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OPERA OF
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Mozart

così fan tutte



Lyric

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Lyric

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John Mangum
General Director,
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Lyric

Welcome to your Lyric

From the Chair and the General Director

Welcome to Lyric Opera of Chicago!

For this new-to-Chicago production of Mozart's *Così fan tutte*, one of the greatest of all operas, we find our quartet of lovers enjoying the pleasures of a sun-drenched 1930s seaside resort. Our magnificent cast offers an exciting mix of long-awaited debuts and the returns of friends of long standing.

As Fiordiligi, we welcome one of today's most engaging singing actresses, Jacquelyn Stucker, to Lyric for the first time. This season, she sings Ginevra in new productions of Handel's *Ariodante* at both the Paris Opéra and Covent Garden,

and she debuts at the Metropolitan Opera as the Countess in *The Marriage of Figaro*. Her slightly less serious sister, Dorabella, is sung by Italian mezzo-soprano Cecilia Molinari, who comes to us fresh from a triumph as Rosina in Rossini's *The Barber of Seville* at the Vienna State Opera.

As Ferrando, one of the two suitors pursuing our heroines, American-born Cuban and Colombian tenor Anthony León makes his Lyric debut. This outstanding young singer was a winner at the 2023 Metropolitan Opera Laffont Competition and first-prize winner at Operalia in 2022. Our Guglielmo is none other than Ian Rucker, recent alumnus of our Patrick G. and

Shirley W. Ryan Opera Center, whose career is really taking off. He wowed Lyric audiences with his virtuoso turn in *Carmina Burana* in the fall, and he follows his Guglielmos here with performances as the Count in *The Marriage of Figaro* at Scottish Opera.

On the podium for this exploration of love, and all of its glories and challenges, is Music Director Enrique Mazzola, conducting the second work in our traversal of the three immortal Mozart-DaPonte operatic collaborations. Next season, we're excited to share that Enrique will finish the trilogy as we return to *Don Giovanni*. We hope to see you then, and many times in between. Thank you so much for being with us, and, with your support of Lyric, helping to make all this sunshine possible.



Kyle Flubacker


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Coming Attractions

At the midway point of the season, a look ahead at the bold mix of Lyric's offerings

"**I would love for Lyric** to be a place where all sorts of creative musical artists can see themselves and their work," said John Mangum, General Director, President and CEO of Lyric Opera of Chicago. He was speaking in advance of the company's world premiere of *A Night of Mellon Collie and Infinite Sadness* — and the innovative production's sold-out success seems to indicate that the process is well underway. In this season and beyond, the company is intentionally broadening its offerings. For nearly seven decades, Lyric has been synonymous with the pillars of the operatic repertoire, and that won't change (take note: the company's own *Ring* cycle is on the horizon for 2029). Yet new audiences are finding their way to the opera house as well, for more world premieres, genre-bending collaborations, concerts, and films with live orchestra. It's intentional.

"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," he says. "Opera is a much wider net than one might assume. There's capacity for creative expression in this art form that spans the boundaries — the false boundaries — of different genres."

The world premiere of *safronia*, onstage at Lyric April 17 and 18, provides a salient example. The evocative new work, commissioned from Chicago's first Poet Laureate, avery r. young, draws on Black folklore and poetic narrative, and is rich with the musical lineages of gospel, blues, funk, and soul. It's a deeply personal story that might never have been told were it not for young's memorable contributions to the company's pandemic era *Twilight: Gods* production. There, young's poetic narration connected scenes and helped reformulate





Photo by Cory Weaver / San Francisco Opera

El último sueño de Frida y Diego brings Kahlo's work to vivid life on stage.

Wagner's *Ring* cycle as a site-specific, communal experience. *safronia* marks the Chicago native's first foray into opera, penning both the score and the libretto himself. This semi-staged production, directed by Timothy Douglas in his Lyric debut, marks a significant addition to Lyric's ongoing commitment to new work that reflects the cultural vibrancy of Chicago and the stories of the communities that shape it.

Similarly contemporary is Gabriela Lena Frank and Nilo Cruz's *El último sueño de Frida y Diego*, which received its premiere in 2022, and will run at Lyric March 21 through April 4, 2026. The work presents an imaginary tale taking place on the Day of the Dead, when 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. The pair's legendary marriage — and revolutionary art —

arrive onstage with vivid colors, surrealist touches, and lush, evocative music sung in Spanish and inspired by Mexican folk music traditions.

Lyric's increasingly popular *Live to Film* concert series — which this season included the charming *Coco* — continues April 10 and 11 with *Mary Poppins*. Audiences will have a chance to see a much younger Dick Van Dyke (who recently marked his 100th birthday) join a high-flying Julie Andrews in this legendary masterpiece.

Mangum sees film as a natural cousin to opera rather than a detour from it. In the 19th century, he notes, opera was the medium for epic storytelling; in the 20th, film emerged as the vehicle for those broad narratives. "The 19th century's operetta, light music, *singspiel* and the like developed into the musical theater

of the 20th century,” he says. “The films that we’re putting on at Lyric are true descendants.”

Rounding out the 2025/26 Season are two presentations that showcase powerful sopranos. Renée Fleming returns to Lyric for a solo recital (surprisingly, her first in the house) derived from her 2021 Grammy winning recording with the Metropolitan Opera’s music director Yannick Nézet-Séguin at the piano. Entitled “Voice of Nature: The Anthropocene,” the program includes music in a folk style, as well as songs commissioned by Fleming from living composers such as Nico Muhly — and also features gorgeous, virtuosic selections by Handel and Canteloube. The eclectic repertoire list includes Romantic favorites, too, and features immersive video curated by the National Geographic Society that invites reflection on the beauty of our planet.

Mangum has often stated his commitment to “the tried and true cornerstones of the repertoire,” and there is perhaps no better example than Puccini’s *Madama Butterfly*, running March 14 to April 12, 2026 (though it’s interesting to note, too, that Mangum cites the work’s appropriation of Eastern source material as an example of the pliable, hybrid nature of opera, hiding in plain sight).

