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AND SHIRLEY W.
RYAN OPERA
CENTER



Rising Stars in Concert

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Rising Stars in Concert

Saturday, April 13, 2024, 7:30 p.m.

Featuring the 2023/24 Ensemble of
The Patrick G. and Shirley W. Ryan Opera Center at Lyric Opera of Chicago

Members of the Lyric Opera Orchestra

Stefano Sarzani, *conductor*

Patricia Racette, *director*

Rising Stars in Concert is generously made possible by **Lead Sponsor the Donna Van Eekeren Foundation** with additional support from the **Dr. Scholl Foundation**, the **Chauncey and Marion D. McCormick Family Foundation**, **Frank Modruson & Lynne Shigley**, **Patricia A. Kenney & Gregory J. O'Leary**, **Dr. Nora Jaskowiak and Mr. Matthew Hinerfeld**, **Ms. Gay K. Stanek**, **Philip G. Lumpkin**, **Phyllis Neiman**, and **Ron & Margaret Beata**.

Listen to the broadcast of *Rising Stars in Concert* on 98.7 WFMT and wfmt.com on Sunday, May 12, at 6 p.m., generously made possible by the **Donna Van Eekeren Foundation**.

Program

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756 – 1791)	<i>Le nozze di Figaro</i> Overture	DONALD LEE III (Conductor)
George Frideric Handel (1685 – 1759)	<i>Giulio Cesare</i> "Da tempeste il legno infranto"	LINDSEY REYNOLDS (Cleopatra)
Jules Massenet (1842 – 1912)	<i>Cendrillon</i> "Enfin, je suis ici"	LUCY BAKER (Cendrillon)
Charles Gounod (1818 – 1893)	<i>Roméo et Juliette</i> "L'amour! L'amour!... Ah! lève-toi, soleil!"	TRAVON D. WALKER (Roméo)
Benjamin Britten (1913 – 1976)	<i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i> "When my cue comes, call me"	RON DUKES (Bottom)
Giacomo Puccini (1858 – 1924)	<i>La Bohème</i> "Che gelida manina"	ALEJANDRO LUÉVANOS (Rodolfo)
Handel	<i>Serse</i> "Crude furie degl'orridi abissi"	SOPHIA MAEKAWA (Serse)
Massenet	<i>Hérodiade</i> "Ce breuvage pourrait me donner un tel rêve... Vision fugitive"	LAUREANO QUANT (Hérode)
Douglas Moore (1893 – 1969)	<i>The Ballad of Baby Doe</i> "Warm as the autumn light"	CHRISTOPHER HUMBERT, JR. (Horace Tabor)
Giuseppe Verdi (1813 – 1901)	<i>La Traviata</i> "È strano!... Ah fors'è lui... Sempre libera"	KATHRYN HENRY (Violetta) with ALEJANDRO LUÉVANOS (Alfredo)
Carlisle Floyd (1926 – 2021)	<i>Of Mice and Men</i> "I must be crazy trav'lin' with you... An' we'll live off the fat of the land"	IAN RUCKER (George) RYAN CAPOZZO (Lennie)

INTERMISSION

Alexander Scriabin (1872 – 1915)	Piano Concerto in F-sharp minor, Movement III, <i>Allegro moderato</i>	MICHAEL BANWARTH
John Adams (1947 –)	<i>Doctor Atomic</i> “Batter my heart”	IAN RUCKER (Robert Oppenheimer) DONALD LEE III (Conductor)
Verdi	<i>Luisa Miller</i> “Egli delira...L’alto retaggio... O meco incolume sarai, lo giuro”	CHRISTOPHER HUMBERT, JR. (Walter) RON DUKES (Wurm)
Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky (1840 – 1893)	<i>Iolanta</i> “Chto skazhet on...Gospod’ moi, esli greshen ia”	WM. CLAY THOMPSON (King René)
Claudio Monteverdi (1567 – 1643)	<i>L’incoronazione di Poppea</i> “Pur ti miro”	LINDSEY REYNOLDS (Poppea) SOPHIA MAEKAWA (Nerone)
Francis Poulenc (1899 – 1963)	<i>Dialogues des Carmélites</i> “Pourquoi vous tenez vous ainsi”	TRAVON D. WALKER (Chevalier) LUCY BAKER (Blanche)
Georges Bizet (1838 – 1875)	<i>Carmen</i> “La fleur que tu m’avais jetée”	RYAN CAPOZZO (Don José) LUTHER H. LEWIS III (Director)
Gaetano Donizetti (1797 – 1848)	<i>Linda di Chamounix</i> “Qui, buon Antonio...Quella pietà”	WM. CLAY THOMPSON (Prefect) LAUREANO QUANT (Antonio) LUTHER H. LEWIS III (Director)
Puccini	<i>La Rondine</i> “Amore mio!”	ALEJANDRO LUÉVANOS (Ruggero) KATHRYN HENRY (Magda)
Stephen Sondheim (1930 – 2021)	<i>Follies</i> “Beautiful Girls”	FULL ENSEMBLE

