

MOZART

Lyric
OPERA OF
CHICAGO

DON
GIOVANNI

In this issue



Lucas Meachem in the title role for Lyric's 2019/20 production of *Don Giovanni*. | pp. 12-29

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For the latest information on this performance, please scan this QR code.



Welcome to *Lyric*

Lyric Opera of Chicago is redefining what an opera company can be. We stand at the intersection of artistic excellence and civic purpose, harnessing the full power of opera — voices, orchestra, stagecraft, and story — to illuminate the emotions and narratives that define the human experience. We create one-of-a-kind shared moments, with a dedication to performance at the highest level. We know that this art form moves people in ways nothing else can. And we welcome you to **where life sings.**

John Mangum
General Director

Enrique Mazzola
Music Director



Christian Van Horn as Don Giovanni



From the Chair and the General Director

Welcome to Lyric's New Season!

As we did 72 years ago, before there even was a Lyric Opera of Chicago, we begin the fall with *Don Giovanni*. In 1954, our intrepid founder, Carol Fox, wanted to see if our city was ready for a permanent opera company, so she sent up a trial balloon — two nights of *Don Giovanni* on 30-year-old sets with a stellar cast imported from New York. Both nights sold out, the endeavor very nearly broke even, and Fox, along with her partners Lawrence Kelly and Nicola Rescigno, had the proof she needed. Lyric was born.

This fall, we conclude our three-season traversal of the Mozart-Da Ponte operas, considered a pinnacle of the repertoire, with this revival of legendary Chicago director Robert Falls' beloved

production. With our Music Director Enrique Mazzola on the podium, and a stellar array of talents on our stage and in our pit, it promises to be an unforgettable experience.

Rising-star sopranos Nina Solodovnikova (Donna Elvira) and Anna El-Khashem (Zerlina) make their debuts here, as does Tommaso Barea (Leporello), who is making waves on the international scene; Mané Galoyan (Donna Anna) returns following her thrilling debut in our 2024/25 *Rigoletto*. Another dear friend of Lyric, the magnificent tenor Lawrence Brownlee, joins them as Don Ottavio.

In the title role, it's wonderful to welcome back world-renowned bass-baritone Christian Van Horn for his 20th role on our stage. Though his official debut would come later in 2004/05 as King of Egypt in *Aida*, Van Horn, an alumnus of our Ryan Opera Center, was also part of the star-studded *Don Giovanni* that opened that season. Then, he was the Masetto understudy for none other than Kyle Ketelsen, who will step into the lead role for the final two performances of this run, making Ketelsen the only singer to appear as Masetto, Leporello, and Don Giovanni in Lyric's history.

All of this is only possible because of you, our beloved audience. Your presence here, whether for the first time or across decades, makes this level of live performance possible, and, for that, you have our enduring gratitude. Enjoy the performance!




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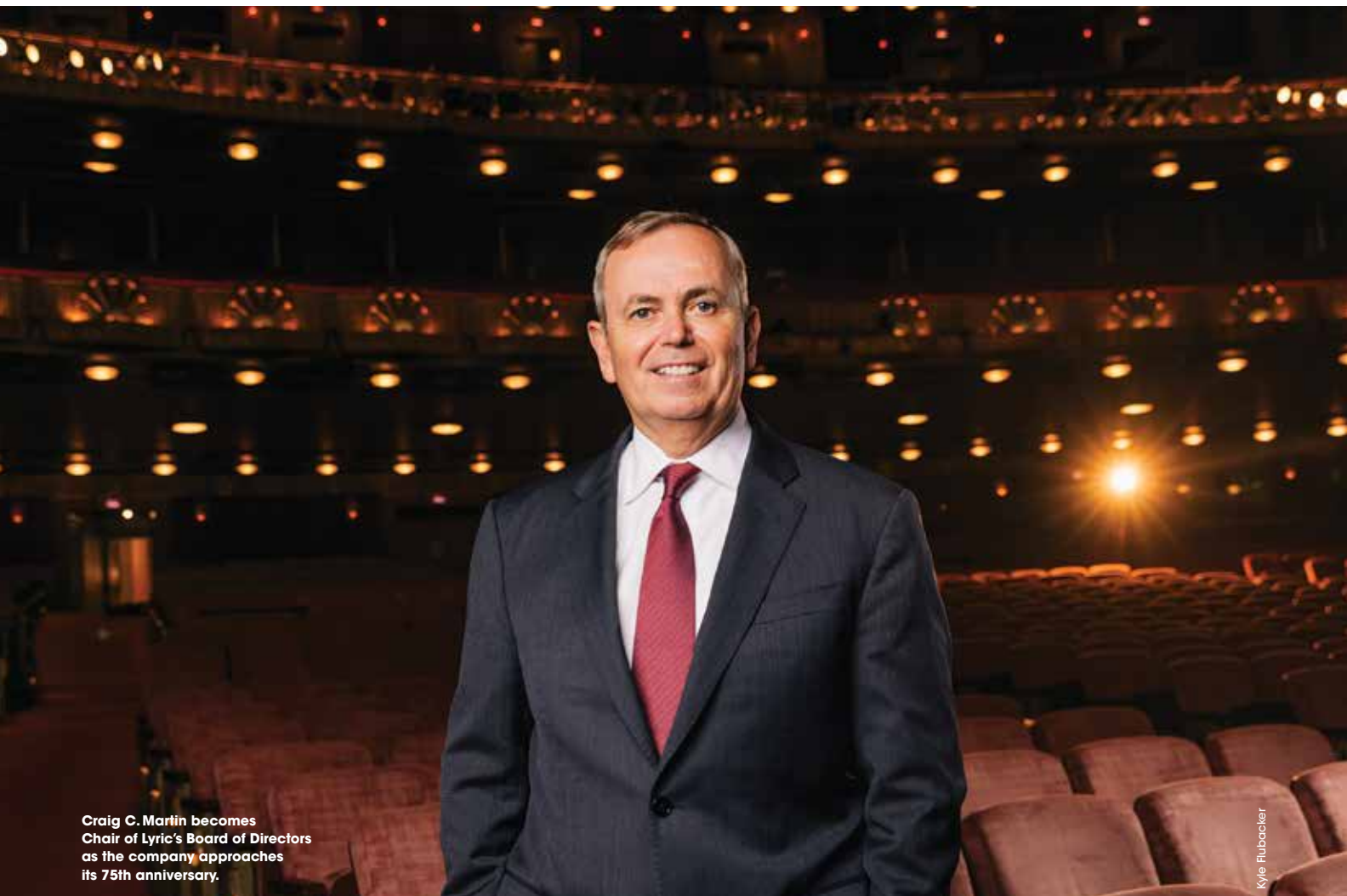
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General Director Emeritus

⁺ Audit Committee
^{*} Executive Committee
[•] National Member
^o Deceased

Taking His Seat



Craig C. Martin becomes
Chair of Lyric's Board of Directors
as the company approaches
its 75th anniversary.

Kyle Flubacker

Lyric's new board Chair arrives at an exciting moment for the company — and he has an exciting vision for the future.

Craig C. Martin came to opera by way of the Denver Broncos.

“My opera story is not the same as a lot of other lovers of the art form,” he says. His parents did not drag him to *La Bohème*. “They dragged me to Denver Broncos football games.”

Opera arrived later, in Boston, on a date with the woman who would become his wife. The opera was *Aida*, and something about the combination of music, drama, and spectacle took hold. The couple has since seen *Aida* at Lyric Opera of Chicago and in Verona, in the Roman amphitheater, complete with animals, procession, and all the grandeur Verdi could reasonably inspire.

“So, if I have to name a favorite,” Martin says, “*Aida* is the one.”

It is an appropriately personal beginning for someone who, this past June, became Chair of Lyric’s Board of Directors after two decades of service to the company. Martin, the Chairman, Americas of Willkie Farr & Gallagher LLP, an elite global law firm, is widely recognized as one of the country’s top lawyers. He arrives in his Lyric role not simply as an admirer of opera, but as someone with firm ideas about what great institutions mean to a city, what those institutions owe the future, and what the people fortunate enough to lead them owe in return.

For Martin, Lyric belongs in the first rank of the institutions that make Chicago.

“We live in the city, we raised our children in the city, we work in the city,” he says. “Lyric is a core cultural institution, part of what makes Chicago a global city.”

That conviction has had practical consequences.

After joining Lyric’s board, Martin looked at the significant annual expenditure on outside legal counsel. He asked why a nonprofit was spending so much on lawyers and was told Lyric was receiving a discount.

His response was characteristically economical.

“That’s not good enough.”

Martin believed that lawyers, particularly those at large firms, had a responsibility to give their expertise as well as their money. When the inevitable question came back, what was he prepared to do about it? Martin had an answer.

“Look, we’ll do it pro bono.”

And they did. The commitment grew into substantial pro bono legal support for Lyric, connecting Martin’s professional life with a conviction that has animated his civic life for years.

“To whom much is given, much is required,” he says.

There is biography behind that belief. Martin was the first generation in his family to attend college. His family was not poor, but it was not wealthy either, and paying for college and law school was not a given.

“I started with nothing. I will die with nothing,” he says, meaning it, as he is quick to explain, in a theological sense. “While you are here, you have a fundamental duty not only to your family, but to your community and those all around you. You have to give it back. You don’t just get to take.”

For Martin, Lyric is one particularly glorious way of doing that.

He assumes the chairmanship at an intriguing moment. Lyric has come through the disruption of the pandemic in strong financial condition and with large ambitions. Martin speaks with obvious respect for the company’s history, but nostalgia is not much of a governing philosophy for him.

“We’re not trying to replicate what Lyric looked like in 1987,” he says. “We’re trying to move to what Lyric looks like in 2040, 2050, and beyond.”

The line captures something essential about the way Martin sees the institution. The question is not whether Lyric should choose between tradition and innovation. It is how a great opera company can embrace both, at the highest level of artistic achievement.

That means Mozart. It means Wagner. It also means being willing to test the boundaries of what belongs on the Lyric stage.

Martin points to *A Night of Mellon Collie and Infinite Sadness*, the Lyric presentation built around the Smashing Pumpkins album. It brought a dramatically new audience into the opera house. For Martin, who had last seen Billy Corgan perform at Metro in the 1990s, it also produced an irresistible encounter.

