

# PUCCINI LA BOHÈME



2023-2024 SEASON | APR 5 - 13

**Oh!** Opera in the heights

**Oh!** Opera in the heights

Donizetti

# Lucia di Lammermoor

October 4-13

Portman

# The Little Prince

December 7-15

Kaminsky  
**Lucidity**

February 21-23

Rossini

# L'italiana in Algeri

April 4-13



2024-2025 Season subscriptions are now available for sale. Take advantage of early bird pricing now through August 1, 2024. For more information scan this barcode or call our Box Office (713) 861-5303.

SCAN ME

## A LETTER FROM OUR MAESTRO

**Oh!** Opera in the heights

Dear friends,

Welcome to our production of Puccini's *La Bohème*, which closes our 2023-24 season that also included *Hansel and Gretel* and *The Light in the Piazza*. With this season repertoire, we have explored the power of family to protect and guide us through the unknown. With *Hansel and Gretel*, it is the unbreakable bond between siblings and the prayers taught by their parents that protected them through peril. With *Piazza*, it is a mother's love for her daughter that enables both to overcome past traumas. With *La Bohème* it is the power of found family that helps these Bohemians through poverty and heartbreak.

For Opera in the Heights, our family is our supporters and our artists, who together have formed this community of opera lovers that made this company into what it is. OH! is now in its 27th year of presenting powerful and intimate operatic experiences here in Lambert Hall that attracts some of the most exciting emerging opera professionals in the country. Our story, too, is about the power of family that helps us endure. We thank you for being part of our story - for your financial support that makes it all possible, for volunteering your time and talents, and for spreading the word and bringing friends to our performances.

We are proud to announce our 2024-25 season will feature Gaetano Donizetti's stirring masterpiece *Lucia di Lammermoor*, Rachel Portman's *The Little Prince* based on the iconic French children's book, a co-world premiere of Laura Kaminsky's *Lucidity*, and Giacchino Rossini's dazzling powerhouse *L'italiana in Algeri* - all stories about, or created by, intrepid women. We hope you will subscribe and join us for another spectacular year of unforgettable opera.

Thank you for being part of the OH! family.

Eiki Isomura  
Artistic and General Director

# PUCCINI LA BOHÈME

An opera in four acts  
Music by Giacomo Puccini  
Libretto by Luigi Illica and Giuseppe Giacosa  
Reduced orchestration by Bryan Higgins  
April 5, 7, 12, 13  
Sung in Italian with English surtitles

## SEASON UNDERWRITERS

The Brown Foundation | Paul Marsden

## SEASON SPONSORS

Texas Commission on the Arts | The Cullen Trust for the Performing Arts | McCollum Foundation

## PRODUCTION SPONSORS

Members of the Maestro's Circle

---

Dr. Eiki Isomura, *Music Director & Conductor*  
Nicole Kenley-Miller, *Stage Director*

---

## CAST

*Rodolfo* Brian Vu, tenor  
*Mimi* Ashley Milanese, soprano  
*Musetta* Caitlin Aloia, soprano  
*Marcello* Kellen Schrimper, baritone  
*Schaunard* Adam Richardson, baritone  
*Colline* Griffen Hogan Tracy, bass  
*Benoit/Alcindoro* Zack Scott Frank, baritone  
*Parpignol* Cody Ryan Arthur, tenor  
*Sergente* J.P. Williams, baritone  
*Doganieri* Micah Zimmerman, baritone  
*Un Ragazzo* Pepper Estes, treble  
*Mimi cover* Siwei Zhang, soprano  
*Musetta cover* Erin McDaniels, soprano

## CHORUS

Errin Hatter, Erin McDaniels, Siwei Zhang, Julie Allison, Sashai French, Kaci Timmons, Patricia Bernstein, Cody Arthur,  
Emerson Chew, Shekinah Anderson, Gonzalo André, J.P. Williams, David Bain, Micah Zimmerman, Martin Wolff

## CHILDREN'S CHORUS

Giselle Jacobs, Sarah Van Landingham, Grace Gamel, Amelia Cardona, Maxwell Magallon, Catalina Artabe,  
Pepper Estes, Victoria Auyanet, Marialaura Guerrero, Jesus Guerrero, Ellen Reed

## PRODUCTION TEAM

**Scenic & Props Designer:** Jodi Bobrovsky  
**Lighting Designer/Technical Director:** Edgar Guajardo  
**Costume Designers:** Shaun Heath, Mary Webber  
**Hair/Makeup Designer:** Makaela Shade-Alexander  
**Scenic Painter:** Mary McNeely  
**Production Stage Manager:** Rebecca Skupin Marcontell  
**Assistant Stage Manager:** Thomas Hardey  
**Pianists:** Andrew Schneider, Catherine Schaefer, Patrick Harvey