Lighting Designer: **Bridget Williams**

Stage Management: **Daniel Sokalski, Amy C. Thompson, Bill Walters** with Ryan Opera Center Stage Manager **Tess Naval**

Musical and Language Preparation: **Michael Banwarth, William C. Billingham, Julia Faulkner, Brent Funderburk, Laurann Gilley, Donald Lee III, Noah Lindquist, Derek Matson, Jerad Mosbey, Craig Terry**

Hair, Makeup, and Wardrobe: **Necole Bluhm, Emily Santiago, Wendy McCay**

Projected Titles Translations: **Kenneth Chalmers, Scott F. Heumann, Amanda Holden, Paul Hopper, Philip Kuttner, Derek Matson, David McCane, Roger Pines, Francis Rizzo, Peter Sellars, Colin Ure**

Cover Photo: **Kyle Flubacker**

Selections from *Dialogues des Carmélites*, *Doctor Atomic*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and *Of Mice and Men* are presented by kind arrangement with Boosey & Hawkes.

Artist profiles



STEFANO SARZANI CONDUCTOR

The Italian-born conductor has been part of the music staff at Lyric since 2018. Cover conductor for several productions, he has also recently conducted *La bohème* (2018/19), *The Barber of Seville* (2019/20), and the family show *The Magic Victrola* (2021/22). Recent engagements include concerts with the Civic Orchestra of Chicago, San Diego Symphony Orchestra, Symphony NH, Orchestra Filarmonica Marchigiana (Italy), and *La bohème* at Opera Idaho. He has collaborated with Central City Opera (*Madama Butterfly*, *Billy Budd*), Detroit Opera (*Hänsel und Gretel*), Opera Maine (*Le nozze di Figaro*), and other symphonic and operatic institutions such as Boise Philharmonic Orchestra, Atlanta Symphony Youth Orchestra, National Repertory Orchestra (Colorado), Orchestra Sinfonica di Sanremo (Italy), Den Jyske Opera (Denmark), Opéra national de Lorraine (France), Atlanta Opera, and Sarasota Opera.



PATRICIA RACETTE DIRECTOR

Previously at Lyric: Eight roles since 2000/01, most recently Sister Helen Prejean/*Dead Man Walking* (2019/20), title role/*Madama Butterfly* (2013/14, 2008/09). Directorial debut.

The accomplished soprano is currently the Artistic Director of the Gerdine Young Artist and Richard Gaddes Festival Artist programs at Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, where she made her directorial debut with a new production of *La traviata* in 2018. She has subsequently directed productions there of *Susannah* and Poulenc's *La Voix Humaine*, in which she sang the lead role. This season she directs *Roméo et Juliette* at Arizona Opera. Much sought after for master classes and workshops, in 2017, Racette presented the pilot program of her intensive seminar, Integrative Artistry, at the San Francisco Conservatory, and has since presented it at The Juilliard School and the Washington National Opera. She has received an Opera News Award, the Richard Tucker Award, and the Marian Anderson Award, as well as the 2017 Grammy Award for Best Opera Recording for her performance in Los Angeles Opera's production of *The Ghosts of Versailles*.



LUCY BAKER MEZZO-SOPRANO

Previously at Lyric: *Karolka/Jenůfa* (2023/24).

