BERKSHIRE OPERA FESTIVAL
2023 SUMMER SEASON

BREAKING THE MOLD
BAROQUE, BEL CANTO, AND BEYOND

PUCCINI'S

MAINSTAGE

LA BOHÈME

SUMMER CONCERT

BREAKING THE MOLD
BAROQUE, BEL CANTO, AND BEYOND
Dear Friends,

One of the questions I’m asked most often by audience members is “When are you going to do La Bohème?” Happily, that time has come!

Giacomo Puccini’s timeless Parisian love story is the pièce de résistance of this, our eighth season. This extraordinary work remains as popular today as it was at its premiere 127 years ago, and for good reason. The emotional impact of its story is universal and deeply human, and Puccini’s synthesis of music and drama is peerless. Few other composers were as capable of holding an audience’s emotions in the palm of their hand with every soaring melody, evocative orchestration, and well-placed chord.

Our world-class cast brings a wealth of experience to their roles, having performed in several productions of this opera around the globe. In their BOF debuts, Whitney Morrison and Yongzhao Yu play our star-crossed lovers, while Véronique Filloux and Benjamin Taylor (last at BOF for 2016’s Madama Butterfly) are another couple confronting their own problems. Rounding out the cast of young bohemians are Evan Lazdowski and Ethan Vincent. They’re joined by the exceptional musicians of the Berkshire Opera Festival Orchestra and Chorus, augmented this year by the Children’s Chorus of Springfield, whom I’m delighted to welcome to our stage.

In July, our season opens with an exciting concert called “Breaking the Mold: Baroque, Bel Canto, and Beyond.” The program spans over 300 years of operatic composition and features arias and ensembles by strong characters who “broke the mold” in one way or another. You’ll get to enjoy again the remarkable talents of Jacqueline Piccolino, Megan Moore, Alex McKissick, and pianist Travis Bloom, along with Ethan Vincent from our cast of La Bohème.

More than any other art form, opera requires a team effort, and I thank you for being a part of our team. The fact that we’re presenting our eighth season of performances this summer is a testament to our donors, ticket buyers, and opera-loving community. We thank you as always for your continued support.

With deep and abiding gratitude,

Brian Garman
Artistic Director and Co-Founder
Hello Everyone,

I would like to extend my warmest and most heartfelt welcome to our 2023 festival, our eighth season. My creative team and I have relished creating Puccini’s *La Bohème* over the past year, arguably the most beloved opera in the canon. On behalf of this season’s production team, and as I never tire of saying, we are so proud to bring the highest quality productions to the Berkshires and its surrounding communities.

As we all sit here in this beautiful theater waiting for the curtain to rise, we know there is nothing better than the power of live opera and the unamplified human voice. I want to thank you for your continued support of all of Berkshire Opera Festival’s endeavors.

I hope you all have a wonderful summer full of live theater and music,

Jonathon Loy
Director of Production and Co-Founder

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A sneak peek at BOF’s 2024 season

MAINSTAGE
Gounod’s
FAUST
August 24, 27 & 30

PUBLIC WORKSHOP
Anthony Davis and Joan Ross Sorkin’s new opera
THE REEF
Based on the novel by Edith Wharton
April in NYC

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BREAKING THE MOLD
Baroque, Bel Canto, and Beyond

Saturday, July 22 at 2:00pm
Mahaiwe Performing Arts Center
Great Barrington, MA

Jacqueline Piccolino, soprano
Megan Moore, mezzo-soprano
Alex McKissick, tenor
Ethan Vincent, baritone
Travis Bloom, piano
Natura il fece, e poi roppe la stampa.
Nature made him, and then broke the mold.
— Ludovico Ariosto, Orlando Furioso

PROGRAM

“Ah! Ruggiero crudel ... Ombre pallide” from Alcina
George Frideric Handel (1685-1759)
Alcina: Ms. Piccolino

“J’ai perdu mon Eurydice” from Orphée et Eurydice
Christoph Willibald von Gluck (1714-1787)
Orphée: Mr. McKissick

“Tanti affetti in tal momento ... Ah! chi sperar potea” from La Donna del Lago
Gioacchino Rossini (1792-1868)
Elena: Ms. Moore

“Ce breuvage pourrait ... Vision fugitive” from Hérodiade
Jules Massenet (1842-1912)
Hérode: Mr. Vincent

“Senza mamma” from Suor Angelica
Giacomo Puccini (1858-1924)
Suor Angelica: Ms. Piccolino

“Thy hand, Belinda ... When I am laid in earth” from Dido and Aeneas
Henry Purcell (1659-1695)
Dido: Ms. Moore

“Alerte! Alerte! ... Anges purs” from Faust
Charles Gounod (1818-1893)
Marguerite: Ms. Piccolino
Faust: Mr. McKissick
Méphistophélès: Mr. Vincent

– INTERMISSION –
“Enfin, je suis ici” from *Cendrillon*
  J. Massenet
  Cendrillon: Ms. Moore

“Mein Sehnen, mein Wählen” from *Die tote Stadt*
  **Erich Korngold (1897-1957)**
  Fritz: Mr. Vincent

“O loss of sight ... Total eclipse” from *Samson*
  G.F. Handel
  Samson: Mr. McKissick

“D’Oreste, d’Ajace” from *Idomeneo*
  **Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791)**
  Elettra: Ms. Piccolino

“Miles! Miles! Miles!” from *The Turn of the Screw*
  **Benjamin Britten (1913-1976)**
  Peter Quint: Mr. McKissick

“Alzati! ... Eri tu” from *Un Ballo in Maschera*
  **Giuseppe Verdi (1813-1901)**
  Renato: Mr. Vincent

“This journey” from *Dead Man Walking*
  **Jake Heggie (b. 1961)**
  Sister Helen Prejean: Ms. Moore

