



Lyric

OPERA OF
CHICAGO

Billy Corgan

A Night of
Mellon Collie
and Infinite
Sadness



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



John Mangum
*General Director,
President & CEO*
Enrique Mazzola
Music Director

Lyric

Welcome to your Lyric

From the Chair and the General Director

Welcome to Lyric Opera of Chicago!

Whether it's your first time here or your 50th, we are pleased to have you in our home. Lyric's stage is the largest in the city of Chicago, allowing us to present grand works of many different kinds – including this extraordinary world premiere, *A Night of Mellon Collie and Infinite Sadness*.

As exceptional as this production is, in many ways it demonstrates the true magnetic pull of our art form. Billy Corgan, frontman for The Smashing Pumpkins,



has been an enthusiastic audience member at Lyric for many years. (As you might imagine, his presence usually causes a bit of a stir.) Two seasons ago, he attended a performance of Mozart's *Requiem* here, and the experience — the full world-class orchestra, our legendary chorus, and Music Director Enrique Mazzola on the podium — galvanized an idea he'd been contemplating. Might Lyric be the place to bring The Smashing Pumpkins' spectacular double album to life, in a new form?

Certainly the source material had the goods. Besides being one of the most commercially successful releases of the 1990s — and today the recording enjoys certified Diamond status (10 million units sold) — *Mellon Collie and the Infinite Sadness* is distinguished by the breathtaking scope of its ambition. Washes of orchestral music merge with ineluctable guitar alt-rock. The lyrics both express and comment upon a vibrant cultural moment. And while there isn't a story, per se, time and life and emotions move forward, driving a core character. Billy collaborated with expert conductor and orchestrator James Lowe, no stranger to Lyric audiences, and the result was an operatic collaboration for the ages — a work for orchestra, chorus, and soloists that feels right at home on a stage that has hosted some of the 20th and 21st centuries' most luminous talents.

All of us here are glad you've joined us for what promises to be a once-in-a-lifetime experience. And we hope, if it's your first time here, you'll come again and, like Billy, become a Lyric fan too. Enjoy the performance!

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^o Deceased

What's New?

A Night of Mellon Collie and Infinite Sadness may seem an unlikely offering in an opera house. But **John Mangum**, Lyric's General Director, President and CEO, points out that such innovations are a particular strength here in Chicago — and they have been happening for quite a long time.



Photo by Peter Smith

T

his world premiere, an operatic reimagining of one of the great alternative rock albums, is unusual in many respects. How did the project come about?

Billy Corgan has been coming to performances at Lyric for a long time, and he attended our Mozart *Requiem* during the 2023/24 season. He saw what that experience was like — the chorus and orchestra, and the four soloists, and Enrique Mazzola conducting on stage. Somehow that performance catalyzed an idea to turn *Mellon Collie and the Infinite Sadness* into something very similar. His management team approached us, just to explore what might be possible. I think our response was, *Look, anything's possible!* Now just a little over a year later, we find ourselves with this spectacular project on our hands.

It's interesting that the *Requiem* would be the catalyst. There's not a narrative, but the chorus and soloists play different roles.

And there's a trajectory. The idea of *A Night of Mellon Collie and Infinite Sadness*, to hear Billy tell it, is that it's a 24-hour emotional journey for a particular individual. That's very much reflected in what he has created; he has mapped this material onto the forces of the Lyric Opera Orchestra and Chorus, and the five soloists, including himself, who will be performing.

What can you tell us about the process itself?

We presented a few different possibilities to Billy, and he really clicked with Jim Lowe, the orchestrator and conductor, and they've been collaborating on realizing Billy's vision. Billy is very much a composer himself. He thinks in terms of harmonies, in terms of textures, in terms of how you layer elements to create a sound world.

The source album already had a broad scale.

Exactly. Very orchestral. I think that what we're



Coming attractions for 2026: Renee Fleming in recital, February 5; *Mary Poppins in Concert Live to Film*, April 10 and 11.

doing here, this piece, was always nascent in that material. It certainly flourishes in this treatment.

Is it still fair to say that this production is out of the box for Lyric? Is that intentional?

I would love for Lyric to continue to expand as a place where all sorts of creative musical artists can see themselves and their work. Clearly, Billy sat in our theater, saw a performance, and said, *I want to do that with my music. I want to do that as an artist.* We want all sorts of musical artists to see that possibility — the possibility of their creativity being transferred to our stage. We're also doing it this season with *safronia*, by Chicago's poet laureate, avery r. young. He's another artist who hadn't worked in opera until this project, but who said, *I can see my creativity thriving and finding its fullest expression at Lyric.* That's what I really hope people take away from this project — that opera is a much wider net than one might assume. There's opportunity for creative expression in this art form that spans the boundaries, the false boundaries, between many different sorts of genres.

Opera has always been a kind of hybrid, hasn't it?

Think of Mozart's *The Magic Flute*. That has material inspired by folk music and popular song in it. And you can pick examples from throughout operatic history, where composers have broken down the boundaries between genres. Even *La Bohème* comes to mind. Act II very much occupies this liminal space between the elevated and the popular, with Musetta's Waltz, and the different layers of the chorus. Even Wagner, whom many view as the pinnacle of the operatic art form, was influenced by the vernacular and by folk music, and that comes from the influence of Weber on his work. You think of Weber's *Der Freischütz*. It has choruses and ensembles and songs that could be right out of folk music. I think it's probably more prevalent in opera than we often think. This season, we have *Madama Butterfly*, where Puccini turned to Asian with a capital A sources, to quote folk material. He does this also in *Turandot* and in a completely different way in *Fanciulla del West*. There are examples all over opera.

You're speaking about popular music, as in the music of the people.

It's strophic songs. It's dance music. The finale of Act I of Mozart's *Don Giovanni* has a couple of popular dance tunes in it from Mozart's time. The finale of Act II has Mozart quoting himself alongside some of his contemporaries, whose operatic tunes had become popular hits.

Also, this direction brings world premieres to the stage of Lyric Opera of Chicago.

Absolutely. We have a duty as one of the world's leading opera companies to further the art form, to develop the art form, to create new work, and to, hopefully, every so often, create a new work that enters the canon. A work that, 50 years from now, is being performed all over the world. It's very rare. For every Mozart opera, there are a hundred operas by Dittersdorff and Monsigny, and a bunch of other names that the public doesn't really remember today, but that once were performed. That's the real artistic duty of an opera company like ours, to continue to push the boundaries of the art form and be a place where new work can be created and premiered and brought before a public. Then the public decides if it wants to see that work again or not. The hope is that everything is a hit, that everything becomes something that people want to see come back.

You've cultivated another new set of offerings here, the films with live orchestra. Is that part of expanding Lyric's identity?

These are the kinds of projects that broaden the audience that we bring here. Film has been an important genre of our time, especially in the past nearly 100 years, since the introduction of sound. My sense is that film became a parallel genre to opera. In the 19th century, if you wanted to create a big, sweeping epic, you went to Paris and you

composed a grand opera, and it was on some massive historical theme and had seven soloists and a huge chorus and ballet and orchestra. Or you were Wagner and you wrote *The Ring*. Those are the epic movies of the 19th century. The 19th century's lighter music, operettas and singspiels, developed into the music theater of the 20th century. And those are the films we are bringing to Lyric. Disney's *Coco* is very much a music theater piece, a musical about creativity and making music and a young boy finding his voice and discovering the meaning of family. We have a history of doing musicals here, and the films feel very much like an outgrowth from that.

These expansions — are they something you've done before? Something you're seeing other organizations do?

All performing arts organizations are constantly asking themselves those questions: How do we bring new people into the experience, and how do we make sure that what we're doing has a broad appeal — and also preserves room for the widest range of artistic experiences? We need to make sure we can do a spectacular and rare opera like *Medea*, alongside these newer initiatives like *A Night of Mellon Collie and Infinite Sadness*, or the *Films in Concert*, or *Carmina Burana*.

You want to expand the bandwidth of the opera company.