A first-year mezzo-soprano with the Ryan Opera Center from Wilmington, North Carolina, Baker has performed the title role/*Ariodante*, *Dorabella/Così fan tutte*, and the Hostess/Blitzstein's *Triple-Sec* with Curtis Opera Theatre. Previous roles include Cherubino/*Le nozze di Figaro* and Hansel/*Hansel and Gretel* with DePaul Opera Theatre and Justice Ginsburg (cover) in Wang's *Scalia/Ginsburg* with Chautauqua Opera Company. In concert, Baker has appeared with the Philadelphia Chamber Music Society and Chautauqua Symphony. She received the Edith Newfield Award from the Musicians Club of Women and first prize in her category from the Chicago Chapter of the NATS Competition. A 2022 fellow at Ravinia's Steans Music Institute, Baker holds a Bachelor of Music from DePaul University and a Master of Music from the Curtis Institute of Music. *Lucy Baker is sponsored by Pamela Crutchfield, Ms. Gay K. Stanek and Blythe McGarvie.*



MICHAEL BANWARTH PIANIST

Previously at Lyric: Music staff for *Champion* (2023/24).

The first-year pianist, from Dubuque, Iowa, recently completed a Master of Music in collaborative piano at the New England Conservatory of Music. A recipient of the Dean's Scholarship and Gunther Schuller medal at NEC, Banwarth served there as teaching assistant for the Song Lab program, performed frequently in the Liederabend and Sonata Night concert series, and prepared productions of *The Turn of the Screw* and *L'enfant et les sortilèges*. In summer 2022, he was a vocal piano fellow at Music Academy of the West. He has also held fellowships at the Bay View Music Festival and the Atlantic Music Festival and served as assistant music director and harpsichordist for the Iowa State Opera Studio during his undergraduate studies. *Michael Banwarth is sponsored by Nancy Dehmlow, Lawrence O. Corry, Philip G. Lumpkin and Lori Julian for the Julian Family Foundation.*



RYAN CAPOZZO TENOR

Previously at Lyric: *Steersman/The Flying Dutchman* (2023/24) and *Remendado/Carmen* (2022/23).

The tenor, a second-year member of the Ryan Opera Center, received a Master of Musical Arts degree from the Yale School of Music, where he was awarded the Phyllis Curtin Career Entry Prize and was heard with Yale Opera as Arcadio/*Florencia en el Amazonas* and Tamino/*The Magic Flute* (partial role, Spring Opera

Showcase). Previously, Capozzo earned Bachelor of Music and Master of Music degrees from the Purchase College Conservatory of Music. At Purchase Opera, he was featured as Rinuccio/*Gianni Schicchi* (guest artist), Reverend Samuel Parris/Robert Ward's *The Crucible*, Don Ottavio/*Don Giovanni*, Nero/*L'incoronazione di Poppea*, and Lysander/*A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Capozzo's portrayal of Mozart's Tamino has been heard at the Berlin Opera Academy. The Huntington, New York native is a two-time Second Place Regional winner of the Metropolitan Opera Laffont Competition and was invited to participate in the 2023 Georg Solti Accademia. *Ryan Capozzo is sponsored by the H. Earl and Miriam U. Hoover Foundation.*



RON DUKES BASS

Previously at Lyric: Corporal/*The Daughter of the Regiment* (2023/24), Chief's Son #1 and Passenger 8/*Proximity*, Sam/*The Factotum*, and Jago/*Ernani* (all 2022/23).

Last season, the second-year Ryan Opera Center member was featured at Pittsburgh Opera in *We Shall Not Be Moved*. He completed his master's degree in opera at the Jacobs School of Music at Indiana University. While there, he served as Associate Instructor of Voice and performed numerous featured roles with IU Opera Theatre, among them Bartolo/*The Marriage of Figaro*, Don Basilio/*The Barber of Seville*, and Simone/*Gianni Schicchi*. He has extensive experience with local, start-up opera companies in Bloomington, Indiana, including Bloomington Chamber Opera, where he portrayed Sarastro/*The Magic Flute*, and A Little Knight Music Opera Company, where he was heard as Oroveso/*Norma*. Originally from Indianapolis, Dukes is a former Studio Artist at Wolf Trap Opera (Truffaldino/*Ariadne auf Naxos*) and the Glimmerglass Festival (Old Gypsy/*Il trovatore* and other roles). He recently concluded a residency with Pensacola Opera, singing Basilio/*The Barber of Seville* and Sarastro. *Ron Dukes is sponsored by Lead Sponsor Lois B. Siegel^o and cosponsors Nasrin & Mark Thierer.*



KATHRYN HENRY SOPRANO

Previously at Lyric: Priestess/*Aida*, Jana and Jenůfa/*Jenůfa* (all 2023/24), and Passenger 1/*Proximity* (2022/23).