“Un di, se ben rammentomi ... Bella figlia dell’amore” from *Rigoletto*
  G. Verdi
  Gilda: Ms. Piccolino
  Maddalena: Ms. Moore
  Il Duca di Mantova: Mr. McKissick
  Rigoletto: Mr. Vincent
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LA BOHÈME

Music by Giacomo Puccini
Libretto by Luigi Illica and Giuseppe Giacosa

Based on Henri Murger’s Scènes de la vie de bohème

Saturday, August 26 at 1:00pm
Tuesday, August 29 at 7:30pm
Friday, September 1 at 7:30pm

The Colonial Theatre
Pittsfield, MA

Opera in four acts

Sung in Italian with projected English translations

There will be one 25-minute intermission
Total performance time is approximately 2 hours and 20 minutes

Premiere: February 1, 1896, Teatro Regio, Turin

Conductor — Brian Garman
Director — Jonathon Loy
Scenic Designer — Stephen Dobay
Costume Designer — Brooke Stanton
Lighting Designer — Alex Jainchill
Hair and Make-Up Designer — Beckie Kravetz
Chorus Master and Assistant Conductor — Geoffrey Larson
Assistant Director — Christian Rozakis
Principal Pianist and Coach — Travis Bloom
Supertitles Author — Cori Ellison
Stage Manager — Cindy Knight
Cast
(in order of vocal appearance)

Marcello, a painter
Benjamin Taylor

Rodolfo, a poet
Yongzhao Yu

Colline, a philosopher
Evan Lazdowski

Schaunard, a musician
Ethan Vincent

Benoit, a landlord
James Demler

Mimi, a seamstress
Whitney Morrison

Parpignol, a toy vendor
Seth Allen

A Child
Jade Lugo

Alcindoro, a councilor of state
James Demler

Musetta, a singer
Véronique Filloux

A Customs Officer
Jonathan Lawlor

A Sergeant
Andrew Boisvert

Choruses of students, working girls, citizens, shopkeepers, street vendors, soldiers, restaurant waiters, boys and girls
Synopsis

The action takes place in Paris.

Act I

It is Christmas Eve in the Latin Quarter. Marcello, a painter, and Rodolfo, a poet, are at work in the small apartment they share with the musician Schaunard and the philosopher Colline. Lacking the money even to buy wood for the stove, Rodolfo decides to burn one of his manuscripts so they can warm their fingers. Colline arrives and they all enjoy the heat from the fire, which quickly dies. Schaunard soon appears with food, wine, and firewood. He explains how he has spent three days working for an eccentric Englishman, but the bohemian friends are too excited with their sudden good fortune to pay him any attention. They begin to set the table, but Schaunard suggests that they dine out, since it is Christmas Eve. The friends decide to go to the Café Momus. Suddenly, there is a knock at the door. It is the landlord, Benoit, demanding rent. They invite Benoit in, ply him with wine, and he soon is drunk and boasting of his prowess with women. When he mentions that he is married, the friends pretend to be scandalized and throw him out. Rodolfo stays behind for a moment to finish writing an article while the others go downstairs to wait. Left alone, Rodolfo finds he is not in the mood to write, and a timid knock is heard at the door. It is his neighbor, Mimi, who asks for a light for her candle. As she enters, she almost faints and drops the key to her room. They search for it together in the dark and their hands touch. He proceeds to tell her about himself (Che gelida manina), and she tells him of her life (Sì. Mi chiamano Mimi). Rodolfo’s friends call to him impatiently, and he tells them he will join them soon at Momus. As he looks at Mimi standing in the moonlight, they both realize they have fallen in love (Duet: O soave fanciulla). They leave for the café.

Act II

Outside the Café Momus, the streets are crowded with people eating, shopping, and celebrating. Rodolfo buys a bonnet for Mimi and introduces her to his friends. The bohemians’ evening is disrupted when Musetta, a former lover of Marcello, arrives with the elderly, rich Alcindoro. Musetta is eager to get Marcello’s attention, so she makes a scene by singing a waltz (Quando m’en vo) and then complains that her shoe is hurting her. She sends the
embarrassed old man away to buy new shoes and falls into Marcello’s arms. All sit down to dinner when a band is heard announcing the arrival of the military patrol. After a waiter brings the bill, the friends realize they have no money with them. Musetta tells the waiter to give the entire bill to Alcindoro, and all depart.

**Act III**

On an early morning in February, Mimi has come to the Barrière d’Enfer, one of the toll gates on the edge of Paris. Musetta and Marcello are living above a tavern there, and Mimi has come to ask for advice about her relationship with Rodolfo (Duet: *Mimi? Speravo di trovarvi qui*). She is pale and ill. After she complains about Rodolfo’s constant jealousy, Marcello suggests they should separate. Rodolfo has arrived at the tavern earlier that morning and now comes outside looking for Marcello. Mimi hides and learns the real reason for Rodolfo’s behavior when he tells Marcello that he thinks Mimi is deathly ill and will only grow worse in their impoverished state. She is seized by a fit of coughing and is discovered by Rodolfo. Marcello hurries inside after hearing Musetta’s laughter. Mimi sadly tells Rodolfo she is going to leave him, and asks him to pack up all of her belongings except for the pink bonnet he bought her, which she tells him to keep as a reminder of their love (*Donde lieta usci*). They agree to stay together until winter is over, while Marcello and Musetta have another vicious quarrel (Quartet: *Addio, dolce svegliare*).

