

# SONGBIRD

The  
Florentine  
Opera

A woman with dark hair and a pink headband with a feather is looking upwards and to the right. She is wearing a black dress with a large, wavy, pink and white patterned shawl draped over her shoulders. The background is a gradient of pink with large, textured fabric shapes in various shades of pink and red.

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# SONGBIRD

## PROGRAM INFORMATION

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- 04 From the General Director & Board President
- 05 Board of Directors
- 08 Credits
- 11 From the Director
- 12 Synopsis
- 13 Program Notes
- 15 Conductor
- 18 Stage Director
- 19 Biographies
- 26 Anello Society
- 27 Commemorative Gifts
- 28 Annual Donors
- 30 Florentine Opera Staff



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

Hello to our wonderful opera friends! Whether it's your first time in our seats or opera has been part of your life for decades, we are so excited to share this wonderful production with you. Offenbach's "Can Can" from his operetta *Orpheus in the Underworld* has been a favorite for generations. His operettas are all full of catchy melodies and fun.

*Songbird* focuses on a singer – the titular Songbird, one traditionally associated with beauty, freedom, and the transcendent power of music. Our captivating jazz singer navigates the complexities of love and desire in a city that thrives on passion and rhythm. The story onstage reflects the eternal challenge each performer faces: serving art or choosing the comfort of a more traditional existence.

When artists take on the guise of fellow performers, they engage in a captivating act of dual portrayal, blurring the lines between reality and artifice. This layered performance-within-a-performance archetype allows for a rich exploration of identity, the transformative power of art, and the intricate interplay between the performer and their audience. These characters navigate the complexities of authenticity, deception, and the inherent theatricality of their craft. This archetype not only showcases the versatility of the performers, but also invites reflection on the nature of art, the masks we wear, and the profound impact of storytelling within the realm of performance. Does *Songbird* choose Piquillo (her beau), or her creative life? Are they one and the same?

The plot of Offenbach's original *La Perichole* revolves around themes of love, temptation, and societal expectations. The modernized story transplants us to the vibrant and culturally rich backdrop of 1920s New Orleans. The Roaring Twenties was a period of cultural and artistic dynamism, marked by jazz, flapper fashion, and the rise of speakeasies. These characters find themselves entangled in the lively social scene of artists and politics, where jazz music pulses through the air and the spirit of rebellion against Prohibition is palpable. Themes of love, temptation, and societal expectations carry just as much meaning in the 1920s and the 2020s as they did in Offenbach's time. *Songbird* in this setting infuses the production with energy, glamour, and intrigue befitting the Jazz Age.

Every production that graces our stage is a gift from our donors, who invest in this art with passion, generosity, and a desire to share something beautiful with our whole community. Our profound thanks to Claire and Glen Hackmann, who have sponsored our spring show for 13 years. We could never have brought this playful jewel to the stage without their support.



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The Florentine Opera  
23/24 Season

# SONGBIRD

Adaptation created by Eric Sean Fogel, James Lowe,  
and Kelley Rourke

Musical Arrangement and Orchestration by James Lowe

English lyrics and book by Kelley Rourke

Based on "La Périchole" by Jacques Offenbach, Henri Meilhac and  
Ludovic Halévy

Commissioned by The Glimmerglass Festival, 2021

Performed in English and French

February 16 & 18, 2024

Wilson Theater at Vogel Hall, Marcus Performing Arts Center

1 hour, 30 minutes, no intermission

CONDUCTOR: Robert Mollicone

STAGE DIRECTOR: Jill Anna Ponasik

## CAST

Songbird ..... Lindsay Metzger^  
Piquillo ..... Aaron Short^  
Don Andrès ..... Zachary Crowle^  
Panatellas ..... Tom Leighton^  
Don Pedro/A Mobster ..... Brandan Sanchez+  
Guadalena ..... Laura McCauley+  
Berginella ..... Alisa Jordheim^  
Mastrilla ..... Tzytle Steinman+  
Celeste - Panatella's Mistress ..... Colleen Brooks^  
A Priest ..... Jerek Fernández+  
The Guide ..... Vince Vogelsang\*

\* Florentine Opera Debut + Baumgartner Studio Artist ^ Baumgartner Studio Artist Alumni

## CREATIVE TEAM

Lisa Schlenker\*\* ..... Co-Scenic Designer  
Madelyn Yee ..... Co-Scenic Designer  
Shima Orans ..... Costume Designer  
Aaron Lichamer ..... Lighting Designer  
Erica Cartledge ..... Hair, Wigs and Make-up Designer  
Dyan Yoder ..... Supertitles Design and Translation  
Tzytle Steinman+ ..... Movement Coordinator

\*\*Member of USA 829

This production is costumed with assistance from Milwaukee Repertory Theater and special thanks to Skylight Music Theatre.