**Chorus Master:** Gregory McDaniel  
**Assistant Conductor:** Luca Antonucci  
**Children's Chorus Master:** Monica Isomura  
**Child Wrangler:** Rachel Ramirez  
**Surtitles prepared by:** Nicole Kenley-Miller  
**Surtitles operated by:** Mike Leone and Keith Chapman  
**Graphic Illustrations:** Padron & Co.  
**Program Design:** Daniel B. Taylor

## ORCHESTRA

### FLUTE

Wendy Isaac Bergin

### OBOE/ENGLISH HORN

Katherine Hart

Emily Moscoso

### CLARINET I

Maiko Sasaki

### CLARINET II

Julian Hernandez

Justin Best

### BASSOON

James Roberson

### HORN I

Chris Shelburne

Emily Nagel March

### HORN II

Deb Rathke

### TRUMPET

Matthew Dickson

### PERCUSSION/ TIMPANI

Andrew Keller

### HARP

Emily Klein

Mayetta Im

### VIOLIN I

Dominika Dancewicz

Johnny Chang

Jane Kimmes

Christine Elston

### VIOLIN II

McKenna Jordan

Jolene Armstrong

### VIOLA

David Bynog

Katie Carrington

### CELLO

Scott Card

Patrick Moore

Miriam Salinas

### BASS

Stephen Martin

## STAFF

Eiki Isomura, *Artistic & Interim General Director*  
Coral Longoria, *Operations Manager*

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Elise Bungo, *Chair* | Wilson Darby, *Treasurer* | George Bishop | Donald Clarke | Francisco J Izaguirre | Paul Marsden  
Mark Johansson | Lawrence Gettleman | Andria R. Balogh, *Rice Board Fellow* | Rosina Chevalier, *Guild Representative*

## SPECIAL THANKS

The OH! Guild, who provide our concessions, ushering services, and so much more.  
If you are interested in volunteering for Opera in the Heights, please contact [guild@operaintheheights.org](mailto:guild@operaintheheights.org)

To our artist homestay hosts - Regina and Bert Mellinger, Martha and Jerry Gallagher, Martin and Marilyn Wolff. It is only with the extraordinary hospitality of our homestay hosts that we are able to bring singers, directors, and designers from around the country to the OH! Stage.

If you might be interested in hosting an artist for a future production, please contact Eiki Isomura at [eiki@operaintheheights.org](mailto:eiki@operaintheheights.org).

Stages Theatre for their generous loan of properties, and Corey Nance and Melina Bobrovsky for prop assistance.  
Deluxe Theater where our set platforms were built.

University of Houston Moores School of Music for costume support.

Parents of the OH! Children's Chorus for supervising, chaperoning, and supporting this undertaking.

The entire performance will last approximately 2 hours and 45 minutes with one 20-minute intermission between Acts II and III.  
A brief pause will occur between Act III and IV.





## DR. EIKI ISOMURA

Artistic Director/Director of Production

Cullen Conducting Chair

Japanese-American conductor Eiki Isomura is artistic director and principal conductor of Opera in the Heights (OH) in Houston, where he has led over a hundred performances of over twenty-five operas, drawing consistent praise for elevating the company's performance standard. He has recently guest conducted at Opera Philadelphia, Opera Santa Barbara, MUSIQA, and Temple University. His upcoming engagements include Opera Orlando, Harrower Workshop at Georgia State University, and Houston Grand Opera Community and Learning. He previously served on the music staff as conductor and pianist with HGOco and Opera in the Ozarks. A devoted advocate for new music, Isomura has co-produced and music directed several world premieres with OH through partnerships with MUSIQA, the American Center for New Works Development, and the Decameron Opera Coalition. Eiki serves on the Artistic Services Council of Opera America. Prior to his appointment at OH, Eiki served as director of orchestral activities at Lone Star College-Montgomery and remains a passionate educator. Eiki holds a doctorate in orchestral conducting from the University of Michigan and was a conducting fellow at the National Arts Centre in Ottawa. He resides in Houston with his spouse and most trusted collaborator, mezzo-soprano Monica Isomura, and their two children.



This production is proudly sponsored by



GEORGE AND MARY JOSEPHINE HAMMAN FOUNDATION



THE CAROL FRANC BUCK FOUNDATION



## NICOLE KENLEY-MILLER

Stage Director

Nicole Kenley-Miller is known for her colorful and embodied productions of opera and music theatre, both on stage and film. Until her recent appointment to the faculty of The University of Oklahoma as Opera Director, she directed opera and musical theatre in Houston for over two decades with The University of Houston, Houston Gilbert & Sullivan Society, and Sugar Land Opera. Nicole is the founder of Intersection Arts, an organization which explores the convergence of art forms to speak to social and cultural issues of our day. Her original show *The Women Have Something to Say* premiered off-Broadway in New York and in excerpts on the Kennedy Center's livestream series. She is excited to return to Opera in Heights after her debut here in 2019 as director of *Amahl and the Night Visitors*.

