



SARASOTA OPERA

Victor DeRenzi, Artistic Director
Richard Russell, General Director



Celebrating 100 years



2026

Winter Opera Festival

WILLIAM E. SCHMIDT OPERA THEATRE

La bohème

Opera in Four Scenes

Music by Giacomo Puccini

Libretto by Giuseppe Giacosa and Luigi Illica

Based on the book *Scènes de la vie de bohème* by Henry Murger

Sung in Italian

First performed by Sarasota Opera on February 11, 1960

2006 production created by Sarasota Opera

Conductor
Stage Director
Scenic Designer
Costume Designer
Lighting Designer
Hair & Makeup Designer
Chorus Master
Youth Opera Chorus Master
Assistant Conductors
Surtile Supplier
Surtile Translator

Victor DeRenzi
Stephanie Sundine
David P. Gordon
Howard Tsvi Kaplan
Ken Yunker
Sue Schaefer
Artyom Pak
Jessé Martins
Stefano Teani, Connor Buckley, Jordan Brooks
Words For Music
Victor DeRenzi

CAST

Rodolfo, *a poet*
Marcello, *a painter*
Schaunard, *a musician*
Colline, *a philosopher*
Benoit, *the landlord*
Alcindoro, *a state councilor*
Mimi
Musetta
Parpignol, *a street vendor*
A Customs Sergeant
A Customs Officer

WooYoung Yoon ++
Filippo Fontana
Riley Findley *
Young Bok Kim
Brian Kontes
Hans Tashjian
Ashley Milanese +
Virginia Mims
Konstantin Jan **
Alejandro Cuellar **
Gabriel Lockheimer Toso **

Sarasota Opera Orchestra
Chorus: Sarasota Opera Apprentice and Studio Artists
Sarasota Youth Opera

*Studio Artist
**Apprentice Artist
+The David and Edith Chaifetz Endowed Artist
++The Jan Schmidt Endowed Artist

FEBRUARY 14, 17, 19, 22 (M), 25, 28 (M), MARCH 3, 6, 11, 20 (M) 26, 28

Production sponsored by Paul and Sharon Steinwachs

SCENE I

In the garret

Marcello, a painter, works on his canvas while Rodolfo, a poet, looks out the window. Rodolfo decides to burn the manuscript of his play to heat the room. The philosopher Colline arrives, soon followed by Schaunard, a musician and the fourth inhabitant of the garret. He has food, money, and wood, but he tells his friends to save the food for another time. Tonight is Christmas Eve, and he insists they dine out. The apartment erupts into turmoil when Benoit, the landlord, demands the rent. He is coaxed by Marcello into talking about his amorous adventures. With mock indignation, the bohemians condemn Benoit's marital infidelity and usher the landlord away without paying him. As his friends are leaving, Rodolfo decides to finish writing an article before joining them. Unable to write, Rodolfo answers a knock at the door. A young woman asks to have her candle relit but faints once inside the garret. After Rodolfo revives her, they are forced to search in the dark for her lost key after both their candles go out. The poet finds the key but convinces the woman he has not and gently touches her hand in the dark. Rodolfo tells her that he is a poet and the woman in turn explains that her name is Mimì, and she makes her living by embroidering. Mimì and Rodolfo profess their love.

INTERMISSION

SCENE II

In the Latin Quarter

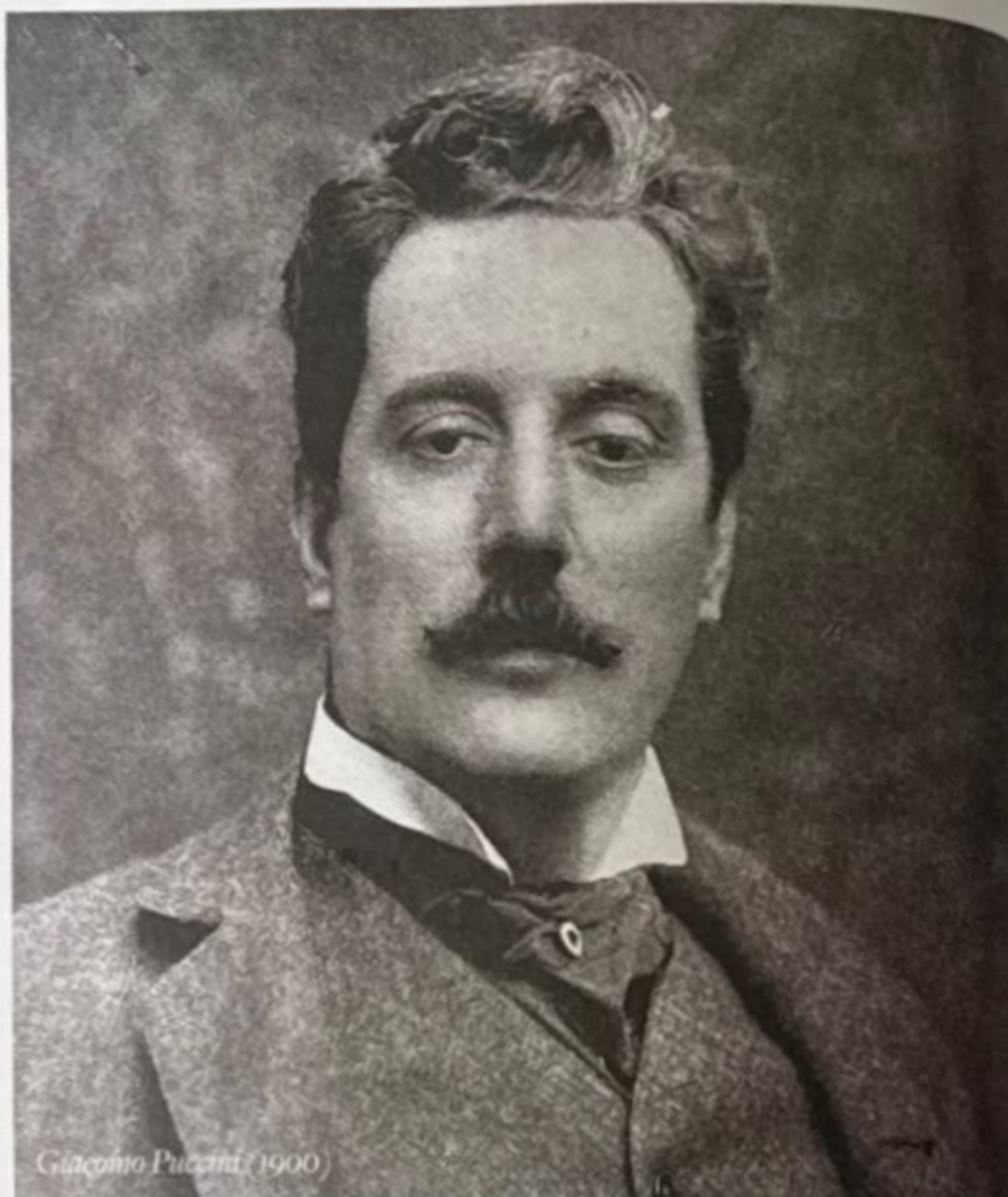
Outside the Café Momus, peddlers sell their merchandise to the revelers. The bohemians converge at the café, and Rodolfo introduces Mimì to his friends. She is readily accepted and tells them about a bonnet Rodolfo has bought her. Marcello is surprised when Musetta, his former lover, arrives with her current paramour, the state councilor, Alcindoro. Musetta's behavior embarrasses Alcindoro as she sings a song to rekindle Marcello's love. Sensing her attempt is successful, Musetta pretends to have a pain in her foot so as to get rid of Alcindoro. Alcindoro runs off to have Musetta's shoe repaired while Marcello and Musetta fall into each other's arms. The waiter presents a bill to the bohemians who cannot pay it. Musetta solves the problem by having the amount added to Alcindoro's bill.