**Act IV**

It is spring. Rodolfo and Marcello are now separated from Mimi and Musetta, but clearly are still in love with the women (Duet: *O Mimi, tu più non torni*). Schaunard and Colline arrive with some meager food, which the bohemians eat, pretending it is a lavish feast. A knock at the door interrupts their fun and Musetta enters. She tells them that Mimi is outside, too weak to climb the stairs. Rodolfo hurries to help her and guides her to the bed. Musetta explains that she heard Mimi was dying and asked to be taken to Rodolfo. They have no food to offer Mimi, but Musetta and Marcello go to pawn Musetta’s earrings in order to pay for medicine and a doctor. Colline decides to help by selling his overcoat (*Vecchia zimarra, senti*) and leaves with Schaunard. Left alone, Rodolfo and Mimi reminisce about the love they shared and the happy times they spent together. The others gradually return, and Rodolfo soon realizes that Mimi is dead. He collapses into sobs, calling her name.
A beloved portrayal of the joys and hardships of ordinary people, Giacomo Puccini’s opera about the bohemians of the Latin Quarter was neither the beginning nor the end of the literary and theatrical journey of Mimi, Rodolfo, Marcello, Musetta, Schaunard, and Colline. The characters first appeared in a series of short stories that Henri Murger published in the Parisian journal *Le Corsair* between 1845 and 1849. Murger then collaborated with Théodore Barrière on a play, *La Vie de Bohème*, which premiered in November 1849 at the Théâtre des Variétés in Paris, and soon after gathered his stories into a novelized version published in 1851 as *Scènes de la Vie de Bohème*. Not surprisingly, by the 1890s, an era in which the arts found new inspiration in the lives of the working class (Mascagni’s *Cavalleria Rusticana* stands out as an operatic example), Murger’s characters seemed perfectly suited for the operatic stage. Not one but two composers stepped up to the task—Puccini and Ruggero Leoncavallo (of *Pagliacci* fame), who feuded openly about who had the idea first. Resolution came in the form of two operas, with the same title, premiered a year apart: Puccini’s, with a libretto by Giuseppe Giacosa and Luigi Illica, in Turin in 1896; Leoncavallo’s in Venice, 15 months later. To this day, Murger’s bohemians continue to inspire directors, filmmakers, and composers. Constantin Stanislavski staged Puccini’s opera in a famous production at the Bolshoi Theater in 1927. Baz Luhrmann brought it to Broadway in 1992 and then conflated the story with that of *La Traviata* in his 2001 film, *Moulin Rouge!* The opera itself has received multiple cinematic treatments, including in 1965 (by Franco Zeffirelli and Herbert von Karajan), 1988, and 2008 (starring Anna Netrebko and Rolando Villazón). And its story was retold as a rock musical set in 1990s New York in Jonathan Larson’s *Rent*.

In contrast to the remarkable amiability of the characters in *La Bohème*, the working relationship of the opera’s creators was vexed. Early in his career, Puccini revealed himself to be a remorseless perfectionist, at his most extreme in *Manon Lescaut*, which took a total of seven librettists (including publisher Giulio Ricordi and the composer himself) to lift it off the ground. The labor of bringing *La Bohème* to the stage, however, was marked less by issues of having too many collaborators than by a passionate struggle among Puccini, his two librettists, and Ricordi. Illica had finished the original scenario for the opera
by 1894, but the months preceding that watershed moment had been a painful succession of arguments about the Latin Quarter scene and a now-discarded act set in a courtyard. On October 6, 1893, Giacosa, feeling strangled by Puccini’s demands and ready to throw in the towel, wrote to Ricordi claiming “artistic impotence.”

How remarkable, then, that despite such creative discord behind the scenes, *La Bohème* unfolds so seamlessly and effortlessly from its opening notes. There is no prelude, and the music erupts from the depths of the orchestra on a single spring-loaded motive that defines the instability of the bohemians’ lives.

The curtain rises swiftly on a scene in medias res, the first in a series of episodes that tumble forth in quick succession, as characters improvise ways to overcome hardship: Marcello works on his painting; Rodolfo burns the pages of his play to heat the garret; Schaunard brings home dinner; and the landlord, Benoit, is tricked out of his rent.

What is the secret to such utter freshness and spontaneity? One answer is that Puccini keeps the story moving, finding musical expression appropriate to the characters and their station in life. For this composer, “real” people simply could not sing in the formal Italian verse and musical structures that had governed so many Italian operas that came before his. Instead, he advances a more energetic and naturalistic repartee in which lyrical moments arise seamlessly out of the drama. That is exactly what happens in the second half of Act I, as the brief, intimate contact of hands groping in the dark for a lost key moves Rodolfo and Mimì to reveal something of themselves to one another in two of the opera’s greatest arias, “Che gelida manina” and “Sì. Mi chiamano Mimì.”

The tone shifts again, though, as it is Christmas Eve, and the new lovers must join friends in the Latin Quarter, on a street teeming with a “vast and motley crowd of citizens, soldiers, serving girls, children, students, seamstresses, gendarmes, etc.,” as the libretto says. In the hands of a lesser composer, Rodolfo, Mimì, and their companions might have been lost in such tumult. But here, Puccini exercises his particular genius for manipulating large numbers of people and devising transparent musical textures that shine a spotlight on the characters he wants us to see and hear. At the center of it all is Musetta, who delivers a siren song (the waltz “Quando m’en vo”) that Marcello cannot resist.
As he falls into her arms, the bill arrives, and the bohemians disappear into the crowd.

