

FLORENCIA EN EL AMAZONAS



A mystical journey into the jungle... and beyond

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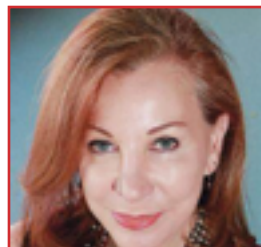
LETTER FROM OUR BOARD LEADERSHIP



DEAR FRIENDS,

Welcome to Pittsburgh Opera's production of **Florencia en el Amazonas**. We are happy to be able to join you in this mystical, magical journey down the Amazon.

Our production of this contemporary opera by Mexican composer Daniel Catán illustrates the rich diversity of the operatic tradition and Pittsburgh Opera's commitment to it. For the first time, Pittsburgh audiences will enjoy an opera in Spanish with a libretto based upon literature in the Latin American genre of Magical Realism. We have assembled a stellar cast of singers, whose roots span across the country and around the globe. Two of the principals in this diverse cast are alumni of our Resident Artist Program, who have gone on to pursue successful, critically-acclaimed careers – a testimony to the impact that Pittsburgh



Opera is having in the music world. Remarkably gifted talent combined with universal, timeless stories viewed through a variety of traditions is what makes opera a vibrant art form that enriches our community.

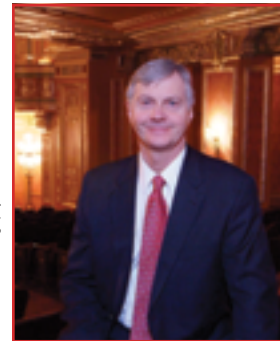
For this art to survive, it needs your philanthropic support. A commitment from each of us, who values being a part of a community strengthened by diversity and artistic expression, will enable Pittsburgh Opera to continue to enliven and move audiences through the beauty of opera. Pittsburgh Opera is dedicated to ensuring that the timeless stories of opera are told in a variety of voices, appealing to the full spectrum of our community, building audiences and donors that are at the foundation of this company's future success.

As we follow Florencia on her journey of discovery, please be mindful of your part in making this possible and how your gifts to Pittsburgh Opera enrich our community, and make your financial commitment today.

DON FISCHER
Board President

MICHELE FABRIZI
Board Chair

LETTER FROM OUR GENERAL DIRECTOR



© Daniel Y. Klein Photography

DEAR FRIENDS,

I am delighted to welcome you to **Florencia en el Amazonas**, the first Spanish-language opera in Pittsburgh Opera's 81-year history.

Like a proud parent, I can't restrain myself from boasting about this fantastic cast. After a stunning role debut as Princess Turandot with us in 2017, our very own Alexandra Loutsion returns to the Benedum today in the title role of diva Florencia Grimaldi. Those of you who were here last month for **Don Giovanni** will no

doubt recognize Craig Verm (who sang the role of Don Giovanni) as deck-hand/mystical figure Riolobo in this production.

Legendary baritone Nathan Gunn, whose voice was lauded by the *New York Times* for its "mighty heft and richness", and Sandra Piques Eddy, who *Broadway World* calls "utterly brilliant", play bickering married couple Alvaro and Paula. Will they rekindle their love, or decide to part ways? You're about to find out.

Making their Benedum debuts are Cuban-American tenor Andres Acosta, first-year Pittsburgh Opera Resident Artist Natasha Wilson, who hails from New Zealand, and bass-baritone Ashraf Sewailam, who was born and raised in Cairo. Mr. Acosta sings the role of the conflicted Arcadio; Ms. Wilson is the intrepid journalist Rosalba who must confront her feelings for him. Mr. Sewailam sings the role of the riverboat's Capitán.

While we won't be back in the Benedum until the spring, we are performing two chamber pieces elsewhere this winter that you won't want to miss. The first, Handel's **Alcina**, is a baroque masterpiece from 1735. It will be at the Pittsburgh CAPA Theater January 25th – February 2nd. The second, **The Last American Hammer**, a contemporary satire, premiered in 2018. We are producing its second-ever performances in our headquarters in the Strip District February 22nd – March 1st. I encourage you to attend them both, and see firsthand how our beautiful art form has evolved over the past 300 years.

As you may have heard, ticket sales cover less than 25% of our operating expenses. We rely on the generosity of our patrons, who believe in our mission and role in the community, to supplement their ticket purchases with an additional gift. Please consider a gift to our 80th Anniversary Campaign at pittsburghopera.org/give, or see one of our representatives in the lobby.

Warm regards,

CHRISTOPHER HAHN
General Director

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arts inspire us
all.

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FLORENCIA EN EL AMAZONAS

Composed by Daniel Catán
Libretto by Marcia Fuentes-Berain
Published by Associated Music Publishers

Inspired by the magic realism of Nobel Prize-winning novelist Gabriel García Márquez and his novels
Love in the Time of Cholera and One Hundred Years of Solitude

IN ORDER OF VOCAL APPEARANCE:

Riolo	Craig Verm**
Rosalba	Natasha Wilson*
Paula	Sandra Piques Eddy
Alvaro	Nathan Gunn
Capitán	Ashraf Sewailam ⁺
Florencia	Alexandra Loutsion**
Arcadio	Andres Acosta ⁺
Cabin Boy	Perry J. Gatch, IV ⁺

THE ARTISTIC TEAM:

Conductor	Antony Walker
Original Concept and Director	Jose Maria Condemi
Revival Director	Stephanie Havey
Original Set Designer	Phillip Lienau
Costume Designer	Elizabeth Poindexter
Original Lighting Designer	Ken Yunker
Lighting Design recreated by	Stevie O'Brian Agnew
Original Projection Designer	Aaron Rhyne
Wig & Make-up Designer	James Geier
Assistant Conductor	Glenn Lewis
Chorus Master	Mark Trawka
Associate Coach/Pianist	James Lesniak
Assistant Stage Director	Matthew Haney*
Stage Manager	Cindy Knight

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Original Set designed by Phillip Lienau
Original Projections Designed by Aaron Rhyne
Flying Effects provided by ZFX, Inc.
Scenery, Props, and Projections provided by Florida Grand Opera
Costumes designed for Utah Symphony & Opera by Elizabeth Poindexter

* Pittsburgh Opera debut
* Pittsburgh Opera Resident Artist
** Pittsburgh Opera Resident Artist alumni
Cast subject to change without notice.