INTERMISSION

SCENE III

Barriere d'Enfer

At the tollgate, guards admit workers and peasants into the city. Mimì, in ill health, finds Marcello at the tavern where Musetta and he are working and Rodolfo has recently arrived. Mimì explains that although she and Rodolfo have been living together, their relationship is not going well. Marcello urges her to leave when he sees that the poet is looking for him. Instead,



Giacomo Puccini (1900)

Mimì hides so she can observe the two. Rodolfo tells Marcello that he wants to separate from Mimì. What frightens him is Mimì's bad health: she is sure to die. Mimì overhears the conversation, and the men discover her as she coughs and weeps. Rodolfo tries to comfort her while Marcello jealously goes to find out why Musetta is laughing loudly in the tavern. Mimì tells Rodolfo that she can no longer live with him. They begin to reminisce as Marcello and Musetta argue. Mimì and Rodolfo decide to remain together until spring as Musetta and Marcello break up.

INTERMISSION

SCENE IV

In the garret

Several months later, both Rodolfo and Marcello desperately miss their former loves. Schaunard and Colline arrive with a meager meal. While much clowning ensues, Musetta bursts through the door and says that Mimì is at the top of the stairs, too weak to enter. Rodolfo brings Mimì in and makes her comfortable. When left alone, Rodolfo and Mimì relive moments from their first meeting. The others return and as they busy themselves, Schaunard notices that Mimì has died. Rodolfo sees his friends' reactions and, rushing to the bedside, discovers Mimì.

World Premiere - Teatro Regio, Turin, February 1, 1896

La bohème, the fourth opera written by the Italian composer Giacomo Puccini (1858-1924), is one of the most performed and best-loved operas in the world today. Its place as a masterpiece in the operatic canon is anchored by the work's many, almost contradictory, elements. These include realistic characters displaying simple emotions, theatrical situations, narrative brevity, and poetic expansiveness. However, the path to creating this fresh and original opera was a tortuous one for Puccini and his librettists. It was only after numerous changes of structure and detail that the work which audiences recognize as Puccini's *La bohème* came into existence.

Following the huge critical and popular success in early 1893 of his third opera, *Manon Lescaut*, Puccini divided his attention by working on two new operas simultaneously. They were *La lupa* (*The She Wolf*), based on Giovanni Verga's short story of a peasant life in Sicily, and *La bohème*. Puccini first gave preference to *La lupa* but finally decided to abandon its composition in July of 1894. The composer incorporated some of the music he had already written for his Sicilian opera into his Parisian one. Even with all of Puccini's attention focused on *La bohème* its creation did not occur swiftly. The composer demanded many changes from the opera's two librettists: Luigi Illica, who was responsible for the scenario, and Giuseppe Giacosa, whose job was to versify the prose text Illica brought into the project. Because of Puccini's unhappiness with Illica's work, Illica complained to the publisher, Giulio Ricordi, that he had rewritten the complete libretto three times and certain sections four times in order to appease Puccini. Both librettists felt abused by the composer and each in turn wanted to resign from his assignment. Ricordi managed to keep Puccini, Illica, and Giacosa (whom he referred to as the 'Holy Trinity') working together.

The librettists' job adapting Henry Murger's book *Scenes de la vie de bohème* was not easy. French author Murger (1822-1861) wrote a work filled with many unrelated episodes and populated with numerous characters based on authentic Parisian figures. Illica and Giacosa had to create a coherent dramatic plot from the unconnected stories. Because of this challenge, the overall shape of the new libretto was much in flux. For example, the famous Act I meeting of Rodolfo and Mimì in the garret was not part of the opera's early stages. Ricordi himself, by suggesting that Musetta should reprise part of her waltz offstage, helped ease some of the problems in creating the current Act III. In the last act, Puccini was completely stymied in writing the music for four Bohemians in which they were to sing a toast to each other. Less than three months before the first performance, the composer simply deleted the section from the opera.

The world premiere of *La bohème* took place at Turin's Teatro Regio on February 1, 1896. It was at this same theater and on this date exactly three years before that *Manon Lescaut* had opened. *La bohème* on the whole was greeted in a friendly fashion by the audience but the majority of the critics were hostile. Expecting to hear an opera in



the romantically tragic vein of *Manon Lescaut*, the critics instead were offered a mixture of lighthearted and sentimental scenes in often conversational style. They condemned the new opera as a step backward and especially castigated Puccini for some of his harmonic touches. In spite of the critics' objections, by the end of its first month *La bohème* was given 24 performances before sold-out houses.

After the first production of the opera, Puccini again demanded new alterations from his librettists. These included the addition of a section in Act II between Parpignol's exit and Musetta's entrance and changes in the end of the same act in order to conclude it more effectively. Puccini even made changes to the melody of Musetta's waltz. Further performances followed in Rome, but the reception at first was lukewarm. However, with a production in Palermo, Sicily in April 1897, the opera achieved an unparalleled success, and its fame spread throughout the Italian peninsula. Performances of *La bohème* are today the backbone of operatic seasons around the globe.

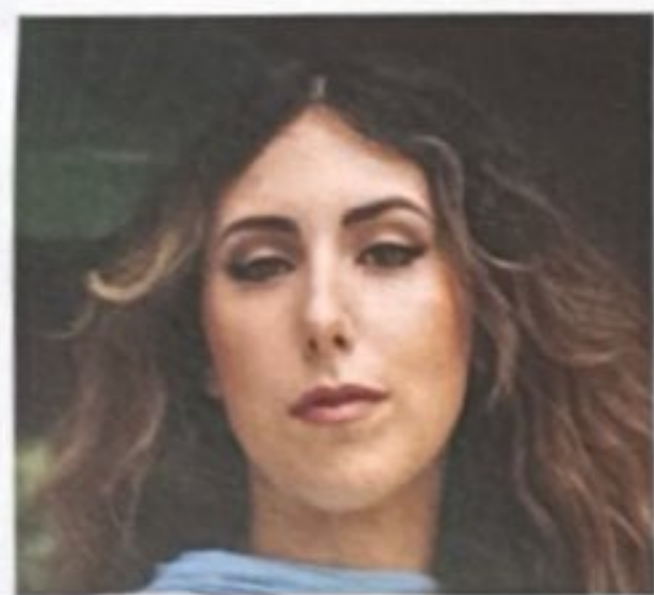
Sarasota Opera has presented many productions of Puccini's works at the Opera House. These include *Madama Butterfly* in 1986, 1994, 2007, 2011, 2017, and 2023; *Il tabarro* in 1987; *Tosca* in 1988, 2004, 2009, 2015, 2022; *La fanciulla del West* in 1993; *La rondine* in 1999 and 2008; *Turandot* in 2013 and 2019; and a production of the composer's complete *Il trittico* (consisting of the three one-act operas *Il tabarro*, *Suor Angelica*, and *Gianni Schicchi*) in 1996. Sarasota Opera last produced *La bohème* in 2020.