## MUSICAL PREPARATION

Lara Bolton, Principal Coach & Pianist

Fumiyasu Kawase+, Studio Artist Pianist

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Kyle Samuelson ..... Trombone/Bass Trombone  
Fumiyasu Kawase ..... Piano  
Steve Lewandowski ..... Banjo  
John Babbitt ..... Bass  
Dave Bayles ..... Drum Set  
Ryan Kahlbaugh ..... Percussion  
Colin O'Day ..... Percussion  
Bobby Everson ..... Timpani

**Please ensure all cellular phones, pagers, and watch alarms are turned off prior to the performance. No photography or videography is allowed by audience members during the performance.**

### LATE SEATING:

Guests arriving late will be seated at a suitable pause in the performance. Please be advised that guests arriving after the performance has begun may miss substantial portions of the performance.

### ACCESSIBILITY:

Wheelchair seating is available on the main and upper floors in Uihlein Hall and on the main floor in Wilson Theater at Vogel Hall. Telecommunication devices for the hearing impaired (TDD) are available at the front of the house at the Marcus Center for the Performing Arts.



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## From the Director JILL ANNA PONASIK

I've noticed that the grayer the skies, and the colder the temperatures, the more eager I am to dive into *Songbird*. This particular winter has provided me with weeks of opportunity in that regard. *Songbird*'s warmth radiates, and the script and score are drenched with color, humor, liveliness and...jazz. For this adaptation of Jacques Offenbach's comic opera *La Périchole* transports us to New Orleans in the 1920s. Here, we enter a prohibition era cafe, teeming with mad-cap misfits. The music sizzles, the ferns drape, and misunderstandings abound as they prepare for an unforgettable Mardi Gras.

As I prepared for this production, I became particularly smitten with the work of Louis Andrews Fischer (1901-1974), a bookseller, carnival costume and float designer, and artist who lived and worked in the French Quarter. Known for her unusual dress, and top-notch parties, Louis was a maverick. It's through her gorgeous watercolor renderings that I began to understand what a buzzing hive of creative activity the Vieux Carré was. In this place, at this time, there were artists everywhere, writing, painting, sculpting, publishing, acting, dancing, discussing, dreaming, transforming and revitalizing this corner of the world.

Thanks to *Songbird*, we're invited to one of their parties. It's going to be one to remember. Laissez les bons temps rouler!



Loius Andrews Fischer's watercolor "Hummingbird" was designed for the 1973 Proteus Parade. (Loius was a central character in Mardi Gras life for over 50 years)

## The Florentine Opera

APRIL 19, 2024  
AT 7:30PM  
APRIL 21, 2024  
AT 2:30PM

Uihlein Hall,  
Marcus Performing Arts Center  
florentineopera.org

# LA BOHÈME



### The Setting: The Café des Muses, New Orleans, the early 1920s

It is Mardi Gras and the speakeasy owned by Don Pedro is busier than usual. The café is run by three cousins, known as the “Three Muses”. Songbird and Piquillo, a couple of struggling artists, perform a vaudeville number. As they count their paltry tips, Piquillo tells Songbird he is getting weary of life on the road and would like to settle down. Songbird argues that they can’t afford a wedding when they barely make enough to feed themselves. Piquillo goes off to find food.

Don Andrés, the Mayor, has disguised himself – poorly – in order to check up on the citizenry. He puts the moves on Songbird, offering to install her in his mansion. When Don Pedro and Panatellas tell Don Andrés it would not look right for him to employ a single woman, Don Andrés charges them with finding Songbird a sham husband. Meanwhile, the famished Songbird agrees to join Don Andrés for dinner, leaving a letter to explain the situation to Piquillo.

Piquillo, upon reading Songbird’s letter, is distraught and begins drinking heavily. Don Pedro and Panatellas seize the opportunity: the Mayor is looking for a sham husband for his would-be mistress, and Piquillo looks desperate enough to agree to anything. When Songbird returns from her dinner with Don Andrés, she is extremely tipsy. Moments before the arranged wedding, Songbird recognizes Piquillo. She is now wearing a costume for Mardi Gras, so he fails to recognize her. Encouraged by an increasingly drunk crowd, the two say their vows.

As Piquillo begins to sober up, he is horrified to learn he has been tricked into marrying, not realizing that his “bride” was none other than Songbird. A couple of bystanders mock him. Don Pedro and Panatellas, trying to salvage the situation, attempt to commiserate with him.

The Mayor, now in full regalia as “Rex, King of Carnival” approaches for the Presentation of the Bride. When Piquillo recognizes Songbird, he is furious that she agreed to take part in a sham wedding. She, in turn, is furious at his lack of trust. He responds by publicly insulting her. With that, Don Andrés and the crowd turn on Piquillo and lock him up.

