

# ELIXIR OF LOVE



The  
Florentine  
Opera

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## ELIXIR OF LOVE

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**From the General Director MAGGEY OPLINGER &  
Board President DR. DAVID PARIS**

**Welcome to our 90th season!** It's incredible to see how many operas have appeared on the Florentine stage in that time, each with its own heartstrings tug from shared emotions. In *L'elisir d'amore*, a love potion supposedly makes people fall in love with the drinker. While this may seem like a whimsical and fun plot point, it addresses the universal vulnerability we feel as we share our feelings with someone, and the joy and relief of having those feelings reciprocated. The opera's enduring popularity stems from this universal experience of love's ups and downs, an enduring touch to the hearts of audiences across generations. Donizetti's enchanting melodies and witty storytelling in *L'elisir d'amore* remind us that love is a timeless force for connection.

Just like in life, no love story comes without its twists and turns, but ultimately we find connection and discover a new person. This "season with a twist" celebrates everything the Florentine is, was, and will be. From bel canto Italian to Argentinian tango, with stopovers in Milwaukee's Bronzeville and New Orleans, you can travel the world with us this season. Each performance should surprise you with something new, and delight you with something familiar. That goes for the audience and those of us working on and backstage. As students sharpen their pencils and pack their backpacks, we unpack and build our sets and costumes. We have the same sense of new beginnings and an eagerness to recommit to our art form in the fall. There's a special energy on stage as we open our season, and despite the 89 previous season openings, we confidently share that the energy (and love) hasn't faded a bit.

*L'elisir d'amore* harkens back to a simpler era, teasingly reminds us of how easy it is to fool ourselves, and how hiding behind potions or props can get in the way of saying and getting what we want. This opera was written centuries ago, but the dilemma of how to own up to a new love is timeless. We are so glad that Milwaukee's love of opera is still growing. Our love affair with the city, and with you, our audience, continues to grow too. Let's revel in Adina and Nemorino's good fortune, even as we laugh at how complicated a simple conversation can become. And let's keep our communication simple: thank you for being in our seats, and for choosing to be part of our first 90 years. A grand thanks to the donors who gift these productions to Milwaukee; your generosity makes magic happen. With that, I welcome Board President Dr. David Paris to the helm, as my co-author and company leader. We're both excited to have you back in the house.



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## IN MEMORIAM



### Eugenie & Ralph Olsen

**EUGENIE FISCHER OLSEN**, an avid friend of Milwaukee's museums, zoo, ballet and more, served as president of the Milwaukee Florentine Opera Club. She shared her life with her husband, **COL. RALPH N. OLSEN, M.D.** who would follow her posthumously days later. After earning her B.S. in education in 1954, she joined the U.S. Army Medical Specialist Corps, training in occupational therapy and serving Korean war veterans. As a 1st Lieutenant, she earned her M.A. in speech pathology at the University of Denver. While stationed at Fitzsimons Army Hospital in Denver, she met Captain Ralph Olsen, M.D. The two wed July 4, 1959 on Governor's Island, Manhattan, then moved to Orléans, France, where Ralph was stationed as chief of pediatrics at the U.S. Army Hospital and Eugenie taught French to American children on base. After their first child was born, they moved to Elm Grove, Wisconsin. Their daughter, Wendy Olsen asked that gifts be made to the Florentine Opera in their honor. Both were avid sailors in addition to being lifelong opera lovers.



The Florentine Opera  
23/24 Season

# L'ELISIR D'AMORE

AN OPERA IN TWO ACTS BY Gaetano Donizetti

Libretto by Felice Romani

Performed in Italian

October 13 & 15, 2023

Uihlein Hall, Marcus Performing Arts Center

2h 30m including one 20-minute intermission

CONDUCTOR: Domenico Boyagian\*

STAGE DIRECTOR: Brenna Corner

## CAST

Adina..... Marie-Eve Munger  
Nemorino ..... Andrew Stenson\*  
Sergeant Belcore ..... Darren Drone\*  
Dulcamara..... Zachary Nelson  
Giannetta..... Laura McCauley+

With the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra and The Florentine Opera Chorus

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\* Florentine Opera Debut + Baumgartner Studio Artist \*\*Member of USA 829

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Fumiyasu Kawase+, Rehearsal Pianist

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Dana Campbell  
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Alexandra Logue  
Olivia Pogodzinski

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## From the Director BRENNIA CORNER

Steve Allen once said that “tragedy plus timing equals comedy”. I’m not sure any truer definition of comedy has ever been made. Allen wasn’t just referring to the large-scale Greek tragedies like Elektra, but to the smaller tragic moments, everything from stubbing your toe to realizing the love of your life has met someone else. Combine these tragic moments with the right timing and they become the fodder for comedic genius, which is something Donizetti and Romani knew quite well. There are few works in the operatic canon that combine comedy and humanity quite so seamlessly as *L’elisir d’Amore*. Donizetti’s musical genius sets real struggles for self-discovery, love and self-acceptance to slapstick comic beats. On the surface of this piece, it is easy to misinterpret the characters, seeing predominantly simplistic comedy archetypes vying only for their own self-interest. However, a deeper look into its musical complexities reveal a well of human experience beneath. It is this exploration of the simple and yet quintessentially human elements of ourselves that Donizetti invites us to participate in.