Lyric is about storytelling through music and the voice, the combination of the orchestra, the chorus, and the solo singers. Those are the boundaries within which we work. Within those, what are the pieces and experiences that we can put before the public that remain true to who we are? We'll always want to find ways to welcome new audiences to experience the power of musical storytelling, the power of opera. ■

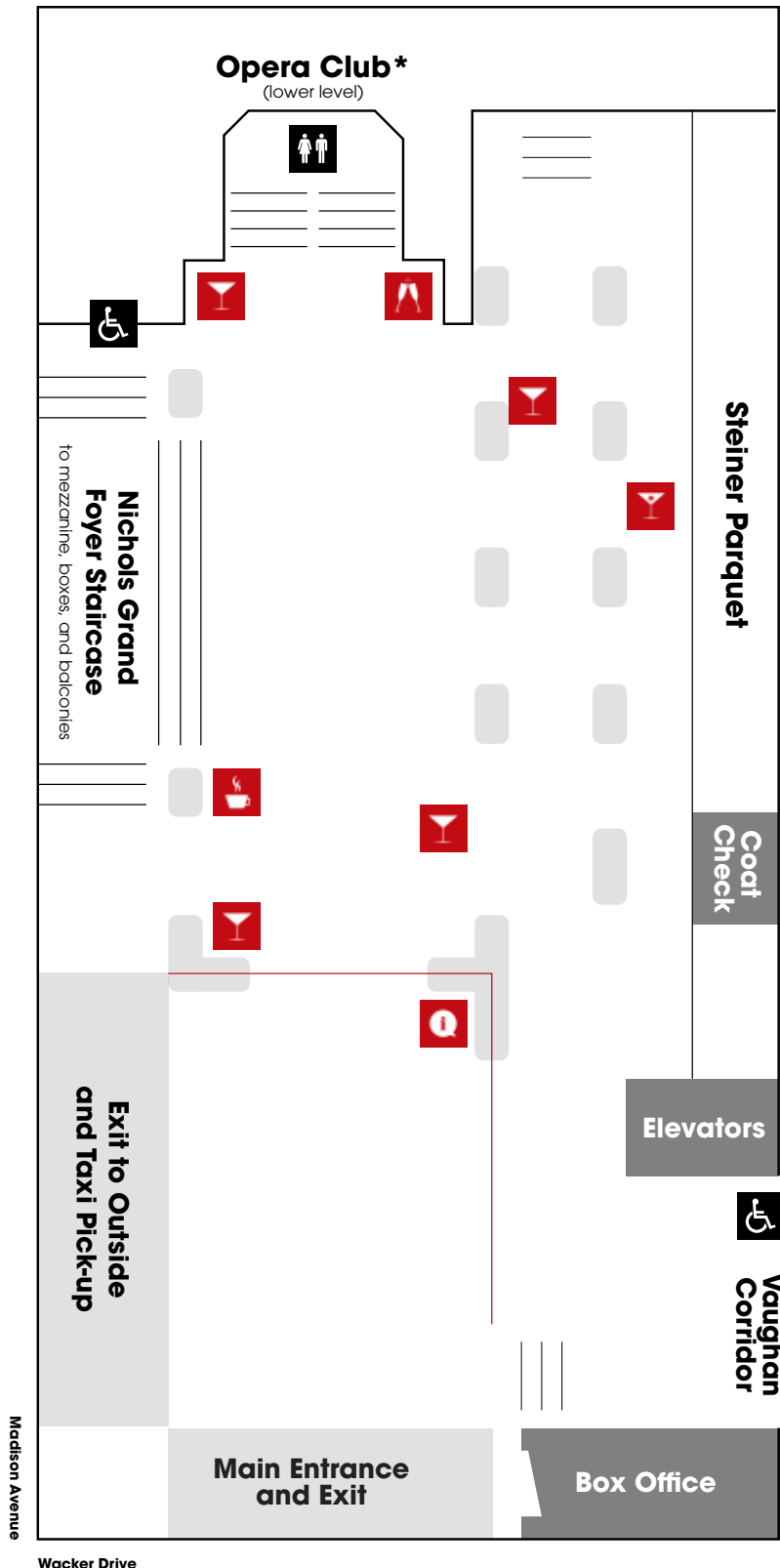
Lyric

Billy Corgan

A Night of
Mellon Collie
and Infinite
Sadness



Lyric Opera House Patron Experience Map



Visit any bar to place your order ahead of time and pick up during intermission.

Purchase beverages & concessions for intermission before the show!

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THE WILLIAM B & CATHERINE
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Graham Room located on the **2nd floor** near the elevators

Florian

Florian located on the **3rd floor** near the elevators

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| | Specialty Bar | | Champagne Bar |
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2nd Floor Mezzanine through 6th Floor:
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Standard Bars located in the lower level Opera Club, foyer, mezzanine, 3,4,5 and 6.

For emergency situations or medical attention please find an usher who will be able to assist you

Please note that lower level **Opera Club is not wheelchair accessible*

A Night of **Mellon Collie** and Infinite Sadness

November 21, 22, 25, 26, 28, 29, 30, 2025

Music by **Billy Corgan**

Orchestrations by **Billy Corgan** and **James Lowe**

Billy Corgan⁺, Vocals and Guitar
Sydney Mancasola, Soprano
Zoie Reams, Mezzo-soprano
Dominick Valdés Chenes⁺, Tenor
Edward Parks, Baritone

James Lowe, Conductor

Lyric Opera Orchestra and Chorus
Michael Black, Chorus Director

Director: **Katie Spelman**⁺
Costumes: **House of Gilles by Gilles and Chloé Mendel**
Show Art Designer: **Jeff Ritchie**⁺
Lighting Designer: **Chris Maravich**
Sound Designer & Audio Mix Engineer: **Pete Wiejaczka**
Projection Designer: **Greg Emetaz**
Wig & Makeup Designer: **John Metzner**
Stage Manager: **Rachel A. Tobias**
Assistant Stage Manager: **Sandra Moore**
Musical Preparation: **William C. Billingham, Francesco Milioto, Jerad Mosbey**

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Lyric Opera of Chicago thanks its Official Airline, **United Airlines**,
and acknowledges support from the **Illinois Arts Council**.
Scenic Fabrication by **Adirondack Studios**.

This performance will last 2 hours with one intermission.

⁺Lyric debut

COSMIC IMPACT

Three decades ago, The Smashing Pumpkins' double album, *Mellon Collie and the Infinite Sadness*, took Chicago and the music world by storm. Orchestral in sweep, sonically ambitious, and laden with alt-rock power, the recording seemed to exist simultaneously in its own time and beyond it. Listeners and critics alike elevated the work into a previously unseen stratosphere. This reimagined production marks that cultural moment and unveils further layers in the unforgettable landmark release.

by Jaime Black



Photo by Joseph Cullice

There are a multitude of reasons *Mellon Collie and the Infinite Sadness* still resonates so strongly with music fans worldwide three decades after its debut. The treasure trove of songs. The raw emotion. The shimmer of teenage nostalgia. The sheer scope of the project. The stunning arrangements and electrifying guitars and thundering percussion and, oh yeah, the voice. The one that can breezily belt out that “Weeee don’t even care” and then turn around and lament that “Despite all my rage, I am still just a rat in a cage.”

Released in October of 1995, the third studio effort from the original lineup of The Smashing Pumpkins (frontman, singer, and songwriter Billy Corgan, guitarist James Iha, bassist D’arcy, and drummer Jimmy Chamberlin) arrived during a turning point for rock. Alternative culture had proved to be a commercial success, and with that came a deluge of new radio-ready post-grunge acts looking to strike while the iron was hot. This was the backdrop for the arrival of an ambitious double album from Chicago’s hometown alt-rock heroes.