“I saw you last at a live show at Metro in the ‘90s,” Martin remembers telling Corgan. “And I liked your performance at Lyric more.”

Corgan laughed.

Martin calls the production “groundbreaking,” but he is equally clear about what it did not mean. Innovation is not a repudiation of opera’s inheritance. Lyric can welcome people through new doors without closing the old ones.

“We are going to continue to be what you would think of as a traditional great opera company,” he says, “but certainly we’re going to be innovative.”

The stakes, in Martin’s view, extend beyond programming. He talks about creating an opera company

sustainable for the next 100 years: fiscally responsible, artistically uncompromising, and capable of inspiring the interest that the art form deserves. He wants Lyric to reach outward, to be welcoming, and to make the extraordinary talent inside the opera house matter to the wider city.

And rather than dwell on the difficulties confronting opera, Martin prefers a more interesting pair of questions:

“What do we want to be famous for? What makes us great?”

One answer is already taking shape.

Martin’s chairmanship comes as Lyric prepares for the return of its interrupted *Ring* cycle, an undertaking whose scale seems perfectly matched to his ambitions for the company.

“In the opera world, maybe the ultimate accomplishment is the *Ring* cycle,” he says. “It’s a pinnacle.”

Its return carries particular resonance as Lyric approaches its 75th anniversary in 2029, as well as the 100th anniversary of the opera house itself. To Martin, the *Ring* is more than an artistic feat. It is a declaration of confidence in Lyric’s place in Chicago, in American opera, and on the international stage.

Yet for all the talk of artistic stature, innovation, and institutional strength, Martin’s idea of Lyric ultimately comes down to something more elemental: what happens to a person in the theater.

“Lyric is a wonderful institution,” he says. “It is an institution that should be for everyone, not for a few.”

He wants the person who enters the opera house, regardless of who they are or where they come from, to walk out astonished by what human beings can create together.

“Amazing, I saw one of the greatest events in our human culture,” is how Martin imagines the reaction. “It should elevate you.”

That sense of wonder may also explain one of his favorite Lyric memories.

In 2011, Martin was running the American Bar Association meeting in Chicago and participated in a

program about opera with Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, whose devotion to the art form was legendary. Ginsburg wanted to see Lyric.

But she did not want the standard tour.

The Grand Foyer, the theater, and the stage were not enough. Justice Ginsburg wanted to see the rafters.

And so, Craig Martin, then-General Director Anthony Freud, and a Justice of the United States Supreme Court began climbing the metal stairs high above the stage, into the realm of pulleys, weights, and backstage machinery. A federal marshal led the

procession. Another followed behind.

And Justice Ginsburg made the trip in her white gloves. “Truly,” Martin says, “an ‘only at Lyric’ moment.”

For a man who believes a great opera company should honor its past without being confined by it, perhaps there is something fitting in the image: Ruth Bader Ginsburg, gloves and all, leaving the conventional tour behind and climbing higher to see how the whole magnificent thing works. **L**

Lyric is a core cultural institution, part of what makes Chicago a global city.

Accessibility at Lyric

Opera is for everyone, and at Lyric, that belief shapes everything we do. Every patron deserves an experience built for them, and our accessibility services help make that possible. For more information, visit lyricopera.org/accessibility, or contact Audience Services at 312.827.5600 or audienceservices@lyricopera.org.



American Sign Language

ASL interpretation is available at select performances for all operas in English and for select performances in other languages.



Audio Description

Expert audio-described performances are scheduled for each production.



Auracast

Lyric has introduced new Auracast assistive listening technology for every performance. Built on Bluetooth Low Energy audio, Auracast broadcasts sound directly from the stage and orchestra pit to compatible hearing aids, cochlear implants, and earbuds.



Braille Programs

Braille programs may be borrowed from the coat check located between aisles 2 and 3 on the main floor for any mainstage production.



Large-Print Programs

Large-print programs are available for all performances from the coat check located between aisles 2 and 3 on the main floor.



Opera Glasses

High-powered opera glasses are available at no cost from the coat check located between aisles 2 and 3 on the main floor. A valid driver's license, state identification, or major credit card is required as a security deposit.



SoundShirts

SoundShirts, which use touch sensation to provide wearers the ability to feel the music on their upper body, are available at select performances.



Touch Tours

Guided Touch Tours, tailored to patrons who are blind or have low vision, are given prior to select performances at 12:00 p.m.

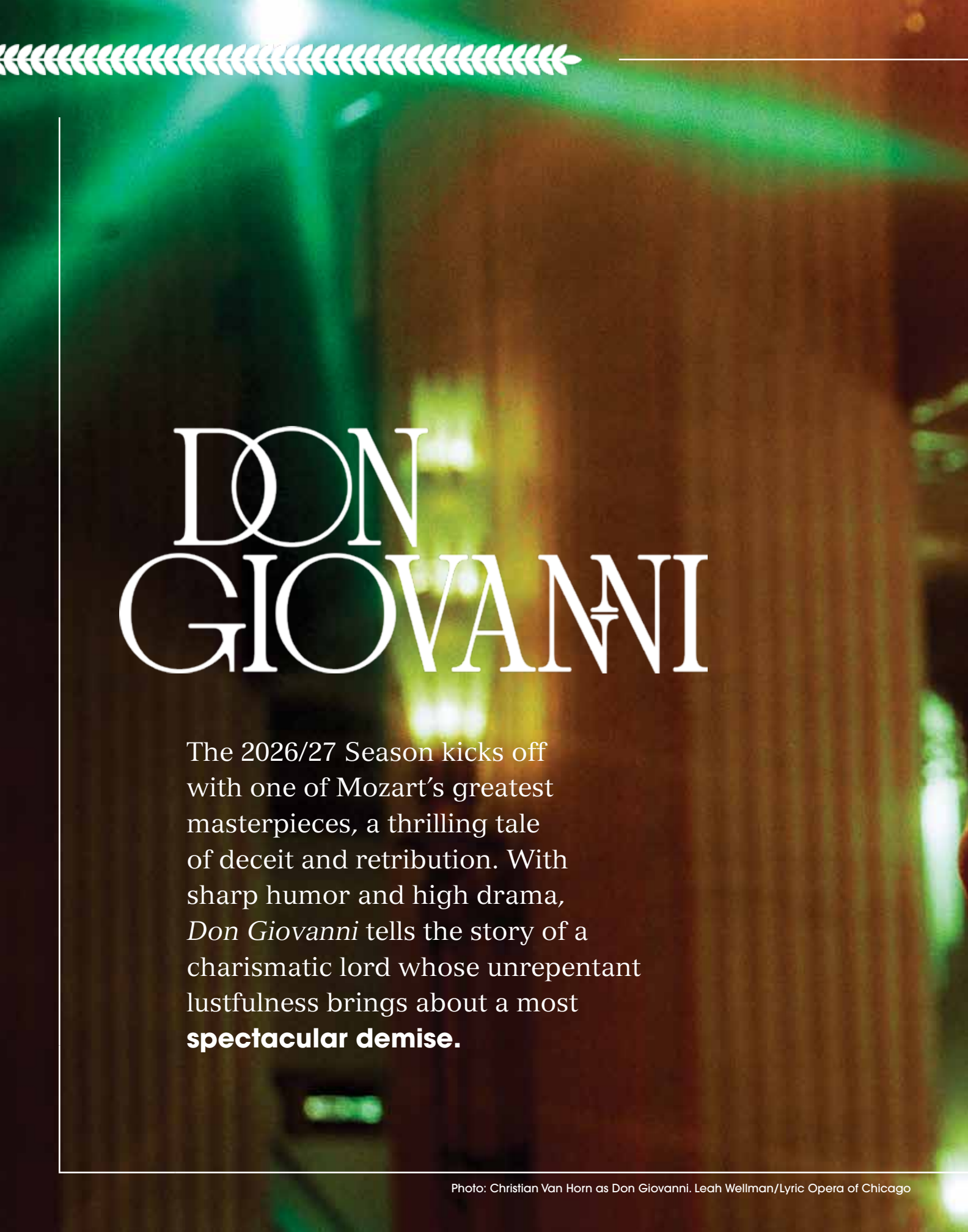


Wheelchair Accessibility

Wheelchair platforms are available throughout the opera house for patrons wishing to remain in their wheelchairs for the performance.



Patrons wearing SoundShirts.



DON GIOVANNI

The 2026/27 Season kicks off with one of Mozart's greatest masterpieces, a thrilling tale of deceit and retribution. With sharp humor and high drama, *Don Giovanni* tells the story of a charismatic lord whose unrepentant lustfulness brings about a most **spectacular demise.**



A man in a dark suit, white shirt, and red tie stands in the foreground, smiling. The background is a blurred view of an opera house with warm, golden lights.

Music to our ears!

**Willkie Farr & Gallagher
congratulates Craig C.
Martin, Chair Americas,
on becoming the
Chair of the Board of
Directors of
Lyric Opera of Chicago.**

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DON GIOVANI



Opera in two acts in Italian

Music by **Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart**

Libretto by **Lorenzo Da Ponte**

October 10, 13, 15, 18^M, 21^M, 24, 30, and November 1^M, 2026

CHARACTERS IN ORDER OF VOCAL APPEARANCE

Leporello	Tommaso Barea⁺
Donna Anna	Mané Galoyan
Don Giovanni	Christian Van Horn^{**}
	Kyle Ketelsen (10/30, 11/1)
Commendatore	David Leigh⁺
Don Ottavio	Lawrence Brownlee
Donna Elvira	Nina Solodovnikova⁺
Zerlina	Anna El-Khashem⁺
Masetto	Christopher Humbert, Jr.^{**}

Conductor
Director
Set Designer
Costume Designer
Lighting Designer
Chorus Director
Choreographer
Wig & Makeup Designer
Associate Director
Assistant Director
Stage Manager
Musical Preparation

Enrique Mazzola
Robert Falls
Walt Spangler
Ana Kuzmanic
Duane Schuler
Michael Black
August Tye
John Metzner
Jordan Lee Braun
Katrina Bachus
Rachel A. Tobias
Michael Banwarth^{}**
William C. Billingham
Austin Chanu[^]
Susan Miller Hult
Noah Lindquist
Jerad Mosbey
Stefano Sarzani
William C. Billingham
Susan Miller Hult
Andrew Rathgeber
Colin Ure

Fortepiano
Prompter
Fight & Intimacy Director
Projected English Titles

ASL Interpreters (10/18)

Veramarie Baldoza
Crom Saunders
Martin Wilde

Audio Description (10/18)

*First performed at the Premiere Estates Theatre, Prague on October 29, 1787.
First performed by Lyric Opera of Chicago on February 5, 1954.*

⁺ Lyric debut

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

[^] Solti Foundation U.S. Opera Residency

Synopsis

Time **1920s** | Place **A small village in Spain**

ACT I

Scene 1: The street outside the Commendatore’s house

Leporello stands guard for Don Giovanni’s latest conquest. Suddenly Giovanni rushes out pursued by Donna Anna, who calls for help. Her father challenges Giovanni and is murdered by him. Returning with her fiancé, Don Ottavio, Anna vows to have vengeance.