In this production, we will revisit a setting of *L’elisir d’Amore* most likely familiar to some of the Florentine Opera audience. We will transport the story from the traditional harvest and farm of Italy to a vineyard in the California wine country in the mid 1930s. The relocations into the 1930s also allows us to foreground the impact of wars (both past and imminent) that surround and affect this community. These types of connections are important in our understanding of the work and inform the grace that the audience extends to these sometimes very silly and genuinely delightful characters.

Timing silliness in order to render comedy from the tragic is crucial here, whether general plot points (a young man on a vineyard having never drunk, getting drunk by accident) to the musical comedy beats written for physical and prop comedy. For at its heart, *Elixir* is a story of love and trust. Learning how to trust and love others, and also ourselves.



## ACT 1

A group of farmhands are finishing their morning harvesting. A poor young man named Nemorino is in love with Adina, a beautiful and unobtainable landowner. Nemorino watches Adina from a distance as she reads aloud to her workers the story of Tristan and Isolde, whose love for one another was inflamed by the drinking of a magic potion.

The pompous Sergeant Belcore appears with his regiment. He flirts with the girls and then asks Adina to marry him. Adina declares that she is in no hurry to make up her mind but promises to think over the offer. The farmhands return to work, and Nemorino finds the courage to declare his love for Adina. She laughs at him, telling him she is too capricious to settle down. Adina tells him that his time would be better spent in town, looking after his sick uncle, than hoping to win her love.

The traveling quack doctor, Dulcamara, arrives, selling his bottled cure-all potion. Nemorino asks Dulcamara if he stocks the magic elixir of love with which Tristan won Isolde. Dulcamara's claims he does and sells a bottle of the "elixir" - in reality only cheap red wine - to Nemorino. To make a safe escape, Dulcamara tells Nemorino the potion needs 24 hours to take effect - by which time, the doctor will be long gone. Nemorino, who has never touched alcohol before, proceeds to drink the entire bottle. The effect of the alcohol is immediate. Certain that he will win Adina's love, Nemorino feigns indifference when he encounters Adina. Surprised and hurt, Adina flirts with Belcore. When orders arrive for Belcore to return immediately to the garrison, Adina agrees to marry him at once. Nemorino is horrified; by the time the love potion works its magic, Adina will be married.

## ACT 2

At the pre-wedding feast, Dr. Dulcamara encourages Adina to sing a duet with him to entertain the guests. Annoyed because Nemorino has not attended the party, Adina delays signing the marriage contract. Nemorino begs Dulcamara for a more powerful, faster-acting elixir. Upon discovering that Nemorino now has no money, the doctor agrees to wait so Nemorino can borrow the cash. When Nemorino tells Belcore that he needs money, Belcore suggests joining the army, as he'll receive an enlistment bonus. What Nemorino does not know is that his rich uncle has died, leaving him a large inheritance. All at once, Nemorino has become the most eligible bachelor in the area. Reeling from the double dose of elixir, Nemorino attributes his sudden popularity with the ladies to Dulcamara's potion. Adina feels responsible for Nemorino's enlistment, but her concern turns to jealousy when she sees him with the other women. Dulcamara boasts about the power of his elixir and offers to sell Adina some, but she is determined to win Nemorino all on her own.

Nemorino is sad at the thought of leaving his village and Adina for the army. He now feels sure that Adina cares for him as he noticed a tear on her cheek when she saw him with the other women. Adina returns to tell Nemorino that she has bought back his enlistment papers. When he again feigns indifference, she finally confesses that she loves him. Belcore finds the two embracing and redirects his affections to Giannetta, Adina's friend, declaring that thousands of women await him elsewhere. Dulcamara brags to the crowd that his miraculous potion can make people fall in love and even turn poor peasants into millionaires.

## A FEAST FOR THE EYES AND EARS

Florentine Music Director Francesco Milioto on *Elixir of Love*  
By Renata Herrera

Gaetano Donizetti (1797-1848) was one of the great Italian composers of the period known as bel canto. He along with Bellini and Rossini make up what historians consider the big three composers of this period. He was a workaholic and composed over 70 operas in both Italian and French. His 43rd opera, *L'elisir d'amore* premiered in 1832 in Milan and was the first of his great comic operas.

**This is the fourth time that The Florentine Opera has presented *Elixir* since our first production in 1968 and every time that we bring this great opera back, our artists and audiences receive it with much enthusiasm! What excites you about Donizetti's *Elixir of Love*?**

So many things, but particularly the story! Donizetti and the librettist Felice Romani work together perfectly to bring the characters to life. This Romantic *opera buffa* (comic opera) uses stock characters - a peasant man, an unattainable lady, and a pompous soldier to create a love triangle, a wacky mystical salesman - though the way they interact reads as anything but fake.

Donizetti and Romani were masters of foreshadowing. In Adina's first aria, she tells the story of Tristan and Isolde and their magic elixir. Even though Adina rebuffs Nemorino in their first duet, the audience knows that their fate is already pre-woven into the story. The title of the opera is also a big clue.

I like to imagine Italian audiences in 1832 experiencing *Elixir of Love* for the first time. In the 19th century, the theater was a place to eat, drink, and socialize with your friends. It was not a quiet environment the way that opera houses are today! The story and the performance had to be really spectacular to retain the audience's attention. I think that the unraveling of Nemorino and Adina's pre-determined fate served as a hook to get the audience into the text and the story.