Spanning 28 tracks across two records and clocking in at just over two hours, *Mellon Collie and the Infinite Sadness* was

like nothing else at that time. A document of the band’s audacious ambitions and showcasing an expanse of musical experimentation, *Mellon Collie* is widely regarded as a definitive statement from The Smashing Pumpkins. The two discs, *Dawn to Dusk* and *Twilight to Starlight*, present a sprawling and immersive day and night in the life of “a death rock boy,” as one lyric notes. The album zooms across moods and sonic realms, ranging from the breakneck guitar and percussion assault of “Jellybelly” and blistering distortion of “Tales Of A Scorched Earth” to the wistful reflection of “Thirty-Three” and hypnotic romanticism of “Beautiful.” The band channels wounded vulnerability in “To Forgive” and heartfelt yearning on “In the Arms of Sleep.” And it’s a testament to *Mellon Collie*’s range that “X.Y.U.,” as barbed and rabid as anything in the Pumpkins’ songbook, can exist on the same record as the lighthearted love song “Lily (My One and Only).”

“*Mellon Collie* is weird in that it’s a combination of nihilism, sentimentality, and epic hope,” Corgan would share with *Rolling Stone* in 2012 in support of the record’s

It's a combination of nihilism, sentimentality, and epic hope.

deluxe reissue. "That was where the generation was at that moment."

Recorded across the spring and summer of 1995 in Chicago

(Pumpkinland, Sadlands, Bugg Studios, and Chicago Recording Company, just a few blocks east of the Lyric Opera House) and LA studios (The Village Recorder), *Mellon Collie and the Infinite Sadness* saw the band bring in studio talents Flood (Depeche Mode, U2) and Alan Moulder (My Bloody Valentine, Nine Inch Nails) to produce the record with Corgan. The group was coming off the whirlwind success of 1993 breakout *Siamese Dream*, which delivered four smash singles ("Cherub Rock," "Today," "Disarm," and "Rocket") and earned the act a headlining spot on Lollapalooza 1994. Given the band's newfound rock star status, they could have easily gone on autopilot to deliver more of the same. Instead, Corgan and the Pumpkins opted to dream much bigger, creating a generation-defining double album that Corgan would describe as being like Pink Floyd's *"The Wall for Generation X."*

"The only thing that kept me going through all the touring for *Siamese Dream* was making another



Opposite: Billy Corgan continues to write and record today. This page: The *Mellon Collie and the Infinite Sadness* album artwork blends Victorian collage with a steampunk flair.



record,” Corgan explained to *Rolling Stone* for a November 1995 cover story. “It was like setting myself some kind of weird goal. It sounds crazy: ‘When you get done with all this work, here’s more work.’ I came home from Lollapalooza, I took three days off, and then I started. It was literally six days a week, at least four to five hours a day. Which doesn’t sound like a lot of time. But in terms of emotional time, it’s a lot.”

The gambit of a 28-song double album paid off. Launched with the tense and menacing lead single “Bullet With Butterfly Wings,” *Mellon Collie* would earn the Pumpkins a number one debut on the US Billboard 200. At present, the record has achieved Diamond status (10 million units sold) in the U.S. No small feat for four kids from Chicago.

“The four of us come from nothing. And, y’know, we hatched this little dream between us, and fought all odds and succeeded,” Corgan would tell MTV in 1995.

***Mellon Collie* would produce** five official singles from fall 1995 through fall 1996: “Bullet With Butterfly Wings,” “1979,”

“Zero,” “Tonight, Tonight,” and “Thirty-Three.” All five cuts would prove to be staples of mid-’90s MTV, including the carefree pre-social media snapshot of adolescence of “1979” and the scuzzy moneyed hedonism of the “Zero” visual. The treatment for “Thirty-Three” offers a series of surreal, dreamlike fantasies, while the “Bullet With Butterfly Wings” clip gets down in the mud for something more visceral and violent. The video for “Tonight, Tonight,” meanwhile, channels both 1902’s historic

*The four of us come
from nothing. And, y'know,
we hatched this little dream
between us, and fought all
odds and succeeded.*

French film *A Trip to the Moon* and a spacy steampunk aesthetic for a colorful *fin de siècle* journey into the unknown.

The five singles would also be collected as EPs for 1996's *The Aeroplane Flies High* box set, which delivered a staggering 28 additional b-sides from the *Mellon Collie* era. *Aeroplane's* offerings ranged from an array of covers to harder and darker material to more introspective and acoustic fare and much more. In the first half of the 2010s, deluxe reissues of *Mellon Collie* and *Aeroplane* would deliver even more music from that era, showcasing just how prolific the mid-'90s were for the band.

"We finally managed to manifest everything I always thought we could do," Corgan told *Rolling Stone* in 1995. "Somehow we managed to get a lot of blood out of the stone."



Photo by Patrick Ford/Redferns

Opposite: The band's original lineup, in 1995 — D'Arcy Wretzky, Jimmy Chamberlin, Billy Corgan, and James Iha. This page: Wretzky, Corgan, and Iha at the MTV Awards in Europe.



The Smashing Pumpkins perform during a benefit concert at Metro in 2010.

Mellon Collie garnered the Pumpkins awards and greater pop culture recognition. The band cleaned up at the 1996 MTV Music Video Awards; “Tonight, Tonight” garnered eight nominations and won in six categories, including Video of the Year. And “1979” would win for Best Alternative Video. The following year, “Bullet With Butterfly Wings” would take the Best Hard

Rock Performance Grammy, in addition to six other nominations. This was in addition to cover stories from both *Rolling Stone* and *SPIN*, as well as a 1995 musical guest spot on *Saturday Night Live*, when the group performed “Bullet with Butterfly Wings” and “Zero.” The Pumpkins would even guest as themselves on the iconic “Homerpalooza” episode of *The Simpsons* in 1996, wherein Homer joins the fictitious Hullabalooza music festival as a sideshow performer and makes fast friends with the band.

With all that momentum, the group hit the road for the exhaustive *Infinite Sadness* world tour, which spanned most of 1996 and into 1997. The album cycle would impact Chicago venues of all sizes, including four nights at the Double Door in February of 1995 to preview *Mellon Collie* material, an album

release show at the Riviera Theatre with Cheap Trick, a Metro show in August of 1996, and three nights in October of that year at the Rosemont Horizon, now the Allstate Arena.

The record would ultimately serve as the end of an era of The Smashing Pumpkins, closing a chapter on the guitar-based identity the band had maintained to that point. Corgan seemed presciently aware of the shift, even at the time.