As Piquillo languishes, a Guide appears to him, suggesting freedom is possible but not supplying any tangible help. Panatellas and Don Pedro arrive and tell Piquillo they admire his courage. When Don Pedro and Panatellas exit, Piquillo laments his position. He is near despair when Songbird visits and convinces him of her love. Don Andrés interrupts their reconciliation, but he is so overwhelmed by jealousy that the couple manage to turn the tables and lock him up. After a furious chase sequence, Songbird and Piquillo perform a last number for the customers about the power of love. Don Andrés agrees to bless the marriage of Songbird and Piquillo – for real this time.

### SONGBIRD At a Glance

Songbird is an adaptation of French operetta *La Périchole*, with Jacques Offenbach’s original melodies reimagined in the style of 1920s New Orleans jazz. The original *Périchole* character was based on the true story of Micaela Villegas, an 18th-century Peruvian street singer who caught the eye of a wealthy Spanish military officer. Songbird moves this love story between two struggling artists to Mardi Gras in Prohibition-era New Orleans.

Jacques Offenbach is remembered for his nearly 100 operettas in the mid-19th century. Some of his other most recognizable works include *Les contes d’Hoffmann* (The Tales of Hoffmann), *Orphée aux enfers* (Orpheus in the Underworld), *La belle Hélène*, *La Vie parisienne*, and *La Grande-Duchesse de Gérolstein* (The Grand Duchess of Gerolstein).

Opera for many years was considered a uniquely European form of storytelling. In fact, the first American opera is attributed to William Henry Fry in 1841 – about 150 years after the creation of the opera artform! American opera did not really take off until the 1930s and ‘40s with the works of composers such as George Gershwin and Gian Carlo Menotti. Many 21st-century American opera creatives have focused their attentions to telling uniquely American stories. Songbird continues the movement of setting opera in our own backyard.

Kelley Rourke’s libretto follows the main themes of *La Périchole*: love, corruption, politics, satire, debauchery, and excess. The libretto is bilingual French-English by design to best serve Offenbach’s melodies and heighten the comedy for American audiences. Writing a libretto for existing music is a particularly difficult challenge. The syntax of the new English lyrics must match the melodic phrasing that was written for a French libretto. For example, on a high note you would want to highlight a special word like “love” (in French, “amour”). The sentence structure of the new lyrics might have to be rearranged so you don’t accidentally highlight unimportant words like “the,” “a” or “of”. Songbird librettist Kelley Rourke cleverly uses English-French cognates and borrowed words as seams to connect the English and French sections of the new libretto.

Orchestrator James Lowe ties Offenbach’s Latin-inspired boleros and seguidillas with African-American jazz, ragtime, vaudeville, and blues styles. The first commercial recording of jazz is credited to the New-Orleans-style band The Original Dixieland Jass Band and their recording of “Livery Stable Blues” in 1917. The 1920s is generally considered the height of New Orleans-style jazz when New Orleans jazz legends like King Oliver, Jelly Roll Morton, and Louis Armstrong were performing all over the country.

**Did you know?** Songbird was commissioned (meaning, to pay a composer to create a composition for a specific event) by the Glimmerglass Festival in 2021. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, Songbird was premiered at an *al fresco* stage branded as “Glimmerglass on the Grass”. Songbird is “covid art” but rather than exploring themes of isolation, Songbird celebrates the ability to be in the same room, enjoying music and laughing together.

**Listen for:** Songbird and Piquillo’s first duet “Vaudeville-Seguidilla” weaves joyfully between musical styles of Andalusia and New Orleans. The performers also shift singing techniques from operatic to jazz and everything in between. Other memorable melodies include Don Andrés’ kooky “Incognito” aria, Songbird’s conflicted “Letter” aria and Piquillo’s melancholic “My Songbird” aria.

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## ROBERT MOLLICONE, Conductor



Sought after for his 'finely-calibrated leadership,' 'deft support,' and 'ebullient performance[s]'; conductor, recitalist and coach Robert Mollicone has become a familiar face in opera houses across the US and Europe. As a member of San Francisco Opera's music staff, he has acted in capacities including assistant to former Music Director Nicola Luisotti, assistant conductor, prompter and coach/pianist, and has worked on 40+ productions spanning the breadth of the repertoire, including *Rusalka*, *Der Ring des Nibelungen*, *Les Troyens*, and *Don Carlo*. Equally committed to the development of the American operatic canon, he has helped bring several new operas by composers such as Jake Heggie, Tobias Picker, and John Adams to life.

In the San Francisco Bay Area, he has conducted performances with Opera San Jose (*Where Angels Fear to Tread*, *Silent Night*), San Francisco Opera (*Opera in the Park* 2014/2019, *Christmas with Sol3 Mio*), and West Edge Opera (*Elizabeth Cree*, *L'arbore di Diana*), where he "presided [...] with a fine feeling for pacing and detail". He made his house debut at Festival Opera conducting *Carmen* in August 2023.

Other recent debuts include Austin Opera (*Ariadne auf Naxos*) and Florentine Opera (*L'enfant et les sortilèges*), where he will return to conduct *Songbird/La Périchole* in 2024. Additionally he served as cover conductor for the European premiere of John Adams' *Girls of the Golden West* at De Nationale Opera in Amsterdam and for *La Damnation de Faust* at St. Louis Symphony under Stéphane Denève.