This breathtaking production, conceived and directed by Matthew Ozawa, Lyric’s Chief Artistic Officer, is a much-acclaimed hit, fusing the colorful splendor audiences have grown to expect from the work with an innovative frame. Time past and time present onstage, love and loss, a hypnotic score — sounds like grand opera at its finest. **L**

Coming attractions, top to bottom: Renée Fleming in recital; Avery R. Young's *Safronia*; *Mary Poppins in Concert Live to Film*; *Madama Butterfly*



Photo by Peter Smith



Photo by John Shaw

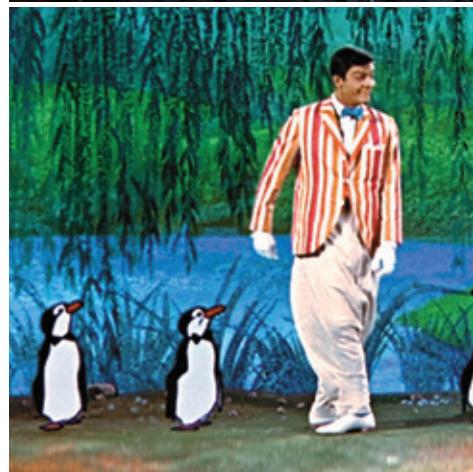


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The **2025 | 26**

Season

Richard Strauss

Salomé

January 25 - February 14, 2026

Mozart

Così fan tutte

February 1 - 15, 2026

Renée Fleming in Recital

Voice of Nature: The Anthropocene

February 5, 2026

Puccini

Madama Butterfly

March 14 - April 12, 2026

Gabriela Lena Frank & Nilo Cruz

El último sueño de Frida y Diego

March 21 - April 4, 2026

Movie Nights at Lyric

Mary Poppins in Concert Live to Film

April 10 & 11, 2026

avery r. young

safronia

April 17 & 18, 2026



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Two officers, convinced all women are fickle in love, hatch a plan to switch places and woo each other's fiancées in disguise — but the women know exactly what they're up to from the start.

Hilarity and dazzling arias ensue in a 1930s-era seaside country club, where frothy costumes and splashy sets belie an undercurrent of distrust and deception on par with a binge-worthy reality show.

Conducted by Enrique Mazzola and featuring a fresh ensemble of star artists alongside Grammy honorees Ana María Martínez and Rod Gilfry, Così sets off vocal pyrotechnics that bubble and burst with athleticism.



Photo by Cory Weaver / San Francisco Opera

Così fan tutte at
San Francisco
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Lyric

Così fan tutte



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Così fan tutte

Opera in two acts in Italian

Music by **Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart**

Libretto by **Lorenzo Da Ponte**

February 1M, 4M, 7, 10, 13, 15M, 2026

CHARACTERS IN ORDER OF VOCAL APPEARANCE

Ferrando
Guglielmo
Don Alfonso
Fiordiligi
Dorabella
Despina

Anthony León+
Ian Rucker**
Rod Gilfry
Jacquelyn Stucker+
Cecilia Molinari+
Ana María Martínez

Conductor
Original Director
Revival Director
Set and Projection Designer
Costume Designer
Lighting Designer
Revival Lighting Designer
Chorus Director
Wig & Makeup Designer
Assistant Director
Stage Manager
Recitative Accompanist
Stage Band Conductor
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Enrique Mazzola
Michael Cavanagh+
Roy Rallo
Erhard Rom+
Constance Hoffman
Jane Cox+
Chris Maravich
Michael Black
John Metzner
Katrina Bachus
Alaina Bartkowiak
Jerad Mosbey
Francesco Milioto
Jerad Mosbey
Kseniia Polstiankina Barrad
Susan Miller Hult
Christopher Bergen

First performed at the Burgtheater in Vienna on January 26, 1790.
First performed by Lyric Opera of Chicago on November 9, 1959.

+ Lyric debut

** Alumnus, The Patrick G. and Shirley W. Ryan Opera Center

Synopsis

Act One

Don Alfonso is trying to enlighten Ferrando and Guglielmo as to the true nature of women. He places a bet that he can prove their fiancées, Dorabella and Fiordiligi, are not the icons of purity the young men believe them to be. Both sides are confident of victory within 24 hours, and during this period Ferrando and Guglielmo agree to do as they are told by Alfonso.

Sisters Fiordiligi and Dorabella are celebrating the virtues of their lovers. Alfonso tells them that their men have been called up and must leave immediately for the “front lines.” The men feign a tearful farewell scene and “go off to war.” The women are devastated but their maid, Despina, tells them to look on the bright side and have a good time in their absence — in other words, behave exactly as men would do.

Don Alfonso enlists Despina in his scheme, and he presents two “Albanian” friends to the sisters. Neither Fiordiligi nor Dorabella recognize Guglielmo and Ferrando in disguise.

Offended to see the strange men, Fiordiligi and Dorabella are repelled by their advances. They declare fidelity to their lovers. The young men are delighted but Alfonso is still confident in his ultimate triumph.

The sisters continue to grieve for their men at the front. The two “Albanians” return and, despondent in the women’s rejection, swallow “poison” and collapse. The terrified girls call for Despina, who goes to find a doctor who claims to cure any illness by magnetism. The men revive and, believing they are in heaven, demand a kiss from their “angels,” Fiordiligi and Dorabella. The sisters rebuff their advances once again.

INTERMISSION

Act Two

Despina persuades the sisters to befriend their new admirers. They decide on preferences: Dorabella chooses Guglielmo; Fiordiligi selects Ferrando. Each has instinctively chosen the other’s partner. Dorabella yields to Guglielmo, exchanging lockets as a pledge of fidelity. Meanwhile, Fiordiligi rejects Ferrando.

Ferrando and Guglielmo report on their progress. Ferrando is furious at the infidelity of his fiancée, Dorabella.

Despina and Dorabella put pressure on Fiordiligi to have fun. Fiordiligi decides she must run away to join Guglielmo at war, but Ferrando confronts her again and she finally yields. Agonized, Guglielmo witnesses it all. Don Alfonso has proven his point and won the bet.

Don Alfonso and Despina arrange for the new couples to be “married” by Despina, disguised as a notary. As the girls sign their names, a military band is heard, signaling that the soldiers have returned unexpectedly. In the confusion, the two “Albanians” disappear, soon reemerging without their disguises and feigning shock at the evidence of a wedding.

The entire plot is finally revealed. All four lovers’ certainties have been destroyed and no one knows quite what to believe, except that human nature is far more complex than they ever imagined.

Courtesy of San Francisco Opera

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**APPROXIMATE TIMINGS
This production will be performed
with one intermission.**

Act One	1 hour 35 minutes
Intermission	30 minutes
Act Two	1 hour 25 minutes
TOTAL	3 hours 30 minutes

Puccini

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Madama Butterfly

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Both Cynical and Heartfelt: The Enigma of *Così fan tutte*

The libretto of this masterpiece has proved troublesome. Mozart's psychological insights, however, transcend the challenging plot, and illuminate enduring truths.

By Martha C. Nussbaum



First performed on January 26, 1790, at the Burgtheater in Vienna, *Così fan tutte*, "Thus Do All Women" (subtitled "The School for Lovers"), was initially well received, but had only five performances during Mozart's lifetime, on account of the death of the emperor Joseph II only a month later, and the ensuing mourning period. (Mozart would die less than two years later, on December 5, 1791.) During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the opera endured a long eclipse, being considered offensive and immoral. Sometimes, loving the music, people attempted to provide it with a totally different libretto: in one version, the replacement text was that of Shakespeare's *Love's Labour's Lost* in French! Now, however, the opera is always in the top 20 of most-performed operas worldwide, ranking slightly below *The Magic Flute*, *The Marriage of Figaro*, and *Don Giovanni*. The beauty of its music has won the hearts of audiences.