One of the most familiar—and original—scenes of La Bohème is Mimi’s death, which differs significantly from the traditional “curtain deaths” of earlier operas. A good example for comparison is La Traviata, whose consumptive heroine, Violetta, is frequently thought of as a model for Mimi. Violetta, surrounded by loved ones, dies with a cry of renewed joy, a tonic chord, and a final curtain in fortissimo dynamics. When Mimi passes away, none of the characters on stage even notices that she is gone until it’s too late. She has no final spasm, nor does she collapse into a pair of loving arms. She sings no high notes; her friends have busied themselves by heating medicine, adjusting curtains, and plumping pillows; there is no vigil, no stage directions that communicate the exact moment of her death or how the singer is to enact it. The libretto does not even mark it with the perfunctory phrase that defines dozens of melodramatic deaths in opera: “She dies.” The only material indicator is in Puccini’s autograph score, where, in the margins next to the measures of the death music, he ironically drew a skull and crossbones. A highly choreographed “good death” was not to be for the likes of his poor seamstress. Mimi only nods her head, “as one who is overcome by sleep,” and thereafter the libretto notes only “silence.” In the score, a slowing of the tempo leads to a “lunga pausa” just before the key changes from D-flat major to B minor and the tempo to andante lento sostenuto. Puccini adds a subtle detail in the single cymbal struck in quadruple pianissimo with a mallet; the diffuse sound seems to originate from and fade into the ether. Mimi is gone, and the final curtain belongs to Rodolfo.

Helen M. Greenwald is the author of numerous scholarly articles on vocal music from the 18th to the 20th centuries, and has edited or collaborated on the critical editions of Rossini’s Zelmira (Fondazione Rossini, 2005), Mascagni’s Cavalleria Rusticana (Bärenreiter, forthcoming), and Verdi’s Atila (Ricordi/University of Chicago Press, 2013), which was premiered in 2010 by Ricardo Muti in his Metropolitan Opera debut. Other publications include the Oxford Handbook of Opera (Oxford University Press, 2014; paperback, 2022) and a monograph on Verdi’s Rigoletto she is writing for Oxford University Press. Professor Greenwald has taught in the Musicology Department at the New England Conservatory of Music in Boston since 1991.
Biographies

Bass-baritone **James Demler** (Benoît/Alcindoro) is known for his large and versatile range of repertoire, spanning the operatic, oratorio, concert, and popular music genres. In 2021-22, Mr. Demler made his company and role debut as Odysseus in Mary Prescott and Cerise Lim Jacobs’s *A Survivor’s Odyssey: The Journey of Penelope and Circe* with White Snake Projects, covered the role of Howie Albert in Blanchard’s *Champion* with Boston Lyric Opera, sang Caterpillar and King in the world premiere of Scurria’s *ALICE: An Operatic Wonderland*, and performed as the bass soloist in Beethoven’s *Symphony No. 9* with the Reno Philharmonic. In 2022-23, Mr. Demler joined the roster of The Metropolitan Opera to cover the Notary in *Der Rosenkavalier*.

*Mr. Demler’s engagement is sponsored by Roger Persell.*

French-American soprano **Véronique Filloux** (Musetta) has been praised by *Opera News* for her “expressive, lovingly shaded soprano” and “dazzling coloratura and lithe stage presence.” With Arizona Opera in the 2022-23 season, she sang Zerbinetta in *Ariadne auf Naxos*, Agatha in Kallor’s *Frankenstein*, and Pamina in *Die Zauberflöte*. She also debuted as Miss Ellen in *Lakmé* with Washington Concert Opera, Martesia in Vivaldi’s *Ercole su'l Termodonte* with Pacific Opera Project, and Iris in *Semele* at Wolf Trap Opera, where she was a Filene Artist. As a Pittsburgh Opera Resident Artist, she sang Despina in *Cosi fan tutte*, Chan in *Charlie Parker’s Yardbird*, Papagena in *The Magic Flute*, Frasquita in *Carmen*, The Girl in Hertzberg’s *The Rose Elf*, and the title role in *Semele*. She spent two summers at Des Moines Metro Opera, singing Peaseblossom and covering Tytania in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* and singing L’Amour and covering La Folie in Rameau’s *Platée*. She has also performed with Central City Opera, Opera Lafayette, and Music of the Baroque. Ms. Filloux is a 1st Prize Winner of the Zenith Opera Competition, the Camille Coloratura Awards, and the Mildred Miller Voice Competition. She is also a Laffont Competition District Winner and Musicians Club of Women Competition top prize winner.

*Ms. Filloux’s engagement is sponsored by Ken and Susan Kramer.*
In the 2023-24 season, bass-baritone Evan Lazdowski (Colline) returns as a Pittsburgh Opera Resident Artist to sing Basilio in Il Barbiere di Siviglia, Thoas in Iphigénie en Tauride, the Soddbuster in Mazzoli’s Proving Up, and Marchese d’Obigny in La Traviata. This season, his roles included Antonio in Le Nozze di Figaro and Re di Scozia in Ariodante. Mr. Lazdowski’s recent engagements have included the Speaker in The Magic Flute at Opera Theatre of Saint Louis and the Commendatore in Don Giovanni at the Aspen Music Festival. Highlights of the 2021-22 season included a debut at Alice Tully Hall singing selections from Vaughan Williams’s Songs of Travel for Juilliard’s Wednesdays at One series. He was a finalist in Houston Grand Opera’s Concert of Arias, the Dallas Opera National Vocal Competition, the Butler Opera International Voice Competition, and was a 2021 Encouragement Winner of the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions. He also performed Nick Shadow in The Rake’s Progress with Juilliard Opera. Other operatic credits include Figaro in Le Nozze di Figaro, Theseus in A Midsummer Night’s Dream, Nourabad in Les Pêcheurs de Perles, and Guglielmo in Così fan tutte. Mr. Lazdowski holds a master’s degree from The Juilliard School, and a bachelor’s degree from Manhattan School of Music, as well as receiving additional training at HGO’s Young Artists Vocal Academy.

Mr. Lazdowski’s engagement is sponsored by Yong and Raymond Kwok.

