Tony nominations, the Tony Award for Lifetime Achievement, the 2016 Tony Award for *The Little Foxes*, and the Helen Hayes Lifetime Achievement Award. *Costume Designers are supported by the Richard P. and Susan Kiphart Costume Designer Endowed Chair.*



DUANE SCHULER LIGHTING DESIGNER

Previously at Lyric: More than 200 productions since 1977, most recently *Cinderella* (2023/24) and *Ernani* (2022/23).

Lyric's former resident lighting designer has recently created lighting for the National Taichung Theatre Taiwan (*Cendrillon*), the Santa Fe Opera (*The Flying Dutchman*), and LA Opera (*Tosca*). Other operatic highlights have included works as diverse as *Turandot* (La Scala), *Pelléas et Mélisande* and *La Rondine* (Metropolitan Opera, where he has designed more than 25 productions), *La fanciulla del West* (Opéra national de Paris), *Elektra*, *Benvenuto Cellini* (Salzburg Festival), *Fidelio* (Royal Opera House), *Béatrice et Bénédict* (Glyndebourne Festival Opera), *The Bassarids* (Dutch National Theatre in Amsterdam), and *Lohengrin* (Festspielhaus Baden-Baden). Ballet credits include *Swan Lake*, *Of Love and Rage*, *The Snow Maiden* (American Ballet Theatre), *The Sleeping Beauty* (Stuttgart Ballet), *Giselle* (Deutsche Ballet), and *The Nutcracker* (Houston Ballet). Theater credits include *House and Garden* (Manhattan Theatre Club), *The Royal Family* (Ahmanson Theatre in Los Angeles), and *The Importance of Being Earnest* (Broadway). Schuler is a founding partner of the Schuler Shook design firm. *Duane Schuler is supported by the Mary-Louise and James S. Aagard Lighting Director Endowed Chair.*



MICHAEL BLACK CHORUS DIRECTOR

The Australian Chorus Director is in his 12th 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. Stoffer Chorus Director Endowed Chair.*



JOHN METZNER WIG MASTER & 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 The 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 in London. *John Metzner is supported by the Marlys A. Beider Wigmaster and Makeup Designer Endowed Chair.*

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Heather Wittles
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Assistant Principal
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John D. Robinson
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English Horn

Judith Zunamon Lewis

Clarinet

Heesoo Kim, *Principal*
Susan Warner,
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Bass Clarinet

Susan Warner,
Acting

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

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Lewis Kirk

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Samuel Hamzem
Neil Kimel

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Will Baker

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Rich Janicki, *percussion*

^{*} On leave, 2024/25 Season

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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
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Laureen Janeczek-Wysocki
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Heidi Spoor
Stephani Springer
Sherry Watkins
Tara Wheeler**Mezzo-Soprano**Emma Dickens
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Kelsea Webb**Mezzo-Soprano**Christina G. Adams
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Megan Fleischmann
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Diana Stoic**Mezzo-Soprano**Leah Dexter
Sadie Cheslak
Miya Higashiyama
Emily Price
Marissa Simmons**Tenor**Esteban Cordero
Klaus Georg
Ernest C. Jackson Jr
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Brian Skoog**Bass**Samuel Dewese
Joseph Lodato
Douglas Peters
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The Patrick G. and Shirley W. Ryan Opera Center, marking its 50th anniversary this season, 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 performs a concert with the Civic Orchestra of Chicago in June.
L-R: Christopher Humbert, Jr., Ian Rucker, Travon D. Walker, Daniel Espinal, Sankara Harouna, Finn Sagal, Gemma Nha, Sophia Maekawa, Adia Evans, Lucy Baker, Emily Richter. Not pictured: Michael Banwarth, Chi-Yuan Lin, Marinette Gomez, Gemma DeCetra.

Lyric

Lyric

RYAN
OPERA
CENTER
50TH

Decade 1: Raise the Curtain!

In 1973, the leadership of Lyric Opera of Chicago launched one of the earliest professional programs of its kind. Here, the first installment of our ongoing celebration of the 50th anniversary of The Patrick G. and Shirley W. Ryan Opera Center.



Clockwise, from top left: The Inaugural Ensemble of Apprentice Artists; the program's first Director, Herbert Handt, makes a point; Ensemble member Patricia Guthrie (1973-74) with Giulio Favario, then Lyric's chorus director; a movement class during the first decade; Ensemble soprano Trudy Hines and guest tenor Frank Little in *The Rake's Progress*; backstage at the Civic Theatre, for a 1977 performance for students of *The Barber of Seville*.