Mollicone also regularly shares the recital stage with artists including Denyce Graves, Joyce El-Khoury, Brian Jagde, Ailyn Pérez, Nicholas Phan, and Jamie Barton, with whom he was lauded for 'miracles of sensitive expression'. He made his Carnegie Hall debut alongside soprano Melody Moore in May 2016. He is also engaged to train emerging artists as faculty member of the Adler Fellowship and Boston Wagner Institute, and is a regular guest coach at San Francisco Conservatory of Music.

He is a graduate of San Francisco Opera's Adler Fellowship, as well as of the Cafritz Young Artist Program at Washington National Opera. He holds a M. Mus. from Boston University, where he studied with Shiela Kibbe.



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This is Jill Anna's 15th season as artistic director of Milwaukee Opera Theatre, and *Songbird* is her 4th production with The Florentine. At both organizations, she loves watching artists and audiences connect through opera.

Select past productions with the Florentine include: *Così: REMIX*, *Cinderella*, *L'Enfant et les Sortilèges*, and *Little Mahagonny*. With the Skylight Music Theater: *Ernest Shackleton Loves Me*, *Oklahoma!*, *Ruddigore*, *Carmina Burana* and *Tales of Hoffmann*. With Milwaukee Opera Theater: *Impossible Operas*, *Rusalka*, *Preludes*, *Clemenza di Tito*, *Zie Magic Flute*, *Doc Danger* and the

*Danger Squad*, *Svadba*, *A Chorus Line*, *Handel's Bestiary*, *The Mikado*, *Victory for Victoria*, *1776*, *Song from the Uproar*, *Lucy*, *Fortuna the Time Bender vs. The Schoolgirls of Doom*, and *Guns N' Rosenkavalier*.

An eager creator, always excited to collaborate, Jill Anna has helped develop work with The Decameron Opera Coalition, Skylight Music Theatre, Milwaukee Chamber Theatre, Present Music, Renaissance Theaterworks, The Florentine Opera, In Tandem, First Stage Children's Theatre, Quasimondo Physical Theatre, Danceworks Performance Company, Wild Space Dance Company, The Alchemist, Theater RED, Angry Young Men Ltd, Carroll University, The University of Wisconsin Milwaukee, and The University of Wisconsin Parkside. Despite the 337 miles that separate them, she feels especially connected to Nautilus Music-Theater in St Paul, MN.

Jill Anna's work has been presented in parks and parking lots, ballrooms and breweries, churches, classrooms, gardens, lobbies, recital halls, bookstores, masonic temples, and sometimes, like right now, in a theater.

As we celebrate 16 years of programming, we are thrilled to welcome back so many alumni from our Baumgartner Studio Artist program! The Donald and Donna Baumgartner Studio Artist professional residency is designed to ensure the future of opera by providing emerging artists from around the country with comprehensive training, advanced instruction, and professional performance opportunities.

ARTISTIC



**Lindsay Metzger, *Songbird*** | 2014/15 Baumgartner Studio Artist

Noted for her "easy stage manner and refined voice" (Chicago Classical Review), Mezzo-Soprano Lindsay Metzger recently made her company debut with Austin Opera as Cherubino in *Le nozze di Figaro*, and covered Nicklausse in *Les Contes d'Hoffmann* during the 2022-2023 season. Ms. Metzger returned to Dallas Opera to sing *Sandman* and cover Hansel in *Hansel and Gretel*, joined the roster of the Metropolitan Opera to cover Flora in *La Traviata*, and sang Stéphanie in *Roméo et Juliette* with Opera San Antonio.

A graduate of the Lyric Opera of Chicago's Ryan Opera Center, she has been seen on the stage of the Lyric in the roles of Mercédès in *Carmen*, Garcias in *Don Quichotte*, Alisa in *Lucia di Lammermoor*, as well as supporting roles in *Der Rosenkavalier* and *Le nozze di Figaro*. Credits include Giannetta in *L'elisir d'amore* with Florentine Opera, Cherubino in *Le nozze di Figaro* with La Musica Lirica in Novafeltria, Italy, and a debut with Chicago's Haymarket Opera Company as Daphné in Charpentier's *La descente d'Orphée aux enfers*. A frequent and sought after performer with Chicago's leading arts organizations, Ms. Metzger debuted with the Grant Park Music Festival as the soprano soloist in Fauré's *Requiem* and with the Civic Orchestra of Chicago in a program featuring the works of Berlioz and Verdi. Ms. Metzger was awarded the 2017 Luminarts Fellowship in Women's Classical Voice, the Best Vocal Artist prize from the American Opera Society, the Paul Collins Fellowship from University of Wisconsin-Madison, and the Virginia Cooper Meier Award from the Musician's Club of Women.