## NOTE FROM THE STAGE DIRECTOR

What is it about *La Bohème* that keeps us coming back? Many would say it's the music - the sheer density of some of the most beloved arias and duets in the operatic repertoire. Puccini was a master of dramatic timing in his composition, and his collaboration with librettists Luigi Illica and Giuseppe Giacosa resulted in perhaps the most emotionally impactful and moving work of his career.

The music is indeed divine. But for me, it's the characters. There is something about this ragamuffin group of artistic friends who share everything. They love and fight with passion. They laugh, cry, die - and they do it all together. In our day of increasing isolation and division, this lively artist band reminds us of the importance of relationship and community in weathering the trials of life that come against us. In the end, the most moving story to me is not necessarily the one of romantic love, but of the power of friendship and shared humanity to remind us that we are not alone.

We have chosen a slightly different setting in this production, moving the action to the time of the late 1920s in Paris. The artistic community was perhaps no more dynamic in Paris than at this time around and shortly after Puccini's death, and it provided an interesting landscape to imagine the characters trying to make it in this artistically explosive era.

I'm so glad to be back at Opera in the Heights after having directed *Amahl and the Night Visitors* here in 2019. This company is so special, because it embodies exactly what *Bohème* is about - a group of artists supporting each other on their journey to understand themselves through the art they make. We hope you will see onstage what we have all experienced offstage.

Nicole Kenley-Miller  
Stage Director

## SYNOPSIS

---

### ACT I

Paris, in the 1920s. In their garret, starving artists Marcello, a painter, and Rodolfo, a poet, try to keep warm on Christmas Eve by feeding the stove with pages from Rodolfo's latest drama. They are soon joined by their roommates—Colline, a philosopher, and Schaunard, a musician, who brings food, fuel, and funds he has collected from an eccentric nobleman ("La banca di Francia"). While they celebrate their unexpected fortune, the landlord, Benoit, comes to collect the rent. After getting him drunk, the friends urge Benoit to tell of his flirtations, then throw him out feigning outrage at his infidelity to his wife. As the others depart to revel at Café Momus, Rodolfo remains behind to finish an article, promising to join them later. He is visited by Mimì, a neighbor, whose candle has gone out. As she enters the room, she suddenly faints and drops her key. Rodolfo wakes her up, offers some wine, and relights her candle. Mimì realizes that she lost her key, and as the two search for it, both candles go out. Rodolfo finds the key and keeps it to prolong their encounter. In the moonlight, he takes Mimì's hand and tells her about his dreams ("Che gelida manina"). She recounts her life alone in a lofty garret, embroidering flowers and waiting for the spring ("Sì, mi chiamano Mimì"). Rodolfo's friends call from outside, telling him to join them. He responds that he is not alone and will be along shortly. Happy to have found each other, ("O soave fanciulla") Mimì and Rodolfo leave, arm in arm, for the café.

### ACT II

Amid the shouts of street hawkers near Café Momus, Rodolfo buys Mimì a pink bonnet and introduces her to his friends. They all sit down and order supper. The toy vendor Parpignol passes by, swarmed by children. Marcello's ex-lover, Musetta, makes a boisterous entrance on the arm of the wealthy Alcindoro. The ensuing tumult reaches its peak when, trying to gain Marcello's attention, she loudly sings the praises of her own popularity ("Quando m'en vo"). Sending Alcindoro away to buy her a new pair of shoes, Musetta finally falls into Marcello's arms. A parade of soldiers march by the café, and as the bohemians fall in behind, the returning Alcindoro is left with the check.

### ACT III

At dawn at a toll-gate on the edge of Paris, a customs official admits farm women to the city. Guests are heard drinking and singing within a tavern. Mimì arrives, searching for the place where Marcello and Musetta now live. When the painter appears, she tells him of her distress over Rodolfo's incessant jealousy. She says she believes it is best that they part. As Rodolfo emerges from the tavern, Mimì hides nearby. Rodolfo tells Marcello that he wants to separate from Mimì, blaming her flirtatiousness. Pressed for the real reason, he breaks down, saying that her illness can only grow worse in the poverty they share. Overcome with emotion, Mimì comes forward to say goodbye to her lover ("Donde lieta uscì"). Marcello runs back into the tavern upon hearing Musetta's laughter. While Mimì and Rodolfo recall past happiness, Marcello returns with Musetta, quarreling about her flirting with a customer

## SYNOPSIS

---

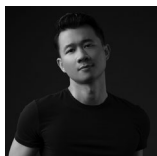
("Dunque è proprio finita"). They hurl insults at each other and part, but Mimì and Rodolfo decide to remain together until springtime.

### ACT IV

Months later in the garret, Rodolfo and Marcello, now separated from their girlfriends, reflect on their loneliness ("O Mimì tu più non torni"). Colline and Schaunard bring a meager meal. To lighten their spirits, the four stage a dance, which turns into a mock duel. At the height of the hilarity, Musetta bursts in with news that Mimì is outside, too weak to come upstairs. As Rodolfo runs to her aid, Musetta relates how Mimì begged to be taken to Rodolfo to die. She is made as comfortable as possible, while Musetta asks Marcello to sell her earrings for medicine and Colline goes off to pawn his overcoat ("Vecchia zimarra, senti"). Left alone ("Sono andati?"), Mimì and Rodolfo recall their meeting and their first happy days, but she is seized with violent coughing. When the others return, Musetta gives Mimì a muff to warm her hands, and Mimì slowly drifts into unconsciousness. Musetta prays for Mimì, but it is too late. The friends realize that she is dead, and Rodolfo collapses in despair.