In the summer of 2021, the soprano portrayed Lucy Harker/John Corigliano's *The Lord of Cries* (world premiere) at the Santa Fe Opera; she appears on the work's Grammy nominated recording. A former Baumgartner Studio Artist at Milwaukee's Florentine Opera, she appeared there as Barbarina/*The Marriage of Figaro*, Micaëla/*La tragédie de Carmen*, and the title role/Pauline Viardot's *Cendrillon*. As a Toulmin Foundation Scholar at New York's Juilliard School of Music, Henry portrayed Arminda/*La finta giardiniera*. A native of Sheboygan, Wisconsin, the soprano has appeared with the National Symphony Orchestra, Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra, and Civic Orchestra of Chicago. She participated in Carnegie Hall's 2022 SongStudio with Renée

Fleming and Ravinia's 2020 Steans Music Institute. Henry was a finalist in the 2015 Metropolitan Opera Laffont Competition and the 2018 Houston Grand Opera Eleanor McCollum Competition, among others. For the 2023 Aspen Music Festival, she starred as Roxane Coss/*Bel Canto*. *Kathryn Henry is sponsored by Lead Sponsor The C.G. Pinnell Family and cosponsors Patricia A. Kenney and Gregory J. O'Leary.*



CHRISTOPHER HUMBERT, JR. BASS-BARITONE

Previously at Lyric: Lawrence Brownlee and Friends (2023/24).

Originally from Akron, Ohio, the first-year bass-baritone has performed widely throughout his home state, including appearances with Opera Columbus, Mid-Ohio Opera, and Nightingale Opera Theatre. Other engagements include Boston Lyric Opera, Detroit Opera, Florida Grand Opera, Des Moines Metro Opera, the Seagle Festival, Utah Festival Opera, and Annapolis Opera. 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 (debut, baritone soloist in Vaughan Williams's *Dona Nobis Pacem*) and the Erie Philharmonic. Humbert received the American Opera Society of Chicago Scholarship Award. He 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 cosponsors the Bill & Orli Staley Foundation.*



DONALD LEE III CONDUCTOR/PIANIST

Previously at Lyric: Music staff for *Champion* (2023/24), *The Factotum* (2022/23); conducted selections for *The Magic Victrola* (2021/22).

The Virginia native is the inaugural Ryan Opera Center conductor/pianist, a new Ensemble position in 2021/22. While with Lyric, he has conducted selections for *Sunday in the Park* with Lyric the past three summers. Recent engagements as a conductor and pianist include Cincinnati Opera for *The Highlands* with their Opera Fusion: New Works series, Seattle Opera for *X: The Life and Times of Malcolm X*, Des Moines Metro Opera for *Porgy and Bess* and *Carmen*, and Opera Theatre of Saint Louis for their New Works Festival and other projects. Lee recently programmed and performed in digital recitals titled *Where Honor is Due* with Salon 21 in Cincinnati and *Adaptations* with Piano by Nature, highlighting music of Black composers alongside canonical works. An alumnus of James Madison University and the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music, Lee has served as assistant professor of piano at Kentucky State University. *Donald Lee III is sponsored by Lead Sponsors Michael Steinberg and Dr. Salme Harju Steinberg and cosponsors Dr. David H. Whitney and Dr. Juliana Y. Chyu and Drs. Joan and Russ Zajchuk.*

^oDeceased



LUTHER H. LEWIS III
STAGE DIRECTOR

Previously at Lyric: *Aida, Jenůfa, The Flying Dutchman* (all 2023/24); *Proximity, The Factotum, Le Comte Ory, and Fiddler on the Roof* (all 2022/23).

The multidisciplinary artist is the inaugural Ryan Opera Center Stage Director, a new Ensemble position started in 2022/23. The Indiana native, who studied at Oberlin Conservatory of Music, the University of Kentucky, and the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, has appeared in principal, supporting, and chorus roles in the U.S. and abroad with numerous companies, among them Lyric (*Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg* (2012/13), *Porgy and Bess* (2014/15)), and other productions at San Francisco Opera and Opéra de Montréal. In 2018, Lewis presented *Illustrations: A Gallery Concert* in collaboration with Chicago Opera Theater at the Goodman Theatre. He directed and designed scenic elements for Chicago Opera Theater's *Opera for All* program and for After School Matters. Lewis recently served as the inaugural Crane Directing Fellow with Opera Columbus and as a directing fellow with Opera Saratoga. *Luther H. Lewis III* is sponsored by **Lead Sponsor the Robert and Penelope Steiner Family Foundation.**



ALEJANDRO LUÉVANOS
TENOR

Previously at Lyric: *Messenger/Aida, Notary/The Daughter of the Regiment* (both 2023/24), *Passenger 6/Proximity, Lillas Pastia/Carmen, A Royal Herald/Don Carlos, and Riccardo/Ernani* (all 2022/23).