Ms. Metzger was an Apprentice Artist with Des Moines Metro Opera, a Studio Artist with Florentine Opera, and an Opera Fellow at the Aspen Music Festival. She holds a BM from DePaul University and an MM from University of Wisconsin-Madison.



**Aaron Short, *Piquillo*** | 2014/15 Baumgartner Studio Artist

Tenor Aaron Short is thrilled to return to Florentine Opera for the 2023-2024 season. As a former Studio Artist, he appeared in several Florentine productions, most notably performing the role of the Steurmann in *Der fliegende Holländer*. In addition to the Florentine, Mr. Short also fulfilled a young artist residency with Portland Opera, where he made his critically acclaimed role debut as Lensky in *Eugene Onegin*. He has also apprenticed with Santa Fe Opera and fulfilled residencies with Chautauqua Opera, Wolf Trap Opera, Lyric Opera Studio Weimar, and Opera of the Ozarks.

Mr. Short recently made his debut with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra as the Servant to Amelia in *Un ballo in maschera* under the baton of Maestro Riccardo Muti. Other recent credits include Edgardo in *Lucia di Lammermoor* with both the Knoxville Opera and the Festival Lyrique en Mer, First Armored Man in *Die Zauberflöte* with the Dallas Opera, Dr. Osborn in the Chicago premiere of *Rhoda and the Fossil Hunt* with the Lyric Opera of Chicago's Lyric Unlimited, Alméric in *Iolanta* and Flask in *Moby Dick* with Chicago Opera Theater, Sam in *Susannah* with Nashville Opera, and President Theodore Roosevelt in *Two Yosemite*s, a new opera composed by Justin Ralls, with Opera Theater Oregon.

Mr. Short is an alumnus of Wichita State University and Manhattan School of Music, where his performance in the role of Jimmy Mahoney in Kurt Weill's *Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny* was hailed by the New York Times as "simultaneously subtle and shattering." In 2020, Mr. Short began pursuing a Doctorate of Musical Arts degree at Northwestern University, where he performed the roles of Fabian in the Chicago premiere of Jake Heggie's *If I Were You* and Rodolfo in *La Bohème*. He currently resides in Chicago with his wife Clarissa and dog Shakira.





**Zachary Crowle, *Don Andres*** | 2021/22 & 22/23 Baumgartner Studio Artist

Zachary Crowle is a baritone based out of Brooklyn, New York. In two seasons as a Baumgartner Studio Artist with the Florentine Opera, Zach was seen as Guglielmo in *Così fan tutte: REMIX*, Gregorio in *Roméo et Juliette*, Fiorello and the Officer in *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, Le Baron du Pictordu in Viardot's *Cendrillon*, The Black Cat and The Grandfather Clock in Ravel's *L'enfant et les sortilèges*, Vidal Hernando in *Luisa Fernanda*, and Marullo in *Rigoletto*. Some of his favorite roles include Count Almaviva in *Le nozze di Figaro*, Guildenstern in the world premiere of Herschel Garfein's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*, Der Tod in Ulmann's *Der Kaiser von Atlantis*, and Leporello in *Don Giovanni*.

Zach received his Masters Degree and Specialist Degree from the University of Michigan, studying with Stephen Lusmann, and his Bachelors from the New England Conservatory of Music, studying with Karen Holvik.



**Tom Leighton, *Panatellas*** | 2015/16 & 16/17 Baumgartner Studio Artist, 2017 Summer Concert Residency

Existing comfortably outside the box, Tom Leighton is a passionate and versatile musical artist with experience spanning multiple genres and mediums. As an operatic tenor he has appeared with Madison Opera, Florentine Opera, Nashville Opera, and as a soloist with the Madison Symphony and Milwaukee Symphony.

As an entertainer on the Jersey Shore, Tom has delighted audiences with his unique interpretations of popular songs from the last six decades in resort destinations like Cape May, Wildwood, Stone Harbor, and Atlantic

City. As a voice over artist Tom can be heard over iHeart Radio airwaves in song parodies, sketches, and commercials produced by Premiere Networks. Always looking for ways to share music with others, Tom has been a dedicated music educator for over a decade. Once a public school vocal and general music teacher in New York State, he is now dedicated to private vocal instruction.

Tom holds a BM from the Eastman School of Music and an MM from the University of Wisconsin-Madison.



**Brandon Sanchez, *Don Pedro*** | 2023/24 Baumgartner Studio Artist

Baritone Brandon Sanchez has quickly built a dynamic and visible career, having performed some of the most beloved operas, oratorios, and art song cycles popular with today's audiences. Roles include Schaubard (*La Bohème*), Belcore (*L'elisir d'amore*), Sergeant of Police and Samuel (*The Pirates of Penzance*), and Celebrant in Bernstein's *Mass*. Brandon has had the pleasure of singing with Symphony Silicon Valley, Peninsula Cantare, the Lafayette Master Chorale (IN) and internationally with the Ireland Limerick Sinfonia and the Cairo Festival Symphony. Brandon holds a Master of Music in Voice Performance and a Performance Diploma in Solo Voice Performance from Indiana University's Jacobs School of Music.