Greg Trupiano (1955-2020) joined Sarasota Opera in 1987 and was with the company until his death. He was also the Artistic Director of the Brooklyn-based *The Walt Whitman Project*, founded in 2000.



Emily Adams
Soprano • Atlanta, GA
STUDIO ARTIST
SARASOTA OPERA DEBUT

OTHER ENGAGEMENTS
Elisabetta, Roberto Devereux,
Capitol City Opera
Lucia, Lucia di Lammermoor,
Capitol City Opera
Lucia (cover), Lucia di Lammermoor,
St. Petersburg Opera



Christine Alfano
Soprano • Jacksonville, FL
STUDIO ARTIST
The Ron and Barbara Archbold
Endowed Artist

SARASOTA OPERA
Apprentice Artist (2025)

OTHER ENGAGEMENTS
Kate Pinkerton, Madama Butterfly,
Amelia Island Opera
Gertrud, Hänsel und Gretel,
Amelia Island Opera
Angelica, Suor Angelica,
Bold City Opera



Saverio Alfieri
Music Staff • Milan, Italy
APPRENTICE TO THE MUSIC STAFF
SARASOTA OPERA DEBUT

OTHER ENGAGEMENTS
Assistant Conductor, L'amico Fritz;
Le nozze di Figaro, Teatro Grattaciolo
Assistant Conductor,
National Music Festival, Maryland
Assistant Conductor,
Le nozze di Figaro, Music On Site



Mary Burke Barber
Soprano • Philadelphia, PA
MRS. HAYES
Susannah
STUDIO ARTIST

SARASOTA OPERA
Studio Artist (2024)
Debut: Apprentice Artist (2023)

OTHER ENGAGEMENTS
Mercédès, Carmen, Florida Grand Op
Giannetta, L'elisir d'amore,
Florida Grand Opera
Die Zweite Dame, Die Zauberflöte,
Florida Grand Opera



Hanna Brammer
Soprano • Traverse City, MI
SUSANNAH
Susannah
Sponsored by
Mr. and Mrs. Robert Arthur

SARASOTA OPERA (partial list)
Fiordiligi, Così fan tutte (2025)
Vespina, L'infedeltà delusa (2024)
Carolina, Il matrimonio segreto (2022)
Debut: Apprentice Artist (2016)

OTHER ENGAGEMENTS
Violetta, La traviata, Opera Tampa
Woglinde, Das Rheingold,
Pacific Symphony
Pamina, Die Zauberflöte,
Jacksonville Symphony



Jeremy Brauner
Tenor • Maplewood, NJ
SAM POLK
Susannah

SARASOTA OPERA
Rafaelle, Stiffelio (2025)
Normanno, Lucia di
Lammermoor (2024)
Debut: Apprentice Artist (2013)

OTHER ENGAGEMENTS
Don José, Carmen,
New York City Opera
Fritz Kobus, L'Amico Fritz,
Teatro Grattaciolo
Canio, Pagliacci, Opera Tampa



Jordan Brooks
Music Staff • West Chester, PA
ASSISTANT CONDUCTOR
La bohème; Il trovatore

SARASOTA OPERA DEBUT

OTHER ENGAGEMENTS
Assistant Conductor, The Consul,
Opera at USC
Assistant Conductor, La bohème,
Chicago Summer Opera
Assistant Conductor, Die Zauberflöte,
Berlin Opera Academy



Evan K. Brown
Tenor • Austin, TX
STUDIO ARTIST

SARASOTA OPERA
Benvolio, Roméo et Juliette (2020)
Debut: Apprentice Artist (2020)

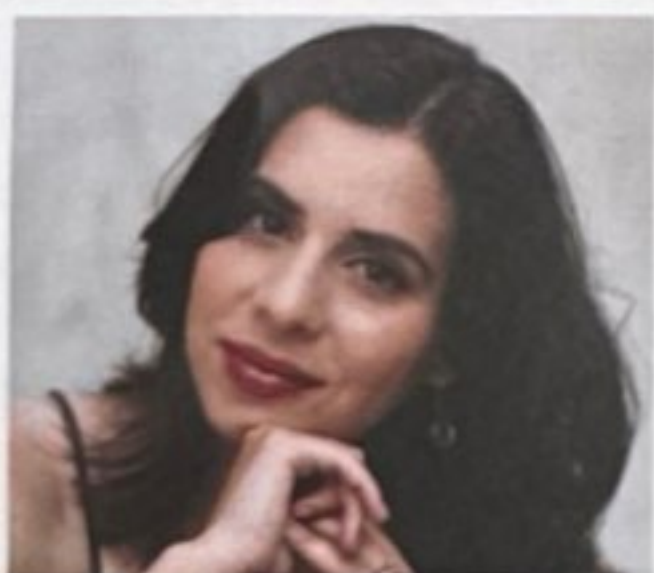
OTHER ENGAGEMENTS
Canio (cover), Pagliacci,
The Glimmerglass Festival
Spoletta/Cavaradossi (cover),
Tosca, Charlottesville Opera
Hermann, Pique Dame,
Butler Opera Center



Anthony Barrese
Conductor • Melrose Park, IL
CONDUCTOR
The Merry Widow

SARASOTA OPERA (partial list)
Conductor, L'infedeltà delusa (2024)
Conductor, Roméo et Juliette (2020)
Conductor, L'italiana in Algeri (2017)
Debut: Assistant to the
Music Staff (2002)

OTHER ENGAGEMENTS
Conductor, The Farolitos of Christmas,
Opera Southwest
Conductor, La bohème, Opera Tampa
Conductor, L'elisir d'amore,
Florida Grand Opera



Gabrielle Barkidjija
Mezzo-soprano • Chicago, IL
INES
Il trovatore
MRS. OTT
Susannah
STUDIO ARTIST

SARASOTA OPERA
Dorotea, Stiffelio (2025)
Debut: Studio Artist (2025)

OTHER ENGAGEMENTS
Meg Page, Falstaff,
Geneva Light Opera
Marcellina, Le nozze di Figaro,
Aspen Opera Theater
Dodo, Breaking the Waves,
Detroit Opera