The Mexican tenor is a second-year member of the Ryan Opera Center Ensemble. His appearances in Mexico include *Don José/Carmen* (Toluca Philharmonic Orchestra); *Borsa/Rigoletto, Count Almaviva/The Barber of Seville*, and scenes from *Il trovatore* (Orquesta Sinfónica del Estado de México); and Rossini's *Stabat Mater* and *Petite Messe Solennelle*, as well as an opera gala with Ramón Vargas (all at Mexico City's Palacio de Bellas Artes). He has appeared as tenor soloist in Bach's Cantata No. 4, Beethoven's Symphony No. 9, Brahms's *Liebeslieder Walzer*, Schubert's *Winterreise*, and Luis G. Jordà's *Cantata a la Independencia*. Luévanos was previously a two-year member of the Opera Studio at the Bellas Artes, where he is scheduled to return to appear in Shostakovich's *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*. He is a 2021 and 2022 winner of the Mexico District in the Metropolitan Opera Laffont Competition. *Alejandro Luévanos* is sponsored by an **Anonymous Lead Donor.**



SOPHIA MAEKAWA
MEZZO-SOPRANO

Previously at Lyric: *Tisbe/Cinderella and Herdswoman/Jenůfa* (both 2023/24).

The first-year mezzo-soprano with the Ryan Opera Center from Kyoto, Japan, was a 2022 Santa Fe Opera Apprentice Artist, understudying Rosina/*Il barbiere di Siviglia* and

Comrade Chin and Shu Fang/*M. Butterfly*, and a 2021 Gerdine Young Artist with Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, understudying Kadin/*On the Edge*. She recently received her Bachelor of Music degree from the Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia. While there, the mezzo performed in *Ariodante* (title role), *Albert Herring*, and *L'enfant et les sortilèges*. Other roles in her repertoire include *Hermia/A Midsummer Night's Dream, Annio/La clemenza di Tito, Mercédès/Carmen, Second Woman/Dido and Aeneas*, and *Mrs. Nolan/The Medium*. Concert appearances include the Wichita Symphony and Curtis Symphony Orchestra with Yannick Nézet-Séguin. Maekawa received the American Opera Society of Chicago Scholarship Award. She was a finalist at the 2022 Opera Grand Rapids Competition and semi-finalist in the 2021 Houston Grand Opera Eleanor McCollum Competition. *Sophia Maekawa* is sponsored by **David and Janet Fox, Richard W. Shepro and Lindsay E. Roberts and Mark and Gale Kozloff.**



TESS NAVAL
STAGE MANAGER

Previously at Lyric: *Aida, Champion, Jenůfa, The Flying Dutchman* (all 2023/24); *Carmen, The Factotum, Don Carlos, Fiddler on the Roof* (all 2022/23).

Naval is the Ryan Opera Center's first Stage Manager, a new Ensemble position. A Chicago native previously based here as a freelance stage manager, she graduated from Boston University with a BFA in stage management. Some recent projects include work with Yale Opera for their Fall Opera Scenes programs (2018, 2019, 2021), including *The Elixir of Love, Eugene Onegin, The Old Maid and the Thief, and Le Rossignol; The Pirates of Penzance and Peter Pan* with Music Theater Works; *Gather* with Filament Theatre; *Yours Truly* with Albany Park Theater Project; *Cendrillon* with North Park University; the *Jason Bishop Show*; Boston University Opera Institute's productions of *Così fan tutte* and *La tragédie de Carmen; Mary Poppins* with the Berkshire Theatre Group; and *Our Class* with the Boston Center for American Performance. Naval has interned at the Pentameters Theatre in London, the Ivoryton Playhouse in Connecticut, the Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey, and Berkshire Theatre Group. *Tess Naval* is sponsored by **Amy & Paul Carbone and Roberta L. & Robert J. Washlow.**



LAUREANO QUANT
BARITONE

Previously at Lyric: *Notary/The Daughter of the Regiment* and *Foreman/Jenůfa, Lawrence Brownlee and Friends* (all 2023/24), *Dançaire/Carmen* and *Count of Lerma/Don Carlos* (both 2022/23).