Born and raised in the Bay Area, he holds a Bachelor of Music in Vocal Performance from San José State University. He is a recipient of Mu Phi Epsilon Foundation's Liana K. Sandin Voice Scholarship. Brandon has been a young artist with Cedar Rapids Opera and the Mary Ragland Emerging Artists of Nashville Opera, and is currently a Baumgartner Studio Artist with the Florentine Opera.



**Laura McCauley, *Guadalena*** | 2022/23 & 23/24 Baumgartner Studio Artist

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*. This 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 Guadalena 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*.



**Alisa Jordheim, *Berginella*** | 2012/13 Baumgartner Studio Artist

Lauded by the San Francisco Chronicle as "vocally resplendent" and possessing "impeccable coloratura," in the 2023/24 season soprano Alisa Jordheim returns to the Pacific Symphony for her role debut as Musetta in *La bohème*, and returns to Florentine Opera for Berginella of Offenbach's *Songbird*. Last season, she returned to the role of Gilda in *Rigoletto* with both the Pacific Symphony and Amarillo Opera, and made her Thailand Philharmonic Orchestra debut singing Mahler's Symphony No. 4. Ms. Jordheim sang her first performances of Susanna in *Le nozze di Figaro* in her debut with Virginia Opera, returned to San Diego Opera as Despina in *Così fan tutte*, and returned to Central City Opera for Adele in *Die Fledermaus*

and Gilda in *Rigoletto*. Ms. Jordheim made her company and role debut as Gilda in *Rigoletto* with San Diego Opera, Mozart's *Exsultate Jubilate* with Milwaukee Symphony, and Mozart's *Mass in C minor* with the Bel Canto Chorus. She also recently joined Palm Beach Opera for Cunegonde in *Candide*, made her Paris Opera debut as 1st Knappe in *Parsifal*, and returned to Florentine Opera for both Venus in *Venus and Adonis* and Belinda in *Dido and Aeneas*.

She holds both a Master of Music and Bachelor of Music from the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music, where her roles included Zerlina in *Don Giovanni*, Pamina in *Die Zauberflöte*, and Echo in *Ariadne auf Naxos* in addition to singing Mozart's *Mass in C minor*, with previous studies at Lawrence University. She is a two-time winner of the Wisconsin district of the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions, 2015 winner of the Bel Canto Regional Artists Competition, and the second place winner of the Auditions Plus Classical Singer Vocal Competition. She is also the recipient of the Edith Newfield Scholarship in the Musicians Club of Women Scholarship Competition.



**Tzytle Steinman, *Mastrilla*** | 2022/23 & 23/24 Baumgartner Studio Artist

Tzytle Steinman, once described as, “Wickedly funny and talented” by The Fargo Forum, is a mezzo-soprano originally from San Diego, CA. She has performed with multiple companies across the United States including Ohio Light Opera, Fargo-Moorhead Opera, San Diego Opera, Utah Festival Opera, Sarasota Opera, and Florentine Opera. This season, as a second year Baumgartner Studio Artist with the Florentine Opera, she will be seen as *Enfant* in *Lenfant et les sortilèges* and *Mastrilla* in *Songbird*.

Her other roles include *Buttercup* in *HMS Pinafore*, *Venus* in *Orpheus in the Underworld*, *Rosina* in the *Barber of Seville* (Tour), *Dorabella* in *Così fan tutte*, *Dinah* in *Trouble in Tahiti*, *Tisbe* in *La Cenerentola*, *Prince Orlofsky* in *Die Fledermaus*, *Stephano* in *Roméo et Juliette*, and *Mercedes* in *Carmen*. Tzytle is a recipient of the Farwell Trust Award from the Musicians Club of Women in Chicago and three Encouragement Awards from the Metropolitan Opera National Council auditions. She received her MM in Voice and Opera from Northwestern University and her BM from Boston Conservatory. She also has a large background in dance, musical theater, and choreography. Her choreography has been seen in many productions including *Carmen* (Opera NEO) and *La Cenerentola* (Fargo-Moorhead Opera).

In 2021, she was a contestant on the Price is Right. When she isn't singing, Tzytle loves to knit, bake, hike and take her rescue dog, Golde, to her favorite dog beach. Check her out on tiktok and Instagram @Tzytle



**Colleen Brooks, *Celeste*** | 2008/09 Baumgartner Studio Artist

“Brooks communicates beautifully in her singing” (Milwaukee Journal Sentinel online) and delivers “outstanding musical authenticity” (San Francisco Classical Voice). Colleen Brooks, mezzo-soprano, has performed in North America, Europe and Asia and enjoys performing locally with Florentine Opera, Milwaukee Opera Theatre and Skylight Music Theatre.