Patrick Bessenbacher
Tenor • Overland Park, KS
CAMILLE DE ROSILLON
The Merry Widow

SARASOTA OPERA DEBUT

OTHER ENGAGEMENTS
Mechtild, Hildegard,
Beth Morrison Projects/LA Opera
Shepherd, Amahl and
the Night Visitors, Lincoln Center
Theatre/Metropolitan Opera
Acis, Acis and Galatea,
Florentine Opera



Connor Buckley
Music Staff • Hagerstown, MD
ASSISTANT CONDUCTOR
La bohème; Il trovatore

SARASOTA OPERA DEBUT

OTHER ENGAGEMENTS
Repetiteur, Hänsel und Gretel,
Lakes Area Music Festival
Repetiteur, Le nozze di Figaro,
Palm Beach Opera
Repetiteur, Roméo et Juliette,
Palm Beach Opera



Katherine M. Carter
Stage Director • New York, NY
STAGE DIRECTOR
The Merry Widow

SARASOTA OPERA
Thérèse (2023)
Debut: Les pêcheurs
de perles (2022)

OTHER ENGAGEMENTS
Nabucco, Canadian
Opera Company
Dialogues des Carmélites,
Wolf Trap Opera
Revival Director, La bohème,
San Francisco Opera



Nathaniel Catasca
Tenor • Albuquerque, NM
RUIZ
Il trovatore
ELDER HAYES
Susannah
STUDIO ARTIST

SARASOTA OPERA
Le Remendado, Carmen (2024)
Debut: Studio Artist (2024)

OTHER ENGAGEMENTS
Rodolfo (cover), La bohème,
Portland Opera
Bardolfo, Falstaff, Portland Opera
Bill Watson/ Lloyd the Bartender,
The Shining, Portland Opera



Lisa Chavez
Mezzo-soprano • Hayward, CA
AZUCENA
Il trovatore

SARASOTA OPERA (partial list)
Santuzza, Cavalleria rusticana (2025)
Thérèse, Thérèse (2023)
Carmen, Carmen (2018)
Debut: Madame de Croissy,
Dialogues des Carmélites (2017)

OTHER ENGAGEMENTS
Frugola/Principessa/Zita, Il Trittico,
Lithuanian National Opera
and Ballet Vilnius
Isabella, L'italiana in Algeri,
Opera San José
Maggie, Stonewall,
New York City Opera



Martha Collins
Stage Director • Ottawa, Canada
STAGE DIRECTOR
Susannah

SARASOTA OPERA (partial list)
Cavalleria rusticana/Pagliacci (2025)
Carmen (2024)
Ernani (2023)
Attila (2022)
Debut: Apprentice Artists Program
Stage Director (2004)

OTHER ENGAGEMENTS
Matilde, Opera Southwest
L'occasione fa il ladro,
Opera Southwest
Faust, Tri-Cities Opera
Ariadne auf Naxos,
Land of Enchantment Opera



Pierre-Nicolas Colombat

Music Staff • Baltimore, MD
ASSISTANT CONDUCTOR
The Merry Widow; Susannah
SARASOTA OPERA DEBUT

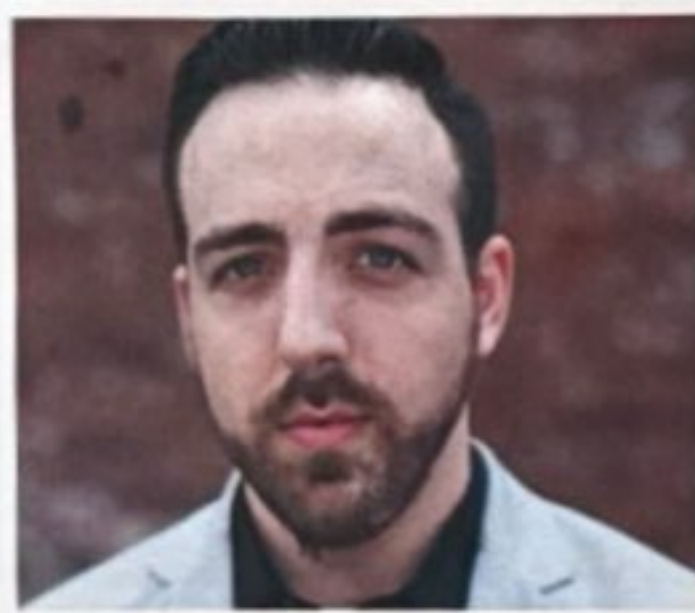
OTHER ENGAGEMENTS
 Répétiteur, *The Cunning Little Vixen*, Theater Basel
 Répétiteur, *La Cenerentola*, Theater Basel
 Répétiteur, *Mignon*, Theater Basel



Drew Comer

Bass • Brownsbug, IN
ELDER OTT
Susannah
STUDIO ARTIST
SARASOTA OPERA DEBUT

OTHER ENGAGEMENTS
 Second Soldier, *Salome*, Orquesta Sinfónica de Minería
 A servant, *La traviata*, Santa Fe Opera
 Antonio (cover), *Le nozze di Figaro*, Santa Fe Opera



Matthew Cossack

Baritone • Brooklyn, NY
STUDIO ARTIST
SARASOTA OPERA DEBUT

OTHER ENGAGEMENTS
 Marcello, *La bohème*, Opera Naples
 Dancaire, *Carmen*, Deutsche Oper Berlin
 Starveling, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Deutsche Oper Berlin



Victor DeRenzi

Conductor • New York, NY
CONDUCTOR
La bohème; Il trovatore
Artistic Director and Principal Conductor since 1982

SARASOTA OPERA (partial list)
Così fan tutte (2025)
Stiffelio (2025)
Cavalleria rusticana/Pagliacci (2025)
Madama Butterfly (2023)
Ermani (2023)
 Debut: *Orphée aux enfers* (1982)

OTHER ENGAGEMENTS
 A Verdi Celebration, Opera de Montreal
La fanciulla del west, Theatre de l'Opera de Nice
Un ballo in maschera, Canary Islands/Spain
 Maestro DeRenzi is a Knight of the Italian Republic



Filippo Fontana

Baritone • Udine, Italy
MARCELLO
La bohème

SARASOTA OPERA (partial list)
Guglielmo, Così fan tutte (2025)
Figaro, Il barbiere di Siviglia (2018, 2025)
Nanni, L'infedeltà delusa (2024)
 Debut: *Lescaut, Manon Lescaut* (2018)

OTHER ENGAGEMENTS
 Dandini, *La cenerentola*, Teatro dell'Opera di Roma
 Taddeo, *L'italiana in Algeri*, Teatro alla Scala, Milan
Figaro, Il barbiere di Siviglia, Teatro Campoamor



Aviva Fortunata

Soprano • Calgary, Canada
LEONORA
Il trovatore

SARASOTA OPERA
Lina, Stiffelio (2025)
Luisa, Luisa Miller (2024)
 Debut: *Elvira, Ermani* (2023)