A second-year member of the Ryan Opera Center Ensemble and a native of Barranquilla, Colombia, the baritone holds a Master of Music degree from the Manhattan School of Music and a Master of Musical Arts degree from Yale University. Highlights of his repertoire include *Belcore/The Elixir of Love, Guglielmo/Così fan tutte, Figaro/Saverio Mercadante's I due Figaro, Maguire/*

Tobias Picker's *Emmeline*, Zurga/*The Pearl Fishers*, Vittorio and The Boarder/Nino Rota's *I due timidi*, Demetrius/*A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and the Captain and Prince Ragotsky/*Candide*. In the Metropolitan Opera Laffont Competition, Quant was awarded Second Place in the New England Region (2024), the Western Region (2022) and the Southeastern Region (2020). He has also won the Luminarts Cultural Foundation Men's Voice Fellowship (2023) and the Online Audience Award in Houston Grand Opera's Concert of Arias (2020). Quant has participated in the Merola Opera Program and SongStudio, the latter led by Renée Fleming at Carnegie Hall. *Laureano Quant is sponsored by Lead Sponsor Peter Scheuermann.*



LINDSEY REYNOLDS SOPRANO

Previously at Lyric: *Barena/Jenûfa* (2023/24), *Very Loud Girl* and *Passenger 2/Proximity*, *Alice/Le Comte Ory*, and *Voice from Above/Don Carlos* (all 2022/23).

The soprano, a native of New Orleans, is a second-year member of the Ryan Opera Center. In 2021/22, she portrayed *Despina/Così fan tutte* and *Betty/Marc Blitzstein's Triple-Sec* (film adaptation) with Curtis Opera Theatre and served as an Emerging Artist with Opera Philadelphia, where she sang the *Page/Rigoletto*. Among the many leading roles Reynolds has performed are *Zerlina/Don Giovanni*, *Adina/The Elixir of Love*, *Giulietta/I Capuleti e i Montecchi*, *Miss Wordsworth/Albert Herring*, and *Monica/The Medium*. She has appeared in concert with the Curtis Symphony Orchestra under Yannick Nézet-Séguin, the Philadelphia Orchestra, and the Civic Orchestra of Chicago. Recipient of an Emerging Artist Award from Opera Index, Reynolds has been awarded first place in many competitions, among them the Musicians Club of Women, James Toland Vocal Arts Competition, and National Association of Negro Musicians Competition. *Lindsey Reynolds is sponsored by an Anonymous Donor, Fred and Phoebe Boelter and Donna Van Ekeren & Dale Connelly.*



IAN RUCKER BARITONE

Previously at Lyric: *Man in Bar/Champion* and *Foreman/Jenûfa* (both 2023/24); *Moralès/Carmen* and *Raimbaud/Le Comte Ory* (both 2022/23).

The second-year Ryan Opera Center baritone is from Oshkosh, Wisconsin. He holds a master's degree in vocal performance from Indiana University's Jacobs School of Music. His roles there included *Count Almaviva/The Marriage of Figaro* and the title role/*The Barber of Seville*. He has also appeared as *Papageno/The Magic Flute* at Bloomington Chamber Opera. Rucker earned his bachelor's degree in vocal performance at the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire, where he was heard in the title roles/*Don Giovanni* and *Sweeney Todd*, as well as *Officer Lockstock/Urinetown* and *Ernst Ludwig/Cabaret*. Rucker is a former Palm Beach Opera Apprentice

Artist and a former Aspen Music Festival Renée Fleming Artist. He recently received an Encouragement Award in the Metropolitan Opera Laffont Competition (Wisconsin District) and first place in the James Toland Vocal Arts Competition. *Ian Rucker is sponsored by Karen Petite, Jennifer L. Stone and Heidi Heutel Bohn.*



WM. CLAY THOMPSON BASS

Previously at Lyric: *King/Aida* (2023/24), *Zuniga/Carmen*, *Second Courtier/Le Comte Ory* (both 2022/23).