Producers, critics, and audiences, however, continue to find *Così* a deeply problematic work. The great critic Joseph Kerman goes so far as to write, "Even the most devout Mozartian will have to admit that there is something unsatisfactory about *Così*" — which he calls



Photo by Cory Weaver / San Francisco Opera

Above: In this production, Ferrando and Guglielmo make their bet, appropriately enough, in a locker room. **Opposite:** Despina embodies the libretto's cynicism, as she encourages Fiordiligi and Dorabella to take advantage of their situation.

"Mozart's most problematic work." What is the problem? In essence, it is a felt dissonance between the heartless spirit of Lorenzo Da Ponte's libretto and the remarkable emotional expressivity of the music, especially in the second act. This dissonance is then rendered more problematic still by the cookie-cutter ending in which everything snaps back to the way it was before Act Two.

Da Ponte's libretto is polished, well-constructed, witty—and cynical. Don Alfonso, the opera's resident philosopher/observer/cynic, who creates the plan to test the fidelity of the young women, opines that emotions are short-lived and fickle, but the libretto ultimately goes yet further, suggesting that they are altogether unreal and factitious. Much of the work's humor, in Act One, derives from the fact that while the women take their own emotions seriously, we are urged to see that they are only play-acting, imitating literary expressions of passion. (Singer-actresses have a challenge: while acting they must create the impression of mere play-acting, and later on show how different that is from genuine feeling.) Throughout Act One, Mozart's music serves Da Ponte's cynical purpose quite well, creating an artificial comedy with characters who are essentially

cardboard cutouts and objects of knowing laughter (by Don Alfonso and Despina, and by us). We know very little about the nature of Mozart and Da Ponte's collaboration, but we certainly have no evidence that, like Verdi, Mozart controlled the process and insisted on getting his way; the legendarily self-promoting Da Ponte's letters suggest the opposite, rightly or wrongly.

But Mozart cannot help taking emotions seriously, and by Act Two his genius for emotional insight, range, and particularity takes over, breaking the clever mold and subverting its purpose. In the other Da Ponte operas, it is also true that Mozart supplies emotional depth to texts that might have been set otherwise. (Just imagine, for example, in how many

This is Mozart — who shows again and again that playfulness and humor can be a supreme expression of reciprocity in love.



Photo by Cory Weaver / San Francisco Opera

Initially, the sisters at least appear to put up a valiant defense.

ways the text of Cherubino's aria "Voi che sapete" in *The Marriage of Figaro* might have been set, and how completely it might have lacked the tender longing that it in fact expresses.) In *Così*, however, the music doesn't just render emotionally determinate a text that is indeterminate; it actually subverts the entire point of the libretto. No, Don Alfonso, emotions are not just a game; they are real, and people have deep, interesting, and highly individual emotional lives.

In Act One, the girls are not very different from one another, and both play-act at emotions with a grandiosity that signals an absence of authentic self-knowledge and real erotic experience. In Act Two, both discover depths of emotional response in themselves — in highly particular ways. Both Kerman and philosopher Bernard Williams focus on the duet between Fiordiligi and Ferrando, "Fra gli amplessi," ("In the embraces"), which shows Fiordiligi discovering love, and so discovering new capacities in herself. Emotions strike both lovers as mysterious, but also as totally real and urgent, as real as anything in the world can be. (And this is so, whether the emotions actually last or not: so long as they exist, they are both real and at the core of the person's humanity.) The contrast between Fiordiligi's Act One aria, where she is playing around with ideas of constancy like a would-

be melodrama heroine, and this duet, with its soaring phrases and tremulous expression of passion, could not be more striking — and moving, too, as if we are seeing a mature woman being born.

Kerman seems to prefer the emotions of the serious pair to those of the comic pair simply because they are serious. Williams's preference for the serious pair must be understood in connection with his often-expressed preference for Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde* as the operatic paradigm of genuine love. (In introducing the posthumous collection in which his article on *Così* appears, Williams's widow notes that he tested their budding relationship by taking her to a performance of *Tristan*, to see how much she loved it!)

But this is Mozart, the same Mozart who shows again and again that playfulness and humor can be a supreme expression of reciprocity in love. (And isn't this

Emotions strike both lovers as mysterious, but also as totally real and urgent, as real as anything in the world can be.

an important truth in real life?) So I propose (*contra* Williams and Kerman, who are a bit contemptuous of the more light-hearted lovers) that we also do justice to the other pair. The moment in all opera that most unfailingly makes me weep for sheer joy at the precariousness and lovability of the world is Dorabella and Guglielmo's Act Two duet, "Il core vi dono" ("I give you a heart"). The usual staging has him give her a heart-shaped locket as a token of love. She accepts it, and they then joke that the heart that was in one breast is now beating in the other's: His heart (the locket) is now on her breast, and (she says) hers has now gone over there and is beating in his.

The music first expresses tender playful alternation, and then, with the delicate staccatos of the line "E batte cosi" ("And beats just so"), they are suddenly together. (That's where I cry, invariably.) "O cambio felice," "O happy exchange." Dorabella has already said that she chooses Guglielmo because he seems more playful — and one is painfully aware that Ferrando, her original fiancé, was therefore utterly wrong for her (and right for Fiordiligi), since he is all lofty sentiment and no play. And now, with Guglielmo, she suddenly finds what she wanted all along: in the intimacy of joking and play she finds love's reality, as the hearts change places and then somehow beat in harmony, though from the opposite place.

In effect, as Kerman wittily puts it, the second act belongs not to Don Alfonso but to "Don Wolfgang," who, being himself, took emotion very seriously — including its soaring heights but including, as well, its capacity for tender play — and probed the characters' depths with varied and aching effect. By offering the maid Despina no corresponding individuality in passion, Mozart seems to suggest that, in this world, emotional individuality requires leisure and may be incompatible with labor.

Act Two belongs to Mozart, but it must end as Da Ponte wrote it. Although the work has been staged in multiple ways, we are evidently supposed to think that the girls go back to their original partners. (Alfonso tells the lovers to marry the girls *in spite* of their

fickleness, which implies that they take their original partners back. This is also the "lesson" intended from start to finish — in the libretto, that is.) According to the libretto, there is no loss, because all is convention and emotions are factitious anyway. But given the music of Act Two, the ending is deeply disturbing, and the message finally conveyed a rather unpleasant one: As Williams puts it, what's posited is "the idea that emotions are indeed deep, indeed based on reality, but the world will go on as though they were not, and the social order, which looks to things other than those emotional forces, will win out." We might even see in the work a critique of the institution of marriage, as inimical to genuine love, at least for women.

Williams thinks that Mozart and Da Ponte collaboratively create this dark and disturbing insight. I find more persuasive Kerman's suggestion that the libretto is one thing, the music in some respects quite another, and Mozart is trapped by the contrivance of the libretto, creating an ending that turns out jarring and unsatisfying.