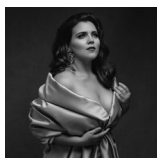
The entire performance will last approximately 2 hours and 45 minutes with one 20-minute intermission between Acts II and III. A brief pause will occur between Act III and IV.





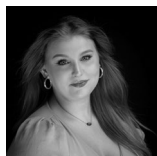
### BRIAN VU, tenor | Rodolfo

Tenor Brian Vu returns to Opera in the Heights after last performing in *Il Trovatore*. The 2023–2024 season sees Mr. Vu sing his first Tenor solos in Handel's *Messiah* with Phoenix Symphony Orchestra, debut Alfredo in Opera Omaha's *La traviata*, a return to OH! to debut Rodolfo in *La bohème*, and debut Pvt. Danny Chen in *An American Soldier* at the Perelman Performing Arts Center in NYC. Previous highlights include a return to Minnesota Opera as Bryce in the world premiere of *Edward Tulane*, a return to the Metropolitan Opera as Sergio in a new production of *Fedora*, Sarasota Opera as Don Ottavio in *Don Giovanni*, Hawaii Opera Theater as Rinuccio in *Gianni Schicchi*, and a return to Glimmerglass Festival as the title role in *Candide*. Brian is a graduate of Yale University and UCLA. In his free time, he loves exploring new cities and dancing at the disco with friends. IG: @vouski



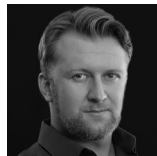
### ASHLEY MILANESE, soprano | Mimi

Lauded for her "soaring lyric soprano capable of heart-stopping soft effects", Italian-American Ashley Milaneze is quickly emerging as an exciting presence in the operatic world. Her most recent debut highlights include the soprano soloist with the LA Phil in Britten's *War Requiem* at Walt Disney Concert Hall, Giorgetta in *Il Tabarro* with On Site Opera, and Lucia in Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor* with Sarasota Opera. Past seasons include performances with Teatro Regio Torino, Komische Oper Berlin, The Metropolitan Opera, Opera Philadelphia, and New Orleans Opera. Ms. Milaneze studied at both The Juilliard School and Curtis Institute of Music.



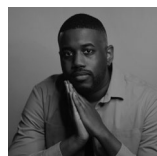
### CAITLIN ALOIA, soprano | Musetta

Soprano Caitlin Aloia enjoys a flourishing career in opera, chamber music, and art song. Based in Houston, she has performed several opera roles while pursuing her Masters Degree and Artist Diploma at Rice University, such as Tatiana from *Eugene Onegin*, La Fortuna in Monteverdi's *L'incoronazione di Poppea*, Donna Anna in *Don Giovanni*, and Poppea in *Agrippina*. This season, Caitlin made her professional opera, house, and role debut as Proserpina in Monteverdi's *Orfeo* at the Santa Fe Opera, orchestrated by Nico Muhly. She has programmed and produced several recitals of art song and chamber music around the Houston area, paying homage to her time at the Marlboro Music Festival in 2021. Caitlin is the inaugural winner of the Carolyn Bailey Argento Vocal Performance Fellowship awarded by the National Opera Association.



### KELLEN SCHRIMPER, baritone | Marcello

Kellen Schrimper is a dramatic baritone, noted for his plangent, warm tone, and noble stage presence. In the 2023–2024 season he has made two role debuts as Count Almaviva in *Le nozze di Figaro* with Pacific Northwest Opera, and Marcello in *La bohème* with Opera in the Heights. As a 2023 Gerdine Young Artist, he made his company debut with Opera Theatre of St. Louis as Sciarone in *Tosca*, while covering the role of Scarpia. He also covered Reverend Blitch in *Susannah*. In their annual Center Stage Concert, he sang various excerpts from the operatic canon, ranging from *Peter Grimes* to *Don Giovanni* with the Saint Louis Symphony Orchestra. Prior to his time in Saint Louis, Mr. Schrimper made his debut with Opera in the Heights as Marullo in *Rigoletto*. He was also an apprentice and principal artist with Des Moines Metro Opera for several seasons. During the summer of 2022, Mr. Schrimper covered Snug in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and Jimmy in Geter/Palmer's *American Apollo*.