Tenor Alex McKissick (“Breaking the Mold” artist) makes his Irish National Opera debut next season as Narraboth in Salome. He made notable debuts during the 2022-23 season, including with the Cleveland Orchestra as Joe in La Fanciulla del West conducted by Franz Welser-Möst, North Carolina Opera as Don Ottavio in Don Giovanni, and in the Liszt piano transcription of Beethoven’s Symphony No. 9 in Boston. Highlights from last season include the world premiere of two Georgia Shreve oratorios, Lavinia and Anne Komnene, at Alice Tully Hall; an appearance on 21c Liederabend Op. Senses, a collaboration between National Sawdust and Beth Morrison Projects on which he sang an excerpt from Prestini and Campbell’s Edward Tulane; and a performance with Camerata Notturna of Beethoven’s Symphony No. 9. Mr. McKissick has performed with Aspen Music Festival, Richmond Symphony, Des Moines Metro Opera, Charleston Symphony, Wolf Trap Opera, Washington National Opera, and Georg Solti Accademia, working with conductors Eun Sun Kim, Daniele Callegari, Keri-Lynn Wilson, and Nicole Paiement. His recording of Bernstein’s Songfest, released by Naxos, was under consideration for a Grammy Award nomination and his CD Una Notte a Napoli, is available at select locations. He received his bachelor and master’s degrees from The Juilliard School, and is an alumnus of the Cafritz Young Artist Program at the Washington National Opera.

Mr. McKissick’s engagement is sponsored by Elysa and Peter Graber-Lipperman.
Next season, mezzo-soprano Megan Moore ("Breaking the Mold" artist) will make debuts at Seattle Opera singing Rosina in Il Barbiere di Siviglia and Dallas Opera in Elektra, in addition to covering Prince Orlofsky in Die Fledermaus with Les Musiciens du Louvre. This season, she made company debuts with Seattle Symphony in Tan Dun’s Buddha Passion with the composer on the podium, San Diego Opera as La Zelatrice in Suor Angelica and La Ciesca in Gianni Schicchi, Opera Philadelphia covering Desdemona and Emilia in Rossini’s Otello, and Opera Theatre of Saint Louis as Dorabella in Così fan tutte. Recital appearances included Carnegie Hall’s Citywide series, as well as dates in Iowa and Maryland. She also debuted at Carnegie Hall’s Zankel Hall with Bach’s Schau, lieber Gott, wie meine Feind and at Charleston Symphony’s annual Holiday Pops! concert, in addition to participating in the Operalia competition in Riga, Latvia. She has sung with the Metropolitan Opera, English Concert, Santa Fe Opera, and Opera Naples working with conductors Harry Bicket, Ramón Tebar, and Gary Thor Wedow, as well as stage directors James Darrah and Stephen Wadsworth. Recent awards include first prize in the Copenhagen Lied Duo Competition and the top award at the George London Competition. Ms. Moore received her training at Miami University, Eastman School of Music, Internationale Meistersinger Akademie, and The Juilliard School.

Ms. Moore’s engagement is sponsored by Ilene and Lester Bliwise.

Rising star Whitney Morrison (Mimi) has earned praise for her “big, gleaming soprano” (Chicago Classical Review) and “vocally sumptuous” performances (Chicago Tribune). A Chicago native and recent alumna of the Ryan Opera Center, the soprano champions the African American aesthetic in classical music, embracing a style of performance that blends classical singing technique with elements of the gospel singing tradition. Of her most recent performance on Lyric Opera of Chicago’s virtual concert, “Lawrence Brownlee and Friends: The Next Chapter,” Opera News raved, “Whitney Morrison was simply astonishing in everything she sang... This is a voice we need to hear live.” Ms. Morrison received a 2023 Grammy nomination for Boston Modern Orchestra Project’s recording of Anthony Davis’s X: The Life and Times of Malcolm X, on which she sang the role Louise/Betty. In 2022, she made her debut with Michigan Opera Theatre in the same role and reprised it with Opera Omaha and Odyssey Opera, before going on to record it. Her 2022-23 season also includes performances with Lyric Opera of Chicago in their spring production of Proximity as Yasmine Miller in Roumain and Smith’s The Walkers, and with Chicago Opera Theater as Lady Billows in their winter production of Britten’s Albert Herring.

Ms. Morrison’s engagement is sponsored by John K. O’Brien and Jamie Lehrer.
American soprano Jacqueline Piccolino (“Breaking the Mold” artist) has been hailed by the San Francisco Chronicle as having “impeccable technique and stage presence.” She has performed with Seattle Opera, San Francisco Opera, and Wolf Trap Opera. In concert, she has been a soloist in Beethoven’s *Christus am Ölberge* with the UC Davis Symphony Orchestra; Barber’s *Knoxville: Summer of 1915*; and Handel’s *Judas Maccabeus*. During the 2022-23 season, she performs Beethoven’s *Symphony No. 9* with Quad City Symphony Orchestra, Woglinde in *Das Rheingold* with Seattle Opera, and joined Chicago Opera Theater for Szymanowski’s *Król Roger* and Britten’s *Albert Herring*. In 2020, Ms. Piccolino received the Eileen Deneen Award from the American Opera Society of Chicago and the prestigious Rose M. Grundman Award from the Musicians Club of Women in Chicago. In addition, she has received awards from the Sullivan, Shoshana, and George London Foundations, and was a finalist in the Stanisław Moniuszko Competition. After graduating with a Bachelor of Music degree from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, she went on to be a soloist in the Napa Festival del Sole’s Bouchaine Young Artist Concert Series and participant in the Houston Grand Opera Young Artist Vocal Academy. She is an alumna of the Merola Opera Program and was a San Francisco Opera Center Adler Fellow.