The American bass is a second-year Ryan Opera Center member and a two-time District winner of the Metropolitan Opera Laffont Competition. He debuted at Arizona Opera (*Zuniga/Carmen*) and the Metropolitan Opera (*Octet Singer/Brett Dean's Hamlet*). Thompson is a former participant in the Santa Fe Opera and Wolf Trap Opera young-artist programs (last summer he performed *Méphisophélès/Faust*). From 2017 to 2019, he was a Resident Artist at Minnesota Opera, performing in numerous operas including *The Fix*, a world premiere by Joel Puckett. Thompson has been featured at the Château de Versailles Spectacles (*Suleyman Pasha/The Ghosts of Versailles*), The Glimmerglass Festival (*The Cunning Little Vixen*, *Silent Night*, *West Side Story*, *Noye's Fludde*, *The Ghosts of Versailles*, and *La traviata*), and Fort Worth Opera (*Zuniga/Carmen* and *Raymond Buck/David T. Little's JFK*, in a world premiere). *Wm. Clay Thompson is sponsored by Lead Sponsor the J. Thomas Hurvis Endowment, in loving memory of Dick Kiphart and cosponsor Julian A. Oettinger.*



TRAVON D. WALKER TENOR

Previously at Lyric: *Lawrence Brownlee and Friends* (2023/24).

The first-year tenor recently received his master's degree from Rice University, where he sang *Sam Kaplan/Kurt Weill's Street Scene* and appeared in scenes from *Così fan tutte*, *The Turn of the Screw*, *Lucia di Lammermoor*, and *West Side Story*. A native of Hinesville, Georgia, Walker completed his undergraduate studies at the Eastman School of Music, where he made his operatic debut as *The Reader* in Ricky Ian Gordon's *The Tibetan Book of the Dead* and sang *Dan Leno* in the virtual production of Kevin Puts's *Elizabeth Cree*. Walker has been a Studio Artist at Wolf Trap Opera and was invited to participate in Joyce DiDonato's 2023 Master Classes and Renée Fleming's 2023 SongStudio, both at Carnegie Hall. Other engagements include the Erie Philharmonic Orchestra and his company debut with Houston Grand Opera as *The Navigator/Jeremy Howard Beck's Another City* (world premiere). Walker won the American Opera Society of Chicago Best Vocal Artist Award. He received an Encouragement Award from the Kansas City District in the 2023 Metropolitan Opera Laffont Competition. *Travon D. Walker is sponsored by the Robert and Isabelle Bass Foundation and the Ford, Mages and Boykins families with Fifth Third Bank.* [L](#)

Farewell Songs

Outgoing Ryan Opera Center artists share reflections on their experiences—and boundless gratitude.



Todd Rosenberg

RYAN CAPOZZO

My time with the Ryan Opera Center has been a deeply rewarding experience. It's been the highlight of my career to do such challenging and fulfilling work alongside my fellow Ensemble members. The professional and musical guidance I've received from the Ryan Opera Center faculty and administration has shaped me into a more complete and mature artist. I had the specific privilege of performing the Steuermann in Lyric's production of *Der fliegende Holländer*. Getting to work with that cast was a chance to learn from true masters of the craft, and it is a memory I will cherish dearly. Lyric will forever be a home away from home for me, and I thank you all for welcoming me with open arms!



Cary Weaver

RON DUKES

Being invited to join the Ryan Opera Center was a full circle moment for me. I saw my very first opera at Lyric Opera of Chicago, a production of *Tosca*, so the company has always held a special place in my heart. Over the course of my residency I've been challenged as a vocal technician and stage performer on numerous occasions. Those experiences and everything else I've been provided here have been invaluable in developing my skills and abilities. I'll carry with me what I've learned here for years to come, and I am immensely grateful to all who made possible my time at Lyric.



Susan Miller-Hult

KATHRYN HENRY

Since the start of my operatic journey, I've dreamt of being a member of the Ryan Opera Center. I remember attending Lyric performances as a student, seeing current and alumni Ryan Opera Center artists in the casts, and saying to myself that, one day, I would be one of those singers. That dream has become a reality, and I am extremely grateful. From coaches encouraging me to be my most authentic self to performing alongside my idols and everything in between, I have learned innumerable lessons to become a better performer, colleague, and person. Lyric Opera of Chicago is my home, and I will be forever indebted to the wonderful team here for their support and guidance.



