Detroit Opera

XERXES

SERSE

SAT / MAR 4, 2023 / 7:30PM
FRI / MAR 10, 2023 / 7:30PM
SUN / MAR 12, 2023 / 2:30PM

Story telling...

Opera has been described as an art form that tells a story through music and singing. Detroit Opera is innovating new and exciting ways to tell those stories.

At The Whitney we see architecture as another art form that tells a story, in our case through our 125-year-old Romanesque-style mansion, one of the last remaining mansions that once lined Woodward Avenue. It is a true reflection of Old Detroit.

Before your next opera, or whenever the urge hits you, come visit our mansion. We promise that the welcoming reception you'll receive, the food and drink you'll enjoy, and the ambiance you'll experience, will make you think you've gone back in time.

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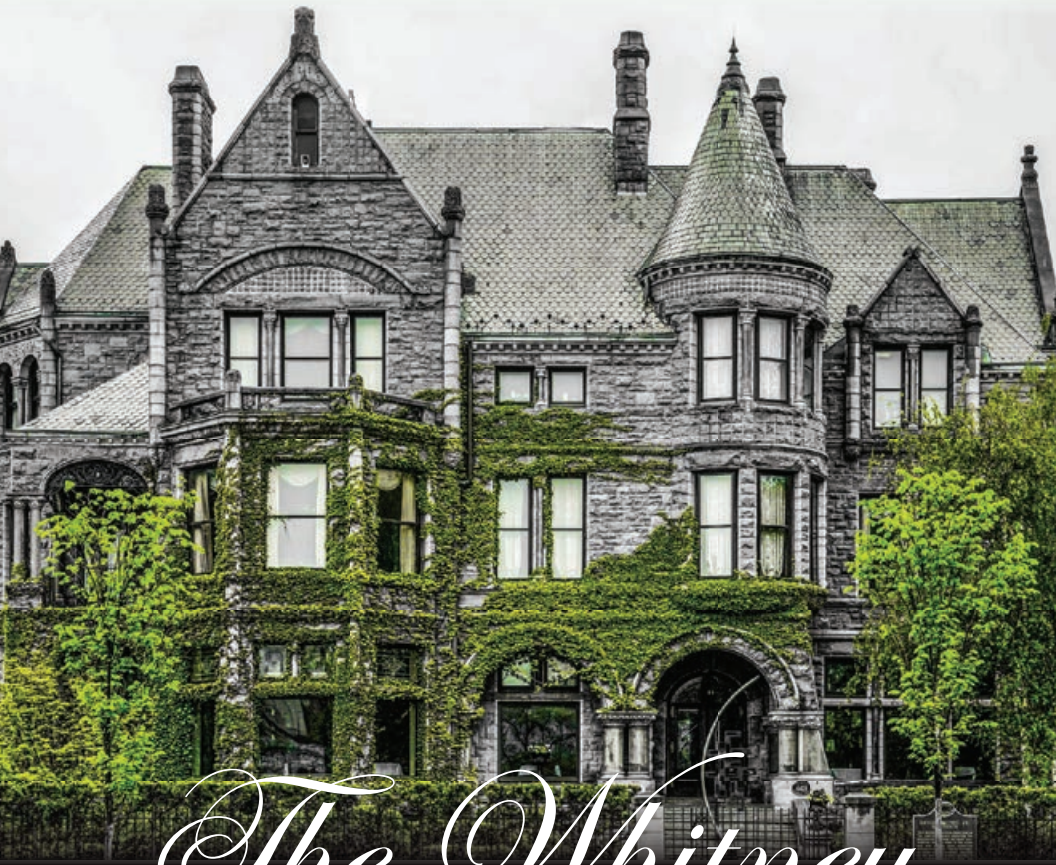

The Whitney

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The Community Foundation is dedicated to supporting and enhancing the arts in southeast Michigan.

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A message from Wayne Brown

Welcome to the second half of Detroit Opera's 2022–23 season! We are pleased that you are joining us for our company's first performances of *Xerxes*, Handel's tongue-in-cheek 1738 masterpiece, featuring a stellar cast led by the renowned conductor Dame Jane Glover. James Blaszko directs this revival of Tazewell Thompson's production. As with all our opera presentations, *Xerxes* reflects our broader goal to share with Detroit audiences new ways to experience opera through the distinctive artistic lens of Yuval Sharon, our artistic director. These performances are made possible in part by the long-standing support received from General Motors.