And what of the war to which the men march off to cheerful choral song in praise of the military life? Is that part of the comic contrivance, or is it all too real? Might war not be another way in which the conventions of the world treat human emotions as if they do not matter? John Cox, director of Lyric's 2017/18 production of *Così fan tutte*, wrote that as he sees it, the entire comedy "is played out on the edge of this abyss," and that the unsettling darkness of the ending derives from this background reality. This suggestion (whether it's about the libretto or the music, or both) dovetails with the ideas I have been exploring, though it also suggests a different orientation for our attention. Such layers show the work's multivocal richness. And they surely do not negate the music's astonishing capacity for the expression of love's risks and delights. □

Martha C. Nussbaum is Ernst Freund Distinguished Service Professor of Law and Ethics at The University of Chicago. Her new book, The Republic of Love: Opera and Political Freedom, appears in April 2026.

Artist profiles



JACQUELYN STUCKER FIORDILIGI

Lyric debut

This season the soprano appears as Ginevra in two new productions of *Ariodante*, at

Opéra National de Paris under Raphaël Pichon and for the Royal Ballet and Opera under Stefano Montanari. She returns to the Metropolitan Opera as The Bride in the American premiere of Kaija Saariaho's *Innocence* under Susanna Mälkki, and closes the season in Philip Venables' *We Are the Lucky Ones* at Tiroler Festspiele Erl, reprising her starring role of Two. Other recent highlights include her debuts at the Metropolitan Opera as Contessa Almaviva led by Joana Mallwitz, at Opéra national de Paris as Lucia in Thomas Adès' *The Exterminating Angel*, and at Santa Fe as the Governess in *The Turn of the Screw*. Earlier performances include Rosalinde in *Die Fledermaus* at Staatsoper Hamburg, Armida in Handel's *Rinaldo* at Glyndebourne Festival and, at Festival d'Aix-en-Provence, both Dalila in Rameau's *Samson* in a new conception by Claus Guth and Raphaël Pichon and the title role in Monteverdi's *L'Incoronazione di Poppea* in the acclaimed staging by Ted Huffman.

CECILIA MOLINARI DORABELLA

Lyric debut

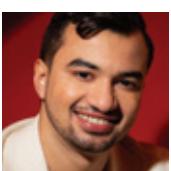
Recent highlights for the Italian mezzo-soprano include Rosina in *Il barbiere di Siviglia* at Wiener Staatsoper, Cherubino in *Le nozze di Figaro* at Semperoper Dresden, Sesto in *Giulio Cesare* at The National Opera and Ballet Amsterdam, Idamante in *Idomeneo* at Teatro Carlo Felice Genova, Béatrice in *Béatrice et Bénédict* at Opéra National de Lyon, Orfeo in *Orfeo ed Euridice* at Teatro la Fenice Venezia, Meg Page in *Falstaff* at the Salzburger Festspiele, Rosina in *Il barbiere di Siviglia* at Deutsche Oper Berlin, Isabella in *L'italiana in Algeri* at Teatro alla Scala, Cherubino in *Le nozze di Figaro* at Teatro de la Maestranza Sevilla, and Ariodante at the Festival della Valle d'Itria. She sang Dorabella in *Così fan tutte* at Wiener Staatsoper, Abenamet in *Zoraida di Granata* at Donizetti Festival Bergamo, Idamante in *Idomeneo* at National Opera and Ballet Amsterdam, and Rosina in *Il barbiere di Siviglia* at the Glyndebourne Festival. Molinari has been praised for her performances on the concert stage as well with orchestras including the Orchestra Filarmonica del Teatro alla Scala di Milano, the Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra, the Insula Orchestra, the Orchestra Sinfonica della RAI, the PKF - Prague Philharmonia, and the Borusan Istanbul Philharmonic Orchestra. Molinari was named a Best Soloist in the Premio Abbiati 2025.



ANA MARÍA MARTÍNEZ DESPINA

Previously at Lyric: 11 roles since 2008/09, most recently Florencia/*Florencia en el Amazonas* (2021/22) and Cio-Cio-San/*Madama Butterfly* (2019/20).

Later this season, the Grammy Award winning soprano will return to Lyric as Catrina in Gabriela Lena Frank's *El último sueño de Frida y Diego*, and sings a *Beyond the Aria* recital with pianist Craig Terry at the Harris Theatre. Last season, Martínez returned to LA Opera with appearances as Margarita Xirgu in Osvaldo Golijov's *Ainadamar*, marking the company premier, and as Despina in *Cosi fan tutte*, conducted by James Conlon. She also made her house debut at Pittsburgh Opera as the title role in *Tosca*, premiered her recital program "Unveiling" at the Houston Hobby Center with Andy Einhorn, appeared in residency with the Aspen Music Festival where she reprised "Unveiling," and gave a performance of Ravel's *Schéhérazade* with conductor Fabien Gabel. She was the inaugural recipient of the Lynn Wyatt Great Artist Award from Houston Grand Opera, where she made role debuts as Carmen and Cio-Cio-San, in addition to performing the title role of *Rusalka*, Rosina in *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, Nedda in *Pagliacci*, Mimi in *La Bohème*, Donna Elvira in *Don Giovanni*, and Lucero in the world premiere of Daniel Catán's *Salsipuedes*. Additional performances include Elisabetta in *Don Carlo* with Bayerische Staatsoper; Contessa in *Le nozze di Figaro*, the title role of *Carmen*, Cio-Cio San, and Mimi in *La Bohème* with LA Opera; and Donna Elvira in *Don Giovanni* and Cio-Cio San in *Madama Butterfly* with the Metropolitan Opera. She is a Professor of Voice at the Shepherd School of Music at Rice University.



ANTHONY LEÓN FERRANDO

Lyric debut

The American-born Cuban and Colombian tenor was named a 2023 Metropolitan Opera Laffont Competition winner and received the First Prize and the Don Plácido Domingo Ferrer Zarzuela Prize at Operalia in 2022. He is a former member of the Domingo-Colburn-Stein Young Artist Program at LA Opera. Recent engagements include singing Nadir in Bizet's *Les pêcheurs de perles* for his debut at the Berlin Staatsoper, Lysander in Britten's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, and Ferrando in *Così fan tutte* at LA Opera. Previously León appeared as Nadir at Cologne Opera, sang Telemaco in *Il ritorno d'Ulisse* at the Aix-en-Provence festival, and made debuts with the Chicago Symphony at the Ravinia Festival and the LA Philharmonic at the

Hollywood Bowl with Maestro Gustavo Dudamel. Other recent notable performances include creating the role of The Consumer in the world premiere of Ellen Reid's opera *The Shell Trial* at Dutch National Opera in Amsterdam.



IAN RUCKER GUGLIELMO

Previously at Lyric: Five roles since 2022/23, most recently Schaunard/*La Bohème* (2024/25) and Foreman/*Jenůfa* (2023/24).