Kyle Fluecker

DONALD LEE III

The experience of being a member of the Ryan Opera Center has been nothing less than transformative. Thanks to our caring leaders and the resources provided by our incredibly generous sponsors, I've been able to develop my skills as a conductor and musician more intensely than I could have imagined. Being the inaugural Ensemble Conductor has allowed me to forge relationships with colleagues throughout the opera world, providing me with a clear path forward in the performing arts. I am incredibly grateful for three wonderful years in the Ryan Opera Center.



William Powell III

LUTHER H. LEWIS III

I am honored to have been the first Ryan Opera Center Stage Director. This opportunity to develop my skills and train alongside some of the most seasoned and respected professionals has been truly life-changing. My experience included assisting on two world-premiere operas, and I am so grateful for the guidance and inspiration I've received. One of the most memorable and touching moments was seeing my name above the stage at last year's *Rising Stars in Concert*, particularly on the anniversary of my mother's passing. Having my directorial work appear at Lyric will be a lasting memory, and I feel well-equipped to continue my professional journey. I am beyond thankful.



LUÉVANOS, AT RIGHT, WITH QUINN KELSEY

Cory Weaver

ALEJANDRO LUÉVANOS

Being a member of the Ryan Opera Center has been a wonderful and literally life-changing experience: it's the first time I've lived outside of Mexico, spoken English on a daily basis, and had a regular routine of very intense work on my vocal, musical, and performance skills. But even more than that, knowing that I had been invited to join one of the most important programs in the world inspired me to cherish every lesson, coaching, class, and all the other opportunities offered. I leave the Ryan Opera Center confidently looking forward to what the future holds with all the tools needed to face it. And most importantly, I am even more in love with singing than ever before!



Evan Zimmerman

TESSA NAVAL

As my time in the Ryan Opera Center concludes, I find myself reflecting on my growth as a stage manager. I have learned so much and cannot thank everyone enough for helping me throughout this journey. As my position was new, I wasn't totally sure what to expect, but from the minute I walked through the stage door, I was embraced with support, respect, and kindness. My confidence in my abilities has grown immensely, and I know that going forward I will continue to be supported by the incredible team here at Lyric. The skills I've nurtured and the lessons I've learned from the absolute best in the business will undoubtedly stay with me throughout the rest of my career.



Andrew Claff

LAUREANO QUANT

Words cannot fully express how transformative the experience of being an Ensemble member of the Ryan Opera Center has been for me. I am extremely grateful for all the opportunities I've been given here—they have challenged me in all aspects of my artistry. It is both exciting and humbling to recognize how much I've grown, thanks to being immersed in a nurturing environment with so many talented colleagues, faculty, and administration. With the invaluable training and experience I've received and the support of treasured friends and mentors, I look optimistically to the future of my professional journey as a proud member of the Lyric family.



Bob Kusek

LINDSEY REYNOLDS

I am incredibly grateful for my time at the Ryan Opera Center! It has been a transformative experience filled with invaluable lessons and unforgettable moments. Working alongside world-renowned singers whom I've long admired has been a dream come true! Moreover, being surrounded by talented and supportive colleagues who have become like family has truly enriched my journey. The Ryan Opera Center has not only provided me with wonderful training but also a sense of belonging and fellowship that I will cherish forever! As I wrap up my time in the program, I'm excited to utilize all I've learned to enhance my next steps. With new skills, boundless passion, and heartwarming connections, I'm ready to spread my wings and sing!



Todd Rosenberg

WM. CLAY THOMPSON

My time at the Ryan Opera Center has been extraordinary. From the overwhelming joy of hearing my name called at the Finals to performing in *Carmen*, *Le Comte Ory*, and *Aida*, each step has been a testament to the dreams I've long nurtured. Sharing the stage with extraordinary talents has sparked an invaluable lesson—Iron Sharpens Iron. It has broadened my perspective and fueled my determination. The entire experience has been a journey of self-discovery, pushing me beyond my comfort zone and instilling a profound belief in my abilities, thanks to the unwavering support from my colleagues and the administration. This journey is not just mine; it's a collective triumph, and I am immensely grateful to have been part of it. 🎭

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The 2023/24 Ensemble, with Enrique Mazzola, greets the crowd after the triumphant performance in Millennium Park on August 20, 2023.

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