

PITTSBURGH OPERA

September 17, 2019

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**Pittsburgh Opera presents its first-ever Spanish-language opera,
Daniel Catán and Marcela Fuentes-Berain's magical
*Florencia en el Amazonas***

What:	Florencia en el Amazonas Music by Daniel Catán , Libretto by Marcela Fuentes-Berain
Where:	Benedum Center for the Performing Arts, downtown Pittsburgh
When:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sat., Nov. 9, 2019 * 8:00 PM • Tues., Nov. 12, 2019 * 7:00 PM • Fri., Nov. 15, 2019 * 7:30 PM • Sun., Nov. 17, 2019 * 2:00 PM
Run Time:	1 hour, 45 minutes, with one intermission
Language:	Sung in Spanish with English texts projected above the stage
Tickets:	<p>Single tickets for adults start at \$14; tickets for kids and teens ages 6-18 are half-price. Student discounts available. Call 412-456-6666 or visit pittsburghopera.org/tickets.</p> <p>Group Discounts available for groups of six or more. Contact Regina Connolly at (412) 281-0912, ext. 213 or groups@pittsburghopera.org.</p>
Media Events	<p>Photo Shoot (Mon., Oct. 28, 12:30 PM) - location TBA</p> <p>Full Dress Rehearsal (Thurs., Nov. 7, 7:00 PM) - Benedum Center</p>
Related Events See pages 6-8 of this release.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opera Up Close (10/27) at the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh • WQED Preview (11/2 & 11/8) • New Guard Opening Night Lounge (11/9) • Audio Commentary (11/12) • Meet the Artists (11/12) • November Brown Bag concert (11/16)

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Photo by Matthew Staver

Pittsburgh Opera continues its 81st season with its first-ever Spanish-language opera, Daniel Catán and Marcela Fuentes-Berain's magical **Florencia en el Amazonas**.

Florencia Grimaldi is a famous opera singer traveling to perform at the opera house in [Manaus](#), Brazil, in the early 1900s. She also hopes to find her long-lost lover Cristóbal, a butterfly hunter who has disappeared into the Amazon jungle.

Florencia journeys down the Amazon river by steamship with a cast of colorful characters, including an intrepid female journalist and a couple looking to rekindle their love. As they penetrate deeper and deeper into the heart of the Amazon, the passengers and crew realize their voyage is not just a physical journey, but also a mystical one.

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*, **Florencia en el Amazonas** features lush, melodic music and ever-changing backdrops of mysterious beauty.

Music Director Antony Walker conducts. Stephanie Havey directs a revival of Jose Maria Condemi's original production.

These performances have received special funding from [The Pittsburgh Foundation](#).

As always, English supertitles will be projected above the stage.

Single tickets for adults start at just \$14; kids and teens ages 6-18 are half-price. For tickets call 412-456-6666, visit the Box Office at Theater Square, or buy online at [pittsburghopera.org](#) or [CulturalDistrict.org](#). Group discounts, including student discounts, are available.

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Fun facts about *Florencia en el Amazonas*

1. Not only is **Florencia en el Amazonas** the first Spanish-language opera in Pittsburgh Opera's 81-year history, it was also the first Spanish-language opera by a Mexican composer [commissioned by major United States opera houses](#). It premiered in Houston in 1996.
2. Soprano [Alexandra Loutsion](#), who sings the role of the title character, grew up in Canonsburg, PA. She is an alumna of the former Children's Festival Chorus, which is now called [Pittsburgh Youth Chorus](#), and a former [Pittsburgh Opera Resident Artist](#). Her most recent appearance with Pittsburgh Opera was her role debut as Princess [Turandot](#) in 2017.
3. Composer Daniel Catán stated that **Florencia** "is the story of the return journey that we all undertake at a certain point in our lives: the moment when we look back at what we once dreamed of becoming, and then confront what we have now become."

The story, in brief

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.

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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](#)

Ticketing Information

- Single tickets for adults start at \$14; tickets for kids and teens ages 6-18 are half-price. Call 412-456-6666 or visit pittsburghopera.org/tickets.
- Group discounts, including student discounts, are available. For more information about [group ticket services and discounts](#) for groups of six or more people, contact Regina Connolly at (412) 281-0912, ext. 213 or groups@pittsburghopera.org.

Sponsors

- [PNC](#) is the 2019-20 Pittsburgh Opera Season Sponsor
- [WQED-FM](#) is Pittsburgh Opera’s Media Sponsor
- [Ambridge Regional Distribution and Manufacturing Center](#) is the Tuesday performance and ‘Meet the Artists’ post-show event sponsor
- These performances have received special funding from [The Pittsburgh Foundation](#), and from the following Funds:
 - The J. Raymond Price Memorial Fund of The Pittsburgh Foundation
 - Belle Richards Fund No. 2 of The Pittsburgh Foundation
 - Alice Risk Wilson Fund of The Pittsburgh Foundation
 - John K. Saxman, Jr. Fund of The Pittsburgh Foundation
 - Nicky Horvitz Gordon Memorial Fund of The Pittsburgh Foundation

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Cast and Artistic Team: *Florencia en el Amazonas*

Florencia	Alexandra Loutsion **
Rosalba	Natasha Wilson *
Ríolobo	Craig Verm **
Arcadio	Andres Acosta +
Alvaro	Nathan Gunn
Paula	Sandra Piques Eddy
Capitán	Brian Kontes
Conductor	Antony Walker
Original Concept and Director:	Jose Maria Condemi
Revival Director	Stephanie Havey
Set Designer	Phillip Lineau
Costume Designer	Elizabeth Poindexter
Original Lighting Designer	Ken Yunker
Lighting Design recreated by	Stevie O'Brian Agnew
Projection Designer	Aaron Rhyne
Wig and Make-up Designer	James Geier
Stage Manager	Cindy Knight
Asst Conductor	Glenn Lewis
Chorus Master	Mark Trawka
Associate Coach/Pianist	James Lesniak
Assistant Stage Director	Matthew Haney *
Assistant Stage Manager	Alex W. Seidel
Assistant Stage Manager	Jin Ah Lee