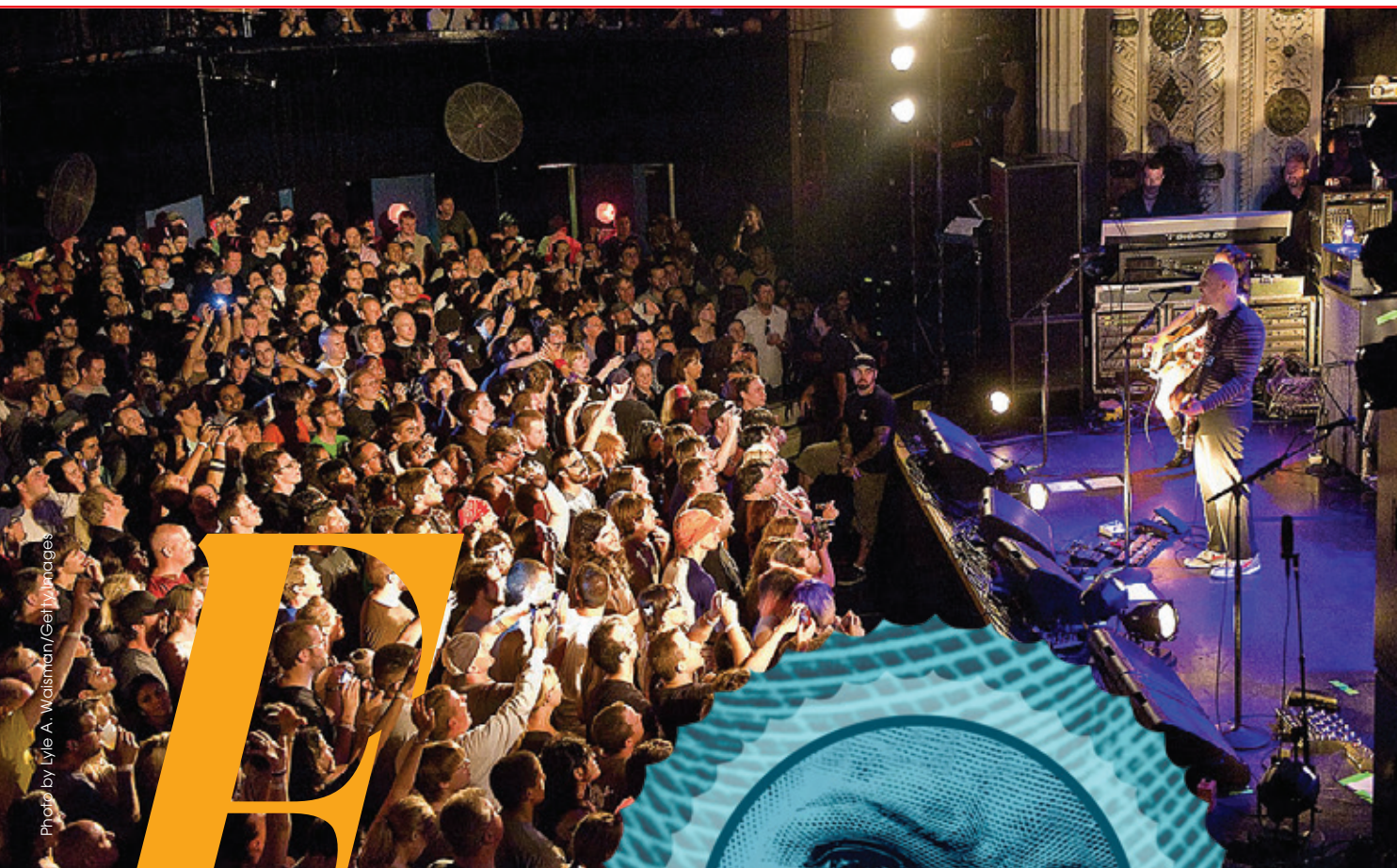
“We publicly made the decision that *Mellon Collie* is the last Smashing Pumpkins record that will be that kind

of rock thing,” the frontman declared to *SPIN* in 1996. “We’re going to get off this train we’ve been on, which is to be this seek ‘n’ destroy rock band. It’s not that you won’t hear it in the future in some guise.”

That the *Mellon Collie* songbook is now reimaged by Corgan and Arranger/Conductor James Lowe and presented as a stunning new work with the Lyric Opera Orchestra and Chorus is a testament to the longevity and caliber of the record. Thirty years after the world first heard the now iconic warning “The world is a vampire,” we assemble in the Lyric Opera House to hear these songs, familiar but also brand new again.

*We finally managed
to manifest everything
I always thought we
could do.*





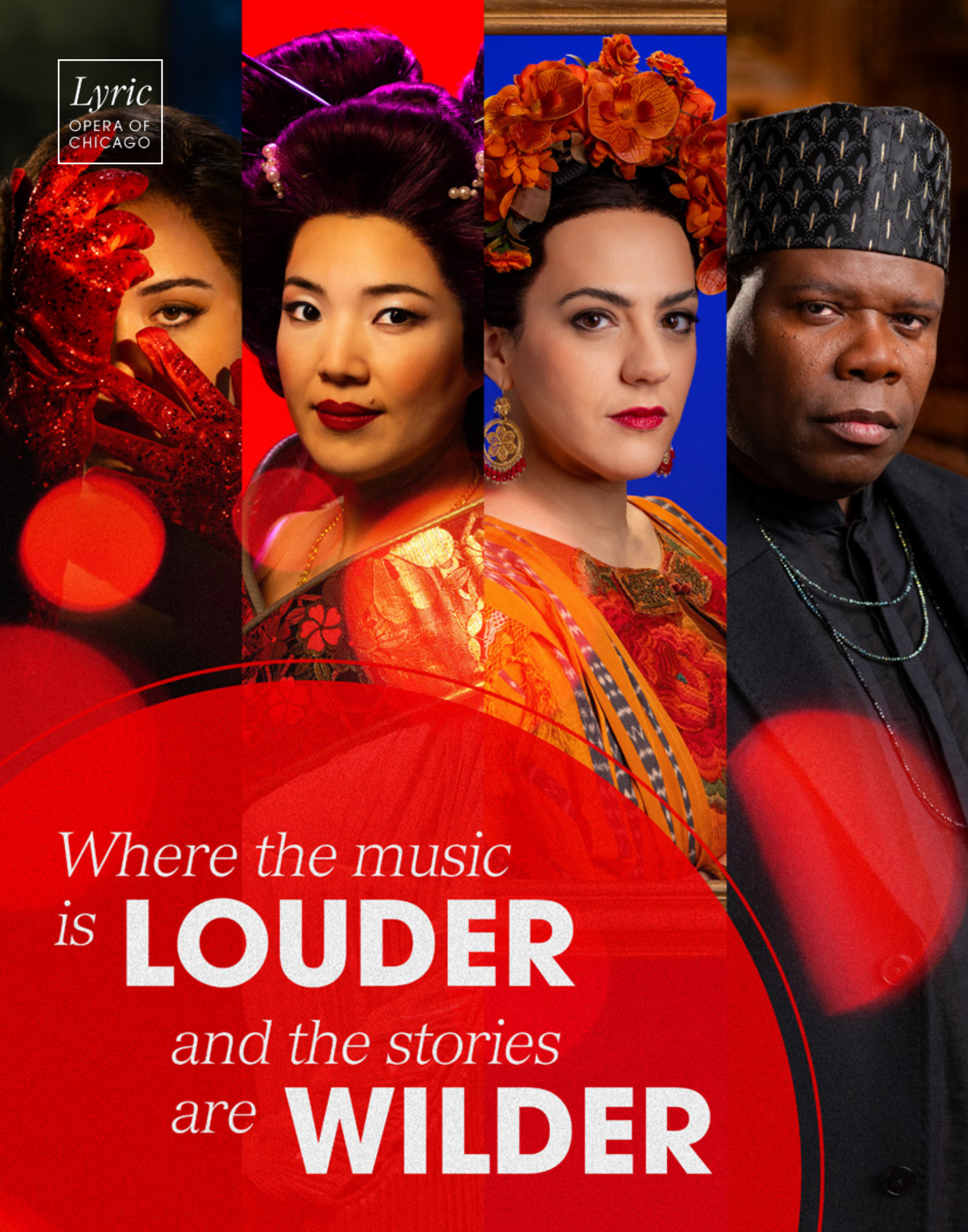
For some, it's a return to

younger days clad in a black and silver ZERO shirt at school or at the mall. A symbol that you, too, knew “the silence of the world,” as one lyric put it. For others, these performances may be an introduction to The Smashing Pumpkins live experience, after discovering the music through social videos or even an older relative. Regardless of whether this is your first show or if you were in the crowds for the earliest days at the Cabaret Metro and Avalon Niteclub, we congregate now at the Lyric Opera House, in the city by the lake, where the impossible is possible.

Tonight, tonight. **L**

Jaime Black is the founder and host of Dynasty Podcasts, which has showcased Chicago's creative communities and professional industries since 2005. He has previously held senior producer positions at radio stations like Q101 and WBEZ.



A promotional poster for the Lyric Opera of Chicago. The background is a collage of three vertical panels. The left panel shows a woman's face partially obscured by her hand wearing a red sequined glove. The middle panel shows a woman in a traditional Japanese kimono with a large orange flower headpiece. The right panel shows a man in a black patterned cap and shirt. A large red circular graphic is at the bottom.

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is **LOUDER**
and the stories
are **WILDER**



John Shaw/Lyric Opera of Chicago

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Puccini

Madama Butterfly

Mar. 14 - Apr. 12

A timeless tragedy — in dazzling contemporary technicolor.

Meet Cio-Cio-San — known as Madama Butterfly — a faithful but doomed geisha in love with B.F. Pinkerton. Everyone but Butterfly knows the Navy lieutenant will break her heart and ruin her life.