**What should the audience listen for in Donizetti's music?**

The most famous solos are both of Nemorino's arias - *Quanto e bella* in Act 1 and *Una furtiva lagrima* in Act 2. Adina's gorgeous aria *Prendi per me sei libero*, and Belcore's *Come paride vezzoso* are also very recognizable. In my opinion, the real highlights of the opera are the ensembles. All of the duets pump energy into the music. We often forget about the difficulty of juxtaposing the emotions of two characters. This needs to happen at the same time with the same music! There are always two individual perspectives in every duet and they need to be perfectly balanced to allow both characters to tell their side of the story. They need to be placed correctly and balanced dramatically. Donizetti achieves this in a very clever way.

The chorus interactions with the principals add to the energy, too. When the chorus is present, the whole stage is alive and when you have a great director, it becomes a feast for the eyes and ears.

**What makes *Elixir of Love* special amongst other bel canto operas?**

The best operas are always the best for the same reason: everything on stage is maximized. The audience gets the most that they can out of the beauty of the music, the emotions presented, and the pacing of the story. It's like a perfectly trimmed steak. Everything you see and hear serves to heighten the comedy. And in the end...wine is really the star of the show! Plus, nobody dies and everybody wins! What's there not to love?



Known for his savvy style on the podium and ability to communicate, Maestro Domenico Boyagian has proven to be highly valuable, sensitive and compassionate in his aesthetic delivery. Born and raised in Bologna, Italy and the son of the internationally renowned Armenian-Italian Verdi baritone Garbis Boyagian, Mo. Boyagian arrived in the U.S. in 2000 to pursue his musical studies in piano and conducting. Described by the Cleveland Plain Dealer as "...a conductor for whom the music is the sole point of standing before musicians".

When he was named the Inaugural Music Director of the Cleveland Opera Theater, Mo. Boyagian began that season by conducting *A Street Car Named Desire*, *La bohème* and *Tosca* with ensuing seasons including *Le nozze di Figaro*, *Madama Butterfly*, *Suor Angelica* and *The Threepenny Opera*. Additionally, he has been on the roster of guest conductors for The Manhattan School of Music. Past engagements include: *La traviata* with Opera North; Associate Conductor at Florida Grand Opera, *Così fan tutte*; and Associate Conductor, Opera Southwest, *La bohème*. This past fall he conducted *Così fan tutte* with OperaDelaware. Mo. Boyagian continues his position as Music Director of the Suburban Symphony where he was appointed in 2018 dedicating himself to both the symphonic repertoire and opera.

Maestro Boyagian was reengaged to conduct the National Symphony Orchestra and Chorus of Costa Rica in critically acclaimed performances of Verdi's *Messa da Requiem*. He made his New York debut conducting performances of *Don Pasquale* and was invited to return to Opera Southwest in the premiere of Ethan Frederick Greene's, *A Way Home*. In Cleveland Mo. Boyagian led a production of Szymanowski's rare and challenging *King Roger*, hailed by the Cleveland Plain Dealer as being performed "amid Szymanowski's rich orchestral colors, which received handsome definition by the Opera Circle Orchestra under the shapely direction of Domenico Boyagian." Particularly adept in the standard Italian repertoire, he made his Canadian debut with *La traviata* for Opera Belcanto in Toronto and in Italy at Teatro della Regina, La Camerata Musicale Giovanile Orchestra (Bologna), Assisi Opera and Sofia Festival Orchestra.

A collaboration with the celebrated Italian pianist Antonio Pompa-Baldi produced his recording debut for Centaur Records with the Ohio Philharmonic conducting the works of Edvard Grieg including the *Holberg Suite, Opus 40*. Of this recording, the Cleveland Plain Dealer wrote, "the soloist and conductor Boyagian maintained such close contact that the score unfolded with seamless vibrancy."



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Brenna Corner is an international opera and theater stage director working across the United States, Canada and Europe.

Select directing projects include: *Il Trovatore* (Washington National Opera); *Tenor Overboard* (Glimmerglass Festival); *H.M.S Pinafore* (Vancouver Opera); *Don Giovanni* (Seattle Opera); *Hansel and Gretel* (San Diego Opera & Vancouver Opera); *La Bohème* (Calgary Opera); *Dead Man Walking* (The Israeli Opera); *La Bohème* (The Dallas Opera); *Noye's Fludd & Scalia/Ginsburg* (Glimmerglass Opera); *Sweeney Todd* (New Orleans Opera); *Der fliegende Holländer* (Cincinnati Opera & Houston Grand Opera); *L'elisir d'Amore* (Vancouver Opera); *Carmen* (The Atlanta Opera); and *Cendrillon & La Clemenza di Tito* (Manitoba Underground Opera).

She is the Artistic Director of Manitoba Underground Opera, which produces a festival of new operatic experiences each August in Winnipeg. She has also worked as a dramatic coach for training programs including The Washington National Opera Cafritz Young Artist Program in Washington D.C.

Brenna made her directorial main stage debut in 2016 with a new production of *Hansel and Gretel* designed by the Old Trout Puppet Workshop for Vancouver Opera. This production has since toured North America, and was mostly recently produced for San Diego Opera as part of their 2019-20 season. She made her American directorial debut in February of 2017 with New Orleans Opera, creating a new production of *Sweeney Todd, The Demon Barber of Fleet Street*.

During the COVID-19 pandemic she created new opera experiences through film including *Don Giovanni* for Seattle Opera, *Carmen: Up-Close and Personal* for Vancouver Opera, *Dear Mom: a web series* for Kentucky Opera and *Green Envelopes* for Manitoba Underground Opera.

Brenna was a member of the Yulanda M. Faris Young Artist Program with Vancouver Opera and spent two years as the resident director for The Atlanta Opera Studio Artist Program. She is a certified member of Fight Directors Canada and has choreographed many fights for both opera and theatre.