Scene 2: A village square

Giovanni, who had previously abandoned Donna Elvira, now flees, referring her to Leporello, who recites the catalogue of Giovanni’s conquests. Masetto and Zerlina, soon to be married, celebrate with their friends. Giovanni orders Leporello to escort Masetto and the peasants to his villa. Once Masetto is gone, Giovanni seduces Zerlina. Elvira warns the girl to avoid Giovanni. Anna and Ottavio request Giovanni’s help in punishing the Commendatore’s unknown assassin. Elvira returns, but Giovanni dismisses her as a madwoman. Once they’ve gone, Anna suddenly realizes that this was, in fact, her father’s murderer.

Scene 3: The garden of Don Giovanni’s villa

Giovanni orders Leporello to prepare a feast for that evening. Zerlina persuades Masetto to forgive her. Giovanni resumes his pursuit of Zerlina and, upon discovering Masetto, persuades the couple to enter the villa with him. Anna, Elvira, and Ottavio arrive, masked and intent on vengeance. Leporello invites them — on Giovanni’s behalf — to attend the party.

Scene 4: The ballroom of Don Giovanni’s villa

Giovanni tells Leporello to distract Masetto, then leads Zerlina to another room. Suddenly her screams alarm the party guests. Giovanni blames Leporello for attacking Zerlina. Anna, Elvira, and Ottavio unmask and denounce Giovanni.

INTERMISSION

APPROXIMATE TIMINGS

This production will be performed with one intermission.

Act I	1 hour 35 minutes
Intermission	30 minutes
Act II	1 hour 20 minutes
Total	3 hours 25 minutes

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ACT II

Scene 1: The street below Donna Elvira's hotel

Leporello wants to quit working for Giovanni, but is induced to stay. Giovanni exchanges clothes with Leporello in order to seduce Elvira's maid unrecognized. Elvira appears at a window of her hotel room, lamenting Giovanni's cruelty. He asks her to come to him, but it's with the disguised Leporello that she leaves. Giovanni then serenades the maid. When Masetto arrives with some armed villagers, Giovanni sends the men off and detains Masetto, whom he beats viciously. Masetto's cries bring Zerlina, who comforts him.

Scene 2: A church

Leporello eludes Elvira but is discovered by Anna, Ottavio, Masetto, and Zerlina. Leporello reveals his true identity, begs for mercy, and escapes. Ottavio asks his companions to comfort Anna until he can return as the messenger of her vengeance. Elvira admits that although Giovanni has betrayed her, she still pities him.

Scene 3: A cemetery

Giovanni tells Leporello about his latest adventures. The two hear the Commendatore's voice emanating from a statue. Giovanni orders Leporello to invite the statue to dinner.

Scene 4: Donna Anna's house

Anna begs Ottavio to wait to marry her until her grief for her father has subsided. When he berates her for treating him cruelly, she assures him of her love.

Scene 5: Don Giovanni's dining room

Giovanni is enjoying food and wine when Elvira bursts in, imploring him to change his ways, but he ignores her pleading. The statue arrives and orders him to repent. Giovanni refuses and is dragged to hell. Leporello tells Anna, Ottavio, Elvira, Zerlina, and Masetto what has happened, and all proclaim the end of an evildoer. 

Lyric Opera of Chicago gratefully acknowledges the support of the NIB Foundation Italian Opera Endowment and The Regenstein Foundation Mozart Opera Endowment, in honor of Ruth Regenstein.

Additional Costumes by San Francisco Costume Shop, Seams Unlimited, and Vicky Neufeld.

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Mika Kares and Lucas Meachem reach their final confrontation, in Lyric 2019/20 production.

Revenge and Love: The Don Giovanni Puzzle

With a splendid score almost constantly in tension with an ambiguous libretto and provocative anti-hero, the opera nevertheless continues to entrance. That may be among Mozart's greatest achievements.

By Martha C. Nussbaum

Don Giovanni is a glorious enigma. Its music is utterly enthralling, and yet its sentiments are confusing, perhaps also confused. Is the listener to be captivated by the Don, and to feel a sense of loss when he leaves the world — as many romantic interpreters have believed? If so, there is one sort of problem: This Don is a really horrible person, who, despite a certain boyish energy and charm, has no sympathy at all for anyone else and who uses a combination of class dazzle and sheer force to make his conquests. If audiences of a bygone era (or, at any rate, their male members) viewed this behavior indulgently, surely audiences today cannot.

Mozart (1756-1791) typically portrays this sort of domineering masculinity in a very negative light (think of the Count in *The Marriage of Figaro*); he prefers men who approach women with gentle and tender sentiments (even when, like the lovers in *Così fan tutte*, their emotions aren't going to last very long). Or is the Don a scoundrel for whose punishment we should be rooting all the time, as librettist Lorenzo Da Ponte's subtitle, "The Profligate Punished" (*Il dissoluto punito*) suggests? If so, there is another sort of problem: Mozart is virtually obsessed with the repudiation of a morality based upon revenge. Again and again, in *Idomeneo*, *The Marriage of Figaro*, *The Magic Flute*, and, most obviously, *La clemenza di Tito*, mercy and gentleness win out over vindictiveness and hate — not just in the libretti, but also, and more powerfully, in the music.

Where, then, in this opera, is the Mozart whose gentle humanity we love? It's tempting to agree with the great opera critic Joseph Kerman (1924-2014): Da Ponte gave Mozart a libretto that was in some ways a bad fit for the composer's own emotional preoccupations, and Mozart did the best he could.

Before we conclude that Kerman is right, however (and I think he is at least partly right), we need to consider the romantic interpretation, since it is so influential. According to a long line of (male) critics, beginning at least with the 19th-century Danish philosopher Søren Kierkegaard (1813-1855), and including my own teacher, the distinguished British philosopher Bernard Williams (1929-2003), the Don is an emblem of erotic striving and sexual energy,

a kind of life force whose doom leaves the world gray and impoverished. Such interpreters hear in the opening D minor of *Don Giovanni's* overture the heralding of a new post-baroque and post-religious era (never mind that this same music is later associated with the very conventional, religious Commendatore). They go on to represent the Don as eros incarnate. But can this be correct, when the Don needs force so often to achieve his ends (even with Zerlina, initially interested though she is)? And when he so conspicuously lacks characteristics that Mozart elsewhere associates with the ability to inspire love in a woman — such as tenderness, humor, playfulness, an inner life?

Susanna (in *Figaro*) says of Cherubino, "If women love him, they surely have good reason." Could anyone say this with a straight face about the Don? Rather, we should say, "If women love him, they're bewitched by wealth, class, and false promises." He certainly lacks the appealing playfulness of the Don in Tirso de Molina's *The Prankster of Seville* (*El Burlador de Sevilla*, 1630), probably the first literary example of the Don Juan legend. He doesn't have ideas either, as Molière's *Don Juan*, another of Da Ponte's sources, conspicuously does. Taking these characteristics away, Da Ponte leaves only hollowness in their place. Mozart further emphasizes the Don's hollowness by refusing him a full-scale aria, in which inner thoughts and feelings could be explored. He's little more than a series of elegant poses: a "No-Man" (as musicologist Wye Jamison Allanbrook (1943-2010) puts it in her subtle and important study of *Don Giovanni* and *Figaro*). And lest we try to reply that rape was not viewed in such a negative light in Mozart's time, we should remember that even the not-very-moral Leporello protests, "But Donna Anna didn't ask to be raped."

Nor is the Don's music (as opposed to the opera's) at all innovative or romantic. It is either banal, if pleasing (the serenade) or manic (the so-called "Champagne Aria," lasting a mere 90 seconds), or borrows a spurious tenderness in the service of violence to come ("Là ci darem la mano" — in which, as Kerman noted in a 1990 essay, all the real musical invention is supplied by Zerlina). We have only to compare this "hero" with genuine romantic heroes, such as the Werther of Goethe and Massenet, in order to see that he's



Don Giovanni with Amanda Majeski, Ben Bliss, and Rachel Willis-Sørensen

Kyle Flucke

not that sort of thing at all: no boundless inner world, no surging love, no subjectivity at all, musical or verbal.

I fear that these romantic male critics have been duped by the evident power of Mozart's music into locating this "demonic" power in the person of the Don, where it surely does *not* reside. Perhaps the idea of boundless sexual energy without love or tenderness has appeal for men of a certain age — but that doesn't license projecting those sentiments onto Mozart, who associated music of enormous power and gravity with the critique of the Don and his actions.

So far as our first enigma is concerned, then, the opera gives a clear answer: the Don is a horrible and empty person, whose passing we should not lament, and who surely is not (as Williams oddly asserted) the source of the vitality of all the other characters. Mozart never glorified male abuse and silencing of women; he was, in some ways, a man more of our current era than of his own. Da Ponte was different, and perhaps some of his Donnish sensibility creeps at times into the libretto he wrote for Mozart — here Kerman is insightful. Nonetheless, even the libretto clearly condemns the Don's behavior, so there is little if any tension between libretto and music.

Our second enigma is far more difficult, since the desire for revenge motivates all the other characters of the opera much of the time, and it surely gives the plot its structure. Here Kerman's idea fully convinces: the libretto requires revenge, but Mozart evidently has a hard time subscribing wholeheartedly to the cruel punishment of anyone — a reason why the final ensemble has always been

felt unconvincing and flat, and has sometimes been cut in performance, including by Gustav Mahler (although this practice is seldom encountered today). Does Mozart, then, find any way to extricate himself from the trap set for him by Da Ponte's libretto? The trap of making revenge look fitting and mercy inappropriate?