*Ms. Piccolino’s engagement is sponsored by Theresa Cerezola.*

Baritone Benjamin Taylor (Marcello) began the 2022-23 season with a debut at Boston Lyric Opera as Schaunard in *La Bohème*, followed by debuts at the Bayerische Staatsoper as Bello in *La Fanciulla del West*, OperaDelaware/Opera Baltimore as Germont in *La Traviata*, and Opera Philadelphia as Schaunard. He returns to The Metropolitan Opera for Papageno in *The Magic Flute*, and in Poulenc’s *Dialogues des Carmélites*. On the concert stage, he made his debut with the Cleveland Orchestra as Bello in *La Fanciulla del West*. Upcoming engagements include returns to Opera Philadelphia and The Metropolitan Opera. He began last season by making his debut at The Metropolitan Opera as Chester in Blanchard’s *Fire Shut Up in My Bones*, followed by debuts at Michigan Opera Theatre and Spoleto Festival USA as Schaunard, Cincinnati Opera as West in the world premiere of Spears and Smith’s *Castor and Patience*, North Carolina Opera as William Still in Moravec and Campbell’s *Sanctuary Road*, Baltimore Concert Opera as Michonnet in *Adriana Lecouvreur*, and a return to Pittsburgh Opera as Papageno in *The Magic Flute*. Additionally, he workshoped Liverman, DJ King Rico, and Maharaj’s *The Factotum* at the Lyric Opera of Chicago in the role of Garby.

*Mr. Taylor’s engagement is co-sponsored by Donald Usher and Patricia Begrowicz.*
Next season, American baritone Ethan Vincent ("Breaking the Mold" artist; Schaunard) will cover the role of Riolobo in *Florencia en el Amazonas* at the Metropolitan Opera under the baton of Yannick Nézet-Séguin, and make debuts at San Diego Opera as Leporello in *Don Giovanni* and at Washington National Opera as Ping in Francesca Zambello’s new production of *Turandot*. He launched the 2022-23 season with Orff’s *Carmina Burana* for the Columbus Symphony’s opening night concert before joining the San Francisco Opera to cover Germont in *La Traviata* conducted by Eun Sun Kim. He made his Boston Youth Symphony debut singing Méphistophélès in Berlioz’s *La Damnation de Faust*. Mr. Vincent debuted with Opera Philadelphia in a series of performances including *Carmina Burana* and Margaret Bonds’s *Credo*, an Emerging Artist recital, and a guest appearance on their spring Opera Gala. He recently appeared with the Philadelphia Orchestra, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Santa Fe Opera, Milwaukee Symphony, San Diego Opera, and Cincinnati Opera, with conductors Gustavo Dudamel, Roberto Kalb, Rossen Milanov, Leon Botstein, and Ken-David Masur. He can be seen in the role of César in the film *Bel Canto* alongside Julianne Moore. Mr. Vincent hails from Kansas City and holds bachelor and master’s degrees in voice performance from Northwestern University.

*Mr. Vincent’s engagement is sponsored by Noreen Doyle.*

Tenor Yongzhao Yu (Rodolfo), who won the Audience Choice Award and the Ana María Martínez Encouragement Award in HGO’s 2015 Eleanor McCallum Competition, continues to make important debuts throughout the United States. The 2022-23 season saw his Metropolitan Opera debut as Flavio in *Norma*, where he also covered the roles of Alfredo in *La Traviata* and Rodolfo in *La Bohème*. In 2021-22, he performed the role of Rodolfo at New Orleans Opera, a role he has also sung for Houston Grand Opera, Wolf Trap Opera, and Arizona Opera. Additionally, he recently made his Seattle Opera debut as the Duke in *Rigoletto*, covered Alfredo in *La Traviata* at the Metropolitan Opera, and made his Houston Symphony debut in Beethoven’s *Choral Fantasy*. In the 2016-17 season, he made his Houston Grand Opera stage debut as a Winged Angel in the premiere of Heggie and Scheer’s *It’s a Wonderful Life*. He has performed Flavio at Houston Grand Opera and with the National Center for the Performing Arts in Beijing, Naulz in Lei Lei’s *Visitors on the Icy Mountain* with Shanghai Grand Theater, and Alfredo at the Shanghai Oriental Art Center. He recently sang Alfredo in with the Sacramento Philharmonic, the Aspen Opera Center, and at Houston Grand Opera.

*Mr. Yu’s engagement is sponsored by Thomas Fynan, MD.*
Maestro Brian Garman (Conductor) is the Artistic Director and Co-Founder of Berkshire Opera Festival, having conducted their inaugural production of Madama Butterfly in 2016, and every subsequent mainstage production. He also joined the Crested Butte Music Festival in 2018 as the new Music Director of Opera, leading a production of Falstaff. Prior to this, he opened Seattle Opera’s season conducting La Traviata, and the preceding fall was appointed the inaugural Music Director of the Seattle Opera Young Artists Program. He was previously on the conducting roster at New York City Opera and concurrently led runs of Verdi’s Un Giorno di Regno and Chabrier’s L’Étoile at Wolf Trap Opera Company. Maestro Garman was the Resident Conductor at Pittsburgh Opera for ten years, leading several productions to unanimous critical acclaim. Additionally, he was at the helm for numerous performances as Music Director of the Pittsburgh Opera Center. On the senior music staff of The Santa Fe Opera for six years, he was an associate conductor and assisted in the musical preparation of dozens of operas. As a pianist and coach, Maestro Garman is sought after by numerous singers of renown, and has been called upon frequently to give recitals and master classes around the United States and Europe.