This season's highlights for the American baritone include Dandini/*La Cenerentola* at Lyric Opera of Kansas City and Count Almaviva/*The Marriage of Figaro* at Scottish Opera. Also this season, Rucker was the baritone soloist in *Carmina Burana* at Lyric. He recently performed the title role in the world premiere of *The Story of Billy Budd, Sailor* at Festival d'Aix-en-Provence, was a prize winner in the 2024 Neue Stimmen vocal competition, and sang the role of Diener IV in Strauss's *Capriccio* at the 2024 Salzburg Festival. While an Ensemble member with the Ryan Opera Center, Rucker sang Man in Bar/*Champion* (2023/24), Moralès/*Carmen* and Raimbaud/*Le Comte Ory* (both 2022/23). He spent a summer at the Aspen Summer Music Festival as a Renée Fleming Artist, and was also an Apprentice Artist with Palm Beach Opera. Competition successes include semi-finalist in the 2025 Operalia competition, 1st Prize in Tier II of the James Toland Vocal Arts Competition, and encouragement awards in both the Wisconsin and Georgia districts of the Metropolitan Opera Laffont Competition. Rucker received a bachelor's degree in Vocal Performance from The University of Wisconsin - Eau Claire and a masters in Vocal Performance at the Indiana University Jacobs School of Music.



ROD GILFRY DON ALFONSO

Previously at Lyric: Three roles since 1994/95, most recently Marcello/*La Bohème* (2001/02) and Figaro/*Il barbiere di Siviglia* (1994/95).

The American baritone is a two-time Grammy Award nominee, most recently for his performance in the title role of Messiaen's *Saint François d'Assise* in Amsterdam. This season, Gilfry returns to the Metropolitan Opera as the Father-in-Law in Kaija Saariaho's *Innocence* and reprises the role of Owen Hart in Jake Heggie's *Dead Man Walking* with San Francisco Opera. At Lyric in 2022/23, he performed Alfred Stieglitz in Kevin Puts' *The Brightness of Light* with Renée Fleming, a concert production which has appeared at Los Angeles Opera, Dallas Symphony, Baltimore Symphony, Colorado Symphony,

National Symphony Orchestra, Oregon Symphony, Tanglewood Festival, Naples (FL) Philharmonic, and Aspen Music Festival and School, among other venues. Recent highlights include Don Alfonso in *Così fan tutte* with James Conlon at LA Opera; Alberto Roc in the American premiere of Thomas Adès's *The Exterminating Angel*, Claudio in Brett Dean's *Hamlet* (also at Opera Australia), Owen Hart in *Dead Man Walking*, and Danilo in a new production of *The Merry Widow* at the Metropolitan Opera; Kaija Saariaho's *Innocence* at the San Francisco Opera; and Howard K. Stern in Mark-Anthony Turnage's *Anna Nicole* with the New York City Opera and the Royal Ballet and Opera. Gilfry originated the role of Robert McNamara in Washington National Opera's world premiere *Written in Stone* by Huang Ruo and David Henry Hwang.



ENRIQUE MAZZOLA CONDUCTOR

Lyric's Music Director — the third in the company's history — is internationally renowned as an interpreter and champion of *bel canto* opera and as a specialist in French repertoire and the works of Verdi. Mazzola's recently completed tenure as Principal Guest Conductor at Deutsche Oper Berlin included recordings of *Dinorah* and *Hérodiade* and performances of *Le prophète*, *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, *Werther*, *Falstaff*, *Vépres Siciliennes*, and *Les contes d'Hoffmann*. He served as Conductor in Residence for the Bregenz Festival from 2021 to 2024, where he conducted a new production of *Rigoletto* and recorded DVDs of *Rigoletto*, *Madama Butterfly*, *Die Freischütz*, *Ernani*, and *Mosè in Egitto*. He served as Artistic and Music Director of the Orchestre National d'Île de France from 2012 to 2019, and in 2018 was named a Chevalier de l'ordre des Arts et des Lettres. Mazzola made his debut at Lyric with *Lucia di Lammermoor* in 2016/17, and conducted Bellini's *I puritani* in 2017/18. During 2019/20, he led Verdi's *Luisa Miller* to launch the company's Early Verdi Series and, in his first performances as Music Director, opened Lyric's 2021/22 season with Sir David McVicar's new production of *Macbeth*. An accomplished interpreter of contemporary music, Mazzola recently conducted Missy Mazzoli and Royce Vavrek's *The Listeners* (2024/25) and Terence Blanchard's *Champion* (2022/23) at Lyric. He has conducted at the Metropolitan Opera, La Scala, the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, and the major houses of Vienna, Berlin, Munich, Zurich, Moscow, and Tokyo, as well as a historic Meyerbeer cycle with Deutsche Oper Berlin. Past major European festivals have included Glyndebourne (including DVD releases of *Don Pasquale*, *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, and *Poliuto*), Salzburg (*Orphée aux Enfers*), Pesaro (Rossini Opera Festival), Venice, Aix-en-Provence, and Bregenz. Symphonic highlights include the Orchestre National du Capitole de Toulouse, Philharmonia Orchestra, Orchestre National de France,

Vienna Symphony, London Philharmonic, and Brussels Philharmonic. Mazzola was born in Barcelona, Spain, into a musical family, and grew up in Milan, where he studied violin and piano, earning diplomas in composition and orchestral conducting at the Conservatorio Giuseppe Verdi of Milan. *Enrique Mazzola is supported by the John D. and Alexandra C. Nichols Endowed Chair.*



MICHAEL CAVANAGH ORIGINAL DIRECTOR

Lyric debut

The late director's opera career spanned more than two decades, including more than 140 productions at companies throughout

North America and Europe. This production of *Così fan tutte* was created for San Francisco Opera in 2021 as part of his trilogy of Mozart / Da Ponte operas there. In 2021, Cavanagh became the artistic director and head of opera at the Royal Swedish Opera in Stockholm, where his notable successes included a new production of *Aida* and an esteemed production of *Sweeney Todd*. His seven productions at San Francisco Opera include *Nixon in China*, which he remounted in five cities including Dublin and Stockholm. In the United States, he also directed for the opera companies in Philadelphia, Boston, Honolulu, Austin, Kansas City, Minneapolis, and San Diego, among others.



ROY RALLO REVIVAL DIRECTOR

Previously at Lyric: Il Trovatore (2019)

Rallo began his career with Southern California's Long Beach Opera, where he directed original productions of Mozart's

Lucio Silla, Strauss' *Elektra*, and Bartok's *Bluebeard's Castle*. In Europe he has directed new productions of *Don Pasquale* and an original music theater piece, *Methusalem Project*, for the National Theater Weimar, *Ariadne auf Naxos* for Opéra National de Bordeaux, *Der Rosenkavalier* for Den Jyske Opera in Aarhus Denmark, and co-directed *Aida* for the Deutsche Oper Berlin, *Carmen* for the Nationaltheater Mannheim, and Busoni's *Doktor Faustus* for the Bavarian State Opera. In the U.S. he has revived productions for Portland Opera, Utah Opera, Opera Omaha, Pittsburgh Opera, Houston Grand Opera, and The Metropolitan Opera. At San Francisco Opera he has remounted revivals of *The Barber of Seville*, *Pique Dame*, *Il Trovatore*, *Partenope*, and his own staging of David Hockney's design for Strauss' *Die Frau ohne Schatten* as well as staging *The Barber of Seville* and *Transformations* for San Francisco Opera's Merola Opera Program.