Pittsburgh Opera presents
Florencia en el Amazonas, first performed at Wortham Theater Center in Houston on October 26, 1996.

These performances mark the first production of **Florencia en el Amazonas** at Pittsburgh Opera.

Opera in two acts.

Sung in Spanish with English texts projected above the stage.

Estimated performance time:
2 hours, 11 minutes with 1 intermission.

Special effects notice: strobe lights

Supertitles by Jeremy Sortore

Pittsburgh Opera offers an Audio Commentary service for patrons with visual impairments during Tuesday performances. To pick up an Assistive Listening Device, simply present an ID at the Guest Services Center. Braille and Large-Print programs are also available at each performance.

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performance of
Florencia en el Amazonas





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SYNOPSIS

FLORENCIA EN EL AMAZONAS

ACT I

The *El Dorado*, a steamboat sailing down the Amazon from Leticia, Colombia, to Manaus in the early 1900s. On the riverbank, Riolobo, a mystical character who can assume many forms, excitedly announces that the *El Dorado* is bound for the opera house in Manaus. There, the legendary opera diva Florencia Grimaldi, who has not set foot in her native South America for twenty years, will give a concert to reopen the theater. From among the crowds lining the riverbank and selling their local wares, we glimpse the ship's passengers coming aboard: a young journalist, Rosalba, who is working on a biography of Florencia Grimaldi; Paula and Alvaro, a middle-aged couple journeying to hear Grimaldi in hopes of rekindling their marriage; and the diva herself, traveling incognito.

As the ship pulls away from the busy port, Florencia reflects on the emptiness of her life and her desire to rediscover herself and her long-lost lover, Cristóbal, a butterfly hunter in search of the rare Emerald Muse. Rosalba's notebook is rescued from the river by the ship Capitán's nephew, Arcadio, and they exchange confidences about their longings and desires. Alvaro and Paula attempt to dine on deck, but misunderstandings about the exotic menu lead only to bitter exchanges.

Florencia, awakened by the sounds of the jungle, learns from the Capitán that the butterfly hunter has disappeared into the jungle without a trace. Later, a tempestuous game of cards contrasts the growing affection between Rosalba and Arcadio and the escalating tension between Paula and Alvaro. A violent storm quickly develops, and the ship is carried helplessly in the rushing currents in a downpour of pink rain. Alvaro saves the boat from being crushed by tree trunks but is knocked overboard. With the Capitán unconscious, Riolobo appears in the guise of a river-spirit and implores the mercy of the gods of the river. Arcadio ably takes the helm but is unable to stop the forces of nature as the ship runs aground.

20-Minute Intermission

SYNOPSIS continued on next page

ACT II

In the quiet after the storm, Florencia wonders whether she is alive or dead. Arcadio and Rosalba rejoice to find they have survived the storm, but, frightened by the intensity of their feelings for each other, vow not to fall in love and risk disillusionment. Paula laments the loss of Alvaro, recognizing that the wall between them was pride—not a lack of love. Riolobo once again calls upon the mystical and transformative powers of the Amazon. Suddenly Alvaro is returned to the boat, explaining that Paula’s voice called him back from the brink of death. On behalf of all the passengers, Florencia thanks him for saving their lives, and they resume their journey to Manaus.

Rosalba finds her ruined notebook, which contained all her notes for the biography of Florencia. Rosalba is distraught by the loss of two years’ work, but Florencia tells her she has lost nothing irreplaceable. The two women begin to argue about the source of Grimaldi’s talents, and when Florencia passionately declares that the diva’s gift sprang from her love for a man, Rosalba suddenly realizes the woman standing before her is the opera singer herself.

With both pairs of lovers reconciled to their need for each other, the ship is about to reach Manaus when it is discovered that no one may disembark because of a cholera epidemic. In despair at being unable to fulfill her search, Florencia’s spirit drifts toward Cristóbal in a mystical reunion.

– Courtesy of Houston Grand Opera



Photograph by David Bachman. Taken at the National Aviary.

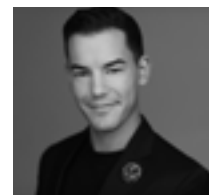
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ARTIST BIOGRAPHIES

FLORENCIA EN EL AMAZONAS



ANDRES ACOSTA: ARCADIO

Praised for his sweet lyric voice, Cuban-American tenor Andres Acosta continues to stand out through his strong vocal presence and magnetic acting. In the 2019-2020 season, Acosta makes his Atlanta Opera debut as Alejandro/**Frida**, makes his Houston Grand Opera debut as Father Matias/**El Milagro del Recuerdo**, reprises the role of Timothy Laughlin/**Fellow Travelers** in his house debut with Madison

Opera, and returns to Minnesota Opera and debuts with the Glimmerglass Festival as Don Ottavio/**Don Giovanni**.

Mr. Acosta’s 2018-19 season included his highly acclaimed portrayal of Timothy Laughlin in Minnesota Opera’s production of **Fellow Travelers** by Greg Spears, and he reprised the role of Arcadio/**Florencia en el Amazonas** with Pensacola Opera. In concert he debuted with the Ravinia Festival and Chicago Symphony Orchestra as a Street Singer/**Bernstein’s Mass**, the Cincinnati Symphony for their autumn Pops Concert, the Indianapolis Chamber Orchestra in Bernstein’s **Trouble in Tahiti**, and LOFTrecital for Bernstein’s **Songfest**. Acosta joined Theatre Latté Da’s national tour as Victor Granier/**All is Calm**. He also competed as a semifinalist in Houston Grand Opera’s Eleanor McCollum Competition.