She studied classical music at The University of Manitoba, and she has diplomas in theatre from Grant MacEwan College and The British American Drama Academy.

**ARTISTIC**

**Darren Drone, *Sergeant Belcore***



Described as having “a gorgeously warm tone and deep resonance” (Opera News), baritone Darren Drone is quickly making a name for himself in the opera world. In the summer of 2023, Mr. Drone debuted at The Glimmerglass Festival as Marcello in *La bohème* and Grégorio in *Roméo et Juliette*, and participated in a workshop of Nmon Ford’s *House of Orfeus* with Cincinnati Opera. In the 2023-2024 season, Mr. Drone will be seen as Belcore in *L'elisir d'amore* in a debut with the Florentine Opera, and returns to the Metropolitan Opera covering Moralès in *Carmen* and singing Foreman/Adult James and covering Chester in *Fire Shut Up in My Bones*. He also will appear with the Dayton Philharmonic singing as a soloist in Brahms’ *Requiem*.

In the 2022-2023 season, Mr. Drone made a series of exciting debuts with esteemed American companies including Seattle Opera as Baron Douphol in *La Traviata*, Portland Opera as Zuniga in *Carmen*, and Opera San José in the title role of Verdi’s *Falstaff*. He also performed in a concert of operatic favorites with the Santa Fe Symphony and joined the Lyric Opera of Chicago roster where he covered Preacher Man and Bilal in the world premiere of Daniel Roumain and Anna Deavere Smith’s *The Walkers*.

During the 2021-2022 season, Mr. Drone joined the Metropolitan Opera roster as a featured soloist in *Porgy & Bess*, covered Mtchll in the world premiere of Carlos Simon and Marc Bamuthi Joseph’s *it all falls down* at Washington National Opera, made his Opera Memphis debut as Guglielmo in *Così fan tutte* and was set to make a debut with Florentine Opera as Schaunard in *La bohème* (COVID-19). In the summer of 2021, Mr. Drone joined the Santa Fe Opera roster, covering the roles of the Count in *Le nozze di Figaro*, Starveling in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, and the Captain in *Eugene Onegin*. He returned to Santa Fe this past summer, singing Moralès in *Carmen* and covering the title role of *Falstaff*.

**Laura McCauley, *Giannetta***



Laura McCauley, Uzbek-American Soprano, has been hailed for her “gleaming” voice and “explosive presentation” (Ken Herman, San Diego Story). Laura was a winner in the Metropolitan Opera Laffont District Competition for 2022-St. Louis and 2018-Arizona, and was awarded the Encouragement Award in 2019 and 2017. She was also a finalist in Tri-Cities Next Online Vocal Competition in 2020.

Laura is currently at The Florentine Opera for her second season as a Baumgartner Studio Artist. Laura has covered Juliette in Gounod’s *Roméo et Juliette*, sang Fiordiligi in *Così: REMIX*, and sang Berta in *Il barbiere di Siviglia*.

Laura was also the featured soprano in *Covers*, a collaborative new work performance with Immortal Girlfriend. With the Florentine Opera’s outreach initiative, Laura sang Donna Bartola and Donna Basilia in an adaptation of *The Barber of Seville* for children and this season will be singing a variety of characters in *The Child and the Enchantments*. For the coming season, Laura will be singing Gianetta in *L'Elisir d'amore* and covering Adina. She will also be featured in *María de Buenos Aires* and singing Guadalupe in *Songbird*.

Laura has sung with Arizona Opera’s OPERAtunity as the Stepsister and Fairy Godmother in their production of *Cinderella* as well as their Opera 101 program. As a Young Artist with Seagle Festival, Laura sang her first Mimi in *La bohème* in 2021. As a Studio Artist with Opera Neo, she sang the role of Satirino in *La Calisto* in 2018. While living in Chicago, her most recent home base, Laura sang in the American premier of *Die Kathrin* with Folks Operetta, sang with MIOpera’s production of *Pirates of Penzance* as Mable, and was a member of the ensemble in Opera Festival of Chicago’s production of Verdi’s *Il Corsaro*.





**Marie-Eve Munger, Adina**

Born in Saguenay, Québec, Canadian coloratura soprano Marie-Eve Munger enjoys a flourishing career in both North America and Europe. She has sung at houses such as La Scala, Teatro Liceu, Festival d'Aix-en-Provence, Opéra de Marseille; Lyric Opera of Chicago, Minnesota Opera and Opéra de Montréal. Her repertoire includes roles such as Juliette, Ophélie, Gilda, Zerbinetta, and Lakmé. On the concert stage, she has performed with the Chicago Symphony, Bavarian Radio Orchestra in Munich, the Montréal Symphony, and performs regularly in recital.

This season, she brings her Adina in *L'elisir d'amore* to the Florentine Opera, performs the Queen of the Night in *Die Zauberflöte* with Opéra du Rhin, sings the title role in *Le domino noir* with Opéra de Lausanne, La Fée in *Cendrillon* with Limoges Opera, Queen of Sheba in *Rex Salomonis – Traetta* with the Innsbrucker Festwochen, and Arlette in *La Chauve-Souris* with Opera de Lille. Her album, *Maestrino Mozart* was released by Atma in September 2022.