Birth of a Training Program

1974

The Opera School of Chicago is first incorporated, comprising 10 Ensemble members. The *Chicago Tribune* describes the new program as "...the most exciting development to take place in local opera history since the establishment of Lyric Opera itself 20 seasons ago!"

Ensemble members perform 21 roles for Lyric's mainstage season.

General Manager Carol Fox and Music Director Bruno Bartoletti choose the multi-talented American lyric tenor and conductor Herbert Handt, formerly of the Berlin Staatsoper, to direct the program.

1975

The entire Ensemble joins the Grant Park Symphony Orchestra for its first-ever concert in the park. Repertoire includes excerpts from *Fidelio* and numerous Verdi arias.

1977

The School mounts *The Turn of the Screw* as its first-ever presentation in the 750-seat Civic Theatre.

Renowned American conductor Lee Schaenen—formerly assistant to Herbert von Karajan at La Scala and in Berlin—is appointed as director.

1981

The program is renamed as the Lyric Opera Center for American Artists.

Lyric

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CHICAGO

Spark inspiration.
Fuel creativity.
Ignite the stage.

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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.



Jason and the Argonauts

Lyric

**Lyric
Unlimited:
Learning
and Civic
Engagement**

Opera ... delivered!

Opera in the Neighborhoods brings youth-focused operas to students across the Chicago area and suburbs.

By Janie Ragsdale

"We are delighted to offer students an opportunity to experience opera through Lyric's *Opera in the Neighborhoods* program," says Jill LeCesne Potter, Senior Director of Learning Programs for Lyric Unlimited, the company's learning and civic engagement division. Under the banner of Lyric Unlimited, *Opera in the Neighborhoods* brings the magic of opera to audiences outside the opera house, presenting live performances of youth-focused operas at venues across the Chicago area.

After a bit of scaling back during the pandemic, the innovative and popular program returned to full strength

last fall with a full-fledged tour of *Jason and the Argonauts*, an original work composed by Gregory Spears with a libretto by Kathryn Walat. The tour of *Jason* introduced around 3,000 students to the magic of opera between five school performances and two public performances at Chicago's Vittum Theatre.

This fall, *Opera in the Neighborhoods* will present *Frida Kahlo and the Bravest Girl in the World*, a youth opera composed by Joe Illick with a libretto by Mark Campbell, and based on the acclaimed picture book by Laurence Anholt, with Spanish translation by Arlene Martínez-



The set for *Jason and the Argonauts* references the classical and the current.

Kyle Flubacker



Stylized perils onstage in *Jason and the Argonauts*.

Vázquez. Frida recounts the real-life friendship between a young girl living in Mexico City and the legendary artist Frida Kahlo. The opera features a vibrant cast of characters, including Frida's husband Diego Rivera and their beloved pets, all portrayed through engaging song and narrative.

"Operas like *Frida Kahlo and the Bravest Girl* in the World have the unique ability to inspire and educate by introducing historical figures with cultural significance and stories with relatable themes," explains Potter. Student audiences will delight in the opportunity to connect to this musical journey about facing your fears, learning new things, and the power of friendship.

The tour of *Frida* will feature 11 school performances at venues throughout the Chicago area and suburbs, as well as three performances at Chicago performing arts facilities for the public to enjoy. The lineup of public performances includes Kennedy-King College on October 12, the Merit School of Music on October 27, and the Reva and David Logan Center for the Arts on November 2.

By bringing opera directly to students, *Opera in the Neighborhoods* ensures that audiences across a wide range of communities can enjoy and be inspired by live performances. Lyric Unlimited also offers many resources for teachers to bring the arts into the classroom and integrate production themes into their curriculum.

The longstanding program initially featured abridged, family-friendly versions of classic operas (beginning with *Die Fledermaus* in 1994). While this content was more familiar to educators and parents, these classic works sometimes didn't easily connect with contemporary concerns. In response to feedback from the educators and communities the program serves, *Opera in the Neighborhoods* now features original works commissioned from world-class composers, which explore themes relevant to young audiences.