### ADAM RICHARDSON, baritone | Schaunard

Baritone Adam Richardson is a celebrated artist known for his captivating performances across opera, concert, and theatre stages. Praised by Opera News for his "gorgeous textured baritone," Richardson's career has been marked by a series of impressive achievements and notable debuts. In the upcoming 2023–2024 season, Richardson is set to make his debut with the Metropolitan Opera in *X: The Life and Times of Malcolm X* in the role of 'Friend,' Virginia Opera in *Sanctuary Road*, and Music Theatre Wichita. Additionally, he will return to Opera in the Heights as Schaunard in *La Bohème*. The previous season, 2022–2023, showcased Richardson as he portrayed Yoshio in *Hanjo* with Catapult Opera, a role he reprised at Teatro Sociale di Trento, Italy. A significant highlight was his house debut with Opera Omaha, where he commanded the title role of Malcolm X in *X: The Life and Times of Malcolm X*. He was seen in the world premiere of *Factotum* at Lyric Opera of Chicago and his return to the role of John Mack at Pittsburgh Opera in *We Shall Not Be Moved*, a work he originated and premiered in 2017. Richardson's versatility extended to the realm of film, marking his first appearance in the famed "Blue's Clues" franchise with *Blue's Clue's Big City Adventure*.



### GRIFFEN HOGAN TRACY, bass | Colline

Bass Griffen Hogan Tracy is from Golden, Colorado and will be making numerous debuts in the 2023–2024 season. This season Griffen will sing the bass solo in Mozart's *Requiem*, Colline in *La Bohème* at Opera in the Heights, Ashby in *La Fanciulla del West* at North Carolina Opera, and the bass solo in Beethoven's *9th* with the Santa Fe Symphony. 22–23 highlights were Sparafucile in *Rigoletto* at Amarillo Opera, Commendatore in *Don Giovanni* at AVA and Raimondo in *Lucia di Lammermoor* at Cincinnati Opera. He is a graduate of the Academy of Vocal Arts in Philadelphia where he performed Colline in *La Bohème*, Prince Gremin in *Eugene Onegin*, Antonio in *Le Nozze di Figaro*, and Sam in *Un Ballo in Maschera*. Griffen has been an Apprentice Artist with the Santa Fe Opera, Opera Theatre of St. Louis and Central City Opera. He is a two-time regional finalist in the Laffont Competition and won top prize in the 2023 Denver Lyric Opera Guild competition. Griffen holds a B.M. from the University of Denver and a M.M. from the University of Tennessee Knoxville.



### ZACK SCOTT FRANK, baritone | Benoit/Alcindoro

Wisconsinite baritone Zack Scott Frank has appeared on stage with local and regional opera companies, including Shreveport Opera, Opera Leggera, Lone Star Lyric Opera, and the Houston Grand Opera. They earned their M.M. from LSU in 2020. Stage credits include Count Almaviva in *Le Nozze di Figaro*, the title role in *Gianni Schicchi*, Marullo in *Rigoletto*, and George in *Sunday in the Park with George*. Currently, Zack lives and works in the Houston area.



### CODY RYAN ARTHUR, tenor | Parpignol/Chorus

Cody Ryan Arthur, tenor, maintains a diverse professional career on operatic, concert, and choral stages across the US. His operatic repertoire includes leading roles from *Die Zauberflöte*, *Don Pasquale*, *Albert Herring*, *Dinner at Eight*, and others. As a Young Artist, Cody has performed with Miami Music Festival, Chicago Summer Opera, Opera NEO, and Operafest Sewanee. Locally, Cody has collaborated with HGOco, Opera in the Heights, Houston Grand Opera Chorus, Ars Lyrica, Bach Society of Houston, Harmonia Stellarum, Greenbriar Consortium, and Mercury Singers. This season he joined TUTS for *Sweeney Todd*, HGO Chorus for *Parsifal*, Bach Society Houston for *Bach Vespers*, and TACTUS for Bach's *St. John's Passion*.

## CHORUS



Errin Hatter  
soprano



Erin McDaniels  
soprano



Siwei Zhang  
soprano



Julie Allison  
soprano



Sashai French  
soprano



Kaci Timmons  
alto



Patricia Bernstein  
alto



Cody Arthur  
tenor 1



Emerson Chew  
tenor 1



Shekinah Anderson  
tenor 2



Gonzalo André  
tenor 2



JP Williams  
bass 1



David Bain  
bass 1



Martin Wolff  
bass 2

## PRODUCTION TEAM



### JODI BOBROVSKY Scenic & Props Designer

Previous work for Opera in the Heights- scenic designs for *Little Women*, *The Pearl Fishers*, *La Cenerentola*, *The Medium*, *The Telephone*, and *The Tragedy of Carmen*. She has been a staff designer at Stages Repertory Theatre for 24 seasons. Favorite designs include: *Yankee Tavern*, *A Picasso*, and *The Whipping Man*, which won Houston Press' 2014 Best Scenic Design award. University of Houston Moore's Opera, freelance properties designer 18 seasons including; *Cold Sassy Tree*; *Salsipuedes*; *Il Postino*. Houston Grand Opera: special properties design for *Jenufa*; *Julius Caesar*; *The Little Prince* (world Premiere).