Recent successes include her début with Lyric Opera of Chicago in Massenet's *Cendrillon*, Teatro alla Scala, Barcelona's Liceu and Festival d'Aix-en-Provence in *Elektra*, Opéra de Marseille in *My Fair Lady*, Opéra de Montréal in *Roméo et Juliette*, Munich's Bayerische Rundfunks in *Lakmé* and *L'enfant et les sortilèges*, Chicago Symphony Orchestra in *L'enfant et les sortilèges*, and Paris Opéra Comique in *Le pré aux clercs*, *Fantasio*, and *La bohème*.

Ms. Munger earned her master's degree from the Schulich School of Music at McGill University. She won first prize at the Marmande International Voice Competition in 2007 and won the Choquette-Symcox award from the Jeunesses Musicales du Canada in 2012. When not on stage, down-to-earth and outdoorsy Munger is an avid gardener, budding sailor, amateur cook, and mother to a wonderful boy.



**Zachary Nelson, Dulcamara**

Zachary Nelson, a native of Annapolis, Maryland, studied vocal performance at The Catholic University of America, subsequently attending the prestigious Academy of Vocal Arts in Philadelphia.

The 2023-2024 season features a mix of role debuts and favorites for Mr. Nelson. Returning to Palm Beach Opera, he makes his role debut as the Four Villains in Offenbach's *Les contes d'Hoffmann*. Other appearances include Florentine Opera as Dulcamara in *L'elisir d'amore*; Atlanta Opera as Marcello in *La bohème*, and Arizona Opera as Leporello in *Don Giovanni*. In concert he joins the Utah Symphony for Beethoven's 9th Symphony and Act 3 of Berg's *Wozzeck*, and appears with the Sag Harbor Song Festival in recital. During the summer of 2024 he debuts the role of Faninal in *Der Rosenkavalier* with Santa Fe Opera, his 11th opera with the company. Further ahead, he returns to the Lyric Opera of Chicago.

Last season, Mr. Nelson made an anticipated role debut as Alberich in Atlanta Opera's new production of *Das Rheingold*. Additionally, he returned to the role of Leporello in *Don Giovanni* with North Carolina Opera, joined the Lubbock Symphony as Sharpless (role debut) in *Madama Butterfly*, and returned to Santa Fe Opera, singing Golaud in *Pelléas et Mélisande*.

Highlights of recent seasons include Marcello in *La bohème* with New Orleans Opera and the Jacksonville Symphony, Escamillo in *Carmen* and Ping in *Turandot* with Palm Beach Opera, the title role in *Sweeney Todd* with Des Moines Metro Opera, and Doug in *Everest* with Chicago Opera Theater.

A regular performer with Lyric Opera of Chicago, the baritone has been featured at the Lyric as a soloist in their widely attended annual Millennium Park concert, followed by performances of Marcello in *La bohème*. He has also performed Ping in *Turandot*, Donner in *Das Rheingold* and covered Enrico Ashton in *Lucia di Lammermoor* and Dulcamara in *L'elisir d'amore*.



**Andrew Stenson, Nemorino**

American tenor Andrew Stenson, praised by The Wall Street Journal for his "vivid tenor that is both beautiful and full of raw feeling", is a graduate of The Metropolitan Opera's Lindemann Young Artists Program. In addition to singing many of the standard lyric tenor roles, Mr. Stenson has created leading characters in two important World Premieres. He left an indelible impression as Danny Chen in *An American Soldier* with Opera Theater of St. Louis and had a big personal success as Gen Watanabe in the World Premiere of *Bel Canto* with Lyric Opera of Chicago, a production televised on PBS. He returned to Chicago to sing Ferrando in *Così fan tutte*.

Mr. Stenson has sung such roles as Candide, Tamino in *The Magic Flute*, Ernesto in *Don Pasquale*, Tonio in *La fille du régiment*, Almaviva in *The Barber of Seville*, and Sprink in *Silent Night* with the opera companies of Seattle, Minnesota, Dallas, Utah, Palm Beach, Arizona, and Washington National Opera.

In Europe, he has sung with the Glyndebourne Festival, Wexford Festival, and the opera companies of Toulouse and Bordeaux. Mr. Stenson is very much in demand as a soloist in the concert and oratorio repertoires, having appeared with the Symphonies of San Francisco, Philadelphia, Seattle, Kansas City, and Lincoln Center's Mostly Mozart Festival. He has also won Top Prizes in several major vocal competitions.

During the pandemic, Mr. Stenson participated in several virtual productions produced by Seattle Opera. He appeared in their stagings of *L'elisir d'amore*, *Don Giovanni*, and *Tosca*, in addition to a solo recital.

MUSIC



**Dr. Eric McEnaney, Principal Coach & Pianist**

Eric McEnaney enjoys a multifaceted career as a distinguished pianist, vocal coach, administrator, and artist teacher whose Grammy-nominated work has been heard on stages throughout the country and abroad. He is currently a Master Vocal Coach for Minnesota Opera and has prepared more than 125 productions for such companies as Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, Central City Opera, Virginia Opera, and Opera Southwest, among others. Additionally, Dr. McEnaney served as Principal Production Pianist & Coach at Florentine Opera Company for four seasons, where he oversaw the musical preparation of two world premiere recordings, *Sister Carrie* and *Prince of Players*, nominated for the Grammy in Best Opera Recording.