Later this month, we invite you to return to the Detroit Opera House on March 17 to 19 for the visit by the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, now under the visionary artistic leadership of Robert Battle. A Detroit favorite, the company's dance presentation will mark the 14th collaboration with our organization.

This season's final opera, *Fountain of Tears* (*Ainadamar*) on April 8 to 16, is by one of the world's most exciting composers, Osvaldo Golijov, with a libretto by David Henry Hwang. The opera—about the life and death of revolutionary Spanish poet Federico García Lorca—powerfully blends flamenco dance, projections, and poetry and is directed by Brazilian choreographer Deborah Colker. *Fountain of Tears* will be performed entirely in Spanish, with English titles. The season's final dance presentation will be a rare U.S. appearance (April 29–30) by the renowned State Ballet of Georgia, led by ballet star Nina Ananiashvili and featuring a program of mostly George Balanchine works, accompanied by the Detroit Opera Orchestra.

Finally, we wish to remind you to please go directly to detroitopera.org when purchasing any ticket for opera or dance at the Detroit Opera House. As you search for ticket options for any event you are interested in attending, you should remain attentive and vigilant: be certain that the web address is true to the organization, and do not rely upon the name of the production or artists alone. For tickets and further information about our upcoming performances, always visit our website, detroitopera.org.

Enjoy today's performance, and come back soon!

Wayne S. Brown
President & CEO, Detroit Opera

The Event of the Season

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A Message from Yuval Sharon

George Frideric Handel already had 38 operas under his belt when he suffered a catastrophic stroke in 1737. Restored to health, he began the opera that would become one of his only comedies: *Xerxes*. His near-fatal illness must surely have given him a renewed lease on life and respect for the cycles of nature so far beyond his control. As he sat down to set the introductory aria to the opera, I imagine this serene gratitude for life impacting the discovery of a melody that has since become among his most beloved arias: "Ombra mai fu."

There is also something a little silly about the powerful king Xerxes, a king who's in love with being in love, rhapsodizing about a plane tree—and this is part of what bewildered Handel's contemporary audience at the disastrous premiere in 1738. Even though *Xerxes* is one of Handel's most popular operas today, it certainly wasn't what operagoers in Handel's day were accustomed to seeing. The opera didn't fit into either the recognizable tragic mode (*opera seria*) nor the full-on comedic one (*opera buffa*)—not dissimilar from Mozart's *dramma giocoso*, *Don Giovanni*. As our conductor, Dame Jane Glover, points out in her essay on page 8, *Xerxes* is much closer to the theater than the Baroque stage spectacles that were popular in Handel's time: a "perfect triangle," as she says, of words, music, and visuals. The opera toggles back and forth between the light and the dark.

Of the 42 operas written by Handel, *Xerxes* marks only the second appearance on the Detroit Opera stage of one of his works, the first being *Giulio Cesare* in 2012. The freedom and flexibility of his style, so close to how we listen to traditional jazz, may likely be a discovery for you with these performances. If you're lucky enough to be hearing this opera as your first by Handel, I am sure the gracefulness of the music, performed by some of the best American artists singing this repertoire today, will have you yearning to hear his remaining 41!

Yuval Sharon
The Gary L. Wasserman Artistic Director

CONDUCTOR'S

by Dame Jane Glover

I am a bit of a Handel specialist; I've written a book about him as well as conducted a huge amount of his music. But I have never done *Xerxes*! I can't believe I have gotten to my great age without doing it because, in a way, it's one of the most popular of all his operas. I have conducted many of Handel's serious works, but this one is very different, so I'm really excited to be here in Detroit!

Interestingly, *Xerxes* didn't go over well in Handel's lifetime. He was a man of the theater, which is why—with lots of short arias—it's almost like a musical, with very few *da capo* arias. But the drama bowls along very quickly, and people genuinely have conversations. They don't just sing "I'm so in love" or "I'm so angry," but the drama moves along like a play. Unlike the *opera seria* that was popular when Handel wrote the work—characterized by immense arias and quick recitatives—*Xerxes* is much closer to the theater.

There are three sides to opera: words, music, and visuals. When it's a perfect triangle, it's a perfect art form. This all started with Francesco Cavalli's and Claudio Monteverdi's earliest operas, yet throughout the history of opera one of those sides pulls ahead. In the 18th century, it was all about the singing, all about the ornamentation, and less about the drama. Nicolò Minato, who wrote the libretto for Cavalli's *Xerxes* in 1655, was the first to notice that the form was pulling away from that essential triangle.