In the 2017-2018 season, Acosta was an Apprentice at the Merola Opera Program and then joined the Resident Artist Program at Minnesota Opera. His season included covering and performing Duca/**Rigoletto**, Gennaro/**Lucrezia Borgia**, Nicias/**Thaïs**, Beppe/**Rita**, and Ernesto/**Don Pasquale**.

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5

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Photo: Sigrid Colomyes

WED

8 pm

BYHAM THEATER

MAR 25 2020

ARTIST BIOGRAPHIES, continued



SANDRA PIQUES EDDY: PAULA

Recent engagements include: Rosina/**Il Barbiere di Siviglia** on tour with New Zealand Opera, a reprise of **Carmen** on tour with Maestro Seiji Ozawa's Music Academy in Japan, Suzuki/**Madama Butterfly** with Inland Northwest Opera, and the Abbess/**Suor Angelica** at the Metropolitan Opera. Along with her recent Japan tours, Ms. Eddy has also performed **Carmen** with Opera Colorado, Portland Opera, Austin Opera, Lyric Opera of Kansas City, Michigan Opera Theater, Rochester Philharmonic, Opera Coeur d'Alene, Greensboro Opera, Spokane Symphony, and Opera North (UK). Other significant roles include: Charlotte/**Werther** with Boston Lyric Opera; Fiona in Nico Muhly's **Two Boys** at the Metropolitan Opera; Dido/**Dido and Aeneas** with Florentine Opera; Isabella/**L'Italiana in Algeri** with Atlanta Opera, Vancouver Opera, Arizona Opera, and Boston Midsummer Opera; **Rosina** with Vancouver Opera, Lyric Opera of Kansas City, Austin Opera; Angelina/**La Cenerentola** with Spoleto Festival, Austin Lyric, Saratoga Opera, and Greensboro Opera, Idamante/**Idomeneo** with Boston Lyric Opera and Florentine Opera; Dorabella/**Così fan tutte** with Glimmerglass Opera, New York City Opera, Boston Lyric Opera, and in her Pittsburgh Opera company debut in 2006. Sandra looks forward to her role debut as Adalgisa/**Norma** at Boston Lyric Opera, her home opera company, this season.



NATHAN GUNN: ALVARO

Baritone Nathan Gunn has made a reputation as one of the most exciting and versatile baritones performing today. He has sung leading lyric baritone roles and appeared in several world premieres in many of the most renowned opera houses of the world including the Metropolitan Opera, San Francisco Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Royal Opera House, Paris Opera, and Bayerische Staatsoper. Also a distinguished concert performer, Mr. Gunn has appeared with the New York Philharmonic, Boston Symphony Orchestra, Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Cleveland Orchestra and the London Symphony Orchestra, and has been presented in recitals in New York, Chicago, Boston, San Francisco, Philadelphia, Toronto, London, and Brussels. His discography includes **Billy Budd** (Virgin Classics) which won the 2010 Grammy Award, **Il Barbiere di Siviglia** (SONY Classics), Rogers & Hammerstein's **Allegro** (Sony Masterworks Broadway), Bernstein's **Wonderful Town** (LSO Live) and his solo albums **Just Before Sunrise** (Sony/BMG Masterworks) and **American Anthem** (EMI). He also starred in the Metropolitan Opera's HD broadcasts of **The Magic Flute** and **The Merry Widow**. Mr. Gunn has also ventured outside the standard opera repertoire with performances of the title role in **Sweeney Todd** at the Houston Grand Opera, **Camelot** and **Carousel** with the New York Philharmonic (both broadcast on PBS's Great Performances), **Showboat** at Carnegie Hall and the Lyric Opera of Chicago, and **Wonderful Town** with the London Symphony Orchestra. Mr. Gunn is a professor of voice at the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana and General Director of the Lyric Theater @ Illinois.



ALEXANDRA LOUSSION: FLORENCIA

Former Resident Artist and Pittsburgh native Alexandra Loutsion continues to be recognized for her passionate performances as a rising star on the operatic stage. Ms. Loutsion's 2019-2020 season includes her role and company debut with Minnesota Opera singing Elektra/**Elektra**, a debut with Austin Opera and return to Palm Beach Opera singing Turandot/**Turandot** and a debut with the Chicago Philharmonic singing excerpts from Sankaram's **Taking Up Serpents**. Last season she made her international debut with Canadian Opera Company singing Overseer/**Elektra** and covering Elektra/**Elektra**, returned to Central City Opera as Leonora/**Il Trovatore**, and debuted as Turandot/**Turandot** with New Orleans Opera. She recently debuted with San Francisco Opera singing Overseer/**Elektra** and covering Turandot/**Turandot**, sang Tosca/**Tosca** with Palm Beach Opera and Wolf Trap Opera with the National Symphony Orchestra, and covered Dama di Lady/**Macbeth** for the Chicago Symphony Orchestra under Riccardo Muti. On the concert stage, Ms. Loutsion has sung the soprano solo in Verdi's **Messa da Requiem** with the Santa Fe Symphony and the Academy Chamber Orchestra of Pittsburgh, as well as Beethoven's **Symphony No. 9** with West Virginia Symphony, Syracuse Symphoria, Erie Philharmonic, and the Cathedral Choral Society of Washington D.C. She recently represented the USA as a quarterfinalist in the Francisco Viñas Competition in Barcelona, Spain, and was also awarded a place in the Greek America Foundation's "Forty under 40" Class of 2018, which celebrates the professional excellence and philanthropic endeavors of North Americans of Greek descent.