As a recitalist, Dr. McEnaney has appeared with singers from the rosters of the nation's leading opera companies and has assisted many of the most renowned classical vocal artists of our time including Christine Brewer, Anna Christy, Elizabeth Futral, Denyce Graves, Marilyn Horne, Thomas Hampson, Frank Lopardo, Susanne Mentzer, Susanna Phillips, Patricia Racette, John Relyea, Nadine Sierra, and Carol Vaness. He serves as an official accompanist for the Metropolitan Opera Laffont Competition, has played more than 50 concerts as an orchestral keyboardist for Minnesota Orchestra, and his performances have been broadcast on PBS, Great Performances, American Public Media, Minnesota Public Radio, Colorado Public Radio, and Twin Cities Public Television. Dr. McEnaney holds advanced degrees in piano performance and collaborative piano and makes his home in Minneapolis.



**Dr. Benjamin Rivera, Chorus Master**

Chicago native Benjamin Rivera has dedicated his career to the inspiring and wonderfully varied art of ensemble singing. He began as a professional singer, and performed as a member of the Chicago Symphony Chorus for over twenty seasons. He also sang with Chicago a cappella, the Grant Park Chorus, and several other ensembles, appearing as a soloist on numerous programs, and singing on dozens of recordings. He gradually transitioned to full-time conducting, and now holds positions in three states. Rivera's current titles include Chorus Director and regular conductor of the Fort Wayne Philharmonic, Chorus Master of the Florentine Opera, Choirmaster of the Church of the Ascension, High Holidays Choir Director of Temple

Sholom, and Assistant Conductor of the Chicago Symphony Chorus. He recently prepared the Chicago Symphony Chorus for a performance at the Ravinia Festival under the direction of Marin Alsop. Prior to his appointment to the conducting staff of the Chicago Symphony, Rivera was the Associate Conductor of The Washington Chorus, preparing the Chorus for performances with the National Symphony at the Kennedy Center and Wolf Trap. He also works regularly as a guest chorus director, appearing multiple times with the Grant Park Chorus, Chicago a cappella, Music of the Baroque, and others. Especially adept with languages, Rivera frequently coaches German, Spanish, and Latin, among others. He holds degrees in voice and music theory from North Park University and Roosevelt University, respectively, and a DMA in conducting from Northwestern University. Dr. Rivera lives with his family in Beverly, a neighborhood on the southwest side of Chicago.

**PRODUCTION**



**Nadja Simmonds, Assistant Stage Director**

Stage director Nadja Simmonds is originally from Cincinnati, Ohio, where she started performing with Cincinnati Black Theatre company and Cincinnati Shakespeare Company's Summer Program. She then moved to Milwaukee and attended Marquette University, with a focus in Theater Arts, Digital Media, and Spanish.

Some of her recent work includes acting/directing with Florentine Opera Company, Next Act Theater, Montana Shakespeare in the Parks, Milwaukee Repertory Theater, Forward Theater, First Stage Children's Theater, Northern Sky Theatre, Milwaukee Chamber Theatre's Young Playwrights Festival, and working with the Summit Players, Wisconsin's premiere traveling

Shakespeare troupe. This summer, she could be found touring with Montana Shakespeare in the Parks, performing outdoors with some of her closest friends.

During the height of the pandemic, Nadja moved back to Cincinnati and worked on virtual productions with CATCO, First Stage Children's Theater, and Milwaukee Chamber Theater, while taking some much needed family time. Since then, her focus has been on finding and working with supportive theater communities that value collaboration, accountability, equity and inclusion, and a work life balance.

One day in the near or distant future, she'll find a city to settle down in and make her official artistic home. But for now, she goes where the wind (and paycheck) takes her! This spring, Nadja returns to Milwaukee to direct her first mainstage opera, *Bronzeville Bohème*, celebrating the beauty and creativity of Milwaukee's historic Bronzeville neighborhood.



**Marcella Barbeau, Lighting Designer**

Marcella Barbeau (she/her) is a New York City based lighting designer. Recent credits include *Lucy and Charlie's Honeymoon* (Lookingglass Theatre, world premiere), Santa Cruz Shakespeare's 2023 festival, *Maria de Buenos Aires* (Opera San Antonio, Opera Columbus), *Rigoletto* (Opera Columbus), *Cabaret* and *As One*, *The Threepenny Opera*, *The Threepenny Carmen* (world premiere) (The Atlanta Opera), *You're A Good Man Charlie Brown* (Village Theatre), *The (R)evolution of Steve Jobs* (co-design, Austin Opera), *Five Guys Named Moe* (Playhouse on Park). Upcoming projects include: *How I Learned to Drive* (Actor's

Shakespeare Project), *La Traviata* (Opera Omaha), *Carmen* (Austin Opera). She received her Master of Fine Arts at Boston University. As a Chinese-American lighting designer, Marcella actively seeks to collaborate with and amplify the voices of fellow BIPOC artists of all intersectionalities.



**Erica Cartledge, Resident Wig/Makeup Designer**

Recent wig and makeup design - *Covers* (Florentine Opera), *Nutcracker* (Milwaukee Ballet), *Romeo and Juliet* (Florentine Opera), *Luisa Fernanda* (Florentine Opera), *Cinderella & The Child and the Enchantments* (Florentine Opera), *Rigoletto* (Florentine Opera). Upcoming engagements include *Così fan tutte: REMIX* (Florentine Opera), *Barber of Seville* (Florentine Opera), *Nutcracker* (Milwaukee Ballet), *Hunchback of Notre Dame* (Milwaukee Ballet), *Peter Pan* (Milwaukee Ballet), *Bronzeville Bohème* (Florentine Opera). Erica has worked on world premiere productions of Don Davis' opera *Rio de Sangre* and Robert Aldridge & Herschel Garfein's opera *Sister Carrie* (Florentine Opera). Other Florentine Opera engagements include *The Magic Flute*, *Venus & Adonis/Dido & Aeneas*, *Don Giovanni*, *Die Fledermaus*, *Madama Butterfly*, *Elixir of Love*, *Elmer Gantry*, *La bohème*, *Julius Caesar*, *La traviata*, *Albert Herring*, *Carmen*, *Le Nozze di Figaro*, *Idomeneo*, *Tosca*, *I Capuleti ei Montecchi*, *Merry Widow*, *Salome*, *Macbeth*. Erica has been a part of all wig and makeup Florentine Opera productions since 2006.