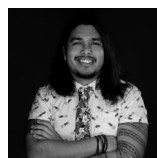
### SHAUN HEATH Costume Designer

Shaun Heath is a designer, director and theatre artisan located in Houston, Texas. She began her career working with the Santa Fe Opera, then came back to Houston where she worked for local theatres and moved on to public education. Recent works by Shaun include costume designs for fabulous productions of *The Pirates of Penzance* for the Houston Gilbert and Sullivan Society, *Rigoletto* at Opera in the Heights, *Sondheim on Sondheim* at the University of Houston's Moores School of Music. Her skill and experience have resulted in an impressive array of designs, both for large-scale productions and small, intimate groups.



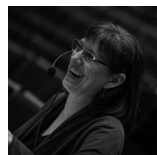
### MARY WEBBER Costume Designer

Mary Webber is a retired high school theatre teacher who has been costuming for more than fifty years. Over the years, she has become a master of costume design, crafting unique and memorable looks for the stage. Today, Mary owns her own costume and design business where she works with a select group of clients. With a passion for teaching, Mary also regularly shares her experience and expertise with current theatre and design students. Although she is now retired from her days in the high school classroom, Mary's legacy of excellence in costume design will live on.



### EDGAR GUAJARDO Lighting Designer/Technical Director

Edgar Guajardo is a Lighting and Scenic Designer/Theatrical Producer/Poet/ Actor/ Painter/ Carpenter originally from Pharr Texas, but has been residing in Houston for 10 plus years. He has a BFA in Theatrical Production with an emphasis in Lighting Design and Scenic Design from the University of Houston. He was the former Assistant Electrician on *Mickey Mouse's Rockin Road Show* for Disney Live and the former Assistant Technical Director of Queensbury Theatre company. He currently is the Resident lighting designer for Opera in the Heights and Production Manager of the Deluxe Theater FWCR.



### REBECCA SKUPIN MARCONTELL Stage Manager

Rebecca is pleased to be returning to Opera in the Heights following last year's *Rigoletto*. Locally she has worked with Houston Grand Opera, AD Players, Theatre Under the Stars, Main Street Theater, Queensbury Theatre, 4th Wall Theatre, Stages Repertory Theatre, Houston Shakespeare Festival, the Alley Theatre and Houston Ballet. Rebecca is currently celebrating her 26th year as a member of Actors Equity and in the summer of 2022, she was elected to one of 13 Stage Manager seats on Equity's National Council.

## PRODUCTION TEAM

---



### **THOMAS HARDY** **Assistant Stage Manager**

Thomas Hardey is a recent graduate of The University of Texas at Austin with a degree in Theatre and Dance where he studied stage management, event management, and production design. This is his first production at Opera in the Heights. Previously he worked on *26 Miles* at Main Street Theater and has just completed his 2nd year with SXSW Music Festival in Austin Texas as one of their production stage managers.



### **MAKAELA SHADE-ALEXANDER** **Hair/Makeup Designer**

Makaela Shade-Alexander was raised in Washington D.C. where she developed her love for music. She attended Duke Ellington School of the Arts High School where she studied voice graduating in 2016 and received her Bachelors of Voice at Montclair State University in 2020. She received her Make-up Certification in 2019 and has since done freelance work and done makeup for shows such as *Der Kaiser von Atlantis*, *M. Choufleurie*, *L'enfant et les Sortilèges*, and *Hansel and Gretel*. She is currently working toward her Masters in Performance at University of Houston. where she premeired as the lead role of Anna Glawari in *The Merry Widow*.



### **GREGORY MCDANIEL** **Chorus Master**

Gregory D. McDaniel is a passionate conductor active in many different musical surroundings. Praised for his "impeccable musicality and technique" (La Presse - Montreal), Mr. McDaniel was recently featured in concert with Orchestre Metropolitan, conducting Boulanger's *D'un Matin de Printemps*. Earlier this season, McDaniel led two projects for Houston Ebony Opera Guild, including their annual African-American Music Gala, which featured a performance of Julia Perry's *Stabat Mater*. Past seasons have included leading performances of Missy Mazzoli's *Proving Up* and William Grant Still's *Highway 1, USA* for Opera Ithaca. A native of Houston, TX, Gregory received degrees from the University of North Texas in Orchestral Conducting and the University of Houston in Choral Music Education.

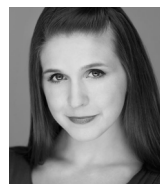


### **LUCA ANTONUCCI** **Assistant Conductor**

A native of Watertown, MA, Luca Antonucci holds an M.M. in Orchestral Conducting from the Hartt School, where he studied with Edward Cumming and Glen Adsit, and is currently completing a D.M.A. from University of Michigan, where he studies with Kenneth Kiesler. Luca graduated summa cum Laude from Amherst College and was a Fulbright Fellow in Vienna, where he conducted research and published work on Arnold Schönberg in the *Journal of the Arnold Schönberg Center*.