Opera in Handel's day was more also about visual and sonic spectacle, and sometimes that stops people from listening to the music or following the story. Yet *Xerxes* is so alive, due in great part to Handel's mastery of words, music, and visuals. And still today, I think as practitioners, whether creators or interpreters, we're always looking for that balance.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

***Da capo* aria:** a musical form in which the first section is repeated after a contrasting middle section, typically found in Baroque operas.

Ornamentation: the addition of decorative musical embellishments to a melody, often used in Baroque and Classical music.

Libretto: the text or script of an opera or other musical work, typically written in verse and containing dialogue, lyrics, and stage directions.

NOTE

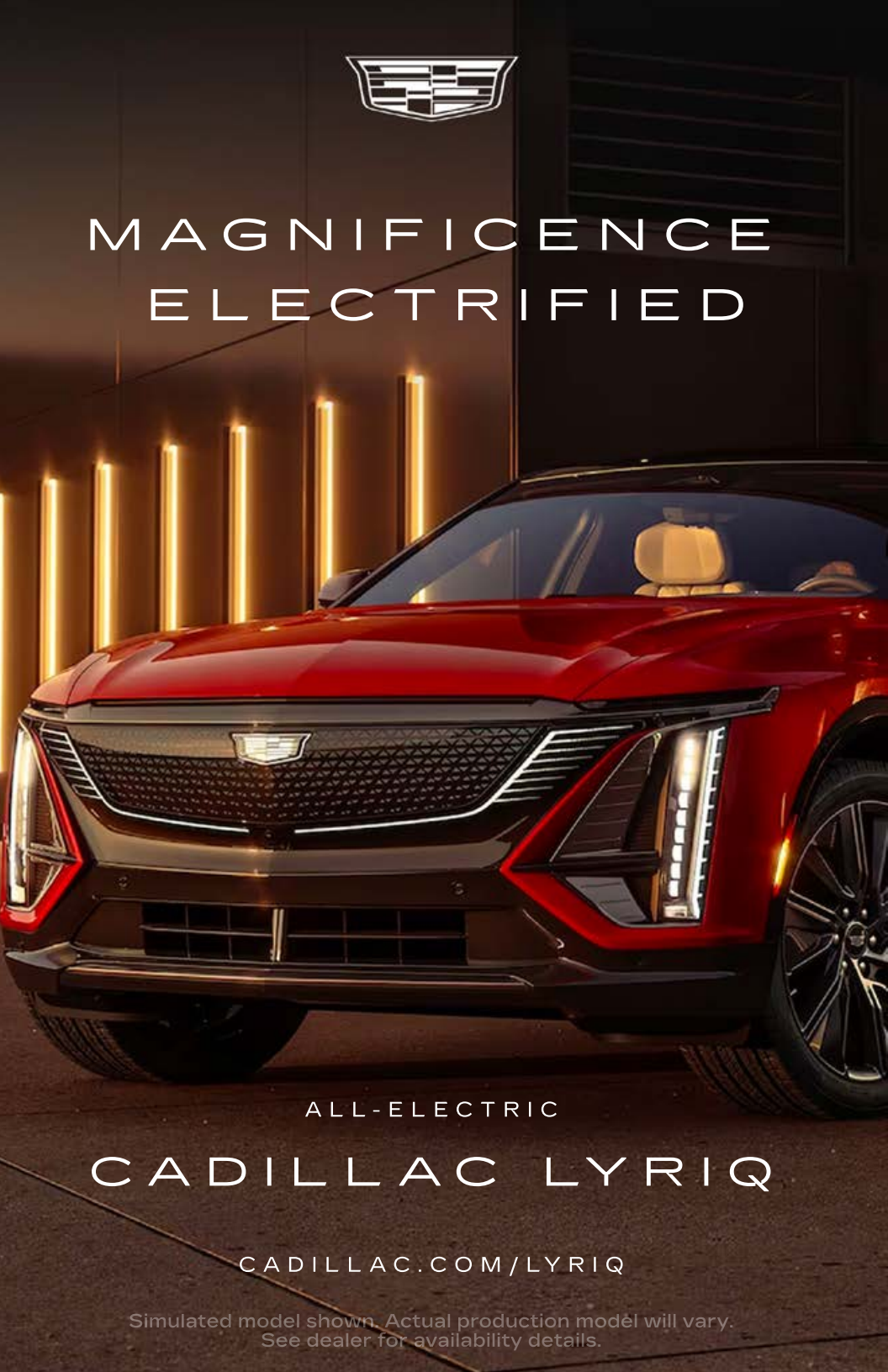
At some point every character is allowed to be sympathetic. The goodies aren't completely good. The baddies aren't completely bad. The funnies aren't completely funny. There's quite a lot of humanity in this piece—not just in the libretto, but also Handel. Great heart, that man.