She was a Studio Artist with the Florentine Opera for their 2008-09 season where she performed the roles of *Kate Pinkerton* (*Madama Butterfly*) and *Third Lady* (*The Magic Flute*) and was most recently heard there as *Mariana* in *Luisa Fernanda*.

As of March 2023, additional roles performed include *Ježibaba* (*Rusalka*), *Sorceress* (*Dido and Aeneas*), *Huntsman* (*Venus and Adonis*), *Dora Marx* (*The Snow Dragon*, world premiere), *Wagner's Mezzos* (*The Skylight Ring*, world premiere), *Isabelle Eberhardt* (*Song from the Uproar*), *Queen Chandra Devi* (*The Silent Prince*, European tour), *Azucena* (*Il Trovatore*), *Rosina* (*Il barbiere di Siviglia*), *Donna Elvira* (*Don Giovanni*), *Hansel* (*Hansel and Gretel*), *Garcias* (*Don Quichotte*), *Piramo* (*Piramo e Tisbe*), and *Mrs. Webb* (*Our Town*, original workshop).

Colleen has had the privilege of coaching with current American composers such as William Bolcom, Jake Heggie, Thomas Pasatieri, Ned Rorem and Somtow Sucharitkul and performed with Mr. Heggie at the Grandin Music Festival in Cincinnati in 2006. She was a Wisconsin District Winner in the Metropolitan Opera Competition in 2009 and a participant in San Francisco Opera's Merola Opera Program in the summer of 2010.

Colleen completed her DMA in vocal performance at the College-Conservatory of Music (CCM) in Cincinnati, OH. She holds a master's degree in vocal performance from Indiana University as well as bachelor's degrees in both vocal performance and biochemistry from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Colleen has been a member of the voice faculty at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee since 2013.



**Jerek Fernández, *A Priest*** | 2023/24 Baumgartner Studio Artist & 2023 Summer Studio Ensemble

Jerek Fernández is a tenor hailing from San Juan, Puerto Rico. Fernández is currently the Baumgartner Studio Artist resident tenor at The Florentine Opera for the 2023-2024 season, where he will perform the roles of the *Teapot*, the *Little Old Man*, and the *Frog* in *Lenfant et les sortilèges*, the role of *Clergy* in *Offenbach's Songbird*, and understudy the roles of *Nemorino* in *L'elisir d'amore* and *Rodolfo* in *La Bohème*. Most recently, Jerek was the tenor for The Florentine Opera's Summer Studio Ensemble, where he performed scenes as *Don Ottavio* (*Don Giovanni*) and *Basilio* (*Le nozze di Figaro*).

After his studies at The Conservatory of Music of Puerto Rico, Jerek became an Apprentice Artist at Sarasota Opera for their 2023 winter season, where he covered the role of *Un officier* in *Thérèse* and performed scenes as *Count Almaviva* (*Il barbiere di Siviglia*) and *Nemorino* (*L'elisir d'amore*).

Fernández debuted as *Kaspar* in *Menotti's Amahl and the Night Visitors* in 2019, the same year that he made his soloist debut with the Puerto Rico Symphony Orchestra. An active member of the Lyrical Chorale of Puerto Rico, Fernández has participated in multiple productions including *Carmen*, *La Bohème*, and *Los Gavilanes*. In 2022, Fernández received an Honorable Mention at the Young Patronesses of the Opera Vocal Competition, and was a Summer Feedback Winner at Classical Singer Magazine.



**Vince Vogelsang, *The Guide***

Vince Vogelsang is currently Executive General Manager at Wantable Cafe. He was previously Director of Live Events at Majic Productions and Senior Director of Operations and General Director at the Sharon Lynne Wilson Center for the Arts. These performances mark Mr. Vogelsang's debut with the Florentine.



## PRODUCTION

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

Erica Cartledge is the Florentine Opera's Resident Wig + Makeup Designer. Her recent designs include - *Elixir of Love* (Florentine Opera), the Milwaukee Ballet's new production of the *Nutcracker*, *Barber of Seville* (Florentine Opera), *Così: REMIX* (Florentine Opera), *Hunchback of Notre Dame* (Milwaukee Ballet), *Peter Pan* (Milwaukee Ballet), *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 *Songbird* (Florentine Opera)

and *La 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 design in Florentine Opera productions since 2006.