ASHRAF SEWAILAM: CAPITÁN

Egyptian-born bass baritone Ashraf Sewailam made his US debut as Leporello/**Don Giovanni** with Opera Colorado. This season, Mr. Sewailam performs the title role in **Ali Baba** with Opera Southwest, Giorgio/**I Puritani** with Opera Choir in Rotterdam, Ramphis/**Aida** with Virginia Opera, and Colline/**La bohème** with Seattle Opera. Last season, he performed the role of Osmin/**Abduction from the Seraglio** and Queequeg/**Moby-Dick** with Opera San Jose, Bartolo/**Le nozze di Figaro** with San Diego Opera, Colline/**La bohème** with Austin Opera, and Basilio/**Il barbiere di Siviglia** with New Zealand Opera. Mr. Sewailam also recently sang on a recording of **The 13th Child**, a new opera by Danish composer Poul Ruders. Mr. Sewailam's concert appearances include Orso Faledro/**La nave**, Uin-Sci /Leoni's **Loracolo**, and Salomone/Montemezzi's **L'incantesimo** at Avery Fisher Hall; his Carnegie Hall début as the Bass soloist in Rutter's **Mass of the Children**; Mahler's **Symphony No. 8** with The Colorado Mahlerfest; and the bass solo in Beethoven's **Symphony No. 9** with the Phoenix Symphony. In addition to his singing engagements, Mr. Sewailam served as music director for Disney Character Voice International (DCVI) dubbing Disney productions into Arabic, and performed several of the characters. Mr. Sewailam holds a doctorate in vocal performance and pedagogy from the University of Colorado at Boulder.

The Amazing Amazon

The Amazon basin covers almost 40 percent of the entire South American continent, covering a size about equal to the lower 48 United States, and forms almost 60% of the world's rainforest. The most biodiverse place on earth, the Amazon rainforest is home to thousands of tree species, 50,000 species of other plants, hundreds of thousands of insects, 427 mammal species, 1,300 bird species, 378 species of reptiles, and more than 400 species of amphibians.

How long and wide is the Amazon River?

The length of the Amazon River is approximately 4000 miles and is the widest river of the world—between 1.0 and 6.2 miles at low stage. During the wet season, the river expands to 30 miles or more.

How wide is the mouth of the Amazon?

The mouth of the Amazon is more than 200 miles wide. The Amazon River has by far the greatest total water flow of any river and is navigable for large ocean steamers to about 900 miles inland.

How much water flows into the Atlantic Ocean from the Amazon?

The Amazon discharges 7,831,000 cubic feet every second directly into the turbulent Atlantic. Because of the high tidal energy and the strong waves, sediments from the Amazon flow out into the open ocean and so the Amazon never forms a true delta.

More than 30 million people, including 350 indigenous and ethnic groups, live in the Amazon and depend on nature for agriculture, clothing, and traditional medicines. The major threat to the Amazon rainforest is caused by uncontrolled and/or poorly planned deforestation.

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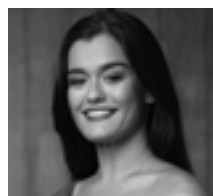




CRAIG VERM: RÍOLOBO

A former Pittsburgh Opera Resident Artist, Craig Verm was last seen on the Pittsburgh Opera stage in the title role of **Don Giovanni**, Marcello/**La bohème**, and Peter/**Hansel and Gretel**. Other performances include Papageno/**The Magic Flute**, Zurga/**The Pearl Fishers**, Ping/**Turandot**, Tom Joad/**The Grapes of Wrath**, Mercutio/**Roméo et Juliette**, Junius/**The Rape of Lucretia**, the

Novice's Friend/**Billy Budd**, Angelotti/**Tosca**, as well as student matinee performances of Guglielmo/**Così fan tutte** and Figaro/**Le nozze di Figaro**. He recently returned to Austin Lyric Opera as Lt. Gordon/**Silent Night**. In the 2019-20 season, he will return to Austin Lyric Opera and also London, England with the BBC symphony orchestra as Doug Hansen/**Everest**. He will also sing Jupiter/**Orpheus in the Underworld** with Madison Opera. In the 2017-18 season, he sang **Billy Budd** with the Des Moines Metro Opera in a production that won a regional Emmy award, he returned to Opera Philadelphia where he revisited **War Stories**, a double-bill of **Il combattimento** and **I Have No Stories To Tell You**, he returned to Seattle Opera as Guglielmo/**Così fan tutte** and Claudio/**Beatrice et Benedict**, and while scheduled to sing Masetto/**Don Giovanni** with the Dallas Opera, he filled in for an ailing colleague and sang the entire run as the title role to critical acclaim. He also revisited the role of Doug Hansen/**Everest** with Lyric Opera of Kansas City and returned to The Santa Fe Opera as Haly/**L'Italiana in Algeri**. Mr. Verm has made international debuts on stages including Lyric Opera of Chicago as Albert/**Werther**, Escamillo/**Carmen** (Teatro Municipal de Santiago), where he later returned as **Billy Budd**, at Théâtre du Capitole de Toulouse as Sid/**Albert Herring**, as Ramiro/**L'heure espagnole** (Nationale Reisopera in the Netherlands), and as Count Almaviva/**Le nozze di Figaro** (Seiji Ozawa's Ongaku-juku Festival). He graduated from Rice University's Shepherd School of Music and the University of Cincinnati-College Conservatory of Music. He was also a 2006 national semi-finalist in the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions and is a former member of the young artist programs of Santa Fe Opera and Cincinnati Opera.



NATASHA WILSON: ROSALBA

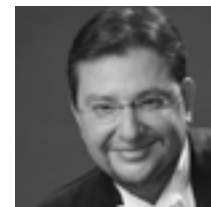
Natasha Wilson is a first-year Pittsburgh Opera Resident Artist in 2019-20. She is scheduled to perform Morgana/**Alcina** and Frasquita/**Carmen** and the **Carmen** Student Matinee. Natasha Wilson is a New Zealand-born soprano, and has a Bachelor of Music, (Honours, first-class), majoring in classical vocal performance, from the University of Auckland. Natasha was recently based in San Francisco, where she

completed her Post-Graduate Diploma in Vocal Studies at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, under the tutelage of César Ulloa.

Ms. Wilson made her professional debut with New Zealand Opera, as a member of the company for their touring production of **The Mikado**. She has also performed internationally with the Australian Brandenburg Orchestra as the soprano soloist in both their Spanish Baroque concert series, as well as their opera series, **Bittersweet Obsessions**.