OTHER ENGAGEMENTS
 Donna Elvira, *Don Giovanni*, Calgary Opera
 Sieglinde, *Die Walküre*, Pacific Opera Victoria
Norma, Norma, Dallas Opera



David Freides

Tenor • Ridgewood, NJ
ELDER GLEATON
Susannah
STUDIO ARTIST
SARASOTA OPERA DEBUT

OTHER ENGAGEMENTS
 Rodolfo, *La bohème*, Regina Opera
 Alfredo, *La traviata*, Regina Opera
 Luigi, *Il tabarro*, Classic Lyric Arts Vocal Academy

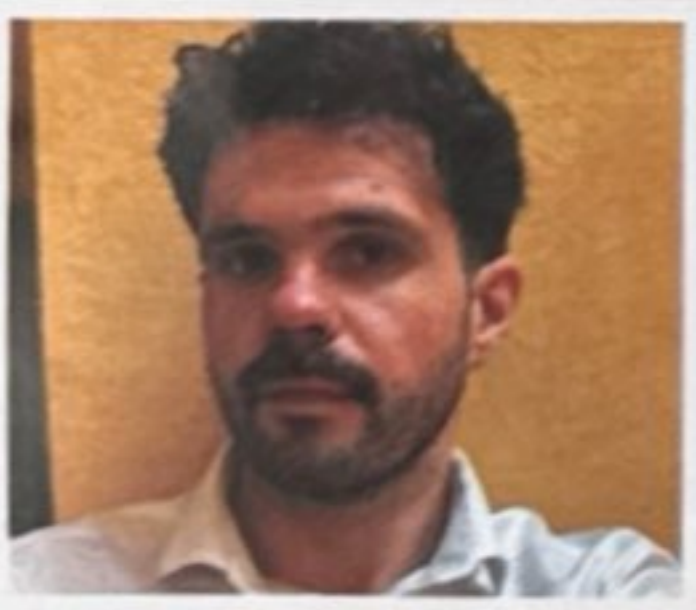


Raquel González

Soprano • Lawrence, KS
HANNA GLAWARI
The Merry Widow

SARASOTA OPERA
 Debut: *Cio-Cio San, Madama Butterfly* (2023)

OTHER ENGAGEMENTS
 Mimi, *La bohème*, Opera Colorado
Cio-Cio-San, Madama Butterfly, Austin Opera, Opera San Antonio
 Elisabetta, *Don Carlo*, Boston Youth Symphony Orchestras



Andrew Downs

Music Staff • Birmingham, AL
ASSISTANT CONDUCTOR
The Merry Widow; Susannah

SARASOTA OPERA
Brundibár (2025)
Carmen; Lucia di Lammermoor (2024)
 Debut: *Assistant Conductor* (2024)

OTHER ENGAGEMENTS
 Conducting Fellow, Indianapolis Symphony Orchestra
The Nutcracker, Carmel Symphony Orchestra
 Assistant Conductor/Coach, Indiana University Opera and Ballet Theater

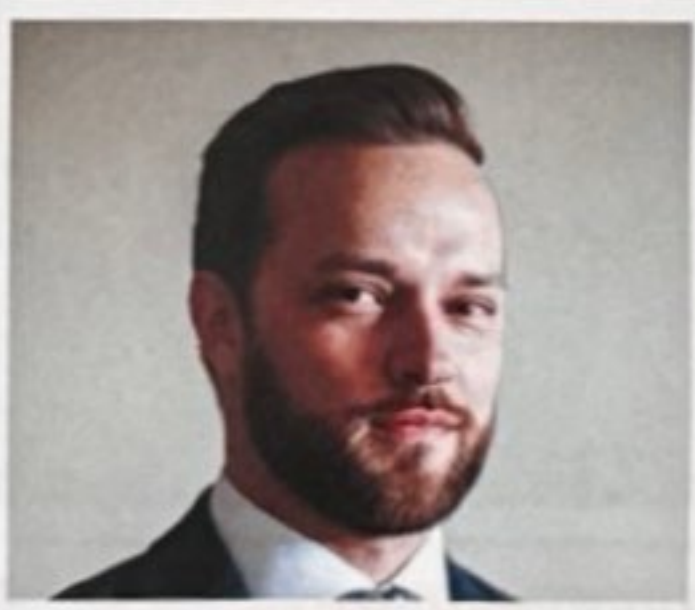


Kyle Dunn

Baritone • Leonia, NJ
RAOUL ST. BRIOCHE
The Merry Widow
STUDIO ARTIST

SARASOTA OPERA
 Studio Artist (2025)
 Debut: *Apprentice Artist* (2024)

OTHER ENGAGEMENTS
Pirate King, The Pirates of Penzance, Light Opera of NJ
Pirate King, The Pirates of Penzance, Opera Theatre of St. Louis
Guglielmo (cover), *Così fan tutte*, Opera Saratoga



Nicholas Fahrenkrug

Baritone • Davenport, IA
STUDIO ARTIST

SARASOTA OPERA
 Debut: *Studio Artist* (2025)

OTHER ENGAGEMENTS
 Philo, *Lysistrata*, *Odyssey Opera*
 Hawkins Fuller, *Fellow Travelers*, Seagle Festival
 Giulio Cesare, *Giulio Cesare*, LSU Opera



Riley Findley

Baritone • Kansas City, MO
SCHAUNARD
La bohème

STUDIO ARTIST
The Valerie and Gabriel Schmergel Endowed Artist

SARASOTA OPERA
 Debut: *Studio Artist* (2025)

OTHER ENGAGEMENTS
Ufficiale, Il barbiere di Siviglia, Lyric Opera of Kansas City
Il conte Almaviva, Le nozze di Figaro, Canto Vocal Program
Gregorio, Roméo et Juliette, Lyric Opera of Kansas City



David P. Gordon

Scenic Designer • Philadelphia, PA
SCENIC DESIGNER
La bohème

SARASOTA OPERA (partial list)
Madama Butterfly, Don Giovanni (2023)
La bohème (2020)
Rigoletto (2019)
Manon Lescaut (2018)
 Debut: *Maskarade* (1995)

OTHER ENGAGEMENTS
The Consul, Seattle Opera
Radio Golf, Arden Theatre Company
 Director of Design & Production, Mason Gross School of the Arts/Rutgers University



Howard Tsvi Kaplan

Costume Designer • Oceanside, NY
RESIDENT COSTUME DESIGNER

SARASOTA OPERA
 Debut: 1998

OTHER ENGAGEMENTS
 Alley Theatre
 Asolo Center
 Florida Grand Opera
 ABC
 PBS
 Ringling Bros. Clown College
 Opera Delaware
 Baltimore Opera
 Kentucky Opera
 Barter Theater



Steven C. Kemp

Scenic Designer • Houston, TX
SCENIC DESIGNER
The Merry Widow

SARASOTA OPERA
Stiffelio (2025)
Luisa Miller (2024)
Ermani (2023)
 Debut: *Tieffland* (2018)