**Aaron Lichamer, Lighting Designer**

Aaron is a Chicago based lighting designer. He has worked extensively in the Midwest, most recently as the lighting supervisor for Chicago Opera Theaters' *Book of Mountains & Seas*. He is glad to be back in Wisconsin. Recent designs include *Another Sunrise/For A Look or A Touch*, *The Cook Off* (Chicago Opera Theater), *Southern Gothic* (Windy City Playhouse); *Country Sunshine*, *Unforgettable: John-Mark McGaha Sings Nat King Cole*, *Dad's Season Tickets*, and *PianoMen* (Milwaukee Rep). He holds a BFA in Lighting Design from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. lichamerdesign.com

**Shima Orans, Costume Designer**

Shima Orans is delighted to be back at Florentine Opera working with Jill Anna Ponasik and many friends, old and new. Past Florentine designs were *Hansel & Gretel* and *The Studio Showcase*, featuring *Little Mahagonny*. She has designed for Skylight Music Theatre, Northern Sky Theatre, Milwaukee Chamber Theatre, Winterdances, M & I Bank Holiday Display, Opera Saratoga, Syracuse Opera, Sterling Renaissance Festival, Oswego Opera, Pittsburgh Playhouse, Apple Hill Playhouse, Acadia Repertory Theatre, and Albuquerque Civic Light Opera. She holds an MFA in Costume Design from Carnegie Mellon University and has taught at Point Park University and the State University of New York

at Oswego.

**Lisa Schlenker, Co-Scenic Designer**

Ms. Schlenker is grateful for this warm *Songbird* design collaboration with Jill Anna Ponasik and the Florentine Opera family. 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 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: *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); *The Mystery of Irma Vep* (Third Avenue Playworks); *Elixir of Love* (Florentine Opera); *Mousetrap* (Next Act Theatre); *A Moon for the Misbegotten* (Milwaukee Chamber Theatre). Upcoming design projects: *What the Constitution Means to Me* (Forward Theatre), *Hells Belgians*, *Girls on Sand*, *Fisherman's Daughters*, and *Reality Trip* (Northern Sky Theater).

**Dyan Yoder, Supertitles Designer**

Dyan Yoder, Supertitle Designer, has been translating and designing supertitles for the Florentine Opera Company and other companies across North America since 2004.

A former Company Manager and Stage Manager for the Florentine Opera, she is currently Partner and Show Director of Captus Creative, a technical event production company, where she is sought after for corporate, opera, and ballet show calling and stage management and is a voiceover artist for live events, podcasts, broadcasts, and recordings. She has worked with various talents, from world leaders, presidents, and dignitaries to musicians covering multiple genres. During the COVID-19

pandemic, she and her team expanded their company and resources by creating a studio that produced virtual, hybrid, and safe productions. Out of these productions, this led to them winning the 2022 Michigan EMMY® for Outstanding Achievement Historical/Cultural.

Originally from Brookfield, WI, Dyan majored in Music and minored in Communications at Carroll University. She recently obtained certificates from Safe Sets International, Johns Hopkins University, and Cornell University.



# 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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 William Woger..... Head Carpenter  
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 Tamara Jasinski..... Supertitles Prompter  
 Show Run Crew ..... IATSE Local 18

**Costumes**

Jessica Meyer ..... Shop Assistant  
 Taylor Godden, Beck Menk, Becky Molyneux, Daniel Rusch, Cyprus White..... Stitchers

**Wardrobe Crew/Dressers**

Becky Molyneux..... Wardrobe Supervisor  
 Dana Brzezinski..... Wardrobe Assistant  
 Debra Bokelberg, Taylor Godden, Shanna McLain, Marie Merkél

**Hair and Make-up**

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





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"Craig Husar exceeded  
my expectations"

-Christian G.

"World class service  
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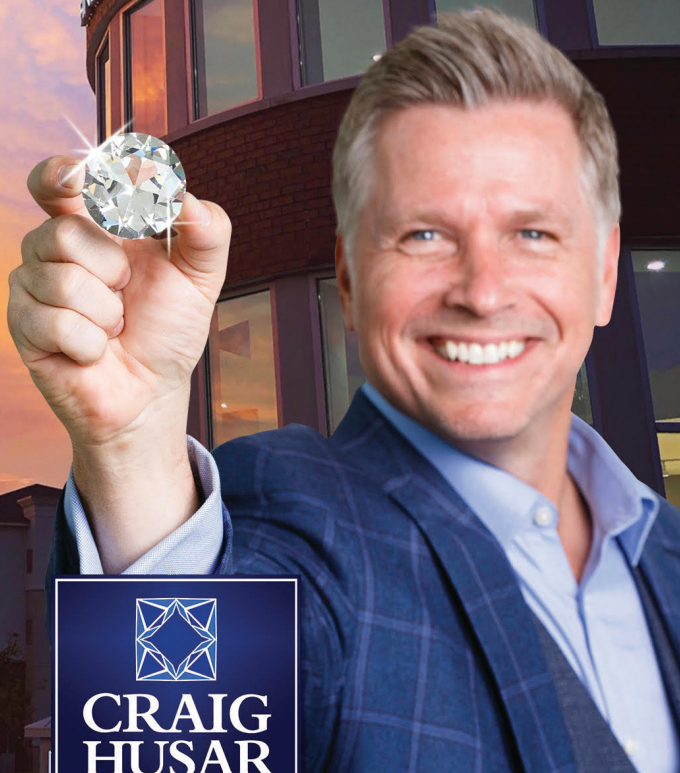
-Emmanuel M.

"Extraordinary  
attention to detail"

-Mason B.



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