Opera newcomers will be swept away by the familiar melodies, gorgeous costuming, and colorful sets — and seasoned opera fans will thrill at this beautiful, thoughtful production from Lyric's own Matthew Ozawa that brings new dimension to an age-old story.

Sung in Italian with projected English titles.



Gabriela Lena Frank & Nilo Cruz

El último sueño de Frida y Diego

Mar. 21 - Apr. 4

How would you spend a single day reunited with a lost love?

On the Day of the Dead, Mexican artist Frida Kahlo crosses over from the underworld for 24 short hours with Diego Rivera, who remains in the living world, alone and grieving her loss.

El último sueño, which had its critically acclaimed world premiere in 2022, brings the legendary marriage — and revolutionary art — of Frida and Diego to the stage with vivid colors, surrealist touches, and lush, evocative music sung in Spanish and inspired by Mexican folk music traditions.

Sung in Spanish with projected English titles.





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John Shaw/Lyric Opera of Chicago

avery r. young

safronia

World Premiere

Apr. 17 & 18

Where blues, funk, and soul meet opera.

Enter the world of avery r. young's *safronia*, a contemporary opera that fuses jazz, gospel, and classical influences with bold storytelling. This electrifying work blends powerful voices, dynamic rhythms, and striking visuals to explore identity, desire, and the pursuit of freedom. Follow lead character safronia's journey through love, conflict, and self-discovery, and experience an opera that challenges expectations, pushes musical boundaries, and leaves a lasting impression.

For two performances only, Lyric presents the world premiere of this Afro-surrealist tale of the Great Migration, blending folklore, poetry, and music — from gospel and blues to funk and soul. A Chicago voice, a powerful tale, and an unforgettable experience.

Sung in English with projected English titles.



Watch more

Scan this QR code to learn more about the project and get a sneak peak at the workshops with the composer.

ROBERT AND PENELOPE STEINER FAMILY FOUNDATION

2025/26 Presenting Season Sponsor

Lyric's presentation of Strauss's *Salome* is generously made possible by **Richard O. Ryan**.

Lyric's presentation of Puccini's *Madama Butterfly* is generously made possible by **Lisbeth Stiffel, Invenery, ITW, Randy L. & Melvin R.* Berlin**, and **Marion A. Cameron-Gray**, *deceased

Lyric's presentation of Gabriela Lena Frank and Nilo Cruz's *El último sueño de Frida y Diego* is generously made possible by the **Zell Family Foundation**, the **Pritzker Foundation**, and **Ethel Gofen**.

Lyric's presentation of avery r. young's *safronia* is generously made possible by the **Pritzker Traubert Foundation**.

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Chloé Mendel Corgan (at right) and her father, Gilles, created more than 100 sketches for the *Mellon Collie* costumes.

UTE CK

by Elle Cashin

To dress the lead artists for this world premiere, Chloé Mendel Corgan is bringing couture to the stage.

When Billy Corgan and Lyric Opera of Chicago

first began to envision what *A Night of Mellon Collie and Infinite Sadness* might look like, live onstage, it wasn't just about the music: There was scenic and costume design to consider, too. They'd need an overall vision, of course, and garments to dress Billy and the four opera singers accompanying him. Their attire needed to reflect and respect the music, but also the occasion, the circumstance, and, of course, Billy himself. And so Billy turned to a regular creative collaborator, one who knows him and his music maybe better than he knows himself: his wife, Chloé Mendel Corgan, an esteemed couture designer in her own right. She began designing Billy's Smashing Pumpkins tour looks in 2011, and they started dating the next year. Together, they run a North Shore tea shop and music venue, Madame ZuZu's, and are raising three children in Highland Park. And, oh — with her father, Gilles Mendel, she designed the statement skirted tuxedo Billy wore to marry her at their home in 2023, an event that was covered in *Vogue*. They are, in short, partners in every sense.

It's under her fashion label, House of Gilles, which she runs with Gilles, that Chloé is producing the haute couture garments for this world premiere production. Their label is known for its fashion-forward bridal gowns and bespoke occasionwear; their pieces have been worn on red carpets by celebrities from Mariah Carey and Blue Ivy Carter to Nina Dobrev, Allison Janney, and Sydney Sweeney. For *Mellon Collie*, she and Gilles began with 100 different sketches of Billy to try and capture a vibe. There were a few obvious directions to choose from —



Photo by Andrew Claffi



Photo by Jared Siskin/Patrick McMullan via Getty Images



Photo by Pascal Le Segretain/Getty Images

'90s-era grunge, the steampunk costumery of the much-lauded “Tonight, Tonight” video, the album’s well-known iconography — but Billy had another vision in mind, one that perhaps paid homage to the Lyric Opera House itself. “Billy kept throwing around this Art Deco feeling he wanted to convey with the [costumes], but not in a *period-correct* way,” Chloé says. “He wanted the *feeling* of Art Deco without it being precise. So I started going backward. Like, what if David Bowie was in an Art Deco movie? That’s how we broke it down.”

Each of the five looks onstage bears the House of Gilles stamp: They’re modern-day designer pieces worthy of a runway or red carpet, and true to the individual artists, yet cohesive, part of a common story. The process took roughly six months: There was cutting, pattern-making,

and fitting; each costume required at least four separate fittings. “The men are in tuxedos, like a 1930s man would be, but we took artistic license,” Chloé says. “They have exaggerated shoulders; it’s slightly theatrical, slightly Bowie-esque.” Chloé and Gilles worked with printmaker Simon Ungless, a longtime collaborator with designer Alexander McQueen, to finish the pieces. “We did this painting technique on the coats where they look almost wet, but when you look closely, it’s all lace designs,” Chloé says. “The lace transfers are done with a vinyl paint texture, so from afar they will look wet and textural, but when you look up close, it’s actually fine art details.”

For the women — soprano Sydney Mancasola and mezzo-soprano Zoie Reams — Chloé and Gilles tapped into their brand’s DNA: romantic, ethereal gowns, impeccably constructed. “The



The costumes, and the show itself, are an ode not just to the album but to Chloé and Billy's identities and the creative space they occupy in the world

craftsmanship of the interior of the garments is actually more important than the exterior: how you feel in it, the security, all of those elements," Chloé says. "And yet it's not heavy; our construction is very light." The metallic gowns will have a rock 'n' roll edge but still feel romantic, with flowers handmade in the House of Gilles New York atelier by *petites mains*, skilled artisans trained under Chanel.

There are, of course, nods to the iconic imagery of the *Mellon Collie* double album: look for references to the moon, albeit with a Deco twist. But largely, what you see is fresh and fashion-forward. "We had to step away from the original imagery and build something new, something that reflects this reimagined music and the opera as it is today," Gilles says. "There's so much to draw from, from that album, but our goal was to capture its emotion

From left: Actress Nina Dobrev, Gilles Mendel, and Chloé Mendel Corgan at the 2024 New York City Ballet Fall Fashion Gala; sketch of an overcoat designed for Billy Corgan for this production; Chloé and Billy at the Maison Margiela show during Paris Fashion Week, 2025; two sketches for the soloists flank a gown from the latest House of Gilles bridal collection.

and spirit in a fresh, authentic way, celebrating each performer for this incredible stage.” Adds Chloé: “There will be nods to that sort of whimsical dream, because it’s the DNA; but we didn’t want to make it so obvious, because that’s the easy way out — and we never do that.”

These are lessons Chloé learned growing up under her father’s wing and spending time in his atelier. In 1981, Gilles Mendel took over as the fifth-generation head of fashion house J.Mendel, originally founded in 1870 in St. Petersburg, Russia; under his leadership, the brand shifted away from furs and into dressmaking and ready-to-wear. “It was always the question people asked: *Will you go into fashion?*” Chloé says. “I went to art school for a semester and tried a few things — working at an architecture firm, being a personal assistant, working at a restaurant — but I kept falling back to fashion.” When she did make the final call to go all in on the industry, it felt like a natural fit, weaving together her dual passions for fashion and family. “Family has always been at the heart of her decisions,” Gilles says. “She’s always had a natural ability to create, and she’s truly a free spirit; you never quite know what’s next. Creating pieces in a bespoke setting allowed us to make true works of art together. Chloé brings so much energy and vision — she really shapes the experience and keeps me on my toes.” In 2024, after co-designing her wedding gown, Chloé and her father officially launched House of Gilles; in addition to bridal and bespoke, the label also just released its first ready-to-wear capsule, a collection that includes pleated minidresses, corseted gowns, and the house’s signature hand-made flower detailing.