As a 2018 Dame Malvina Major Emerging Artist with New Zealand Opera, Ms. Wilson was seen on stage as Paquette in **Candide** during Auckland Arts Festival, Giannetta in **The Elixir of Love**, and as Adina in the 'Opera in Schools tour' version of **The Elixir of Love**, as part of New Zealand Opera's Education programme. Ms. Wilson has also been a member of the Kiri Te Kanawa Foundation's mentoring programme since 2016.

Ms. Wilson's residency is generously sponsored by Michele and Pat Atkins.



ANTONY WALKER: CONDUCTOR

Music Director Antony Walker celebrates his fourteenth season at Pittsburgh Opera in 2019-20. He made his Metropolitan Opera debut in 2011 with Gluck's **Orfeo ed Euridice**, and has returned to The Met since then to conduct **Il barbiere di Siviglia**, **The Pearl Fishers**, and **The Magic Flute**. Maestro Walker enjoys superlative reviews not only for his Pittsburgh Opera productions, but also his recent concert performances of Donizetti's rarely-performed

Maria di Rohan, Massenet's **Hérodiade**, and Beethoven's **Leonore** at Washington Concert Opera. In 2010, Maestro Walker made debuts at English National Opera in **Lucia di Lammermoor**, at Canadian Opera Company in **Maria Stuarda**, and at The Santa Fe Opera in **Madama Butterfly**. In 2016 Maestro Walker was proud to conduct Rossini's monumental **Semiramide** in Florence, Italy, where the operatic art was born. He currently serves as Artistic Director of Washington Concert Opera in Washington D.C., founding Artistic Director and Conductor Emeritus of Pinchgut Opera in Australia, and was Music Director of Cantillation and the Orchestra of the Antipodes for almost two decades. He was Chorus Master and Staff Conductor for Welsh National Opera from 1998-2002 and Musical Director of Sydney Philharmonia Choirs from 1992-97. Since his conducting debut in 1991, Maestro Walker has led nearly 200 operas, large-scale choral and orchestral works, and numerous symphonic and chamber works with companies in Europe, North America, and Australia. His extraordinary career includes engagements with Opera Australia, Welsh National Opera, New York City Opera, Teatro Comunale Bologna, Orchestre Colonne (Paris), Wolf Trap Opera, Merola Program at the San Francisco Opera, Cincinnati Opera, Glimmerglass Festival, Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, Vancouver Opera, Sydney Symphony Orchestra, Melbourne Symphony Orchestra, and Sydney Opera House Orchestra.



STEPHANIE HAVEY: STAGE DIRECTOR

Winner of the Adelaide Bishop award for artistic quality and winner of the Opera America Director-Designer Showcase, Stephanie Havey has staged productions for Pittsburgh Opera, Michigan Opera Theatre, Arizona Opera, Opera de Montreal, Atlanta Opera, Opera Omaha, New York City Opera, and Hawaii Opera Theatre, as well as many new productions for The Curtis Institute of Music, **Tosca** for the

Lyrrique-en-mer International Festival de Belle-Ile, **The Crucible** for Opera Santa Barbara, and **Shining Brow** for Tulsa Opera. Most recently she was the associate director for a new production of **Rigoletto** at Houston Grand Opera. Ms. Havey also has been a member of the staging staff at San Francisco Opera and The Santa Fe Opera.

Upcoming engagements include Seattle Opera, a new production of **Norma** for Boston Lyric Opera, and a return to Arizona Opera. This year, Ms. Havey had the honor of hosting the 2019 Opera America Director-Designer Showcase at the National Conference as a returning alumna.

Ms. Havey is a frequent collaborator for the development of new opera, staging new works with Opera Philadelphia for their Double Exposure event, Opera America's New Works Forum, and in her third season as the Resident Stage Director for North American New Opera Workshop.

Stephanie Havey has been a guest instructor for Young Artist training programs including Opera America's Career Blueprints, Curtis Institute of Music, Oberlin Conservatory of Music, NYU Tisch School of the Arts, and Carnegie Mellon University.



**STEVIE O'BRIEN AGNEW:
LIGHTING DESIGN RECREATION**

Stevie O'Brian Agnew is currently the Resident Lighting Director for Florida Grand Opera. He has designed lighting for Dimensions Dance Theater of Miami, Miami Musical Festival, Pittsburgh Opera, Florida Grand Opera, and Ash Lawn Opera. Mr. Agnew holds a Masters of Fine Arts in Lighting Design from Carnegie Mellon

University School of Drama. He has worked and designed for several other companies across the United States.



PHILIP LIENAU: SET DESIGNER

Phillip Lienau has designed opera, dance, and theatre for companies including Seattle Opera, Opera Colorado, and Seattle Shakespeare Company. He has taught in the University of Washington School of Drama and at Seattle University. He is also an architectural designer and cartographer, and currently designs for the themed entertainment industry.



ELIZABETH POINDEXTER: COSTUME DESIGNER

Ms. Poindexter's design credits include work for Opera San Jose, Utah Opera, American Musical Theatre of San Jose, California Shakespeare Festival, San Jose Repertory Theatre, Western Stage Company (Salinas, CA), The Alley Theatre (Houston, TX) and The Jose Limon Dance Company (New York, NY). Ms. Poindexter was a member of the design faculty of the Television, Radio, Film and

Theatre Department of San Jose State University for 30 years. Her university costume design work included dance (modern and jazz), video and film, musical theatre and opera, as well as classic theatre repertory. Additionally, Elizabeth works as a professional makeup artist in the Bay Area. Her credits include San Francisco Opera as a Principal Makeup Artist, San Francisco Ballet, Opera San Jose, Mark Morris Dance Company, and American Musical Theatre of San Jose. She is a member of the International Alliance of Theatrical Stage Employees, Motion Picture Technicians and Allied Crafts of the United States and Canada – Makeup Artists and Hair Stylists – Local 706. Elizabeth is an active member of the Costume Commission of the United States Institute for Theatre Technology, and a founding member of the Bay Area Costumers' Alliance.