+ Pittsburgh Opera debut

* Pittsburgh Opera Resident Artist

** Pittsburgh Opera Resident Artist alumni

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Related Events for *Florencia en el Amazonas*

Opera Up Close: *Florencia en el Amazonas*

Sunday, October 27, 2019 2:00pm - 3:30pm

Location: Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh - Main, 4400 Forbes Ave in Oakland

Join Pittsburgh Opera Artistic Administrator Robert Boldin, cast members, and more, for a fun in-depth look at [Florencia en el Amazonas](#).

This Opera Up Close will have a literary twist! The event will take place at the Carnegie Library of Pittsburgh, Main Branch, North Wing Music Room on the 2nd floor.

Special guest [Alexandra B. Reznik, Ph.D.](#), Assistant Professor of Humanities at Chatham University, will delve into [Gabriel García Márquez](#)'s magical realism which inspired this opera.

Admission is free. For more information:

<https://www.pittsburghopera.org/calendar/detail/opera-up-close-florencia-en-el-amazonas>

***Florencia en el Amazonas* Previews on WQED-FM 89.3 and WQED.ORG**

Saturday, November 2, 12:30 - 1:00 PM

Friday, November 8, 7:00 - 7:30 PM

Hosted by WQED's Anna Singer, and broadcast over the airwaves on WQED-FM 89.3 as well as the WQED website, WQED's preview of ***Florencia en el Amazonas*** gives listeners an engaging introduction to the singers, music, and story of the opera. For more information: <https://www.pittsburghopera.org/calendar/detail/wqed-preview-florencia-en-el-amazonas>.

Pre-Opera Talks

1 hour before each performance, Benedum Center

All ticketholders are invited to attend a [Pre-Opera Talk](#) one hour before each performance's curtain in the Main Floor/Orchestra section of the Benedum Center. Learn about the composer, the story, and some juicy details about the opera! These talks are free to all ticketholders.

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Pittsburgh Opera New Guard opening night lounge
Saturday, November 9 – prior to the performance and during intermission
South Lounge at the Benedum Center

The Pittsburgh Opera New Guard is a community for young professionals, ages 21-40, who have a passion for Pittsburgh Opera. Membership comes with free and discounted opera tickets, pre-sales or special rates for Pittsburgh Opera Special Events, and more.

Members can enjoy the private New Guard Lounge at the Benedum on opening night of all our operas. The Lounge is sponsored by [Porter Wright](#). [Visit our website](#) or [join our Facebook group](#) for additional event details.

Audio Commentary: *Florencia en el Amazonas*
Tuesday, November 12, 7:00 PM
Benedum Center

Ticketholders with visual impairments are invited to use [Pittsburgh Opera's Audio Description service](#) at our Tuesday performances. Trained volunteers describe the supertitles, scenery, costumes, and stage action. The listeners hear these descriptions via assistive listening devices. Those wishing to use Audio Description should reserve seats to the Tuesday, November 12 performance of **Florencia en el Amazonas** by contacting Regina Connolly at 412-281-0912, ext. 213, or groups@pittsburghopera.org. Braille and large-print programs are available at all performances.

Meet the Artists of *Florencia en el Amazonas*
Tuesday, November 12, immediately following the performance
Benedum Center lower lobby

Pittsburgh Opera [General Director Christopher Hahn](#) interviews the stars of **Florencia en el Amazonas** in the Benedum Center lower lobby after the Tuesday evening performance. You can ask your own questions and mingle with the artists too! Free to all Tuesday ticketholders.

“Meet the Artists” is generously sponsored by Ambridge Regional Distribution and Manufacturing Center. Learn more at <https://www.pittsburghopera.org/calendar/detail/meet-the-artists-florencia-en-el-amazonas>

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Brown Bag concert

Saturday, November 16, Noon - 1:00 PM

George R. White Opera Studio, Pittsburgh Opera Headquarters, [2425 Liberty Avenue](#)

You're invited to our free November Brown Bag concert! Enjoy a wonderful performance from our [Pittsburgh Opera Resident Artists](#).

November's theme is "Music of the Americas," in honor of the Nov. 9th Pittsburgh premiere of [Florencia en el Amazonas](#).

The performance takes place in the George R. White studio at Pittsburgh Opera Headquarters, 2425 Liberty Avenue in the Strip. The performance is free and open to everyone. Bring a friend and bring a lunch! Meet the Resident Artists afterward in an informal reception.

Doors open at 11:30am. Please note that the Pittsburgh Opera garage is available only for handicapped parking, by reservation. RESERVATIONS MUST BE RECEIVED BY 4:00 PM FRIDAY, November 15th. For more information, see <https://www.pittsburghopera.org/calendar/detail/november-brown-bag-concert4>.

COMING UP NEXT for Pittsburgh Opera:

George Frideric Handel's baroque masterpiece [Alcina](#), Jan. 25 – Feb. 2, 2020

Pittsburgh Opera celebrates its 81st season in 2019-20. Established by five intrepid women in 1939, Pittsburgh Opera is viewed as one of the most vibrant opera organizations in the U.S., with a rich artistic tradition, internationally-recognized educational programs, an acclaimed artist training program, and a progressive outlook toward the future. Its green initiative culminated in LEED® Silver certification for its Strip District headquarters, and its capacity as a true community partner has increased significantly under General Director Christopher Hahn's leadership.

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