Searching for an alternative and more typically Mozartean emotional statement, one might first try turning to Don Ottavio, who surely does express sentiments of sympathy and altruism that are highly Mozartean, and closely linked to Mozart's rejections of revenge in other operas — particularly in his beautiful aria in Act One, "Dalla sua pace."

Alas, this aria was added for the Vienna performance at the request of a singer who had trouble with the florid runs of the Act Two aria, "Il mio tesoro" (which was cut on that occasion), so it can't have been an original part of Mozart's conception. And in any case, Don Ottavio, though sensitive and in many ways appealing, is a thoroughly conventional figure, pursuing revenge throughout the opera as much as anyone else.

The answer, then, must be found by turning to the opera's trio of remarkable *women*, surely the prime sources of its extraordinary vitality and musical glory. Though required by the plot to approve of the punishment of the Don, each of them has a moment in which she turns away from the morality of revenge to embrace a richer conception of love. For Zerlina, access to tenderness is easy, since, as a young peasant woman, she has no outside attachment to honor (for

Mozart always a trap) to stand in her way. In the sensuous and tender “Vedrai, carino,” she says that sexual love can heal the wounds created by a vain competition between men: the body affirms what hierarchical culture so often denies. James Joyce knew what he was doing in *Ulysses* when he imagined the earthy Molly Bloom singing this role (as, indeed, when he, or, rather, his protagonist Leopold Bloom, implicitly cast the Don as Blazes Boylan, Molly’s empty and boring lover).

The two aristocratic ladies have a more difficult time with tenderness since, in an honor culture, outraged honor seems to demand steely revenge. Donna Anna even puts this honor culture in its best possible light in her splendid aria, “Or sai chi l’onore,” which makes the demand for bloodshed sound almost like a high-minded assertion of human dignity with no downside. By the opera’s end, however, Donna Anna sings a different tune, literally: the stately, flowing first half of her aria, “Non mi dir,” in which she expresses tenderness to Ottavio, and its vigorous second section, with its excited hope for a future of love with him. Both sections sound so unlike her earlier stern self that they puzzle many interpreters. (Peter Sellars even staged the aria with Donna Anna high on drugs, to explain the sudden shifts of mood.) Could one not say, however, that Anna, who knew how to be a lady, has now discovered how to be human?

Donna Elvira is all along, in a sense, the opera’s emotional center, since it is through her distress and distraction that we see what this Don is worth and what his

vaunted glory comes to. It is surely not very satisfactory, however, that the way in which she departs from the revenge mentality and embraces compassion (“pietà”) is through a renewed love for the Don! It would have been nicer, one feels, if she could have found a new love interest — but the plot does not provide one for her. Still, her emotional shift is the focus, and its unsatisfactory object is less important. “Mi tradì quell’alma ingrata” is another aria added at the Vienna premiere and so was not an original part of the score or libretto. But in this case the opera’s overall plan appears to require the addition: the plan is really not about the Don at all — it’s about the emotional journey of these three women, each wronged, each tempted by revenge, but each, in the end, overcome by love. And it’s also about how each, through that change, awakens to a life that is less exhausted (for revenge is very fatiguing), less strained, more capable of genuine delight and happiness.

That, I believe, is Mozart’s plan. Or, rather, it’s what, being Mozart, he made of a libretto that was at best an incomplete fit with his insights and sensibilities. *Don Giovanni* remains a puzzle, but its searingly powerful music and its complex, often surprising emotions give listeners an unparalleled journey into the human heart. **L**

Martha C. Nussbaum, Ernst Freund Distinguished Service Professor of Law and Ethics at The University of Chicago, is the author of the recent The Republic of Love: Opera and Political Freedom.



Mika Kares and Lucas Meachem

Kyle Flubacker

Director's note

By Robert Falls



When I first began work on this production of *Don Giovanni* in 2013, I certainly never imagined that I would have the opportunity to return to it twice more. One of the pleasures — and surprises — of revisiting a great work is discovering how remarkably malleable it can be. The notes of the score remain the same,

the words remain the same, and yet the opera somehow changes. Or perhaps we change, and consequently hear and see different things in it. Every time I return to *Don Giovanni*, it reveals something different.

Mozart and Da Ponte called the opera a *dramma giocoso* — “humorous drama” — and that contradiction remains essential to me. It begins with attempted sexual assault and murder and ends with a man being dragged into hell. In between, it can be uproariously funny. Farce gives way to terror; erotic comedy turns suddenly cruel; moments of extraordinary beauty coexist with appalling behavior. It is funny and yet not funny, often almost simultaneously. Mozart never allows us the comfort of remaining in a single emotional world.

That was one reason I originally placed the production in Spain in the 1920s, a period poised uneasily between an older social order and the modern world. Giovanni belongs naturally to such a landscape. He possesses wealth, position, and enormous freedom of movement, but he also has the glamour and velocity of a new kind of celebrity. He enters a room and alters its temperature.

I have never thought of Giovanni simply as the charming rake or lovable libertine of theatrical tradition. He is a monster. But — and this is crucial — he is a seductive monster. His charisma is real. So are his wit, his vitality, his appetite, and his astonishing capacity to live entirely in the present tense.

If he were merely repellent, the opera would be much simpler and considerably less disturbing. Mozart gives him an almost irresistible life force even as Da Ponte shows us the human wreckage left behind him.

The three women who encounter Giovanni are consequently not variations on the same victim. Donna Anna, Donna Elvira, and Zerlina respond to him in profoundly different ways. Anna seeks justice. Zerlina is attracted, frightened, and finally able to protect herself. Elvira may be the most complicated of all: furious at Giovanni, humiliated by him, determined to expose him — and still emotionally bound to him. Mozart gives each of them an independent musical and psychological life.

And then there is Leporello. Each time I return to the opera, I find myself increasingly fascinated by his predicament. He knows exactly what Giovanni is. He condemns him, enables him, envies him, profits from him, and repeatedly threatens to leave — yet stays. He is comic, but his complicity is not. Through Leporello the opera asks an uncomfortable question that extends far beyond Giovanni himself: What responsibility belongs to those who recognize destructive behavior and nevertheless continue to serve it?

Finally, Giovanni is offered something almost no one else in the opera receives: an unmistakable opportunity to change. He refuses. Whether we understand that refusal as extraordinary defiance, absolute narcissism, or simply an incapacity to imagine any existence other than his own, Mozart refuses to soften it. Giovanni goes to his death insisting on remaining Giovanni.

More than a decade after I first entered this extraordinary opera, I find myself less interested in solving its contradictions than in allowing them to remain alive. Comedy and horror, attraction and revulsion, freedom and responsibility continually collide. Perhaps that is why *Don Giovanni* survives every attempt to explain it — and why every time I return to it, it reveals something different. ■

**Mozart and Da Ponte
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dramma giocoso —
and that contradiction
remains essential.**

Lyric

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Artist profiles



CHRISTIAN VAN HORN DON GIOVANNI

Previously at Lyric: 19 roles since 2004/05, most recently Don Ruy Gomez de Silva/*Ernani* (2022/23) and Banco/*Macbeth* (2021/22).

This season, the American bass-baritone and Ryan Opera Center alumnus makes returns to San Francisco Opera as Jacopo Fiesco in Verdi's *Simon Boccanegra*, Wiener Staatsoper as Méphistophélès in a new production of Berlioz's *La Damnation de Faust* and in the title role of *Don Giovanni*, and the Bayerische Staatsoper and Théâtre des Champs-Élysées as Méphistophélès in Gounod's *Faust*. He joins Washington Concert Opera for Massenet's *Don Quichotte* and brings the title role in Bartók's *Bluebeard's Castle* to the Royal Ballet and Opera, Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, the Münchner Philharmoniker, and Orchestre Philharmonique de Monte-Carlo. On the concert stage, Van Horn joins the Gran Teatre del Liceu for Verdi's *Requiem* with conductor Nicola Luisotti and soprano Lise Davidsen, and appears with the New York Philharmonic and Gustavo Dudamel for Beethoven's Symphony No. 9. At the Metropolitan Opera, he joins Yannick Nézet-Séguin for the *Diamond Jubilee: 60 Years at Lincoln Center*. Other Lyric highlights include Count Walter/*Luisa Miller* (2019/20), Méphistophélès/*Faust* (2017/18), Escamillo/*Carmen* (2016/17), and Narbal/*Les Troyens* (2016/17). Last season, Van Horn returned to the Metropolitan Opera as Giorgio Walton in a new production of Bellini's *I Puritani*, which was part of The Met's *Live in HD* series, and as Escamillo in Bizet's *Carmen*, a role he sang also at the Wiener Staatsoper later in the season. Van Horn returned to the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées as Méphistophélès in Berlioz's *La Damnation de Faust* and sang Filippo II in Verdi's *Don Carlo* at The Dallas Opera, a role he debuted the prior season in the opera's French version.



KYLE KETELSEN DON GIOVANNI (10/30, 11/1)

Previously at Lyric: 9 roles since 2004/05, most recently Howard/*The Listeners* (2024/25) and Dulcamara/*The Elixir of Love* (2021/22).

Last season, the American bass-baritone debuted at the Opéra national de Paris in the title role of *Don Giovanni*. He returned to Staatsoper Hamburg to sing Jochanaan in a new production of *Salome*, and to the Metropolitan Opera to sing Escamillo in a new production of *Carmen*, and reprise the role of Richard in *The Hours*. Recent highlights at Lyric include soloist in Mozart's *Requiem* (2023/24) and King of Scotland/*Ariodante* (2018/19). Other recent highlights include a return to Wiener Staatsoper in the title role in *Don Giovanni*, concert engagements including Beethoven's *Missa solemnis* with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra conducted by Riccardo Muti, and his first performances of Mendelssohn's *Elijah* with the Utah Symphony. Ketelsen recently returned to LA Opera as Golaud in *Pelléas et Mélisande*. In previous seasons, Ketelsen made house debuts at Wiener Staatsoper in the title role of *Don Giovanni* and at Teatro de la Maestranza as Golaud in *Pelléas et Mélisande*. He returned to Canadian Opera Company in the title role of *Bluebeard's Castle* and sang Escamillo in *Carmen* with the

RTVE Symphony Orchestra in Madrid. He returned to the Bayerische Staatsoper Munich for his role debut as Kaspar in *Der Freischütz* in a new production by Dmitri Tcherniakov, and to Dutch National Opera for his role debut as Adahm in Rudi Stephan's *Die ersten Menschen*.