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Designs include **BROADWAY: The Sound Inside**, **Anastasia** (Outer Critics Circle Award, Drama Desk Award), **A Gentleman's Guide to Love and Murder** (Drama Desk Award), **Bonnie and Clyde**. OFF BROADWAY: **This Ain't No Disco** (Atlantic), **Absolute Brightness of Leonard Pelkey** (Westside), **Bootycandy** (Playwrights Horizons),

Appropriate (Signature), **Water By the Spoonful**, **Lonely, I'm Not**, **The Blue Flower**, **All New People** (Second Stage), **Wild With Happy** (The Public, Drama Desk Nomination), **Graceland** (Lincoln Center). OPERA: **The Thirteenth Child** (Santa Fe Opera), **The Ghosts of Versailles** (LA Opera), **La Traviata** (Wolftrap), **Florenca en el Amazonas** (Florida Grand Opera Colorado, Utah Opera) BALLET: **The Wizard of Oz** (Kansas City Ballet, Colorado Ballet, Royal Winnipeg Ballet, Cincinnati Ballet), **The Sun Also Rises** (Washington Ballet) DISNEY: **Frozen** (Disneyland), **Beauty and the Beast**, **Tangled**, **Frozen** (Disney Cruise Lines) REGIONAL: Arena Stage, Asolo Rep, Berkley Rep, Ford's Theatre, Geffen Playhouse, Hartford Stage, Huntington Theatre Company, La Jolla Playhouse, The Old Globe, Washington Ballet, Shakespeare Theatre.



KEN YUNKER: ORIGINAL LIGHTING DESIGNER

Mr. Yunker is currently the resident lighting designer for the Sarasota Opera Association (fourteenth season) and has served as a principal designer for the Tony Award winning Alliance Theatre Company since 2004 (including world premiers of **Hospice**, **Pointing At The Moon**, **Troubadore**, **Tiger Style!**, **Native Guard**, **The Geller Girls**, **What I Learned in Paris**, **Bluish**, **Day of Kings**

and Leap).

Mr. Yunker has designed more than 600 productions in his 35+ year career, including over 76 productions for the Sarasota Opera, which just became the only American opera company to perform every note ever written by Verdi. Previous to Sarasota, Mr. Yunker served as resident designer for The Atlanta Opera for 25 years and 53 productions (**Der Fliegende Hollander**, the Basil Twist **Hansel and Gretel**, **Turandot**, **Aida**, **Eugene Onegin**, **Der Rosenkavalier**, **Porgy & Bess** and **Fidelio**).

National opera credits include Florida Grand Opera, Bermuda Arts Festival, Utah Symphony and Opera, Tulsa Opera, Fort Worth Opera, San Antonio Opera, Opera Santa Barbara, Arizona Opera, Nevada Opera Theatre, Mobile Opera, and North Carolina Opera, to name a few. Credits in Atlanta include Georgia Shakespeare, Theatre in the Square, True Colors, Theatrical Outfit, Georgia Ensemble, Atlanta Lyric, Ballethnic Dance Company, Rotaru Ballet, Brenau University, Georgia State University, Clayton State University, Emory University, and Florida State University.

Regional awards include the Suzie Bass award for **The Geller Girls**, **Avenue X**, and **Pancakes, Pancakes!**, with nominations for **August: Osage County**, **Into The Woods**, **One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest**, **Troubadour**, **Rejoice** and **The Persians**. At Theatre in the Square Mr. Yunker earned seven Jenny Awards, all for Best Lighting. In 2002 he was nominated for Artist of the Year at The Atlanta Abbey Awards and was featured in Creative Loafing's Best of Atlanta.



JAMES GEIER: WIG & MAKEUP DESIGNER

James Geier returns to Pittsburgh Opera for a sixteenth season after recently completing his fifteenth season at Cincinnati Opera. He formerly worked as a staff makeup artist and wigmaker for a decade with San Francisco Opera and, more recently, as resident wig and makeup designer for Florida Grand Opera. Mr.

Geier is a graduate of the Theatre Arts Department at Brandeis University and completed apprenticeships with both the San Francisco and Santa Fe operas. He has worked for several film companies, including Lucasfilms Ltd., as well as an impressive number of opera, ballet, and theatre companies. His credits include the Denver Center Theatre Company, Cincinnati Shakespeare Company, Cincinnati Ballet, Spoleto Festival USA, Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, Baltimore Opera, Austin Lyric Opera, Seattle Opera, Tulsa Opera, Fort Worth Opera, Opera Omaha, Portland Opera, the Bolshoi Ballet, Kirov Ballet, San Francisco Ballet, Fresno Grand Opera, and American Ballet Theatre.



GLENN LEWIS: ASSISTANT CONDUCTOR

Glenn Lewis, a native of Rochester, New York, has worked as Pittsburgh Opera Head of Music since January 2008. He has served as pianist, vocal coach, and assistant conductor primarily to Music Director Antony Walker on most of the main stage productions of the past several seasons. These include **Tosca**, **Eugene Onegin**, **Samson & Dalila**, **Rigoletto**, **Don Giovanni**,

The Grapes of Wrath, **Orphée**, and **Aida**. Mr. Lewis made his conducting debut in 2009 with the Resident Artist production of **Don Pasquale** and has since conducted **Little Women**, **Dark Sisters**, and **Hänsel und Gretel**, among others. In April 2018, he made his debut with Syracuse Opera conducting **Madama Butterfly**. In February 2017 he conducted **The Abduction from the Seraglio** with Dayton Opera. In the spring of 2016, he was in Washington, D.C. at the Kennedy Center working as an assistant conductor for the **Wagner Ring Cycle** at the Washington National Opera. For 17 seasons he has been on the staff of the Santa Fe Opera. There he has worked on productions including **Wozzeck** and **Salome** with Maestro David Robertson and **Peter Grimes** with Maestro Alan Gilbert. Mr. Lewis worked for 11 years in the opera houses in Cologne and Düsseldorf, Germany, where he conducted productions of **La cenerentola**, **Orpheus in the Underworld**, **Zar und Zimmermann**, and **My Fair Lady**. While there, he assisted Maestri James Conlon, John Fiore, Donald Runnicles, among others, on works including **Elektra**, **The Makropulos Case**, **Der Rosenkavalier**, and **Meistersinger von Nürnberg**. Past engagements include the Metropolitan Opera and Lyric Opera of Chicago. He is a frequent recitalist in solo, chamber, and vocal repertoire. He holds degrees in piano performance from Ithaca College, Northwestern University, and an Artist Diploma in Opera Coaching and Conducting from Cincinnati Conservatory of Music.