Jonathon Loy (Stage Director), New York City and Berkshire based, is the Director of Production and Co-Founder of Berkshire Opera Festival. Mr. Loy has been a Guest Director on the Staging Staff at the Metropolitan Opera in New York City since 2009 and was a 2002 Opera America Fellowship winner. He recently made his Greek National Opera debut directing the revival of Sir David McVicar’s production of Medea. Mr. Loy spent five summers directing with Opera Fairbanks, where in 2014 he staged a new production of L’Italiana in Algeri with Vivica Genaux and Barry Banks. He has directed Don Giovanni for Opera Las Vegas, Hansel and Gretel for the Seattle Opera Young Artist Program, and three new operas – Cummings’s The Golden Gate, Weisman’s Fade and Myers’s The Hunger Art, as well as La Traviata, La Bohème, and Rigoletto for Center City Opera Theater. He is also an active assistant director, and has worked with such companies as The Santa Fe Opera, Washington National Opera, Houston Grand Opera, Opera Philadelphia, Michigan Opera Theater, Palm Beach Opera, Opera Memphis, and Opera North. Mr. Loy was General Director of Center City Opera Theater in Philadelphia from 2003–07, where he was the first to produce fully-staged opera in the Perelman Theater at the Kimmel Center for the Performing Arts.
Travis Bloom ("Breaking the Mold" artist; Musical Preparation) is a sought-after vocal coach and collaborative pianist in New York City. He serves as an artistic staff member at the Manhattan School of Music and the NYU Steinhardt School, collaborating for both the opera and voice departments. Last summer, Mr. Bloom joined the music staff of Opera Saratoga, serving as the principal coach/pianist for their production of *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*. He also recently served on the music staff for the highly-anticipated return of Gordon and Nottage’s *Intimate Apparel* at Lincoln Center. From 2019-2021, he worked as a faculty coach with the Chautauqua Institute Voice Program under the direction of Marlena Malas. During his time at Chautauqua, he worked closely with composers Ricky Ian Gordon and Ben Moore, presenting recitals of their music. Since 2018, he has worked with the Metropolitan Opera Guild as a pianist for their master class series. He has accompanied master classes with Renée Fleming, Susan Graham, Craig Rutenberg, Thomas Hampson, Isabel Leonard, Anthony Roth Costanzo, Harolyn Blackwell, and Piotr Beczala. Since moving to NYC in 2016, Mr. Bloom has been a staff pianist for the Bronx Opera Company and the International Vocal Arts Institute.

Christian Rozakis (Assistant Director) makes his Berkshire Opera Festival debut with this production. He is a New York City-based actor and artist who has spent the majority of his artistic career at the Metropolitan Opera at Lincoln Center, where he has worked on more than 40 productions. He is a graduate of Fiorello H. La Guardia High School of Music & Art and Performing Arts, and William Esper Studio NY. His recent operatic collaborations at the Metropolitan Opera include Cherubini’s *Medea*, Giordano’s *Fedora*, Don Carlo, and *Tosca*, all directed by Sir David McVicar, and *Don Giovanni* directed by Ivo Van Hove. Mr. Rozakis’s future collaborations for the upcoming season at the Met include *Carmen* directed by Carrie Cracknell and Heggie’s *Dead Man Walking* directed by Ivo Van Hove.

Stephen Dobay (Scenic Designer), born and raised in Puerto Rico, received his BA from Williams College and his MFA from the University of Washington. Mr. Dobay returns to Berkshire Opera Festival, where he has designed *Don Giovanni*, Falstaff, Don Pasquale, Rigoletto, Ariadne auf Naxos, and *Madama Butterfly*. His other opera credits include Hänsel und Gretel directed by Jonathan Loy (Opera Fairbanks), Vaughan Williams’s *Sir John in Love*, Verdi’s *Un Giorno di Regno*, Mascagni’s Zanetto and *L’Amico Fritz*, Wolf-Ferrari’s *Il Segreto di Susanna*, Walton’s *The Bear*, Sullivan’s *The Zoo* (Odyssey Opera), *L’elisir d’amore*, *L’Italiana in Algeri*, *Don Pasquale*, Donizetti’s *Il Campanello*, Nicolai’s *Die lustigen Weiber von Windsor*, Flotow’s *Martha* (Boston Midsummer Opera), *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*, Pagliacci (Opera Columbus), Handel’s *Agrippina* (New England Conservatory), and *The Play of Daniel* (The Cloisters).
Alex Jainchill (Lighting Designer) has credits that include Richard III (Shakespeare in the Park/Public Theatre), X: The Life and Times of Malcolm X (Detroit Opera), Long Day’s Journey Into Night (Audible/Minetta Lane), Gun and Powder (World Premiere, Signature Theatre DC), Falstaff (Berkshire Opera Festival), A Raisin in the Sun (Williamstown Theatre Festival), BLKS (MCC), Black Super Hero Magic Mama (Geffen Playhouse), The Wiz (Theatre Under The Stars), Mankind (Playwrights Horizons), MacBeth (Denver Center for Performing Arts), and Uni/Son (World Premiere, Oregon Shakespeare Festival). He was the associate lighting designer for the Broadway productions of Significant Other (Booth) and Old Times (American Airlines), as well as for the world premiere of Dear Evan Hansen. Recent installations include Watershed Moment at the Lyndhurst Mansion in Tarrytown, NY, and Liminality with Museum of Future Experiences in Brooklyn.

Beckie Kravetz (Hair and Make-up Designer) was a principal make-up artist, assistant wig master, and resident mask maker with Los Angeles Opera for over 20 years, where she transformed the faces of Placido Domingo, Sir Thomas Allen, Carol Vaness, Gerald Finley, and many others. She left Los Angeles in 2006 to focus on visual art, creating masks and figurative sculpture. Her work is exhibited in galleries and museums across the country, including a recent group exhibition at the Norman Rockwell Museum in Stockbridge. Ms. Kravetz was the recipient of a Fulbright Fellowship to study in Spain. From her home in Cummington, MA, she also continues to design wigs and make-up for regional opera and theater companies, and has been the hair and make-up designer for Berkshire Opera Festival since its inaugural season.