ERHARD ROM SET AND PROJECTION DESIGNER

Lyric debut

Rom has designed settings for more than 250 productions across the globe. In both 2025 and in 2015 he was named as a finalist in the

Designer of the Year category for the International Opera Awards in London. His design work has frequently been displayed in the Prague Quadrennial International Design Exhibition and at the National Opera Center in Manhattan. His numerous credits include San Francisco Opera, Royal Swedish Opera, LA Opera, Houston Grand Opera, Seattle Opera, Dallas Opera, Washington National Opera, Wexford Festival Opera, Glimmerglass Festival, Vancouver Opera, Minnesota Opera, Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, Wolf Trap Opera, and Atlanta Opera. In 2014 he designed the European premiere of *Silent Night* for the Wexford Festival. Rom is currently designing the fourth part of a new production of the *Ring* cycle for Atlanta Opera, along with a new production of *Turandot*.



CONSTANCE HOFFMAN COSTUME DESIGNER

Previously at Lyric: Bel Canto (2015/16) and Rigoletto (2017/18)

The designer's collaborations in opera include work with the Glyndebourne Festival, Paris Opera, Bregenzer Festspiele, Bayerische Staatsoper, and the Tokyo Opera Nomori, among others. She has designed costumes for San Francisco Opera, the Santa Fe Opera, Houston Grand Opera, LA Opera, Minnesota Opera, the Portland Opera, Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, and the Lincoln Center Festival. In addition, she has had a long association with The Glimmerglass Festival, whose productions have traveled regularly to New York City Opera. There, Hoffman designed costumes for *Paul Bunyan*, *Tosca*, and *Lizzie Borden*, which were televised on the *Live from Lincoln Center* broadcasts. Her extensive theater work has been seen on many stages in New York City, including the Public Theatre, the New Victory Theatre, The Second Stage, Theatre for A New Audience, Madison Square Garden, Radio City Music Hall, and the Joyce. For her Broadway debut, Hoffman earned a Tony nomination and an Outer Critics Circle Award for her designs for *The Green Bird*, directed by Julie Taymor. *Costume designers are supported by the Richard P. and Susan Kiphart Costume Designer endowment.*



JANE COX
LIGHTING DESIGNER

Lyric debut

Cox won a Tony, a Drama Desk, and the Henry Hewes Design award in 2024 for her lighting for *Appropriate*, and received three

Tony nominations for *Macbeth* (2022), *Jitney* (2017) and *Machinal* (2014). She was awarded the Distinguished Achievement Award from the United States Institute for Theatre Technology in 2025. Recent designs include *Fidelio* for WNO; Donnacha Dennehy's *Land of Winter* with Alarm Will Sound; *The Boy and The Weir* at the Abbey Theater in Dublin (her hometown); *Minor Music* at Brooklyn Academy of Music; *Teeth The Musical* in NYC; and *The Marriage of Figaro*, *Così fan tutte*, and *Don Giovanni* at San Francisco Opera. Upcoming projects include *Rocky Horror Picture Show* on Broadway. She is a Professor of the Practice and Director of the Program in Theater and Music Theater at Princeton University, where she is also co-director for the Fund for Irish Studies. Jane has been a member of the Monica Bill Barnes Dance Company for more than 20 years. She is a member of Princeton's CreativeX working with the engineer Naomi Leonard and composer Dan Trueman on Rhythm Bots, a project investigating collective motion and rhythmic connection with robots, and plays traditional Irish flute with the group HUP! *Lighting designers are supported by the Mary-Louise and James S. Aagaard Lighting Director Endowed Chair.*



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*. Last summer, he worked with the Young Artists at Opera Australia and the apprentice singers at the Santa Fe Opera, and he has lectured or given masterclasses at the University of Chicago and Northwestern University. 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.*



CHRIS MARAVICH
REVIVAL 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.*



JOHN METZNER
WIG & MAKEUP DESIGNER

The versatile 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.*

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
Injoo Choi**
Diane Duraffourg-Robinson
Ann Palen
Irene Radetzky
John D. Robinson
David Volfe

Viola

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

Cello

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

String Bass

Samuel Shuhan,
Acting Principal
Andrew L. W. Anderson,
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 (Third Horn**)*
Robert E. Johnson*
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

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*

^ *Solti Foundation U.S. Opera Residency*

^^ *Ryan Opera Center Conductor*

Harp

Lynn Williams, *Principal*

Librarian

John Rosenkrans, *Principal*

Stage Band Contractor

Christine Janicki

EXTRA MUSICIANS

Josef Fischer, *viola*
Wagner Campos, *clarinet*
Jerad Mosbey, *fortepiano*

STAGEBAND MUSICIAN

Joel Cohen, *percussion*

**CHORUS DIRECTOR
AND HEAD OF MUSIC**

Michael Black
*The Howard A. Stotler
Endowed Chair*

REGULAR CHORUS

Soprano
Angela De Venuto
Cathleen Dunn
Desirée Hassler
Rachael Holzhausen
Kimberly McCord
Heidi Spoor
Stephani Springer
Sherry Watkins
Kelsea Webb
Tara Wheeker

Mezzo-Soprano
Marianna Kulikova
Ola Rafalo
Yvette Smith
Marie Sokolova
Maia Surace
Corinne Wallace-Crane
Pamela Williams
Michelle K. Wright

Tenor
Geoffrey Agpalo
Timothy Bradley
Hoss Brock
William M. Combs
John J. Concepción
Kenneth Donovan
Jared V. Esguerra
Joseph A. Fosselman
Cullen Gandy
Cameo T. Humes
Tyler Samuel Lee
Joseph Shadday

Bass
David DuBois
Christopher Filipowicz
Robert Morrissey
Rafael W. Porto
Craig Springer
Nicholas Ward
Ronald Watkins
Nikolas Wenzel
Max Wier
Jonathan Wilson

**CORE SUPPLEMENTARY
CHORUS**

Soprano
Cara Collins
Megan Fleischmann
Emily Mwila

Mezzo-Soprano
Christina G. Adams
Carla Janzen
Emily Price

Tenor
Joshua Benevento
Ace Gangoso

Bass
Michael Cavalieri
David Govertsen
Nicolai Janitzky
Ian R. Prichard

**SUPPLEMENTARY
CHORUS**

Soprano
Nicole Besa
Alexandra Burch
Regina Ceragioli
Anna Donnelly

Elizabeth Fisher
Hayley Fox
Julia Frodyma
Elise Hurwitz
Mackenzie Jacquemin
Alexandra Kassouf
Courtney San Martin
Taylor See
Emlynn Shoemaker
Alannah Spencer
Diana Stoic
Ariana Strahl