MANÉ GALOYAN DONNA ANNA

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

This season, the Armenian soprano appears in two new productions, both role debuts, at Teatro Real, first as Amelia Grimaldi in *Simon Boccanegra*, then as the title role in *Kát'a Kabanová*. Other appearances include a role and house debut as Magda in a concert performance of *La rondine* at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées with the Orchestre National Bordeaux Aquitaine, and role debuts as Micaëla in *Carmen* at the Bayerische Staatsoper, Mimì in *La Bohème* at Seattle Opera, and Fiordiligi in a new production of *Così fan tutte* at Santa Fe Opera. In concert she makes her Boston Symphony Orchestra debut at Tanglewood in Beethoven's Symphony No. 9. Last season Galoyan made several notable role debuts, including Gretel in *Hansel and Gretel* with Houston Grand Opera, Soleá in *El gato montés* at the Teatro de la Zarzuela in Madrid, and the title role in *Iolanta* for her house debut at Opéra de Rouen. She returned to the Metropolitan Opera as Musetta in *La Bohème*, Deutsche Oper Berlin as Suor Angelica and Lauretta in *Il trittico*, and Atlanta Opera as Violetta in *La traviata*. In concert, she returned to Deutsche Oper Berlin for its Gran Gala de Zarzuela. Other recent highlights include Suor Angelica and Lauretta at Deutsche Oper Berlin; Pamina in *Die Zauberflöte* at the Wiener Staatsoper; Adina in *L'elisir d'amore* at the Bayerische Staatsoper, Paris Opéra, and Zürich Opernhaus; Donna Anna with Canadian Opera Company and Atlanta Opera; Violetta at Santa Fe Opera, Deutsche Oper Berlin, Dutch National Opera, Houston Grand Opera, Seattle Opera, and Glyndebourne Festival; and Suor Angelica at the Bayerische Staatsoper.



NINA SOLODOVNIKOVA DONNA ELVIRA

Lyric debut

The Moscow-born soprano lives in Bologna, Italy. In Summer 2026 she made her debut at the Salzburg Festival as Giunia in *Lucio Silla*. From 2024 to 2026 she was an ensemble member at the Deutsche Oper Berlin where she performed such roles as Violetta in *La traviata*, Musetta in *La Bohème*, Gretel in *Hänsel und Gretel*, Pamina in *Die Zauberflöte*, Micaëla in *Carmen*, Gilda in *Rigoletto*, and Liù in *Turandot*. Recent highlights include Giulietta in *I Capuleti e I Montecchi* in Braunschweig, Liù in *Turandot* in Hannover, Fiordiligi in *Così fan tutte* for her South American debut at Teatro Mayor in Bogotá, and Leila in *Les Pêcheurs de perles* at Salzburger Landestheater. Other recent highlights include Adina in *L'elisir d'amore* at Daegu Opera House in South Korea; Violetta in *La traviata* at Ópera de Tenerife, Annetta Mazepa in *Pietro il Grande* at Festival Donizetti in Bergamo; Fanny in Rossini's *La cambiale di matrimonio* and Valencienne in *The Merry Widow* at Teatro Verdi di Salerno; Musetta in *La Bohème* at

Teatro Comunale di Bologna; Aspasia in *Mitridate, re di Ponto* at Teatro Olimpico di Vicenza; Oscar in *Un ballo in maschera* conducted by Yves Abel in Pamplona; Despina in *Così fan tutte* at Tiroler Landestheater Innsbruck, Giulietta in Bellini's *I Capuleti e i Montecchi* in Tenerife and at the Teatro Comunale di Bologna in 2018.



LAWRENCE BROWNLEE DON OTTAVIO

Previously at Lyric: Six roles since 2015/16, most recently Tonio/*The Daughter of the Regiment* (2023/24) and Ory/*Le Comte Ory* (2022/23).

This season, the tenor returns to Opera Philadelphia to reprise the title role in Mozart's *Mitridate, re di ponto*, in a new production. He will make his house and role debut as Tom Rakewell in *The Rake's Progress* at the Teatro dell'Opera di Roma, and appear at the Paris National Opera as Ernesto in *Don Pasquale*, the Hamburg State Opera debuting the role of Arnold Melchtal in *Guillaume Tell*, and the Hungarian State Opera as the Duke of Mantua in *Rigoletto*. Additionally, Brownlee and soprano Erin Morley continue their acclaimed Golden Age recital tour, celebrating their album, which was named one of the Best Classical Albums of 2025 by *The New York Times*. In 2025, Brownlee appeared in three separate Metropolitan Opera *bel canto* productions in a three-month period. Brownlee is a Distinguished Visiting Faculty Member at The Juilliard School, an artistic advisor for Opera Philadelphia, and an Ambassador for Opera for Peace. Recent highlights include role debuts as the title role in *Mitridate, re di ponto* at Boston Lyric Opera, the Duke of Mantua in *Rigoletto*, Edgardo in *Lucia di Lammermoor* at New National Theatre Tokyo, and Fernand in a new production of Donizetti's *La favorite* with Houston Grand Opera as well as reprising roles at the Metropolitan Opera, Opéra Bastille in Paris, New National Theatre in Tokyo, and the Bavarian State Opera. Brownlee's 2023 Grammy-nominated album, *Rising*, features poetry from the Harlem Renaissance set to song in commissioned works from six leading African-American composers.



TOMMASO BAREA LEPORELLO

Lyric debut

Highlights this season for the Venetian bass-baritone include appearances in *Don Giovanni* at the Metropolitan Opera and the Komische Oper in Berlin, *L'italiana in Algeri* at Deutsche Oper in Berlin, *Le nozze di Figaro* for the BBC Proms and at the Norske Opera in Oslo, *Werther* at Teatro Comunale in Bologna, *La Bohème* at Tiroler Erl Festspiele, and *Il trionfo del bonore* at Teatro La Fenice in Venice. Other recent engagements include *Acquagranda* at La Fenice; *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, *Don Carlo* and *La traviata* at Maggio Musicale Fiorentino; *La fanciulla del West* at Teatro San Carlo; *Edipo re* (Leoncavallo) at Teatro Verdi di Pisa; *Carmen* in Ancona and in the new production at the Sferisterio Opera Festival; *Il barbiere di Siviglia* in Palermo and Paris; *Pietro il Grande* in Bergamo; *La Bohème* in Turin, at Festival Puccini in Torre del Lago and in Palermo; *Le Songe d'une nuit d'été* at the Wexford Festival; *Pagliacci* in Macerata; *Ariadne auf Naxos* in Bologna; *La Cenerentola* in Salerno; *Pagliacci* in Macerata; *Il matrimonio segreto* in Ancona; *Rinaldo* in Venice; *Così fan tutte* on tour with Kammerorchester Basel in Paris, Hamburg, and Luxembourg; *Le nozze di Figaro* in Sydney, Moscow, and at the Komische Oper Berlin; *Don Giovanni* at Deutsche Oper Berlin; and *Macerata* and at the Festival d'Aix-en-Provence.

In 2014, as the youngest winner of the "European Union Competition," he debuted as Schaunard in *La Bohème*, while he was attending the Spoleto's Festival of Two Worlds Academy.



ANNA EL-KHASHEM ZERLINA

Lyric debut

Last season, the St. Petersburg-born Russian-Lebanese soprano made her house debut at Teatro del Maggio Musicale Fiorentino as soloist in Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* under Kent Nagano, and made her role debut as Silvia in Mozart's *Ascanio in Alba* at Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, Theater an der Wien, and Opéra de Lausanne. She also returned to Zurich Opera as Marzelline in *Fidelio* and to the Verbier Festival as Despina in Mozart's *Così fan tutte*. Recent highlights include role debuts as Romilda in Handel's *Serse* at Zurich Opera and Ilia in Mozart's *Idomeneo* at Dutch National Opera, alongside performances of Susanna in *Le nozze di Figaro* at Semperoper Dresden and the Verbier Festival. She returned to Zurich Opera as Clarine/Thalie in a new production of Rameau's *Platée*, made her Salzburger Festspiele debut as Zerlina in *Don Giovanni*, and appeared at Dutch National Opera as Marzelline in *Fidelio*. Further engagements include her Vienna State Opera debut as Susanna during the company's guest performance at Opéra de Monte-Carlo, Handel's *Alexander's Feast* at Tonhalle Zurich, and Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* with Les Talens Lyriques under Christophe Rousset at Philharmonie de Paris and Festival de Pâques d'Aix-en-Provence.



CHRISTOPHER HUMBERT, JR. MASETTO

Previously at Lyric: Six roles since 2024/25, most recently Imperial Commissioner/*Madama Butterfly* and Second Soldier/*Salome* (both 2025/26).

This season, the bass-baritone makes his debut with the New York Philharmonic under Gustavo Dudamel in *Tosca* (Un carceriere) and joins the ensemble of Deutsche Oper Berlin as a scholarship recipient of the Opera Foundation New York, appearing in productions of *La Bohème*, *Le nozze di Figaro*, *Lohengrin*, *St. Matthew Passion*, *Otello*, *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, *Don Carlo*, and *Tosca*. Future seasons include debuts with The Santa Fe Opera and Florentine Opera in principal roles. During his tenure in the Ensemble of the Ryan Opera Center, Humbert appeared in *Medea* and *Salome* (both 2025/26), made debuts with the Nashville Symphony in Verdi's *Requiem* and the U.S. Naval Academy for *Messiah*, and returned to the Erie Philharmonic for *Messiah*. Recent concert highlights include a debut with the Seattle Symphony in Haydn's *The Creation* and the Santa Fe Symphony in *La Damnation de Faust*. In summer 2025, he participated in the Salzburg Festival's Young Singers Project, performing in *Andrea Chénier* and *Musketiere!* Other operatic highlights include *Carmen* (Zuniga) and *Dido and Aeneas* (Aeneas) with Palm Beach Opera, *Agrippina* (Pallante) with Florida Grand Opera, *Blue* (Policeman 3/Congregant 3) with Detroit Opera, and *Omar* (Olufemi) with Boston Lyric Opera. He has also appeared with the Minnesota Orchestra in The Listening Project, performing works by Eleanor Alberga, Margaret Bonds, and other composers of the African American diaspora.