The Mellon Collie costumes, and the show itself, are an ode not just to the album but to Chloé and Billy’s identities, the creative space they

occupy in the world and in their community on the North Shore, maybe nowhere more so than at their tea shop. “We opened Madame ZuZu’s in Highland Park as an extension of our home,” Chloé says. “Naturally, we’re creative people, so we wanted to create a place that felt inclusive and different. For me, breaking bread is the core of connection, and that’s exactly what ZuZu’s was meant to do.” On any given day, you might find a mother with her kids, teenagers taking selfies, a meeting of the North Shore Women’s Poker Club, or even members of a semi-vintage rock band. “It’s

Naturally, we’re creative people, so we wanted to create a place that felt inclusive and different

about good music, great food, cookies, beautiful teas, and community — all the things we find fun and meaningful. It’s a space that brings people together from all walks of life.”

The 7-night showcase of *A Night of Mellon Collie and Infinite Sadness* is a reflection of all of this: It’s a celebration of Billy and the band, of Chicago, and of Chloé’s place in it all — fashion and family and music rolled into one. “This is such a huge achievement in Billy’s life; he’s not only honored but blown away that they would even consider making an opera with his music,” Chloé says. “So to be able to support my husband, even just as a wife, is so special. I’m touched that he wants me involved, that we can make it all happen and more.” ■

Elle Cashin was the longtime Editor-in-Chief of Modern Luxury Weddings magazine. She has contributed to The New York Times, Chicago Tribune, CS, The Knot, BRIDES, and other publications.

Artist profiles



BILLY CORGAN
COMPOSER, ARRANGER,
AND VOCALS
Lyric debut

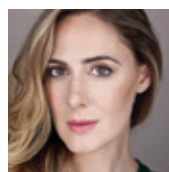
Beyond founding and fronting the Grammy Award-winning band The Smashing Pumpkins, Corgan is a noted solo artist, producer, songwriter, poet, wrestling promoter, podcast host, and café owner. His solo catalogue comprises *TheFutureEmbrace* (2005), *Aegea* (2014), *Ogilala* (2017), and *Cotillions* (2019). In the studio, he has collaborated with everyone from Tony Iommi of Black Sabbath, Rick Ocasek, Cheap Trick, Ray Davies, New Order, Marianne Faithful, and Scorpions to Korn, Phantogram, The Veronicas, and Code Orange. He has also contributed music to film soundtracks such as *Ransom* directed by Academy Award winner Ron Howard, *Stigmata*, and *Spun*, among others. He released his first poetry book, *Blinking with Fists*, in 2004. A lifelong wrestling aficionado, he owns and serves as president of The National Wrestling Alliance (NWA), home to a dynamic roster and bombastic pay-per-view spectacles. He is owner of Madame ZuZu's Tea House in Highland Park, where he often performs intimate surprise sets, and is also the host of "The Magnificent Others," a podcast which brings listeners face-to-face with world-renowned artists, innovative entrepreneurs, and visionary leaders who have dared to push boundaries and redefine what's possible. Corgan remains a staunch animal advocate who supports no-kill shelters such as PAWS Chicago. The Chicago native is constantly writing and recording new music.



JAMES LOWE
CONDUCTOR AND ARRANGER
Previously at Lyric: West Side Story
(2022/23, 2018/19) and *Oklahoma!*
(2012/13).

Equally at home in opera and musical theater, the Grammy-nominated conductor debuted at Lyric with *Oklahoma!* in the 2012/13 Season. Highlights this season include debuts with the Shakespeare Theatre Company for *Guys and Dolls*, Chicago Opera Theater for *Der Silbersee*, Billings Symphony Orchestra for their Holiday Concert, and The Phoenix Symphony for two programs: *The Music of Elton John* and *Dolly Parton's Threads: My Songs in Symphony*. He also returns to Washington National Opera to conduct *West Side Story*. Other recent engagements include a debut with the Illinois

Philharmonic Orchestra in *Sweeney Todd*, a return to The Atlanta Opera for *Rent* and *La Bohème*, and *Il barbiere di Siviglia* at Lyric Opera of Kansas City, where he debuted in 2023/24 with *The Sound of Music*. That season he debuted also at San Diego Opera (*El Milagro del Recuerdo*) and Opera San Antonio (*The Pirates of Penzance*), and returned to Washington National Opera for *Songbird*.



SYDNEY MANCASOLA
SOPRANO

Previously at Lyric: Marzelline/Fidelio (2024/25).

This season Mancasola returns to the Metropolitan Opera as Lisa in a new production of Bellini's *La Sonnambula*.

Other operatic highlights include Susanna at Atlanta Opera, and Pamina in Barrie Kosky's *The Magic Flute* conducted by James Conlon in his final performance as Music Director of the Los Angeles Opera. Concert appearances include Brahms's *Requiem* with the Amarillo Symphony Orchestra. Last season, the soprano made her house debuts at Dutch National Opera as Adele in Barrie Kosky's *Die Fledermaus*, at the Opéra Nice Côte d'Azur as Pamina, and at the Seiji Ozawa Matsumoto Festival in Japan as Tytania in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, reprising the role she performed the previous season in company debuts at both the Fondazione Teatro Carlo Felice in Genoa, Italy, and at the Royal Opera House Muscat. Other recent highlights include the title role of Matthew Aucoin's *Eurydice* in a new chamber arrangement of the work for Boston Lyric Opera, a return to the Metropolitan Opera as Frasquita in a new production of *Carmen*, and Mélisande in *Pelléas et Mélisande* at Des Moines Metro Opera, a role she debuted in her house debut at Los Angeles Opera in the 2022/23 season.

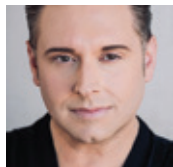


ZOIE REAMS
MEZZO-SOPRANO

Previously at Lyric: Seven roles since 2018/19, most recently Neris/Medea (2025/26) and *Mother/Blue* (2024/25).

This season's engagements for the American mezzo-soprano include Maddalena/*Rigoletto* at the Canadian Opera Company, Siegrune/*Die Walküre* Act III with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, and Beethoven's 9th Symphony with the Boston Symphony. Other recent engagements include Neris/*Medea* at Canadian Opera Company, Solange Knowles' *El Dorado Ballroom* with the Los Angeles Philharmonic, Erika/*Vanessa* at Spoleto Festival USA, Dinah/*Trouble in Tahiti* and Autumn/*Service Provider* at Minnesota Opera, and her debut at the Salzburg Festival as Doubtful Old Lady/Sergei Prokofiev's

The Gambler. Other recent highlights include *Mandane/Idaspe* at Quantum Theatre, *Beggar Woman/Sweeney Todd* at Austin Opera, Lily in the Metropolitan Opera's *Porgy and Bess*, Jane in Cincinnati Opera's *Castor and Patience*, the title role/*Carmen* (Opéra Louisiane, Minnesota Opera), Margret/*Wozzeck* (Des Moines Metro Opera), Bruckner's *Te Deum* (Houston Symphony Orchestra) and Bernstein's *Symphony No. 1: Jeremiah* (Staatstheater Cottbus Philharmonic Orchestra).