OTHER ENGAGEMENTS
La Cenerentola, Lyric Opera of Kansas City
Lalovavi, Cincinnati Opera
Tosca, The Atlanta Opera



Sara Kennedy

Soprano • Austin, TX
VALENCIENNE
The Merry Widow

SARASOTA OPERA
Lola, Cavalleria rusticana (2025)
 Studio Artist (2025)
 Debut: *Apprentice Artist* (2022)

OTHER ENGAGEMENTS
Bianca, Eine florentinische Tragödie, The Little Opera Theatre of NY
 Pamina, *Die Zauberflöte*, Florida Grand Opera
 Ruth Atkins, *Beyond the Horizon*, Teatro Grattaciolo



Young Bok Kim

Bass • Seoul, South Korea

COLLINE

La bohème

FERRANDO

Il trovatore

SARASOTA OPERA (partial list)

Jorg, *Stiffelio* (2025)
Don Basilio, *Il barbiere di Siviglia* (2025)
Raimondo, *Lucia di Lammermoor* (2024)
Il Commendatore, *Don Giovanni* (2023)
Debut: Sarastro, *Die Zauberflöte* (2004)

OTHER ENGAGEMENTS

Timur, *Turandot*, Opera Colorado
Sparafucile, *Rigoletto*, Opera Delaware
Don Alfonso, *Così fan tutte*,
National Opera of Korea



Brian Kontes

Bass • Ridgway, PA

BENOIT

La bohème

ELDER MCLEAN

Susannah

SARASOTA OPERA

Don Bartolo,
Le nozze di Figaro (2025)
Debut: Sarastro,
Die Zauberflöte (2019)

OTHER ENGAGEMENTS

Commendatore, *Don Giovanni*,
Florentine Opera
Sacristan, *Tosca*, Pittsburgh Opera
Timur, *Turandot*, San Diego Opera



Brian McCann

Music Staff • Freehold, NJ

STUDIO ARTIST PROGRAM

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR

SARASOTA OPERA DEBUT

OTHER ENGAGEMENTS

Young Artist Pianist/Coach,
Merola Opera Program
Conducting Fellow,
Spoleto Festival USA
Music Staff, Opera Naples



Jessé Martins

Music Staff • Sapiranga, Brazil

CONDUCTOR

Susannah

STUDIO ARTIST PROGRAM DIRECTOR

YOUTH OPERA MUSIC DIRECTOR

SARASOTA OPERA (partial list)
Conductor, *Lucia di Lammermoor*
Director of Studio Artists Program/
Assistant Conductor, *Don Giovanni*
Thérèse (2023)
Conductor, *The Little Sweep* (2023),
The Secret World of Og (2022)
Conductor, *La Fille du régiment* (2022)
Debut: Youth Opera Music Director
(2011)

OTHER ENGAGEMENTS

Assistant Music Director,
Opera Factory/New Zealand



Artyom Pak

Music Staff • Tashkent, Uzbekistan

CHORUS MASTER AND

DIRECTOR OF THE APPRENTICE

ARTISTS PROGRAM

SARASOTA OPERA

Debut: Assistant Conductor,
Così fan tutte (2025)

OTHER ENGAGEMENTS

L'enfant et les sortilèges,
The Juilliard School
Dialogues des carmélites,
The Juilliard School
Il barbiere di Siviglia,
Central City Opera



Krista Renée Pape

Soprano • Rockport, TX

MRS. GLEATON

Susannah

STUDIO ARTIST

SARASOTA OPERA DEBUT

OTHER ENGAGEMENTS

Frasquita, *Carmen*,
Lyric Opera of Kansas City
Sandmännchen/Taumännchen,
Hänsel und Gretel,
Wichita Grand Opera
Blonde, *Die Entführung aus*
dem Serail, Festival Napa Valley/
Manetti Shrem Opera



Lindsey Polcyn

Mezzo-soprano • Jackson, OH

MRS. MCLEAN

Susannah

STUDIO ARTIST

Sponsored by Les and

Carol Brualdi

SARASOTA OPERA

Apprentice Artist (2025)
Debut: Apprentice Artist (2024)

OTHER ENGAGEMENTS

Mrs. Nolan/Baba (cover),
The Medium, Delaware Valley
Opera Company
Gertrude, *Roméo et Juliette*,
Quisisana Resort
La Zia Principessa, *Suor Angelica*,
Orchestra Society of Philadelphia



Ricardo José Rivera

Baritone • San Juan, Puerto Rico

COUNT DE LUNA

Il trovatore

SARASOTA OPERA

Stankar, *Stiffelio* (2025)
Miller, *Luisa Miller* (2024)
Debut: Don Carlo, *Ernani* (2023)

OTHER ENGAGEMENTS

Riccardo Forth, *I puritani*,
Dominik, *Arabella*,
The Metropolitan Opera
Macbeth, *Macbeth*, Teatro Nuovo
Conte di Luna, *Il trovatore*,
Opera Colorado



Ashley Milanese

Soprano • New Orleans, LA

MIMI

La bohème

The David and Edith Chaifetz

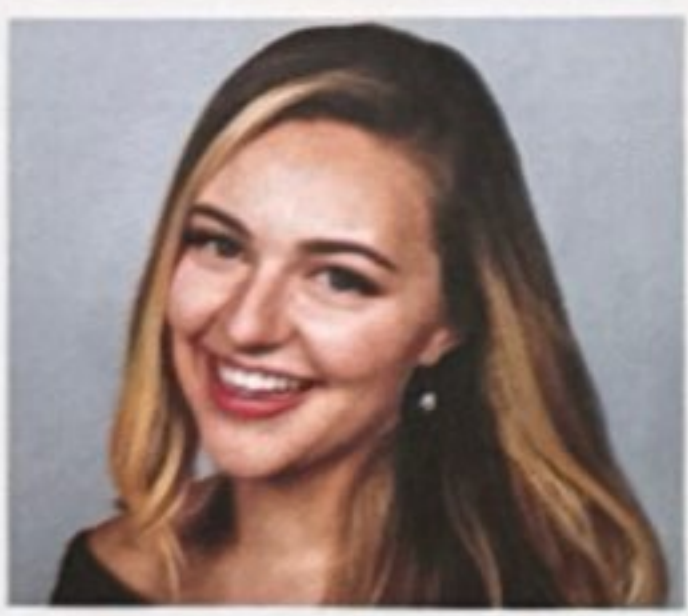
Endowed Artist

SARASOTA OPERA

Nedda, *Pagliacci* (2025)
Debut: Lucia, *Lucia di*
Lammermoor (2024)

OTHER ENGAGEMENTS

Erste Dame, *Die Zauberflöte*,
Opera San Antonio
Serpina, *La serva padrona*,
Pennsylvania Sinfonia Orchestra
Elcia, *Mose in Egitto*,
Opera Southwest