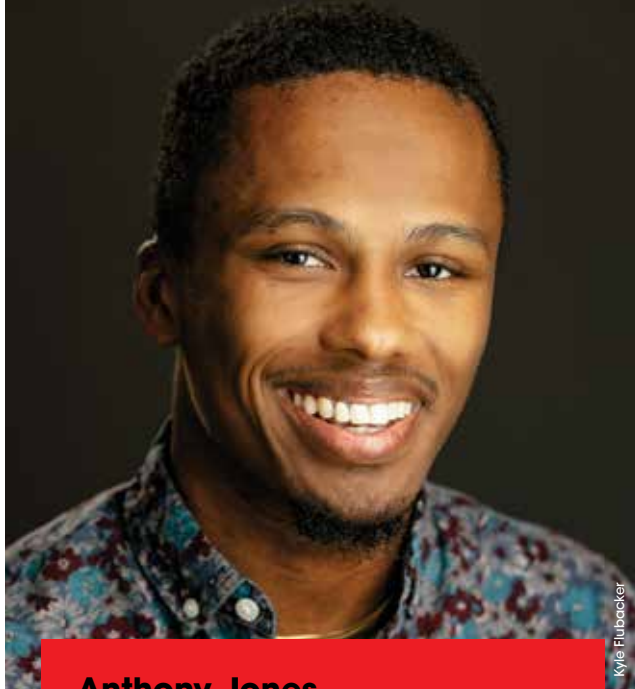
New this season, Lyric will be providing free tickets for all performances, demonstrating its commitment to offering affordable artistic experiences to audiences of all ages. "Our goal," explains Potter, "is to ensure the arts remain accessible to all and that an appreciation for opera continues through many generations to come."

To learn more about Opera in the Neighborhoods and other Lyric Learning & Civic Engagement Programming, visit lyricopera.org/learn-engage/.

Opera in the Neighborhoods is supported by **Lead Sponsor CIBC** with major support from the **Nancy W. Knowles Student and Family Performances Fund**, the **Robert and Penelope Steiner Family Foundation**, and an **Anonymous Donor**. 

People of Lyric

A behind-the-scenes conversation



Kyle Flubacker

Anthony Jones Audience Programs Associate

Hometown: I was born in D.C. and raised mostly right outside the city in Prince George's County, Maryland.

When did you start at Lyric?
August 1, 2022.

First opera you saw live: The first was *The Rake's Progress* by Stravinsky, during college. They were doing a production of it at either Opera Louisiana or New Orleans Opera. It was so different because I had been loading up on videos and stuff—but hearing an operatic voice in person is wild.

Favorite Chicago spot?
I have a membership at the Art Institute. I'll go sometimes after work, when they have the long summer hours, just to take a stroll.

What are your other passions?
I sing with the Adrian Dunn Singers. It's a group of mostly Chicago musicians that do a mix of mostly classical and gospel.

What is your new role here at Lyric?

I'm the Audience Programs Associate. We're working for audiences to engage with Lyric, and opera as an art form, in ways beyond just a mainstage production or a concert. That can be through pre-opera talks, where folks get an inside peek at the reasoning of the director and the composer and the artistic team as to why this piece has importance. It's the *Opera Insights* series, where we talk about what makes these shows—often set in different time periods and different locales—contemporary. What makes them present and applicable to everyday life for us, even now. And the *Opera in the Neighborhoods* performances, where we bring performance experiences for free to young people who might not even have any concept of what a theatrical work is or what live performance is. Before that, for two seasons I was the Lyric Unlimited Coordinator. I was renting a lot of school buses—I think about 112 school buses.

That is a lot. And they are really important.

We talk about it with the free student dress rehearsals, and *Opera in the Neighborhoods*. They're both free. But if you can't get there, then what does it matter? We had a performance of *Jason and the Argonauts* [the *Opera in the Neighborhoods* touring production last season] in Naperville, where we had 700 students in the house for the morning performance. That ended around 11:00. Then we had another 900 coming in for the noon performance. It's a little chaotic. Those days are always interesting!

What was your path to working at Lyric?

I started out being interested in music and singing in church choir. That was just something that everyone did. In high school they got me into the orchestra because they needed violinists. I initially had no plans to pursue music after high school, but my mom said, "Don't be 40 years old, regretting a chance you didn't take when you were 17," so I applied to LSU's music program and developed an interest in operatic vocal performance and music education. I ended up going more fully with the performance route, in the master's program at Roosevelt University. I worked in the Center for Arts Leadership there, and it made me think even more about ways to reach people. Approaching music and approaching performance in different ways. When I saw the listing for the job. I remember sitting there like, *Oh, my gosh, these are the things that I'm interested in*. It's meeting people where they are and trying to be accessible and inclusionary in everything that we do, as opposed to asking people to fit into our box or saying that the doors are open without putting down a runway.

Any Lyric production you are particularly proud of?

Fire Shut Up in My Bones. I thought it was super accessible. I showed it to other people afterwards, people with no classical music background, and someone would always say, "I didn't know that's what opera was."

What's the best part of the job?

One of the things I most enjoy about the work I do is that I feel we're making sure that opera is a living art form and not just an exhibition at a museum. There's a lot of use for museums. And I love going to the museum. But opera doesn't have to be a piece that you look at behind a proverbial glass case, where you think "Oh, look what they used to do," and then you exit the theater and go home. We can continue to grow and evolve, as countless other musical genres have done for decades. **L**