Geoffrey Larson (Chorus Master) has received acclaim for his performances in Opera Magazine, Opera News, Classical Voice North America, and more. He serves as Music Director of the Seattle Metropolitan Chamber Orchestra, and was awarded second prize in the 2021 International Orchestral Conducting Competition “UAL” in Almería, Spain. He has conducted orchestras such as the South Bend Symphony, Omaha Symphony, Spokane Symphony, Alabama Symphony, Bainbridge Symphony, Northwest Mahler Festival, National Radio and Television Orchestra of Albania, and Pleven Philharmonic (Bulgaria). Passionate about the music of our time, Mo. Larson has collaborated with composers such as Gabriel Prokofiev, Randy Woolf, Clarice Assad, Erberk Eryilmaz, and Nancy Galbraith. He recently worked with members of the Seattle Symphony and soprano Laquita Mitchell to present a new opera by Tom Cipullo based on the life of Josephine Baker, and has recorded with the Carnegie Mellon Contemporary Ensemble for the Naxos label. Mr. Larson is currently completing a doctoral thesis at the Indiana University Jacobs School of Music under the mentorship of Arthur Fagen and Thomas Wilkins, where he has served as Assistant Conductor of IU Opera and Ballet Theatre. He additionally counts Walter Huff, Robert Page, David Neely, and George Hurst among his teachers in conducting.
Brooke Stanton (Costume Designer) is a costumer who has worked in theater, film, and television. During her five years with George Lucas’s ILM, she built creatures for the *Star Wars* Special Edition Trilogy and *The Phantom Menace*. She has toured internationally and nationally designing for Peter Sellars. Other clients include Disney, Columbia Pictures, CBS, American Repertory Theatre, American Conservatory Theatre, Aspen Music Festival, Santa Fe Opera, Boston Symphony Youth Orchestra, Commonwealth Shakespeare, S.F. Shakespeare, New England Conservatory, and Odyssey Opera. She also costumed three films starring Robin Williams after studying costume design at New York University and textiles at California College of the Arts.
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Joshua Williams
About

Berkshire Opera Festival (BOF) is a fully-producing summer festival that presented its first season in 2016. BOF presents operatic productions in addition to recitals and other related musical events. Adhering to the highest standards of artistic excellence, BOF has restored fully-staged opera to a place of prominence in the Berkshire arts community.

We believe opera is a living, breathing, relevant art form, and must be nurtured as such for it to survive and thrive. There is no substitute for experiencing the power of the live, unamplified human voice in a theater, and opera has the inherent, transformative ability to greatly enhance one’s quality of life. BOF seeks to be an integral and vital part of our community by producing world-class programming that is musically and dramatically compelling, encompasses the entire operatic repertoire, and fulfills our mission to be accessible and affordable to all Berkshire area residents.

BOF is committed to inclusion, diversity, equity and access and is proud to be an equal opportunity employer. We welcome and affirm all individuals, including those who have been historically marginalized. We strive to create art where all members of our community see themselves and their stories reflected on stage.

Mission Statement

The mission of Berkshire Opera Festival is to entertain and enrich the lives of people of all ages and backgrounds throughout the Berkshire region by providing accessible and affordable performances of a broad range of operas with the highest artistic standards.

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On June 11, friends and supporters of Berkshire Opera Festival gathered at Gedney Farm for “Café Society,” a season kickoff and fundraiser in support of BOF’s 2023 season. We would like to thank everyone who supported and attended this special celebration, including the host and planning committees and the following sponsors, auction donors, vendors, and in-kind supporters.

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Executive Director’s Note

Dear Friends,

Throughout generations, communities of music lovers have come together to celebrate great operatic masterpieces alongside lesser-known treasures and contemporary works, keeping the artistic tradition alive by introducing new audiences to the rich musical storytelling of opera. Berkshire Opera Festival (BOF) is proud to be part of this community of torchbearers who – company by company, singer by singer, musician by musician – pass down our artistry, knowledge, and appreciation of this indelible art form for future opera artists and audiences.

We do this so that everyone has the opportunity to experience live, professional opera in their own community. If this is your first time attending a BOF production – or even if this is your first time ever seeing an opera – I hope you leave the theater this evening feeling you have experienced something truly magical and extraordinary and are excited to attend your next performance.

While the immediate health crisis posed by the pandemic is mostly behind us, the impact it has had on our 2020-2022 seasons has lingered. Your support for live, professional opera in the Berkshires is more important than ever.

BOF’s board, staff, and artists are looking to the future with optimism and a commitment to our mission of entertaining and enriching the lives of people of all ages and backgrounds throughout the Berkshire region with accessible and affordable performances of operas at the highest artistic standards. Our 10th anniversary is only two years away and we have BIG plans for celebrating together with you! But to make these dreams a reality, we need your help.

Please consider making a 100% tax-deductible contribution to Berkshire Opera Festival before our fiscal year ends on September 30! Ticket proceeds, business sponsorships, and foundation and government grants will underwrite 34% of our budget this year, and we are relying on donations from individuals like you to close the gap. Every gift of any amount is greatly appreciated and will help raise the funds still needed to meet this season’s goal.

On behalf of everyone at Berkshire Opera Festival, I cannot thank you enough for your ongoing friendship and support, and I hope you enjoy the show!

Abigail Rollins
Executive Director
President, Board of Directors

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And a special thanks to BOF staff, board, and the 2023 season artists and creative teams.

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Watercolor depicting the original Café Momus, at right, by Henri Lévis, late 1840s
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