Mezzo-Soprano
Emily Amesquita
Robin G. Bradley
Leah Dexter
Elizabeth Frey
Miya Higashiyama
Georgia Jacobson
Samantha McGonigal
Quinn Middleman
Sarah Ponder
Marissa Simmons

Tenor

Jerek Fernández
Klaus Georg
Jianghai Ho
Ernest C. Jackson Jr
Nathan Oakes
Steven Michael Patrick
Brett Potts
Brian Skoog
Ryan Townsend Strand
Tristan Tournaud

Bass

Evan Bravos
Chris DiMarco
Dimitri German
Stephen Hobe
Brian Hupp
Joseph Lodato
Dorian McCall
Wilbur Pauley
Douglas Peters
William Powell III
Dan Richardson
Aaron Wardell

With the generous support of individuals and organizations, Lyric is leading the advancement of opera in America — continually advancing artistic excellence, increasing relevance and reach for both traditional and new audiences, engaging our diverse communities through signature learning and exploration initiatives, and expanding our role as a cultural cornerstone in Chicago. You are our partners in this important shared enterprise — and we sincerely thank you.



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Lyric

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your support**

Bravissimi

We gratefully acknowledge members of the Lyric family who have contributed a total of \$1 million+ throughout the history of the company. Lyric thrives due to the incredible generosity of these individuals, foundations, and corporations.

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Anonymous (3)
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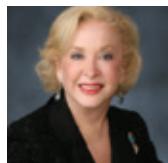
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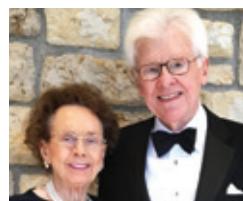
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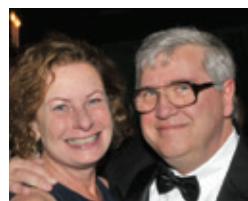
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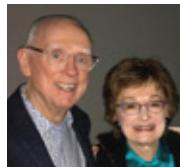


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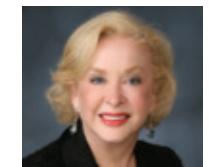
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and James S. Aagaard
Lighting Director
Endowed Chair

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Sarah Riffle
Bridget Williams,
Assistant Lighting
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Mike Reilly, Head Flyman/
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Chris Barker
Robert Hull, Jr.
Connor Ingersoll
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Carpenter
Brian Grenda, Layout
Carpenter
Drew Trusk, Head Shop
Welder
Luigi Trupiano, Layout
Welder

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Thomas Fernandez
Nicholas Gutierrez
Daniel Hull
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Nick Charlan,
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Charge Artist
Michael Murtough
Scenic Artist
Alyssa Mohn, Scenic Artist
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Department Coordinator
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Makeup Crew Foreman

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Wig Shop Staff

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Stage Manager

Katrina Bachus
Jordan Lee Braun
Adam Da Ros,
Assistant Stage Directors

Alaina Bartkowiak
Sandra Moore,
Stage Managers

Adrienne Bader
Alaina Bartkowiak
Alycia Martin
Sandra Moore
Tommy Novak
Daniel Sokalski
Peggy Stenger
Amy C. Thompson,
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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

The Patrick G. and Shirley W. Ryan Opera Center identifies exceptionally talented emerging artists from around the world and provides them with comprehensive training and performance opportunities. On the world's stages, the Center's impressive roster of alumni continually proves the value of training at Lyric.



The 2025/26 Ryan Opera Center Ensemble

Sopranos

Adia Evans
Emily Richter

Mezzo-sopranos

Alexis Pearl
Camille Robles

Tenors

Daniel Luis Espinal
Travon D. Walker

Baritones

Sankara Harouna
Sihao Hu
Finn Sagal

Bass-baritones

Christopher Humbert, Jr.
Benjamin R. Sokol

Conductor

Chi-Yuan Lin

Pianist

Michael Banwarth

Stage Director

Marinette Gomez

Stage Manager

Gemma DeCetra

Kyle Flubacker

Front row, l to r: Emily Richter, Chi-Yuan Lin, Marinette Gomez, Gemma DeCetra, Adia Evans, Michael Banwarth, Finn Sagal, Alexis Pearl

Back row, l to r: Camille Robles, Travon D. Walker, Benjamin R. Sokol, Christopher Humbert, Jr., Sihao Hu, Daniel Luis Espinal, Sankara Harouna

Lyric

Ryan Opera Center

Ryan Opera Center alumni around the world

THIS SEASON



James Kryshak (2010-12)

Royal Ballet and Opera
Pong/Turandot

Lucy Baker (2023-25)

Deutsche Oper Berlin
Hippolyta/A Midsummer
Night's Dream

**Maria Novella Malfatti
(2020-22)**

Teatro Municipale di
Piacenza (Italy)
Violetta/La traviata

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Director, *The Ryan Opera Center*
Board Endowed Chair

Craig Terry
Music Director,
The Jannotta Family
Endowed Chair

Julia Faulkner
Director of Vocal Studies

Logan Skirm
Manager

Annika Donnen
Managing Librarian

Faculty

Julia Faulkner
Vocal Instruction,
Robert and Ellen Marks Ryan
Opera Center Vocal Studies
Program Endowment

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Renée Fleming
Dame Jane Glover
Enrique Mazzola
Gerald Martin Moore
Matthew Polenzani
Russell Thomas
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Celeste Rue

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Instruction

Orit Carpenter
Beth Clayton
Performance Psychology

Katrina Bachus
Louisa Muller
Rachel A. Tobias
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Artistic/Production Personnel

Enrique Mazzola
Donald Paulmbo
Conductors

Keturah Stickann
Director

Peggy Stenger
Stage Manager

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 lost love?

lyricopera.org/frida

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STEINER FAMILY FOUNDATION**
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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**.
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Photo: John Shaw/Lyric Opera of Chicago

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avery r. young

safronia

Apr. 17 & 18

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Photo: John Shaw/Lyric Opera of Chicago

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



Kyle Flubacker

***Opera in the Neighborhoods* brings original works to the places where kids live and go to school.**

Lyric

Lyric Unlimited: Learning and Civic Engagement

Going Strong

Opera in the Neighborhoods introduces young people to the art form — and, this season, to the history of women's rights.

By Janie Ragsdale

"We are delighted to offer students an opportunity to experience opera through the *Opera in the Neighborhoods* program," says Jill LeCesne Potter, Senior Director of Learning Programs for Lyric Unlimited. Through *Opera in the Neighborhoods*, Lyric brings the wonder of opera to young audiences outside the opera house, presenting live performances of youth-focused operas at venues across the Chicago area.