MARK TRAWKA: CHORUS MASTER

Mark Trawka joined Pittsburgh Opera as Director of Musical Studies for the prestigious Pittsburgh Opera Resident Artist Training Program in the 2003-04 season. In the 2006-07 season, he also took on the position of Chorus Master. Mr. Trawka coaches and performs with the Resident Artists and has also accompanied renowned mezzo-soprano Marianne Cornetti in her Pittsburgh recital appearances. He has been a member

of the music staff at Houston Grand Opera, Dallas Opera, and Portland Opera (Oregon), where he was principal pianist and assistant chorus master. Mr. Trawka served as coach/accompanist at Chautauqua Opera and at Glimmerglass Festival for many summer seasons. In the summer of 2006, he was director of the resident artist program at Berkshire Opera. He was music director at the Tyrolean Opera Program in the summer of 2014. Mr. Trawka has been a member of the coaching faculty at Songfest in Los Angeles for the last five summer seasons. He made his opera conducting debut at Pittsburgh Opera with the Resident Artist production of Ricky Ian Gordon's **27**. Educated at the Eastman School of Music and the University of Southern California, Mr. Trawka began his operatic career in the Houston Opera Studio and in San Francisco Opera's Merola Program.

Mark Trawka's faculty position is generously sponsored by Eileen and John Olmsted.



JAMES LESNIAK: ASSOCIATE COACH/PIANIST

A native of Kenosha, Wisconsin, James Lesniak joined the Pittsburgh Opera music staff in 2006. After initial studies with Sheila Wiesztort, he received his Bachelor's and Master's degrees at Indiana University, where he studied with pianists Menahem Pressler, Karen Shaw, and Evelyne Brancart, with the mentorship and influence of Nicolas Larin. His university credits

include music staff work for Mississippi State University and the Indiana University Opera Theatre. Further studies included an apprenticeship with the Domingo-Cafritz Young Artist Program at Washington National Opera for two seasons, where he gave his stage debut in the non-singing/piano playing role of Lazinski in **Fedora** at the Kennedy Center, accompanying Plácido Domingo in the opera. In addition, Mr. Lesniak has served on the coaching staff of Brevard Music Center, Glimmerglass Opera, Washington National Opera at the Kennedy Center, and the National Symphony. He has been an official pianist for the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions, made his conducting debut in 2017 with Pittsburgh Opera's production of composer Laura Kaminsky's **As One**, and conducted Pittsburgh Opera's production of Tom Cipullo's **Glory Denied**. Since 2018, James has served as a coach and accompanist for the vocal students at Slippery Rock University, and for over a decade has been an active member of the Pittsburgh Opera Trunks teaching artist presentation team, participating in engagement programs designed to enlighten and inspire the youth throughout the region. For the summer months, he frequently returns to the music staff of the prestigious Santa Fe Opera, where he has served as Musical Director for their Winter Concert Tour and was on the music staff for the Grammy Award winning production of **The (R)evolution of Steve Jobs**.



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DIRECTOR'S NOTES

FLORENCIA EN EL AMAZONAS

By Jose Maria Condemi

In Werner Herzog's lauded film *Fitzcarraldo*, an opera-obsessed title character embarks on a daring trip into the thick of the Amazon rainforest. Discontent with his own existence as a failed rubber tycoon, he dreams of building an opera house so he paddles his boat to the legendary Teatro Amazonas in Manaus. He yearns to visit the striking architectural marvel and hear Enrico Caruso sing in Verdi's **Ernani**. In the end, he fails at his initial goal but is nevertheless transformed by the audacious journey, the people he meets along the way, and the discoveries he makes about his life and the pursuit of his dreams.

A similar voyage of discovery and self-transformation is at the center of Daniel Catán's strikingly beautiful **Florencia en el Amazonas**. In the opera's opening scene, as passengers hoping to visit the same mythical opera house board the steamboat *El Dorado*, we meet an array of characters who are at critical crossroads in their lives. Florencia Grimaldi is a celebrated and worldly operatic soprano who still craves and aches for the ardent love she once shared with a butterfly hunter. Paula and Alvaro seek to rekindle their own lost passion but seem unable to get past the nuisance and pettiness of married domesticity. The journalist Rosalba, who hopes to write a book about Florencia, struggles to reconcile the idealized version she holds of her subject matter with the reality of her idiosyncrasies. Each has chosen to take the trip for their own ostensible self-seeking motives but, as the *El Dorado* ventures farther and farther into the fabled rainforest, a deeper and richer meaning and a web of interconnectedness will reveal itself. Confronted with the possibility of death, their lives will be upended and forever changed. Reality and fantasy intersect as the treacherous beauty of the Amazon river puts the travelers' preconceptions of their hopes and dreams to the ultimate test. In the end, their outward trip

“ This open-ended story invites us all to make our own meaning of it. ”

will become a journey into themselves and their destination may be an entirely different place from what they envisioned when they set out on the journey.

Mexican-born Daniel Catán is arguably one of the most notable Latin American composers in opera. Unlike most modern composers, his music is Neo-Romantic and his vocal writing is unabashedly lyrical, lush, and evocative, with echoes of Puccini, Ravel, and Debussy. These qualities are in full display in **Florencia en el Amazonas**, a story that fits Catán's style effortlessly. Catán and his collaborator Marcela Fuentes-Berain based their libretto on the writings and characters of Gabriel García Márquez, although it is not directly drawn from any of his works. The story of the opera is told in the distinctive style of magic realism in which fantastical and supernatural elements are presented in an otherwise realistic, even ordinary setting. In *Florencia*, the character of Riolobo functions as the intermediary between reality and the mystical world of the Amazon river and the forces of magic of the rainforest.