DOMINICK VALDÉS CHENES

TENOR
Lyric debut

Engagements for the tenor this season include the role of Solano in Delius' *The Magic Fountain* at the Wexford

Festival, and debuts with Florida Grand Opera as Calaf in *Turandot*, and with The Dallas Opera in concert. Other recent highlights include his Metropolitan Opera debut in the role of Greenhorn in Jake Heggie's *Moby Dick*, his role debut as Erik in *Der Fliegende Holländer* with Oper im Steinbruch, and his house debut as Pollione for Oper Leipzig. Chenes also sang Cavaradossi with the New Orleans Opera and Turiddu with Opera Orlando. In the 2023/24 Season he performed Pinkerton in Boston Lyric Opera's *Madama Butterfly*, Pollione in *Norma* with the Boston Youth Symphony, the title role of Hoffmann in *Les Contes d'Hoffmann* for Palm Beach Opera, and Nicias in *Thaïs* for Utah Opera. He recently made his role debut as Canio in *Pagliacci* with the Sacramento Philharmonic, returned to Seattle Opera for Alfredo in *La Traviata*, and sang Pollione in *Norma* for Musica Viva Hong Kong, the Verdi *Requiem* for the Reading Symphony, and Don José in *Carmen* for Palm Beach Opera. Chenes has performed Pinkerton for Opéra Royal de Wallonie-Liège, Seattle Opera, and Austin Lyric Opera, and Cavaradossi for Seattle Opera, Reading Symphony, and Minnesota Opera.



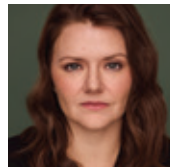
EDWARD PARKS

BARITONE
Previously at Lyric: Valentin/*Faust* (2017/18).

This season's highlights for the Grammy Award-winning baritone include returns to the Metropolitan

Opera both as Schaunard in *La Bohème* and in concert with Andrea Bocelli. Parks will continue to join Bocelli on tour throughout the season, bow as Marcello in *La Bohème* with Palm Beach Opera and sing Orff's *Carmina Burana* with the Santa Fe Symphony. Last season, he made his Houston Grand Opera debut as Marcello, and returned to Detroit Opera to sing Don Alfonso in *Così fan tutte* in a new staging by Yuval Sharon. He appeared with Bocelli on tour in 16 concerts across the United States. Parks began the 2023/24 Season as The Creature in the world premiere of Gregg Kallor's *Frankenstein* with Arizona Opera and,

during the summer, sang Sharpless in *Madama Butterfly* at the Hyogo Performing Arts Center in Japan. He made his Metropolitan Opera debut as Fiorello in *Il barbiere di Siviglia* and has since appeared as Figaro in *Barbiere*, Schaunard in *La Bohème* (also on tour to Japan), and as Larkens in *La Fanciulla del West*, broadcast to cinemas worldwide as part of the Met's "Live in HD" series. A National Winner of the Metropolitan Opera Laffont Competition, the Pennsylvania native trained at the Met's Lindemann Young Artist Development Program.



KATIE SPELMAN

DIRECTOR
Lyric debut

Spelman made her Broadway choreographic debut this past season with *The Notebook*. Other recent

credits include *Great Comet* (Writers Theatre, Jeff Award for Best Director), *Huzzah* (World Premiere, Old Globe), *Waitress* (Paramount), *The Music Man* (Marriott Theatre), *Cabaret* (Barrington Stage Company, Berkie Award for Best Choreography), the world premiere of *An American Tail* (CTC), *Once* (Writers Theatre), *Swearing in English* (Ars Nova), *AD 16* (Olney Theater, Helen Hayes Award for Best Choreography), *The Beautiful Game* (Tokyo), *The Who's Tommy* (DCPA), and *Oklahoma!* (Goodspeed). She was the Associate Choreographer on *Moulin Rouge* for the Boston, Broadway, and Australian companies, as well as an associate on the Broadway productions of *Amelie*, *American Psycho*, and *Once*. She has also collaborated with Lookingglass, Ars Nova, Shakespeare Theatre Company, Camerata Bern, Court Theatre, The Hypocrites, Ensemble Studio Theatre, Timeline Theatre, and Northwestern University. Upcoming: the world premiere of *Wonder* at American Repertory Theatre.



HOUSE OF GILLES

COSTUMES
Lyric debut

House of Gilles is a haute couture house rooted in craftsmanship and artistry.

A sixth-generation family business, it was founded by Gilles Mendel and Chloé Mendel Corgan, merging a legacy of savoir-faire with modernity to create exquisite garments in New York City. Renowned for dressing life's greatest moments, from bridal to red carpet, the house also designed costumes for the 2024 New York City Ballet Fashion Gala. House of Gilles embodies elegance, precision, and innovation. Mendel, a CFDA honoree, Smithsonian's Cooper Hewitt National Design Award winner, and member of the Fédération de la Haute Couture et de la Mode, brings decades of expertise to every creation. At House of Gilles, couture is an experience — where craftsmanship, heritage, and personal storytelling meet.



CHRIS MARAVICH LIGHTING DESIGNER

Lyric's lighting director served in the same position from 2006 to 2012 at San Francisco Opera, where he created lighting for many productions including

The Gospel of Mary Magdalene, *Così fan tutte*, *Turandot*, *Cyrano de Bergerac*, *Il trittico*, *Tosca*, *Simon Boccanegra*, *Don Giovanni*, *Nixon in China*, and *Attila*. He has collaborated on the lighting designs for *Wozzeck* (Finnish National Opera, Grand Théâtre de Genève), *Doktor Faust* at Staatsoper Stuttgart, *Tannhäuser* for Greek National Opera, and *La fanciulla del West*, *The Makropulos Case*, *The Daughter of the Regiment*, *Il trovatore*, *Samson et Dalila*, and *Macbeth* for San Francisco Opera. Maravich has also designed lighting for LA Opera, Opera Colorado, San Diego Opera, Opera Santa Barbara, Lyric Opera of Kansas City, Florida Grand Opera, Madison Opera, Cal Performances, and Opera San José. He currently serves as lighting supervisor for The Joffrey Ballet. *Chris Maravich is supported by the Mary-Louise and James S. Aagaard Lighting Director Endowed Chair.*



PETE WIEJACZKA SOUND DESIGNER AND AUDIO MIX ENGINEER

Previously at Lyric: Ten productions since 2013, most recently *Fiddler on the Roof* (2022/23) and *West Side Story* (2018/19).

Wiejaczka is a frequent collaborator on Lyric's musical theater productions, and provided sound design for *The New Classics: Songs from the New Golden Age of Musical Theater* (2020/21). Other notable productions include sound design for The Joffrey Ballet's performances at Lyric and the Kennedy Center, the Ravinia Festival's 2020 virtual Lawn Party, and a groundbreaking ceremony with the Prague Symphony Orchestra in honor of a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Past projects include numerous special event broadcasts and product launches with live music performances.



GREG EMETAZ VIDEO DESIGNER

Previously at Lyric: Four productions since 2015/16, most recently *Puccini Heroines* (2024/25) and *Champion* (2023/24).

In addition to *Bel Canto* at Lyric, the filmmaker and projection designer's work includes many other important opera world premieres, including *Dolores Claiborne* at San Francisco Opera, *Enemies: a Love Story* at Palm Beach Opera, and *Shalimar the Clown*, "27", *Champion*, and *The Golden Ticket* at Opera Theatre of Saint Louis. Emetaz is the director of the

feature film *Camp Wedding*; short films including *Spell Claire*, *Bowes Academy* (NC Gay + Lesbian Film Fest Jury award), *Get the F K Outta Paris!*, and *Death by Omelette* (SNCF Prix du Polar Finalist and Hong Kong Mobile Film Awards Silver Medalist); and music videos including *Eating 4 Two* and *Butt Drunk* (Friars Club Comedy Film Festival special Jury Award, iTVfest Best Director Award, with Amanda DeSimone). Emetaz created the behind-the-scenes documentaries for Julie Taymor's *The Tempest*, Broadway musical *Spider-Man: Turn off the Dark*, and numerous productions at New York City Opera and Opera Theatre of Saint Louis.