## PRODUCTION TEAM

---



### **MONICA ISOMURA** **Children's Chorus Master**

Mezzo-soprano, Monica Isomura, is recognized for her uniquely warm voice and captivating performances in both opera and concert work. Her notable performance credits include: Jo March in *Little Women*, and Tisbe in *La Cenerentola* (Opera in the Heights), Respighi's *Il Tramonto* with the Westheimer String Quartet, soloist in the *Durufié Requiem*, Bach's *Christmas Oratorio*, and the Mozart Requiem with various Houston ensembles. She was a member of, and frequent soloist with the Grammy Award winning Houston Chamber Choir and appeared in productions and concerts with, Da Camera, Lake Charles Summer Music Festival, Lone Star Lyric Opera, Houston Heights Orchestra, and Memorial Classical Music Series. Monica has previously sung as an apprentice artist with Michigan Opera Theater, The Castleton Festival, Opera in the Ozarks, Opera New Jersey, and Toledo Opera. She holds a bachelor's degree from Northwestern University, a master's degree from the University of Michigan, and a doctorate in voice from Stony Brook University. She maintains a thriving private voice studio in Houston that continually produces competition winners and members of prestigious opera and theater companies and training programs.

---

### **A NOTE ABOUT THE MUSIC FROM EIKI ISOMURA:**

*La Bohème* is one of the most beloved operas in the repertoire by audience members and performers alike. To explain its enduring popularity, one can always point to Puccini's sweeping melodies, including a number of arias and duets that have attained iconic status. In the singularly captivating sequence of Rodolfo and Mimi's first meeting in Act I, Puccini gave us, "Che gelida manina" (What a cold little hand) and "Mi chiamano Mimi," (They call me Mimi), two of the most beloved arias in the entire repertoire, in immediate succession. With these passionate personal statements of the two lovers, and the boisterous shenanigans of their friends, Puccini shows us, the audience, in the most direct manner imaginable, who these characters are. We learn about their struggles, aspirations, quirks, and flaws in a remarkably short amount of time. Their story of love, friendship, and the fragility of life touches us deeply, because we find ourselves genuinely caring about these people.

Our feeling of familiarity and closeness to the characters comes in part from Puccini's use of Leitmotifs, or, recurring musical motives we come to associate with each of the characters. The agitated music at the very beginning of the opera highlights the temperamental nature of Marcello, the painter. This is followed by a soaring, aspirational melody associated with Rodolfo, the poet; more serious and heavy music for Colline, the philosopher; and a cheerful dance for Schaunard, the musician. Mimi's music is hesitant yet dreamy; Musetta's is feisty and erratic. Each appearance of these Leitmotifs contributes to our sense of history with the characters, such that, when Act IV begins, just as Act I did with Marcello's theme, one gets the feeling of reuniting with an old friend.

Through his use of recurring motives, Puccini leverages the power of memory to bring the audience closer to the characters. The most potent example is in the final act when Mimi quotes the opening line of Rodolfo's aria, "Che gelida manina," to him, in reminiscence of their first meeting. But the parallels Puccini establishes between the outer acts, by design, serve more to draw contrasts. As they relive how it all began, we are made all the more aware of how everything is about to change.

As Mimi's friends face the inevitability of her demise, we see each character undergo a transformation, most notably among them, Musetta. Her previously capricious music becomes subdued and prayer-like, as she demonstrates acts of selflessness that are unexpected and moving. Just as the characters on stage, we, too, are left transformed. Our hearts break with theirs, as we look on, not as mere witnesses, but as companions.



Opera in the Heights  
invites you to join  
**MAESTRO'S CIRCLE!**

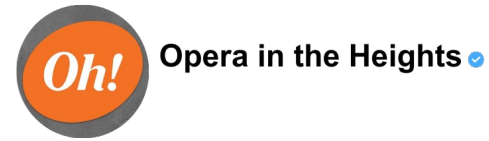


# MAESTRO'S CIRCLE MEMBERS

## Membership for Two Includes:

- Lambert Hall Reserved Parking Pass
- Complimentary Parking at Oh!'s Alternate Venues
- Invitations to Private Oh! Parties
- Opportunities to Meet Principal Artists
- Two Guest Tickets to an Opera of Your Choice
- Invitations to Closed Dress Rehearsals
- Priority Seating for the Season
- Donors who gift \$1000 or more to Opera in the Heights are granted membership into the Maestro's Circle.

Contact our General Director, Eiki Isomura for more information:  
eiki@operaintheheights.org.



Stay connected with us!

**Follow us on  
Social Media.**

Get daily updates by following us on our social media channels. Join our community now!



Jim  
Bates  
Piano  
Tuning

713 = 944 = 4687



**Oh!** Opera in the heights

*Guild*

SUPPORT THE OPERA WHILE HAVING FUN!

Opera in the Heights Guild offers many ways to support the opera as well as opportunities to meet and work with a tremendous group of people from all ages and backgrounds. Guild members have the opportunity to lose themselves in performances of Verdi, Mozart, Donizetti, Puccini, Strauss, Bizet, and the many other great composers of opera!