DAVID LEIGH COMMENDATORE

Lyric debut

In the 2026/27 Season the American bass will return to Festival d'Aix-en-Provence for the world premiere of Hans Abrahamsen's *The Dreamers*, where he will sing the roles of Baron and Saidin. He will also join the Opernhaus Zürich on tour to Carnegie Hall, singing Fafner in *Das Rheingold* and *Siegfried* as part of Wagner's complete *Ring* cycle, conducted by Gianandrea Nosedà. In the 2025/26 Season the Leigh made debuts as John Claggart in *Billy Budd* at Teatro Colón in Buenos Aires, Varlaam in *Boris Godunov* at Opéra de Lyon, and Daland in *Der fliegende Holländer* at Staatsoper Hamburg. In concert, he was bass soloist in Verdi's *Requiem* at the Cité de la Musique in Paris and sang Sarastro in *Die Zauberflöte* with the St. Louis Symphony. Other recent highlights include his debut at the Opéra national de Paris as Virgilio in Pascal Dusapin's *Il Viaggio, Dante*, conducted by Kent Nagano; Rocco in *Fidelio* with Washington National Opera; and two concert appearances with the Czech Philharmonic Orchestra, first in Janáček's *Glagolitic Mass* on tour in Karlovy Vary and at Carnegie Hall, and then Pater Profundus in Mahler's Symphony No. 8 as part of the Prague Spring Festival. Elsewhere, he joined the Rochester Philharmonic for Mozart's *Requiem*, the Nashville Symphony for Beethoven's Symphony No. 9, and in a solo concert with Minnesota Opera.



ENRIQUE MAZZOLA CONDUCTOR

Lyric's Music Director — the third in the company's history — is internationally renowned as a conductor of *bel canto* opera, a specialist in French repertoire, and an expert interpreter of Verdi's works. Mazzola made his debut at Lyric with *Lucia di Lammermoor* in 2016/17 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 conducted Missy Mazzoli and Royce Vavrek's *The Listeners* in 2024/25, a performance recorded for Pentatone, and Terence Blanchard's *Champion* (2022/23) at Lyric. This season, he returns to the Metropolitan Opera (*Maria Stuarda*), Dutch National Opera (*Norma*), and Glyndebourne (*La Cenerentola*), tours with the Orchestre National de France, and leads a European tour of *Porgy and Bess* with Chineke! and Cape Town Opera. The 2024/25 Season marked Mazzola's final season as Principal Guest Conductor at Deutsche Oper Berlin, a tenure that included recordings of *Dinorah* and *Hérodiade* and performances of *Macbeth*, *Le prophète*, *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, *Werther*, *Falstaff*, *Les vêpres siciliennes*, and *Les contes d'Hoffmann*. Other recent highlights include debuts at Deutsche Staatsoper Berlin, Opéra national de Paris, Aspen Music Festival, and Grand Teton Music Festival, as well as a return to New National Theatre Tokyo with *Madama Butterfly*. 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. He has conducted at La Scala, the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, and the major houses of Vienna, Berlin, Munich, Zurich, and Moscow, as well as a historic Meyerbeer cycle with Deutsche Oper Berlin. *Enrique Mazzola is supported by the John D. and Alexandra C. Nichols Endowed Chair.*



ROBERT FALLS DIRECTOR

Previously at Lyric: Four operas since 1993/94, most recently *Don Giovanni* (2019/20 and 2014/15) and *Susannah* (2002/03 and 1993/94).

The American director's other opera credits include *Don Giovanni* for Dallas Opera; and Carlyle Floyd's *Susannah* for the Metropolitan Opera, Houston Grand Opera, Grand Théâtre de Genève, and Bilbao's Palacio Euskalduna. He directed Menotti's *The Consul* at Lyric in the 1996/97 Season. Falls was the longtime artistic director of the Goodman Theatre, where he directed an extensive range of contemporary plays, classics, adaptations, and large-scale works. His most recent productions include Richard Greenberg's adaptation of Philip Barry's *Holiday*, Rebecca Gilman's *Swing State*, and his own adaptation of Chekhov's *The Cherry Orchard* at the Goodman, as well as Peter Shaffer's *Amadeus* at Steppenwolf Theatre. *Swing State* subsequently played Off-Broadway at the Minetta Lane Theatre and was recorded by Audible. His Broadway work includes *Death of a Salesman*, *Long Day's Journey into Night*, *The Night of the Iguana*, *The Rose Tattoo*, *Shining City*, *Talk Radio*, and *Elton John and Tim Rice's Aida*. Other notable productions include *The Iceman Cometh* at Brooklyn Academy of Music and *Luna Gale* at Center Theatre Group. Falls's honors include Tony, Drama Desk, Obie, Helen Hayes, and Joseph Jefferson awards, the O'Neill Medallion, and the Savva Morozov Diamond Award of the Moscow Art Theatre. He was inducted into the American Theater Hall of Fame in 2015.



WALT SPANGLER SET DESIGNER

Previously at Lyric: *Don Giovanni* (2019/20 and 2014/15).

The designer's opera work includes *The Old Maid and the Thief* for The 2026 Spoleto Festival, the world premieres of *The Bonesetter's Daughter* (San Francisco Opera), *The Fix* and *Edward Tulane* (Minnesota Opera), *The Coronation of Poppea* (English National Opera), *Dido and Aeneas* (Handel and Haydn Society), and *La traviata* (Lithuanian National Opera). His many designs for the Goodman Theatre include *Holiday* (Jeff Award nomination) 2666, *The Winter's Tale*, *Measure for Measure* (Jeff Award nomination), *King Lear*, and *Desire Under The Elms*, all directed by Robert Falls. His work for Steppenwolf includes last season's critically acclaimed *Mr. Wolf*, *Good People*, and *The Christians* directed by K. Todd Freeman, as well as *Time Stands Still* and *Tribes* directed by Austin Pendleton. Broadway credits include the world premieres of *Between Riverside and Crazy*, *Tuck Everlasting*, *Desire Under The Elms*, *Escape To Margaritaville*, *A Christmas Story The Musical*, *Scandalous*, and *Hollywood Arms*.



ANA KUZMANIC COSTUME DESIGNER

Previously at Lyric: *Don Giovanni* (2019/20 and 2014/15).

The Yugoslav-born, Chicago-based costume designer and illustrator's work has been seen on Broadway in *August: Osage County*, *Desire Under the Elms*, *Superior Donuts*, and *The Minutes*. Her recent New York work includes the world premiere of *Giulia* by Grammy Award-winning singer-songwriter Jennifer Nettles, directed by Mary Zimmerman, and *The Jacksonian* Off-Broadway. Her opera credits include *Eurydice* and *Florencia en el Amazonas* at the

Metropolitan Opera, *Turandot* at Atlanta Opera, and *Don Giovanni* at Dallas Opera. Her work has also been seen at London's National Theatre, Sydney Theatre Company, Goodman Theatre, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Shakespeare Theatre Company, Steppenwolf Theatre, Lookingglass Theatre, and other leading companies across the United States. Her designs and exhibitions have been presented internationally across Europe, Asia, and North America. Kuzmanic is a Professor of Design at Northwestern University. *Costume Designers are supported by the Richard P. and Susan Kiphart Costume Designer Endowment.*



DUANE SCHULER LIGHTING DESIGNER

Previously at Lyric: More than 200 productions since 1977, most recently *Cavalleria rusticana* & *Pagliacci* (2025/26) and *La Bohème* (2024/25).

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



MICHAEL BLACK CHORUS DIRECTOR

The Australian chorus director 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*. In 2025, 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.*



AUGUST TYE CHOREOGRAPHER

Previously at Lyric: Choreographer since 2004/05, most recently *El último sueño de Frida y Diego* (2025/26).

The American dancer, choreographer, and ballet mistress has worked on nearly 50 productions at Lyric since 1993/94. She remounted the choreography of Lyric's *Iphigénie en Tauride* at San Francisco Opera and the Royal Ballet and Opera. She has presented a 20-year retrospective of her work at Chicago's Vittum Theater and Ruth Page Dance Center, as well as in her hometown of Kalamazoo, Michigan. A graduate of Western Michigan University, Tye performed with the Kalamazoo Ballet, dancing leading roles in *Sleeping Beauty*, *Cinderella*, and *The Nutcracker*. In addition to Lyric and Joel Hall Dancers, she has performed in Chicago with Salt Creek Ballet, Second City Ballet, and Chicago Folks Operetta. Tye is Artistic Director at the Hyde Park School of Dance, which she founded in 1993. Four years later she founded Tyego Dance Project, which has performed at Steppenwolf, the Athenaeum, and throughout America in a revival of Spike Jones's *Nutcracker*.



JOHN METZNER WIG AND 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.*



JORDAN LEE BRAUN ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR

Previously at Lyric: 33 productions since 2016/17.

Since 2016, Braun has worked on nearly 3 dozen productions at Lyric as either an Associate Director, Assistant Director, or Stage Manager. She has collaborated with directors Richard Jones, Sir David Pountney, Sir David McVicar, Sir Graham Vick, Francesca Zambello, Arin Arbus, Barrie Kosky, Bart Sher, Jonathan Miller, and many more. She most recently directed *Madama Butterfly* for Houston Grand Opera and the Canadian Opera Company. Braun has also worked with the Santa Fe Opera, Washington National Opera, Opera Colorado, Wolf Trap Opera, The Atlanta Opera, Florentine Opera, Opera Omaha, Opera Grand Rapids, Charlottesville Opera, Fort Worth Opera, Sarasota Opera, Toledo Opera, and Opera Carolina. **L**

Orchestra & Chorus

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Enrique Mazzola
*The John D. and Alexandra C.
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Violin I

Robert Hanford, *Concertmaster,*
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 Emily Nebel,
Assistant Concertmaster
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 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

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.