By bringing opera directly to students, *Opera in the Neighborhoods* ensures that audiences across a wide range of communities can enjoy and be inspired by live performances. Lyric Unlimited also offers many resources for teachers to bring the arts into the classroom and integrate production themes into their curriculum. All student performances are presented free of charge, reflecting Lyric's commitment to community engagement.

This season, *Opera in the Neighborhoods* returns with a tour of *Katie: The Strongest of the Strong*, a bold new opera for young audiences inspired by the life and legacy of circus strongwoman Katie Sandwina. Through the tour, Lyric Unlimited will introduce thousands of students in grades 3-6 to the magic of opera and the important history of women's rights through an inspiring true story of resilience, justice, and community.

Composed by Faye Chiao with a libretto by Anton Dudley, *Katie: The Strongest of the Strong* brings the true story of a powerful figure in women's history to the stage. Katie Sandwina — a legendary circus

strongwoman — earned the title of "the strongest woman in the world." She lived a life that defied the expectations for women of her time, not only performing as a strongwoman, but also being a wife, mother, and activist. Sandwina brought her incredible strength — and her voice — to the fight for women's rights, helping to lead the women's suffrage movement in the early 1900s.

A celebration of women's courage, strength, and confidence, *Katie: The Strongest of the Strong* includes an all-female cast. The *Opera in the Neighborhoods* tour features mezzo-soprano Lauren Ingebrigtsen — who also works with Lyric Unlimited as a teaching artist — taking on the role of "the strongest of the strong" as Sandwina. Ingebrigtsen, who this season worked with a class at St. Frances of Rome to create and perform an original opera as part of Lyric Unlimited's Elementary Opera Residency, brought lessons learned from teaching children in the classroom to her work performing for them on stage.

"You have to be attuned to and interacting with your audience, who may be unpredictable at times," she says. "Kids — and truthfully, any audience — will bring the vibe that you bring to them. If you are excited, they will be too. If you take something seriously, they will too," she explains. "This show has some heartfelt moments and a really timely message for young people, so even though it is a children's opera, the whole cast really treated it with the sincerity with which you'd treat something like *verismo*."





Lyric

Playing the title role in *Katie: The Strongest of the Strong* was Lyric teaching artist Lauren Ingebrigsten (above, in red), whose students gave her a warm welcome. The show will tour again this spring.

The fall stretch of the *Opera in the Neighborhoods* tour took place in October and November, bringing *Katie: Strongest of the Strong* across Chicago and the suburbs for nine student performances and one public performance. One was particularly special, as Ingebrigtsen's Elementary Opera Residency students from St. Frances of Rome were in attendance. After working to explore, understand, and create opera together, the class was able to attend a live opera performance, with their teaching artist in the leading role.

"I felt like I was Maria Callas! I have never had an audience cheer like that in all my life," Ingebrigtsen reflects on the experience. "The students were getting up, dancing, crying, laughing, clapping, and cheering any chance they got. Kids want to be a part of the opera and we get to give them that chance." This full-circle moment was a highlight for the Lyric Unlimited team who helped to make it happen, as well.

"It is always a meaningful opportunity for students to experience working with a teaching artist to bring an opera of their own creation to life. But for these students, watching their teaching artist in the role of Katie Sandwina was unforgettable," Potter says. "Seeing so many awestruck faces in the theater and hearing their cheers of 'Bravo!' for Lauren is something truly special."

The *Opera in the Neighborhoods* tour of *Katie: The Strongest of the Strong* continues this spring with several school and public performances, including two at Kennedy-King College on Saturday, May 2, 2026. **L**



People of Lyric

A behind-the-scenes conversation



Jon Siner

Senior Director of Gift Planning

Hometown

Cranston, Rhode Island

When did you start at Lyric?

I joined on June 30th, 1994. So I have worked under four General Directors — Ardis Krainik, Bill Mason, Anthony Freud, and now John Mangum.

First opera you saw in person?

Beethoven's *Fidelio* at the Florentine Opera in Milwaukee. It just happened to be what they were playing. I didn't choose it. But I was blown away by the whole experience in an opera house.

First opera at Lyric?

Boris Godunov. Opening night was Sam Ramey.

Favorite performer?

Jerry Hadley, who was one of Lyric's recurring performers when I started — a local favorite, who lived in Champaign-Urbana. He starred in *The Rake's Progress*, my second opera after I started at Lyric, which I had never heard of before. He performed in many of these rare operas at Lyric.

What was your path to working at Lyric?

After University of Wisconsin law school, I worked with the Attorney General in Wisconsin for 10 years. When Harold Washington got elected mayor of Chicago, they were looking for attorneys who had no connection to the Daley machine. They recruited me and I came down. And the first thing I did was subscribe to Lyric. I said, *Oh, my God, it's like I'm coming to Mecca*. I was doing litigation — heavy court work — and volunteering with the Lyric Lecture Corps, which doesn't exist anymore. Some bequests had fallen out of the sky, so Lyric was looking for someone to start a planned giving program. They knew they needed an attorney who could talk opera and I was probably the only person in Chicago (or the world!) who could do that. So they hired me!

Are you currently a practicing lawyer?

Oh, I always have been. If I need to appear in court on estates or represent Lyric, I can do it. You're always a lawyer!

When you started, was planned giving common?

I talked to everyone I could, just to learn about it. The CSO had a program, and the Art Institute, and the University of Chicago — I really got to know those three. Universities have been doing it for hundreds of years. When I started, there were about 75 planned gifts in a drawer someplace. Nobody had any details about them. So what did I do at the start? Everything. (We now have over 600 planned givers at Lyric.)

What is the most challenging aspect of your job?

The initial challenge is, of course, that you're dealing with a taboo topic — death and dying. But I have always looked at it as, *We're talking about celebrating you, and your incredible commitment to Lyric, while you're here*. It's a huge difference. This is why we have the Ardis Krainik Society luncheons. We're telling you now that we appreciate everything you do.

When did your love of opera begin?

The first opera I ever saw was the entire four-opera, 16-hour *Ring* cycle on public television, a broadcast from Bayreuth in 1982. I didn't even know what it was — and why would I want to watch some raving anti-Semite? I was hooked from the first chord. I've been to 12 *Ring* cycles. Every opera lover has a story like that. They went in and it opened up a part of their life they never knew existed.

Do you have a favorite moment at Lyric?

Catherine Malfitano in *Madama Butterfly*. I have never seen anything like it. I mean, it's a sad opera, but she just brought out how tragic the whole thing was. I took a friend who had never been to an opera. And she was in tears at the end. The whole house was sobbing. It was really incredible.

What should people know about what you do?

Lyric has to constantly plan for huge future projects. And if we want this to be around for our children and grandchildren and succeeding generations, we have to think about the funding. That's where these important gifts come in. I never cease to be amazed at how Lyric gives so much joy and satisfaction to people that they want to make sure we continue to present grand opera at the highest possible level. 