Other Florentine Opera engagements include *The Magic Flute*, *Venus & Adonis/Dido & Aeneas*, *Don Giovanni*, *Die Fledermaus*, *Madama Butterfly*, *Elixir of Love*, *Elmer Gantry*, *La bohème*, *Julius Caesar*, *La traviata*, *Albert Herring*, *Carmen*, *Le Nozze di Figaro*, *Idomeneo*, *Tosca*, *I Capuleti ei Montecchi*, *Merry Widow*, *Salome*, *Macbeth*. Erica has been a part of all wig and makeup Florentine Opera productions since 2006.



**Christianne Myers, Costume Designer**

Christianne Myers is a freelance costume designer the Claribel Baird Halstead Collegiate Professor of Theatre & Drama at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. Originally from Baltimore, Christianne spent 14 years living and working in New York City. Her costume design work spans theater, opera, industrial work, and film. In addition to more than 15 productions at the Juilliard School, her other design credits include productions for The Santa Fe Opera, Detroit Public Theatre, The Lincoln Center Institute, The Clarence Brown Theatre, The Syracuse Stage, The Indiana Repertory Theatre, Theatreworks/USA, The Caldwell Theatre, The

Irondale Ensemble, and Opera Memphis. Designs at The Florentine Opera include *Elixir of Love*, *The Magic Flute* and the *Baroque Double Bill*.





**Lisa Schlenker**, *Scenic Designer*

Ms. Schlenker is delighted to return to The Florentine Opera family to revisit her original design work for *Elixir of Love*. Lisa currently serves Northern Sky Theatre as Resident Designer and Production Manager, to tell stories in the north woods of Wisconsin. For over three decades Lisa has devoted time and passion to advancing skills in prop making, scenic design, production management, and mentoring emerging young professionals.

Lisa earned her BA in Music and Theatre from Augustana College and is an alum of the UW Madison MFA program in Theatre Technology, studying with Dennis Dorn, John Ezell, and Peter Beudert. A proud

member of the Production Managers Forum, the Society of Prop Managers, and IATSE/United Scenic Artists Local 829, Lisa keeps work interesting through curiosity and a passion for learning new things. Lisa's book with co-author Sandra Strawn: *The Properties Director's Tool Kit* is available through Focal Press and on Amazon.com. Recent scene design work: *Sunflowered*, *The Fish Whisperer*, and *When Pigs Fly* (Northern Sky); *The Salon du Marie Antoinette* (Opera Lafayette at NYC's Museo del Barrio and the Kennedy Center); *Misery* (MCT); *Così: REMIX* (Florentine Opera); *There is a Happiness That Morning Is* (Next Act Theatre); *The Mystery of Irma Vep* (Third Avenue Playworks). Upcoming design projects: *Mousetrap* (Next Act Theatre); *A Moon for the Misbegotten* (Milwaukee Chamber Theatre); *What the Constitution Means to Me* (Forward Theatre).



**Dyan Yoder**, *Supertitles Designer*

Dyan Yoder has been translating, formatting, and designing supertitles for The Florentine Opera since 2004, as well as other companies across North America. A former Company Manager and Stage Manager for The Florentine Opera, she is currently Partner and Show Director at Captus Creative, a technical event production company. She has worked with national and international bands, dignitaries, and musicians ranging from Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Former Secretary of State General Colin Powell, Senator Cory Booker, First Lady Laura Bush, Dr. Bernice A. King, and Presidents George W. Bush and Barack Obama; to Sir Tim Berners-Lee, Marc Benioff, Blake Shelton, Marvin

Hamlisch, Seth Meyers, Tony Bennett, and Joshua Bell.

She and her team won the 2021 Michigan Regional Emmy Award for Outstanding Achievement Historical/Cultural for the 2021 Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Commission of Mid-Michigan's Day of Celebration, produced safely during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Originally from Brookfield, WI, Dyan majored in Music and minored in Communications at Carroll University in Waukesha, WI, has been certified by Johns Hopkins University in COVID-19 Contact Tracing and in Level A and B Safety by Safe Sets International, and most recently obtained a certificate from Cornell University in Women's Entrepreneurship.

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Anello Society Luncheon photos courtesy of Jeff Zmania

## The Anello Society

The Anello Society is named after the Florentine Opera's visionary founder, John David Anello. This group of visionaries have provided a gift to the Florentine Opera in their wills or estate plans. These planned gifts assure that future financial support to the Florentine Opera remains strong.