Viola

Carol Cook, *Principal*
 Terri Van Valkinburgh,
Assistant Principal
 Rose Armbrust Griffin^{**}
 Amy Hess
 Rebecca Swan
 Melissa Trier Kirk

Cello

Calum Cook, *Principal*
 Ana Kim,
Acting Assistant Principal
 Mark Brandfonbrener
 Mara McClain^{**}
 William H. Cernota
 Walter Preucil

String Bass

Kevin Fink, *Principal*
 Samuel Shuhan,
Acting Assistant 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,
Acting Assistant Principal

English Horn

Judith Zunamon Lewis

Clarinet

Heesoo Kim, *Principal*
 Susan Warner,
Assistant Principal

Bass Clarinet

Susan Warner,
Acting

Bassoon

Preman Tilson, *Principal*
 Hanna Sterba,
Acting Assistant Principal^{**}

Contrabassoon

Hanna Sterba, *Acting*^{**}

Horn

Abigail Black, *Principal*
 Fritz Foss, *Assistant Principal/*
Utility/Acting Third Horn
 Samuel Hamzem
 Neil Kimel

Trumpet

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

Trombone

Jeremy Moeller, *Principal*
 Mark Fisher, *Assistant Principal*^{*}
 Hugo Saavedra,
Acting 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

Crozet Duplantier,
Acting Principal

Stage Band Contractor

Christine Janicki

STAGEBAND MUSICIANS

Kate Carter, *violin*
 Lisa Fako, *violin*
 Sheila Hanford, *violin*
 Hana Kim, *violin*
 Erik Liljenberg, *violin*
 Jeff Yang, *violin*
 Joey Fischer, *viola*
 Isidora Nojkovic, *cello*
 Lindsey Orcutt, *bass*
 Kit Polen, *bass*
 Adèle-Marie Buis, *oboe*
 Sam Waring, *oboe*
 Trevor O'Riordan, *clarinet*
 Eric Bromberg, *clarinet*
 Vincent Disantis, *bassoon*
 Nathaniel Hale, *bassoon*
 Adam Unsworth, *horn*
 Brian Goodwin, *horn*
 Reed Capshaw, *trombone*
 Adam Moen, *trombone*
 Mark Fry, *bass trombone*

EXTRA MUSICIANS

Jennifer Cappelli, *violin*
 Peter Dudek, *viola*
 William C. Billingham, *fortepiano*
 Jesse Langen, *mandolin*

* On leave, 2026/27 Season
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CHORUS DIRECTOR AND HEAD OF MUSIC

Michael Black
The Howard A. Stotler
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REGULAR CHORUS

Soprano

Angela De Venuto
Cathy Dunn
Hayley Fox
Desirée Hassler
Rachael Holzhausen
Kimberly McCord
Heidi Spoor
Stephani Springer
Sherry Watkins
Kelsea Webb
Tara Wheeler

Mezzo-Soprano

Marianna Kulikova
Emily Price
Ola Rafał
Yvette Smith
Marie Sokolova
Maia Surace
Corinne Wallace-Crane
Pamela Williams
Michelle K. Wrighte^{AAA}

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

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Soprano

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Emily Mwila
Ariana Strahl

Mezzo-Soprano

Christina G. Adams
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Carla Janzen

Tenor

Joshua Benevento
Ace Gangoso

Bass

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SUPPLEMENTARY CHORUS

Soprano

Andrea Alderman
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Regina Ceragioli
Anna Donnelly
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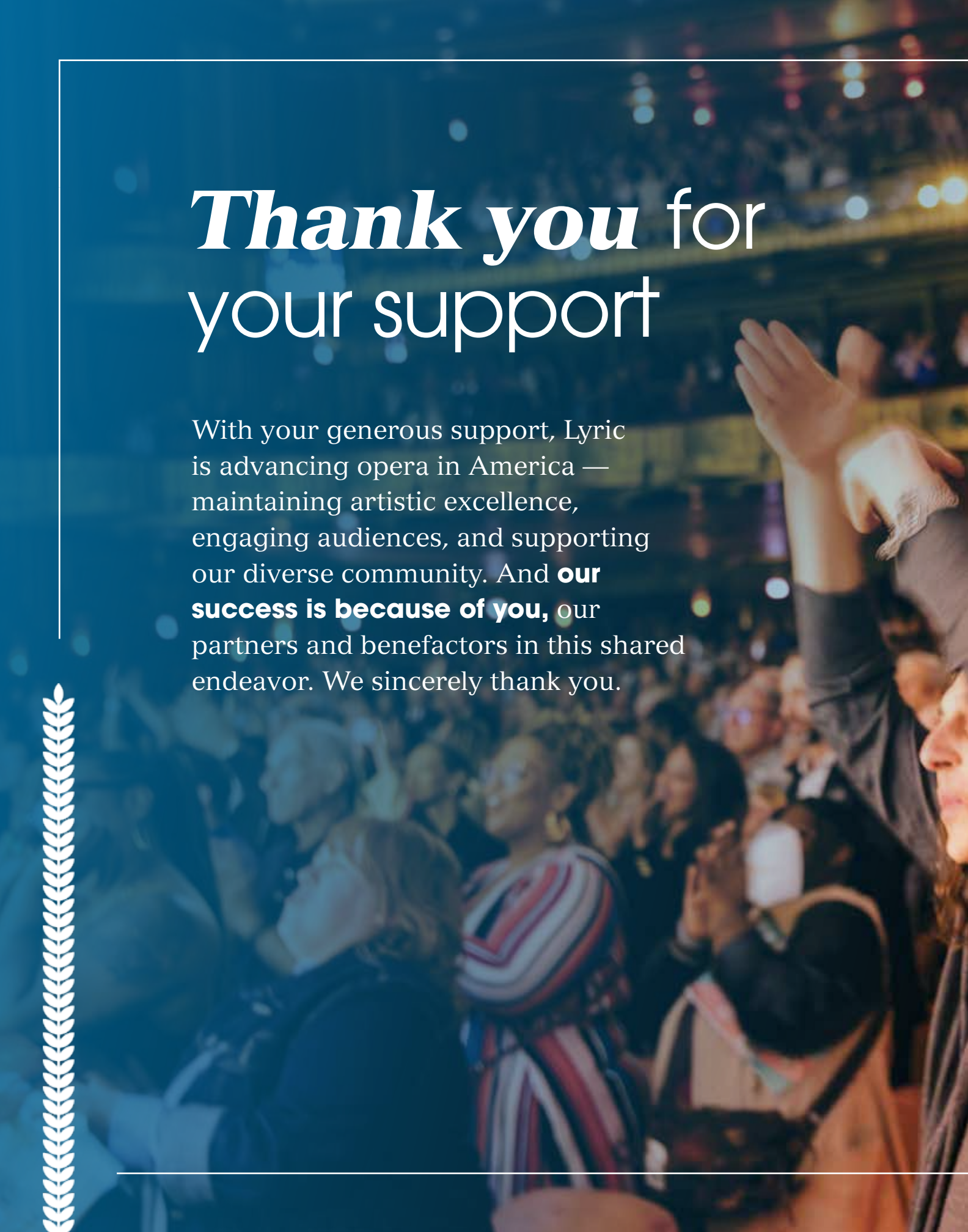
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**The 2026/27 Ryan Opera
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Ryan Opera Center alumni around the world



Gregory Kunde (1978-81), here with Maria Agresta, sang *Otello* in a new production at Teatro Colón this past August.

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Emily Pogorelc
(2018-2020)
L'elisir d'amore
Wiener Staatsoper