MICHAEL BLACK CHORUS DIRECTOR

The Australian chorus director joined Lyric full time in the 2012/13 Season, after having served as interim director the season before. He was named Head

of Music at Lyric, a new position, in the 2023/24 Season. Black was Chorus Director at Opera Australia in Sydney from 2001 to 2013, and has worked in this capacity for such distinguished organizations as the Edinburgh International Festival and Opera Holland Park (London), and, in Australia, the Sydney Symphony Orchestra, the Philharmonia Choir, Motet Choir, the Cantillation chamber choir, and the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra. In Chicago, Black became the first chorus director to work with the choruses of Lyric, the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, and the Grant Park Music Festival, where he served for six seasons, including preparation of *The Damnation of Faust* chorus and Haydn's *Creation*. Black has served as chorus director for close to 140 different operas on four continents, and his work has been recorded and/or aired on ABC, BBC, PBS, for many HD productions in movie theaters, and on television. *Michael Black is supported by the Howard A. Stotler Chorus Director Endowed Chair.*



JOHN METZNER WIG & MAKEUP DESIGNER

The designer first joined the staff of Lyric for the 2022/23 Season. He has previously collaborated with Chicago Shakespeare Theater, Lookingglass Theatre, and Court

Theatre. He served for nine years as Head of Wig and Makeup for Webster University's Conservatory of Theatre Arts, and designed hair and makeup for more than 50 performances at The Repertory Theatre of St. Louis. Other regional credits include work at The Muny, Great River Shakespeare Festival, and Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, where he designed for *The Pirates of Penzance*, among many other productions. His advanced training includes wig styling at the Wig Room Training Academy and London School of Wig Making. *John Metzner is supported by The Marlys A. Beider Wigmaster and Makeup Designer Endowed Chair.* **L**

Orchestra & Chorus

MUSIC DIRECTOR

Enrique Mazzola
*The John D. and Alexandra
 C. Nichols Endowed Chair*

MUSIC STAFF

Michael Banwarth
 Kseniia Polstiankina Barrad
 William C. Billingham
 Aaron Breid
 Kyle Dickson
 Levi Hammer
 Susan Miller Hult
 Tess Jackson
 Keun-A Lee
 Chi-Yuan Lin ^^
 Noah Lindquist*
 Francesco Milioto
 Jerad Mosbey ^
 Jacob Niemann ^
 Stefano Sarzani
 Madeline Slettedahl
 Morgan Stevenson
 Marika Yasuda

ORCHESTRA

Violin I

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

Violin II

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

Viola

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

Cello

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

String Bass

Samuel Shuhan,
Acting Principal
 Andrew L. W. Anderson,
Acting Assistant Principal
 Jeremy Attanaseo**
 Gregory Sarchet
 Collins R. Trier

Flute

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

Piccolo

Alyce Johnson

Oboe

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

English Horn

Judith Zunamon Lewis

Clarinet

Heesoo Kim, *Principal*
 Susan Warner,
Assistant Principal

Bass Clarinet

Susan Warner,
Acting

Bassoon

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

Contrabassoon

Lewis Kirk

Horn

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

Trumpet

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

Trombone

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

Bass Trombone

Will Baker

Tuba

Andrew Smith, *Principal*

Timpani

Edward Harrison, *Principal*

Percussion

Douglas Waddell,
Acting Principal
 Eric Millstein,
Acting Assistant Principal

Harp

Lynn Williams, *Principal*

Librarian

John Rosenkrans, *Principal*

Stage Band Contractor

Christine Janicki

EXTRA MUSICIAN

Marika Yasuda, *piano/celeste*

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.

* On leave, 2025/26 Season

** Season Substitute

^ Salti Foundation U.S. Opera Residency

^^ Ryan Opera Center Conductor

CHORUS DIRECTOR AND HEAD OF MUSIC

Michael Black

*The Howard A. Stotler
Endowed Chair*

REGULAR CHORUS

Soprano

Angela De Venuto
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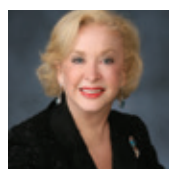
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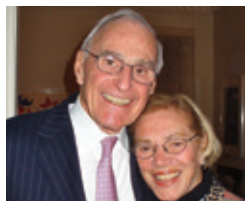


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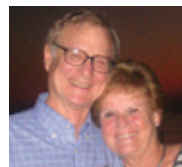


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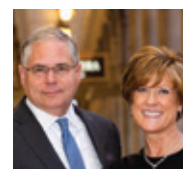
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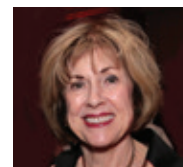
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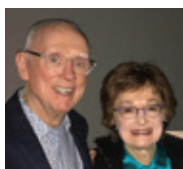


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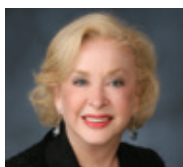
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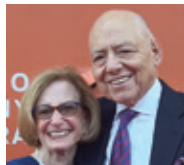


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Sandra Moore, *Stage Managers*

Adrienne Bader
Alaina Bartkowiak
Alycia Martin
Sandra Moore
Tommy Novak
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Peggy Stenger
Amy C. Thompson, *Assistant Stage Managers*



Local 2: Stagehands

Local 476: Studio Mechanics

Local 769: Theatrical Wardrobe



Local USA 829 of the IATSE is the union representing scenic, costume, lighting, sound and projection designers in Live Performance

People of Lyric

A behind-the-scenes conversation



Kyle Flückiger

Sarah Riffle

Assistant Lighting Designer

Hometown

Logan, Ohio

When did you start at Lyric?

July 2017

Favorite opera?

The Consul, by Menotti

Favorite opera?

I always love a good comedic foil or a fun villain. Like Leporello in *Don Giovanni* or Scarpia in *Tosca*.

What do you enjoy outside of Lyric?

I have my own millinery business, City Mouse Adornments, which keeps me busy. I also enjoy going to the symphony or taking in other shows around the city.

What is your role here at Lyric?

I'm one of the two Assistant Lighting Designers — and depending on the show I'll function as either the first or second assistant. When you're the first assistant, you are essentially the backup lighting designer, there to know all the things that the lighting designer does, but you focus on supporting them to a successful execution of their design and making their time in our house smooth. We work with the crew for them and say, here's how we can make things function better, faster in this house. Something unique to assisting in opera — we'll stay with the show through the run to maintain the the artistic integrity of the piece as set by the designer and team for every performance.

What was your path to working at Lyric?

I was a woodwind player — clarinet, saxophone, and mainly oboe — and was going to go for music and theater as an undergrad, but I took a lighting class and I thought it was fascinating. I've been in it ever since. After grad school I was in New York for eight years, doing a huge variety of freelance work as well as a five-year gig with the Tribeca Performing Arts Center as lighting supervisor. I worked the Tribeca Film Festival while working that job. I did a *Porgy and Bess* tour. And when I saw the ad for Lyric, I applied. I was tired of the New York scene and I really wanted to work on opera full-time.

How did you know it would really be opera?

I would say that the bug really bit hard when I was working one summer at Chautauqua. One day during a *sitzprobe*, I was sitting in my office off stage right, just preparing colors for the next day's call. And I was listening, and thought, *Oh, my God, this is amazing. I want to do this. I want to listen to this music every day.*

Any favorite productions or moments at Lyric?

I did really love working on *Fidelio*, and a lot of that was because of the designer, Yuki Nakase Link. She'll do our *Butterfly* this season. She was fantastic to work with, and it's always fun to sit with a colleague who thinks about things in a way that maybe you don't. I loved *Cendrillon*. We had all these little chimneys, with little individual smokers, and it created a kind of fairyscape, like in *Mary Poppins* before they do the chimney sweep song.

What is something about your job that would surprise people?

Lighting can just be basically functional, just showing you where to look, but a lot of what lighting does is support the emotional storytelling. When I tell people what I do, and then they ask, *What is that?* I always say, *Have you ever gone to see a show? Well, the reason you can see the show is because of me.* It's my job to make sure the lights are on. Our job is to be seen but not noticed. It's an understood rule that if you are noticed, you have done your job wrong. If they're paying more attention to the lighting than to the show, then something's gone sideways. You try not to make it a blunt instrument. It's a very subtle art, honestly. Some people will call it the brush strokes, painting with light and stuff like that. And if you're equating it to a fine art like that, it is the watercolor of the theater world. **L**