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**General Director and CEO: Maggey Oplinger**

**Music Director: Francesco Milioto**

**Artistic**

Artistic Administrator..... Jason Abrams  
 Company Manager ..... Megan Henschel  
 Education and Community Engagement Manager ..... Renata Herrera

Chorus Master..... Dr. Benjamin Rivera  
 Voice Teacher..... Connie Hass

**Baumgartner Studio Artists**

Laura McCauley, Tzytle Steinman, Jerek Fernández, Brandan Sanchez, Fumiyasu Kawase

**Marketing & Engagement**

Senior Marketing Manager..... Morgan Sass  
 Ticket Office & Sales Manager..... Anali Warner 414.291.5700 x 224

Events Manager and Board Liason ..... Andrew Kelly

**Philanthropy**

Director of Development..... Gail Valenti  
 Development Operations Manager..... David Kortez

**Production Staff**

Maram Samaha ..... Production Manager  
 Libby Winchester Schultz ..... Technical Director  
 Jordan Elizabeth Meyer..... Costume Shop Manager  
 Erica Cartledge ..... Resident Wig and Make-up Designer  
 Skylar Delk ..... Head Electrician  
 Kate McSorley ..... Properties Manager  
 Debranne Steidl ..... Orchestra Manager & Production Assistant  
 William Woger..... Head Carpenter  
 Carri Dahl..... Scenic Charge Artist  
 Tamara Jasinski..... Supertitles Prompter  
 Show Run Crew ..... IATSE Local 18

**Costumes**

Jessica Meyer ..... Shop Assistant  
 Deb Kocorowski ..... Cutter/Draper  
 Taylor Godden, Beck Menk,  
 Becky Molyneux..... Stitchers

**Wardrobe Crew/Dressers**

Becky Molyneux..... Wardrobe Supervisor  
 Debra Bokelberg, Maris Elise, Alexa Farrell, Taylor Godden, Marie Merkél, Shanna McLain

**Hair and Make-up**

Cynthia Lopez..... Wig and Make-up Assistant  
 Emily Christoffersen, Margot Lange, Sarah Schmeiser, David Roman



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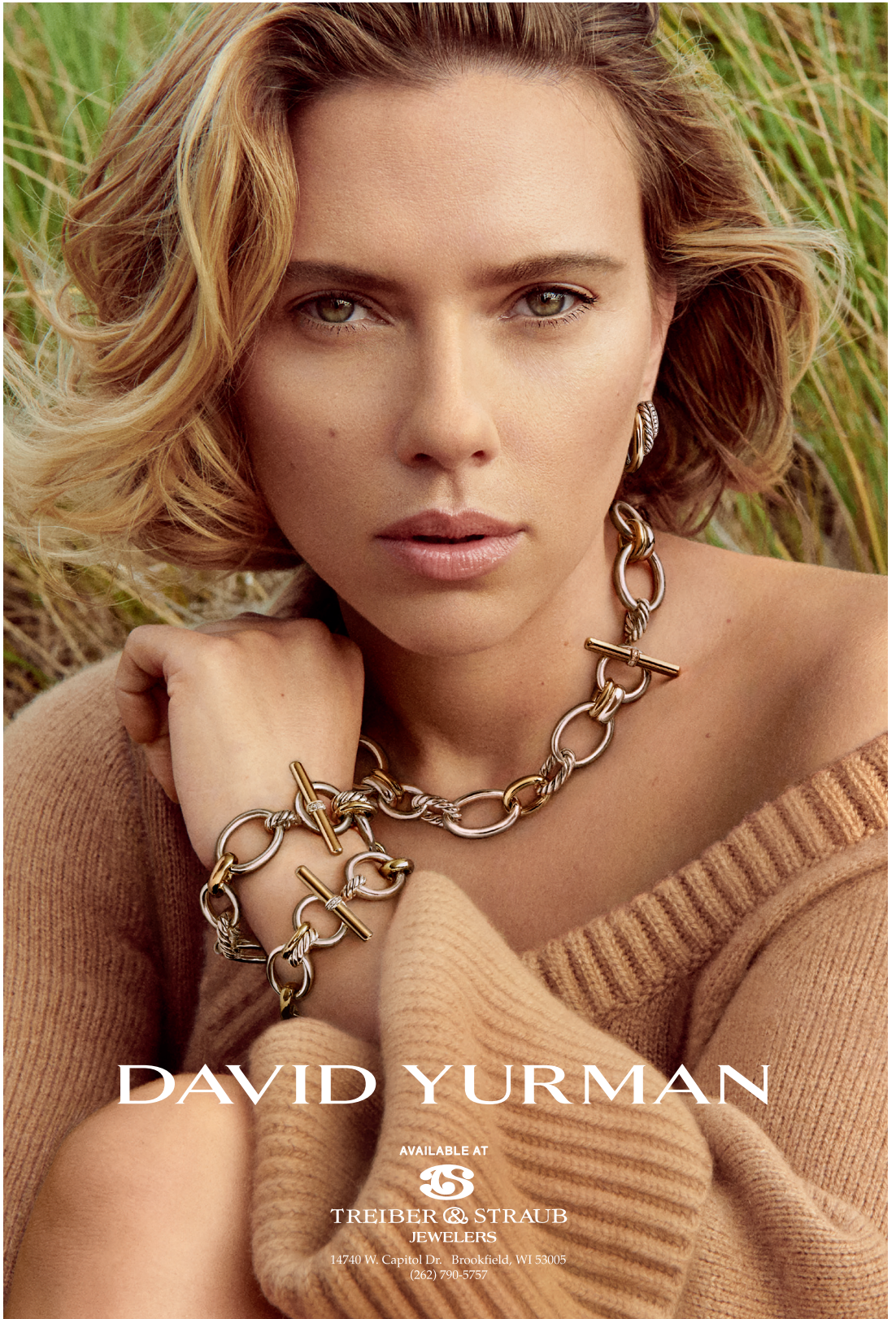
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