The production that I have created with my collaborators relies on the use of video projections to manifest the elements of magic realism that are the heart and soul of the opera. The use of such medium allows to seamlessly and suggestively transition from the naturalistic milieus, in which some of the scenes take place, to the more surreal and psychologically environments that the story requires.

The opera ends in an unknowable mystery: did Florencia find her butterfly hunter lover? Did she morph into a butterfly herself? Or, after a cholera outbreak, did she simply succumb to illness and feverish hallucination? Nobody can tell for sure. This open-ended story invites us all to make our own meaning of it. Let's go on a journey with **Florencia en el Amazonas!**

– Jose Maria Condemi

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February 16, 2020: Meet the creative team that nailed *The Last American Hammer*, composer Peter Hilliard and librettist Matt Bosesi.

March 22, 2020: First Chair: Perspectives from Charles Stegeman, Concertmaster, and Rachel Stegeman, Assistant Concertmaster.

SOCIAL EVENTS

December 15, 2019: Holiday Party *limited capacity

March 9, 2020: Fashion Show

Summer 2020: Garden Party



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50th Anniversary

**Charms, Riddles, and Elegies
of the Medieval Northlands**

Tuesday, January 14, 7:30 PM

PNC Theatre
at Point Park University's
Pittsburgh Playhouse



**For tickets and more information
visit www.chathambaroque.org**

Welcome to All the Pleasures

Henry Purcell's Odes to Saint Cecilia



Capriccio Stravagante

Imaginative String Music
from the 16th and 17th Centuries



Sequentia Benjamin Bagby, director



	Advance	Door
General Admission	\$30	\$35
Seniors (65+)	\$25	\$30
30 & Under	\$15	\$20
Student (full time)	\$10	\$15
Active US Military	\$10	\$15

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FRIDAY 7:30PM

DECEMBER 20, 2019

SUNDAY 3PM

DECEMBER 22, 2019

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BENEDUM DIRECTORY

LATECOMERS

To ensure the quality of our productions, latecomers will be taken to the best possible seat until intermission. Refunds or exchanges are NOT issued to latecomers.

OBSTRUCTED VISION

Supertitles, the English texts projected above the stage, will be fully visible to most Benedum patrons. However, supertitles will not be visible to anyone seated in or behind row W on the Main Floor. By necessary placement of the screen, the architecture of the Benedum precludes visibility in these areas.

CHECK ROOMS

Attended check rooms located on the Gallery and Promenade levels are open during the winter months. Coin-operated lockers are located on the Promenade and Mezzanine levels.

EMERGENCY INFORMATION

This theater is equipped with an Automated External Defibrillator.

ELEVATOR

Located off the Grand Lobby, serving various levels of the Benedum.

FIRE EXITS

Located at all levels and clearly marked. Use ONLY in case of emergency.

LOST AND FOUND

Call Benedum Center Lost and Found at 412-456-2604 weekdays.

REFRESHMENTS

Bars are located on the Gallery, Grand Lobby, and Promenade levels. Drinks may be purchased prior to performances and during intermissions. Beverages are permitted in Trust cups.

BENEDUM CENTER ADMINISTRATION AND TECHNICIANS

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Vice President, Operations

Hannah Frank
Theater Operations Specialist

Stacy Bartlebaugh-Gmys
Volunteer Services Manager

Joanna Obuzor
Operations Manager

Gerald Stevens
Facilities Manager

Berne Bloom
Director of Production

Autumn Abernathy
Production Manager

Diane Hines
Production Manager

BAG & SCREENING POLICY

A guest to a Pittsburgh Cultural Trust venue or event may enter with one bag that is no larger than 16" x 16" x 8". The definition of a bag includes, but is not limited to, purses, tote bags, duffel bags, suitcases, knapsacks, backpacks, packages, cartons, paper sacks, briefcases, portfolio cases, binocular cases, camera equipment cases, and any other type of device or vessel used for carrying or concealing items. Bags are subject to search and theatergoers may be requested to open their jackets prior to entering. Guests with prohibited items may return them to their vehicles. Unattended items left outside the facility doors will be discarded to ensure patron safety. Patrons will be required to pass through security devices. Refer to TrustArts.org/Safety for Safety & Security Procedures that may impact future visits.

INFORMATION AND TICKET CHARGE NUMBER

MasterCard, Visa, Discover, and American Express are accepted. Ticket Charge operates Monday - Friday, 9:00 AM-6:00 PM; and Saturday and Sunday, 12:00-4:00 PM. Orders received fewer than 5 days in advance will be held for pickup at the Box Office. Additional phone services fees will apply. Call 412-456-6666 for tickets or Benedum Center show information. All sales are final.

AUDIO COMMENTARY

Pittsburgh Opera offers an Audio Commentary service for patrons with visual impairments during Tuesday performances at the Benedum Center. Through Channel 2 on the Assistive Listening Devices, patrons can hear the supertitles read simultaneously with their appearances on the screen, as well as descriptions of the set, characters, and costumes. Pittsburgh Opera also offers Braille and large-print programs. Inquire at the Education table and Guest Services Center.

NOTIFICATION TO PATRONS WITH PHYSICAL DISABILITIES

- Wheelchairs are available for transition from entrance to seat location.
- Wheelchair locations are available on the Main Floor only.
- Restroom facilities for patrons with physical disabilities are located near the Grand Lobby.
- Dog guides accommodated. Please inquire at the Box Office when buying tickets.
- Water cups are available in restrooms or at any bar location for the physically disabled.
- Elevator in Grand Lobby serves various levels of the Benedum Center.
- Door personnel and ushers are available for assistance.
- Notice should be given at time of purchase if a wheelchair or disabled patron location is required.
- Assistive Listening Devices, Braille, and large print programs are available in the Guest Services Center off the Grand Lobby.



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