**Ask a Guild member how much fun we're having, then join us!**  
For further information, contact an Opera in the Heights Guild officer:

**Paul DePan, President**  
281.546.8367 or pdpswes@yahoo.com

# OPERA IN THE HEIGHTS 2023 – 2024 SEASON SUPPORTERS

(Listing based on cumulative gifts received during fiscal year 2023)

## SEASON UNDERWRITER & PERFORMANCE SPONSOR (\$5,000 - \$20,000+)

Calvin Fuller  
Heida Thurlow  
Leslie Taylor  
Linda Dodge  
Pat & Mike Journey  
Paul Marsden  
Rhoda Goldberg  
The Brown Foundation

## IMPRESSARIO CIRCLE (\$2,500 - \$4,999)

Don Clarke  
Duke Ensell  
Mark Johansson  
Mary Buehler  
Opera in the Heights Guild  
Zahava Haenosh

## MAESTRO CIRCLE (\$1,000 - \$2,499)

Alice Bergo and Donald Hang  
Ann Faget  
Anne Hulme Sloan  
Barbara and Robert Kauffman  
Benigna and Ernst Leiss  
Carol and Michael Stamatedes  
Cheryl and Dennis Michael Dendy  
Christopher Bacon  
Craig Miller  
Daniel Hayes  
Dave Duggal and Mariya Dimova  
David K Johnson and David V Manuel  
Decie Coleman  
Donald Hang  
Edith and Robert Zinn  
Eleanor Costa  
Elise Bungo  
Francisco Izaguirre  
Jack Bell  
Jose Ivo  
Joyce and Trey Evans  
Lucila and William Haase  
M.F. and Thora Qaddumi

Mary Boyles  
Mr. and Mrs. Rodney Koenig  
Ms. Roxi Cargill and Dr. Peter V. Weston  
Nancy Reuter  
Robert and Edith Zinn  
Rodney Thorin  
Shirley and Don Rose  
Sidney Fay  
Will Speer and Anna Temple

## ARTIST CIRCLE (\$500 - \$999)

Betty and W. Kendall Adam  
Bill Bartlett  
Catherine Lee  
Eliane Herring  
Erica Levit  
Janet and Ed Hess  
Keith Chapman  
Kirby Mears  
Lawrence Gettleman  
Marjo and Winifred Ave-Lallemant  
Mary Anthony Startz  
Sue and John Gooft

## CHORUS CIRCLE (\$100 - \$499)

Allan Van Fleet  
Anna Gay  
Barbra and Joseph Munisteri  
Bette Burkett  
Bill Arning  
Bill Maguire  
Brian Herrington  
Carol and Robert Reilly  
Carolyn Blacknall  
Cathy Harrison  
Cathy Geis  
Charles Lansdell  
Charlotte Meyer and Russell Miller  
Christiane L Goodrich  
Christianne Gell  
Cindy Raimond  
Claire Langston  
Clay Hoster  
Cynthia Vento

Danny Belcher  
David and Vicky Glenn  
David Bush  
Dottie Burge and Vic Driscoll  
Dr. Eugene Myers  
Dr. Jerry L Bohannon  
Ellen Heemer  
Emma Callender  
Frances Johnson  
Francisco Osorio Diaz  
Frans and Claire Kopp  
Fred & Josie Nevill  
Gail and Thomas Viele  
George Chase  
Guillaume Plessis  
H Clifford Rudisill  
Hywel Upshall  
James Stanka  
Jane Adam  
Janice Cruz Cardona  
Jerry Gresham  
John Caffey  
John Goode  
John Willis  
Karen Trenary  
Kathleen Moore and Steven Homer  
Kirk D. Hickey  
Lilian and Emilio Cardona  
Linda Harris  
Lora Wildenthal  
Louis Buja  
Marcia Pampe  
Marie and Paul Monroe  
Martha and Jerry Gallagher  
Mary Ann Ryerson  
Mary Frances Gonzalez  
Maryanne Douglas  
Mike Kahn  
Nell Richardson and Sidney Buchanan  
Pamela Blake  
Patricia and Alan Bernstein  
Peter Hodgson  
Phil Denning  
Rebecca Duncan  
Rebecca Tripathy  
Reva and Bruce Edison

Robert McLaughlin  
Robert & Mary Jane Wakefield  
Robin Converse  
Rosina and Paul Chevalier  
Sam Ross  
Sarah Kerrigan  
Sherry Hutson  
Sonja and Charles Novo  
Stephanie Ragni

Stephen Shogren  
Susan Parker  
William Paul Kellogg  
William Kast



**Oh!**

Opera in the heights  
2022-2023 SEASON

OUR  
BRIGHTEST DAYS  
GALA CONCERT

*October 6*



HANSEL &  
GRETEL

*December  
1, 3, 8, 9*



THE LIGHT  
IN THE  
PIAZZA

*February  
16, 17, 18*



LA BOHÈME

*April  
5, 7, 12, 13*