Virginia Mims

Soprano • West Palm Beach, FL

MUSETTA

La bohème

SARASOTA OPERA

Despina, *Così fan tutte* (2025)
Susanna, *Le nozze di Figaro* (2025)
Rowan, *The Little Sweep* (2023)
Debut: Apprentice Artist (2023)

OTHER ENGAGEMENTS

Musetta, *La bohème*,
Aspen Music Festival
Fiordiligi, *Così fan tutte*,
Aspen Music Festival
Mimi, *La bohème*,
Piccola Scala, Syros, Greece



Zeky Nadji

Baritone • Interlochen, MI

STUDIO ARTIST

SARASOTA OPERA

Ufficiale, *Il barbiere di Siviglia* (2025)
Debut: Apprentice Artist (2024)

OTHER ENGAGEMENTS

Officer, *La bohème*,
Bravo! Vail Music Festival
Leporello, *Don Giovanni*,
Prague Summer Nights
Bretigny, *Manon*, Boulder Opera



Marco Nisticò

Stage Director • Naples, Italy

STAGE DIRECTOR

Il trovatore

SARASOTA OPERA (partial list)

Il barbiere di Siviglia (2025)
L'infedeltà delusa (2024)
L'elisir d'amore (2020)
Gaspardo, Rita (2019)
Debut: Francesco Foscari,
I due Foscari (2008)

OTHER ENGAGEMENTS

La traviata, Opera Colorado
Julietta, Bard Music Festival
I Capuleti e i Montecchi,
Teatro Nuovo



Nathan Schafer

Tenor • Denton, TX

VICOMTE CASCADA

The Merry Widow

STUDIO ARTIST

SARASOTA OPERA DEBUT

OTHER ENGAGEMENTS

Bruder, *Baruch's Schweigen*,
Muffled Voices Festival
Alfred, *Die Fledermaus*,
Washington Opera Society
Ruggero, *La rondine*,
Winter Opera of St. Louis



Sue Schaefer

Hair & Makeup Designer •

Minneapolis, MN

RESIDENT HAIR &

MAKEUP DESIGNER

SARASOTA OPERA:

Cavalleria rusticana /
Pagliacci (2025)
Il barbiere di Siviglia (2025)
Le nozze di Figaro (2025)
Stiffelio (2025)
The Hobbit (2024)
Debut: (2014)

OTHER ENGAGEMENTS:

Hair & Makeup Designer
Florida Grand Opera
Hair & Makeup Designer,
Utah Festival Opera
Hair & Makeup Designer,
Hawaii Opera Theatre
Hair & Makeup Designer,
San Diego Opera



Dylan Schang

Tenor • Appleton, WI

LITTLE BAT

Susannah

STUDIO ARTIST

SARASOTA OPERA DEBUT

OTHER ENGAGEMENTS

Candide, *Candide*, LSU Opera
Lt. Cable, *South Pacific*,
MacBeth Productions
Alfred, *Die Fledermaus*, LSU Opera



Patrick Scully

Bass • New York, NY

NJEGUS

The Merry Widow

STUDIO ARTIST

SARASOTA OPERA

Corporal, *La fille du Régiment* (2022)
Debut: Studio Artist (2020)

OTHER ENGAGEMENTS

Zuniga, *Carmen*,
St. Petersburg Opera
L'emperor, *Le Rossignol*,
West Edge Opera
Masetto, *Don Giovanni*,
Teatro Grattacielo



Michael Schweikardt

Scenic Designer • Cranford, NJ
SCENIC DESIGNER
Il trovatore

SARASOTA OPERA (partial list)
Norma (2018)
Fidelio (2016)
Turandot (2013)
Little Nemo in Slumberland (2012)
Vanessa (2012)
The Crucible (2011)
Debut: *Halka* (2008)

OTHER ENGAGEMENTS
The Jonathan Larson Project,
The Orpheum NYC
The Consul, Opera New Jersey
Dear Evan Hansen, The MUNY



Victor Starsky

Tenor • Richmond Hill, NY
MANRICO
Il trovatore

SARASOTA OPERA
Stiffelio, *Stiffelio* (2025)
Tenor Soloist,
The Music of Giuseppe Verdi (2024)
Debut: Don José, *Carmen* (2024)

OTHER ENGAGEMENTS
Enzo Grimaldo, *La Gioconda*,
Pittsburgh Festival Opera
Don José, *Carmen*, Maryland Opera
Mario Cavaradossi, *Tosca*,
Princeton Symphony Orchestra



Stephanie Sundine

Stage Director • Moline, IL
STAGE DIRECTOR
La bohème

SARASOTA OPERA (partial list)
Così fan tutte (2025)
Stiffelio (2025)
Luisa Miller (2024)
Madama Butterfly (2023)
Il matrimonio segreto (2022)
Tosca (2022)
Debut: *Tatiana*, *Eugene Onegin* (1984)

OTHER ENGAGEMENTS
Turandot, Des Moines Metro Opera
La fanciulla del West, Utah Opera
Les Pêcheurs de perles, Madison Opera,
Atlanta Opera, Opera Carolina



Adam Hirama Wells

Baritone • Clemson, SC
BARON ZETA
The Merry Widow
STUDIO ARTIST
SARASOTA OPERA DEBUT

OTHER ENGAGEMENTS
Samuel, *The Pirates of Penzance*,
New York Gilbert and Sullivan Players
Fiorello/Ufficiale, *Il barbiere di Siviglia*,
Annapolis Opera
Marcello, *La bohème*, Eklund Opera



Alexandra Wiebe

Soprano • Pepper Pike, OH
STUDIO ARTIST
SARASOTA OPERA DEBUT

OTHER ENGAGEMENTS
Großmutter & Frau B, *Baruch's*
Schweigen, Muffled Voices Festival
Gutrune, *Götterdämmerung*,
Wagner in Vermont Festival
Matilde, *Matilde*, Opera Southwest



WooYoung Yoon

Tenor • Seoul, South Korea
RODOLFO
La bohème
The Jan Schmidt Endowed Artist
SARASOTA OPERA DEBUT

OTHER ENGAGEMENTS
Tamino, *Die Zauberflöte*,
Il Duca di Mantova, *Rigoletto*,
Opera San José
Rodolfo, *La Bohème*, Opera San José



Jake Stamatis

Baritone • Tunkhannock, PA
COUNT DANILO
The Merry Widow

SARASOTA OPERA
Don Alfonso, *Così fan tutte* (2025)
Il conte Almaviva,
Le nozze di Figaro (2025)
Le Dancaïre, *Carmen*, (2024)
Debut: Resident Artist (2021)

OTHER ENGAGEMENTS
Figaro, *Il barbiere di Siviglia*,
Park City Opera
Papageno, *Die Zauberflöte*,
Opera Mississippi
Pirate King, *The Pirates of Penzance*,
Pacific Opera Project