Sankara Harouna
(2024-2026)
Porgy and Bess
Komische Oper Berlin



Katherine Beck
(2020-2022)
Così fan tutte
Opera Colorado

For more information, please visit lyricopera.org/ryanoperacenter

This is only the *beginning...*

2026 | 27
SEASON

Mozart

Don Giovanni

Oct. 10 - Nov. 1, 2026

Giddens & Abels

Omar

Oct. 23 - 28, 2026

Donizetti

Don Pasquale

Nov. 12 - 27, 2026

Lyric in Concert

Wagner: Myth & Music

Nov. 20 & 22, 2026

Movie Nights at Lyric

***Disney's Encanto
in Concert Live to Film***

Nov. 28 & 29, 2026

Movie Nights at Lyric

Amadeus Live

Jan. 15 & 16, 2027

Haydn

The Creation

Jan. 22 & 23, 2027

Massenet

***Hérodiade: An
Opera in Concert***

Feb. 23 - 28, 2027

R. Strauss

Ariadne auf Naxos

Mar. 11 - 26, 2027

Verdi

La traviata

Mar. 24 - Apr. 25, 2027

Floyd

Susannah

Apr. 11 - 23, 2027

Artists in Concert

***Sondra Radvanovsky
& SeokJong Baek***

Apr. 30 & May 2, 2027

Artists in Concert

Idina Menzel

May 1, 2027

Loesser & Burrows & Swerling

Guys & Dolls

June 4 - 20, 2027



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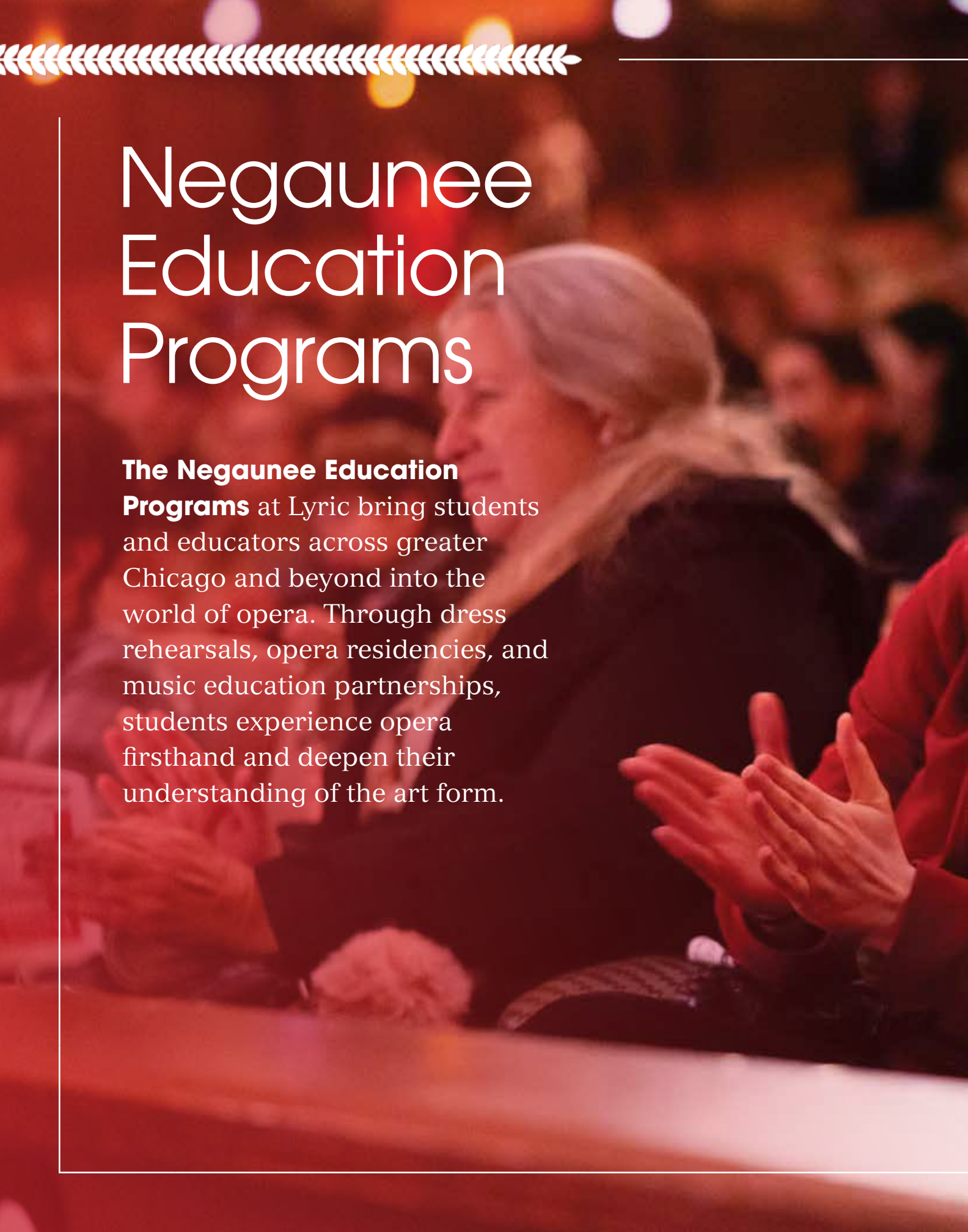
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Negaunee Education Programs

The Negaunee Education Programs at Lyric bring students and educators across greater Chicago and beyond into the world of opera. Through dress rehearsals, opera residencies, and music education partnerships, students experience opera firsthand and deepen their understanding of the art form.



Engagement Programs

Engagement Programs at Lyric connect audiences and communities of all ages with opera through artist interactions, exhibitions and activities at the opera house, and performances throughout the city's neighborhoods.



The art of discovery

Artist Residencies bring opera into the classroom — and help students realize that they have an open invitation to the house.

By Janie Ragsdale

Discovery is an essential part of opera. While seasoned opera-goers love the familiar melodies and plots of their favorite classic operas, there is a special thrill found only through hearing and seeing a story unfold onstage for the first time. Whether it is a world-premiere, a rarely performed piece, or something that is simply new-to-you, the experience is unforgettable, enriching, and even educational. This is especially true for Terina Woolridge and her eighth grade English and Language Arts class. This season, the students from McNair Elementary School will step into the opera house — many for the first time — and experience the thrill of discovering opera as part of Lyric's newly named Negaunee Education Programs.

Through in-school artist residencies that give students hands-on experience with professional artists, opportunities to see opera at small and large scales that spark the imagination through the power of storytelling, and events both in neighborhoods and within the historic Lyric Opera House that provide new experiences fostering a deep connection with

music, the Negaunee Education Programs are about igniting a lifelong passion for opera.

Lyric offers three in-school educational opportunities — Opera Residencies for Schools — based on grade level. Lyric teaching artists are paired with classroom teachers to create learning experiences that support music, arts, and academic goals. As each class has unique needs, residencies are tailored to fit customized learning objectives and goals identified by classroom teachers.

For middle school students like the eighth graders at McNair, Lyric offers the Opera Residency Project. This program engages middle and high school students in the study of opera through activities that integrate language arts, music, drama, and performance skills. Students gain a rich understanding of a selected work, its history and context, and important themes. The program also includes a field trip to Lyric to attend the final dress rehearsal of the opera the students have studied.



Jaclyn Simpson

Attending a dress rehearsal can spark a lifelong love of the performing arts.



On dress rehearsal days, the front of the opera house is a bustle of school buses.

“The opportunity to experience opera in its entirety, from the behind-the-scenes artistry to the power of mainstage performances, has given my students and me a deep and lasting appreciation for the craft,” says Woolridge, who began participating in the Opera Discovery Project in 2023 on the recommendation of an art teacher at McNair.

This season, Woolridge and her students will study *Omar*, the Pulitzer Prize-winning opera by Rhiannon Giddens and Michael Abels. Under the guidance of Lyric teaching artist Lauren Ingebrigtsen, the students will explore major themes including the cost of slavery, the power of literacy, survival, faith, and spirituality as they discover the inspiring true story of 19th-century Islamic scholar Omar ibn Said.

The culmination of the residency will see Ingebrigtsen and Woolridge leading the students through a creative exploration of *Omar*, as the students reinterpret select operatic scenes with their own words and music. How will the eighth graders reinvent this profoundly moving story of the human spirit?

The students’ creativity is near boundless. Highlights of past Opera Discovery Projects at McNair range wildly, from a “lively” original ending to Mozart’s *Così fan Tutte* entitled “If You Cheat, You Get Hands and Feet — which required in-classroom fight choreography from Ingebrigtsen — to insightful original poetry focused on identity inspired by Lyric’s world premiere of *The Factotum*.

The educational benefits of the Opera Discovery Project extend beyond artistic growth, as Woolridge and Ingebrigtsen work together to create important curricular connections for students. There is significant overlap between the themes explored in the operas and those explored in an English Language Arts class, such as character motivations and narrative structure.

Woolridge also notes that exposure to opera offers students the opportunity to broaden their worldview through encounters with diverse languages and cultures and ultimately fostering a sense of deep cross-cultural empathy. “Navigating stories told in different languages has taught them that emotion, drama, and human connection transcend linguistic boundaries,” shares Woolridge.

Although *Omar* is a fundamentally American story sung in English, Woolridge’s words remain true this season, as the students will explore both the American South and the West African homeland Omar was forced to leave behind, through hymns, spirituals, and bluegrass woven together with African percussion instruments. The production also features Arabic text and musical motifs woven through the score, evoking Omar’s Islamic faith.

The benefits of the Opera Discovery Project extend beyond the classroom, as the discovery of a new artform and exploration of their own creativity can be a life-changing experience for students. What begins as an in-classroom assignment to put their own twist on an opera may spark a life-long love of opera and the performing arts that motivates young people to return to the opera house — perhaps as a singer on stage, a musician in the pit, or even the composer of a future Lyric premiere.

“One of our biggest goals is to foster a sense of belonging at Lyric,” says Ingebrigtsen. “I appreciate being able to watch the mystery fall away and see kids claim opera as their own,” she continues. “Of course, it’s important to know what makes an aria different from recitative or who Lorenzo DaPonte was, because that knowledge helps students understand and contextualize what they’re seeing on stage. But most importantly, I want them to leave the classroom knowing that this art form and this opera house belong to them.” [L](#)

People of Lyric

A behind-the-scenes conversation



Michael Solomon

Director of Public Relations,
Media Relations &
Communications

Hometown

Tyler, Texas

When did you start at Lyric?

Just as we were coming back, in the fall of 2021.

First opera you saw live?

Così fan tutte at The Dallas Opera — the summer before I started college.

Favorite opera character?

I've always been drawn to Abigail in *Nabucco*, just because she's kind of unhinged and because the vocal writing for her is extraordinarily demanding. She has incredibly high blasting notes and in the next few seconds goes so low that it shakes the earth.

Favorite opera?

For someone in my position that answer should be the opera I'm currently working on. But the *Ring* cycle has always held a special fascination for me.

What was your path to working at Lyric?

In college, I worked for a newspaper company in Washington, D.C. I started as an intern and ended up there almost 19 years. My first job in opera was as the Senior Press Representative for Washington National Opera at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. The company had only just recently affiliated with the Kennedy Center, so it was a very exciting time. I spent seven seasons there and then went to Austin Opera, on a fellowship program sponsored by OPERA America, to study audience experience. Then the Metropolitan Opera came calling, and I went there for three seasons before Lyric.

The fellowship sounds very interesting.

It changed how I think about the audience experience entirely. I spent part of it at the Four Seasons Hotel Austin, learning how they made guests feel anticipated, not just accommodated. I brought that home to the opera house. Turns out the standing ovation isn't the only moment that counts — the handshake at the door does too.

What's the most fun part of your job?

I love working with artists. I love telling great stories about artists and making artists feel like Lyric is really taking care of them and promoting them and treating them like the stars they are. I want them to have a good time and to come back and sing with us in the future.

What is the most challenging aspect of your job?

Newsrooms, and the number of people covering the arts, have been on the decline for as long as I've been around, it seems. We're always looking for new people who can cover different angles who aren't necessarily on arts desks. I'm trying to introduce our programs and talents to as many people as we can reach locally, nationally, and globally. Whether it's feature stories on our singers, reviews of our performances, profiles of our leaders — I want to make sure Lyric is always not just in the conversation, but at the center of the conversation.

You've been an advocate inside and outside the company for accessibility, broadly defined. What's special about this production of *Don Giovanni*?

This production will be the first time that a major American company has presented a foreign-language opera with American Sign Language interpretation, which is very exciting. A way for different kinds of audiences to experience opera. It's necessary and joyful work.

Do you have a favorite Lyric moment?

In my misspent youth, I saw plenty of opera in Washington and New York, but Lyric was the first company that got me on a plane just to see a show — *Die Frau ohne Schatten*, in the 2007/08 Season. That poster hangs in my office now. I kept coming back to Lyric — for a season-opening *Manon* with Natalie Dessay and Jonas Kaufmann, a gloriously unruly *Lulu*, and so many others since. So when this job came along, it wasn't really a decision — I'd already made up my mind back in 2007.

What do you like about working in the arts?

For the longest time, I didn't really know that jobs like mine existed in the world. I was quite old when I discovered that people actually work in opera. I feel that, given the general news of the day, the arts are a great reprieve. Making it my vocation rather than my avocation has been a wonderful turn of events. **L**