Hans Tashjian

Bass • New York, NY
ALCINDORO
La bohème

SARASOTA OPERA
Gaudenzio, *Il signor Bruschino* (2021)
Uberto, *La serva padrona* (2021)
Batone, *L'inganno felice* (2021)
Debut: Apprentice Artist/2nd Boyar,
The Golden Cockerel (2015)

OTHER ENGAGEMENTS
Ceprano, *Rigoletto*,
The Metropolitan Opera
Sorceress, *Dido & Aeneas*,
Opera Lafayette
Maometto Secondo,
Maometto Secondo, Teatro Nuovo



Stefano Teani

Music Staff • Lucca, Italy
ASSISTANT CONDUCTOR
La bohème; *Il trovatore*

SARASOTA OPERA
Cavalleria rusticana/Pagliacci (2025)
Stiffelio (2025)
Debut: Assistant conductor (2025)

OTHER ENGAGEMENTS
Carmen, Teatro Savoia
Le nozze di Figaro, Teatro Savoia
Don Giovanni,
Accademia Giuseppe Verdi



Ken Yunker

Lighting Designer • Seattle, WA
RESIDENT LIGHTING DESIGNER

SARASOTA OPERA
Debut: 2007

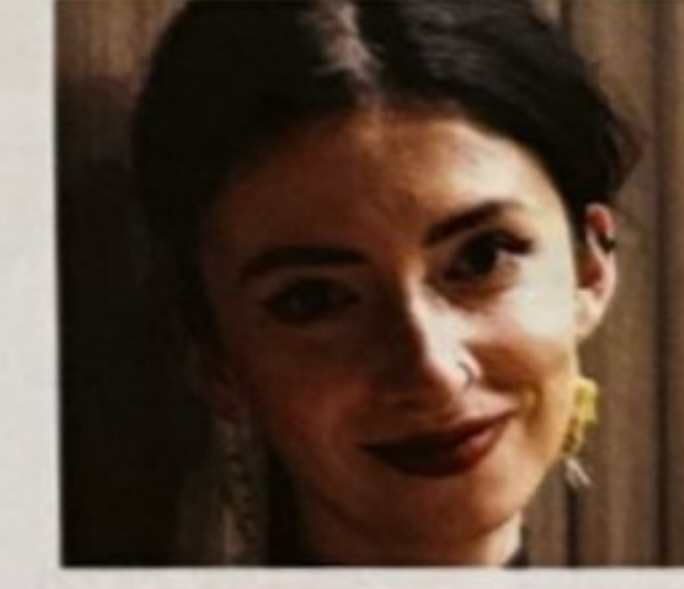
OTHER ENGAGEMENTS
Principal Lighting Designer,
Alliance Theatre Company
(2004-2017)
Resident Lighting Designer,
Atlanta Opera (1993-2015)
Lighting Designer - Americas Brazil,
Florida Grand Opera, Bermuda Arts
Festival, Utah Opera, New Orleans
Opera, Tulsa Opera, Opera Santa
Barbara, Opera New Jersey,
Toledo Opera, San Antonio Opera



Jason Zacher

Bass-baritone • Livingston, NJ
OLIN BLITCH
Susannah
SARASOTA OPERA DEBUT

OTHER ENGAGEMENTS
Colline, *La bohème*, Portland Opera
Uncle, *Elizabeth Cree*,
The Glimmerglass Festival
Snug, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*,
The Atlanta Opera



Hannah Lizza

Stage Director • Chicago, IL
APPRENTICE STAGE DIRECTOR

SARASOTA OPERA
Debut: Apprentice Stage Director
(2025)

OTHER ENGAGEMENTS
Director, *The Tender Land*,
DePaul Opera Theatre
Assistant Director, *Artaserse*,
Haymarket Opera Company
Assistant Director, *Falstaff*,
Chicago Opera Theatre

APPRENTICE ARTISTS



First Row

SAVERIO ALFIERI,
Apprentice to the Music Staff
Milan, Italy

SERAFINA BELLETINI, *Mezzo-Soprano*
Livonia, MI
Sponsored by Mr. and Mrs. Robert Arthur

ALEJANDRO CUELLAR, *Bass*
San Antonio, TX
Sponsored by Dr. Lynne Harrison

ALICIA ESMERALDA BARRY, *Mezzo-Soprano*
Huntingdon Valley, PA
Sponsored by Ruth B. Kreindler

AGNESE GALLENZI, *Soprano*
Urbisaglia, Italy
Sponsored by Elaine Keating

FERNANDO SILVA-GORBEA, *Tenor*
San Juan, Puerto Rico
Sponsored by Dean Scarborough
and Janice Bini

ABBY GUIDO, *Soprano*
Boynton Beach, FL
Sponsored by Flora Garsten

JORDAN HAMMONS, *Tenor*
Tuscaloosa, AL
Sponsored by Forrest S. Crawford

HENRY HORSTMANN, *Baritone*
Lindenhurst, NY
Sponsored by Katherine Benoit
and John Brooks

Second Row

KONSTANTIN JAN, *Tenor*
Prague, Czech Republic
Sponsored by James and Lorna Mack

KEVIN DOUGLAS JASAITIS, *Baritone*
Point Pleasant, NJ
**The Joel D. and Ellen S. Fedder
Endowed Apprentice Artist**

DEIRDRE LAHIFF, *Mezzo-Soprano*
Goshen, NY
Sponsored by Andra and Irwin Press

GABRIEL LOCKHEIMER TOSO, *Bass*
Plymouth, MN
Sponsored by Thomas and Linda Garden

JEREMY LUIS LOPEZ, *Tenor*
Long Island, NY
Sponsored by William C. and Joyce K.
Fletcher

SAMANTHA MCGONIGAL, *Mezzo-Soprano*
Marysville, OH
Sponsored by Hank and Melinda Foster

SPENCER MCINTIRE, *Baritone*
Kansas City, MO
Sponsored by Alan Kesten and
Pamela Johnson

KIRA NEARY, *Soprano*
New York, NY
Sponsored by Anonymous Sponsor

Third Row

KAT NORMAN, *Soprano*
Albuquerque, NM
Sponsored by Kim and Patrick Nettles

ANTHONY PILCHER, *Baritone*
Buffalo, NY
Sponsored by Anonymous Sponsor

HANNAH REICH, *Mezzo-Soprano*
Atlanta, GA
Sponsored by Margaret Renner

UMA SINGH, *Soprano*
Cleveland, OH
**The Joey Frye Endowed
Apprentice Artist**
Sponsored by Judith Sear

SAMANTHA SOSA, *Soprano*
Caracas, Venezuela
**The Lynn and Steve Blackledge
Endowed Apprentice Artist**

SARAH STEMBEL, *Soprano*
New Orleans, LA
Sponsored by Joan Mathews

THOMAS VALENTI, *Tenor*
Boston, MA
Sponsored by Stephania
and James McClennen

MICHAEL VARILLA, *Tenor*
Newtown, PA
Sponsored by Amanda and Dick Smo...

HANNAH ZIZZA, *Stage Director*
Chicago, IL