I think *Xerxes* almost *misleads* people's understanding of opera. "Ombra mai fu" is almost a joke on Handel's part: he opens this opera with a king singing an aria—to a tree! You must think it's some sort of love song, but no, he's singing because he likes the shade of its leaves. And that is the first jolt of many. Handel is telling a story here about somebody, but he's maybe not the somebody you think he is.

It's quite a tough story of brotherly rivalry for the love of a woman. Add in a woman in disguise who loves one of the brothers. And then all sorts of tangled webs are woven through deception. And throughout, Handel refines the drama with Elviro, a comic character who has these moments between the anxieties and the tensions between the main characters—it's a work of genius.

Handel being Handel, there are some wonderful opportunities for great singing! But it is the drama that drives the opera itself. It's quite a subtle thing, but that's what makes *Xerxes* so fascinating. And now it's one of his most popular operas because it speaks to audiences, no question. It's theatrical and vibrant, it's got wonderful love stories, great heart, and wonderful comedy—what more do you want from an opera?

Adapted from an interview with Austin Richey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WILLIAM DAVIDSON FOUNDATION

PRODUCTION

Performed in Italian with English supertitles

Performance runs 2 hours and 30 minutes with one intermission

Music
George Frideric Handel

Libretto
Silvio Stampiglia

World Premiere
King's Theatre, Haymarket in London, England on April 15, 1738

Production Director
Tazewell Thompson

Revival Director
James Blaszko

Set Designer
John Conklin

Costume Designer
Sara Jean Tosetti

Lighting Designer
Robert Wierzel

Wig & Makeup Designer
Joanne Middleton Weaver

Stage Manager
Hailli Ridsdale

XERXES

SERSE

CAST

Conductor Dame Jane Glover

Xerxes Key'mon W. Murrah*

Romilda Lauren Snouffer*

Arsamene Sun-Ly Pierce*

Amastre Vanessa Cariddi*

Atalanta Elizabeth Sutphen*

Ariodate Nicholas Newton*

Elviro Michael Sumuel*

Continuo

Richard Stone*, *theorbo*

Nicola Canzano*, *harpsichord*

Andrea Yun, *cello*

* Detroit Opera debut

CAST

PRODUCTION

XERXES

A Detroit Opera premiere of a production
by the Glimmerglass Festival

Répétiteur Nicola Canzano*
Assistant Director Asura Oulds*
Associate Lighting Designer Eric Norbury*
Assistant Lighting Designer Heather DeFauw
Assistant Stage Managers Zachary Jenkins*, Evan Murphy
Supertitle Operator Dee Dorsey

Projected titles design by Kelley Rourke originally for the Glimmerglass Festival.

* Detroit Opera debut

DETROIT OPERA ORCHESTRA

Detroit Federation of Musicians, Local #5,
of the American Federation of Musicians

Violin I
Eliot Heaton*
CONCERTMASTER
Jenny Wan*
Henrik Karapetyan*
ACTING ASSISTANT CONCERTMASTER
Molly Hughes*
Velda Kelly*
Andrew Wu*

Violin II
Daniel Stachyra*
ACTING PRINCIPAL
Yuri Popowycz*
Beth Kirton*
Bryan Johnston*
Anna Bittar-Weller*

Viola
John Madison*
PRINCIPAL
Scott Stefanko*
Joseph Deller*
Jacqueline Hanson*

Cello
Andrea Yun*
ACTING PRINCIPAL
Benjamin Maxwell*
Allison Rich

Bass
Derek Weller*
PRINCIPAL
Jessica Grabbe

Recorder
Eloy Cortinez*
ACTING PRINCIPAL
Laura Larson*

Oboe
Sally Heffelfinger-Pituch*
ACTING PRINCIPAL
Yuki Harding

Bassoon
Gregory Quick*
ACTING PRINCIPAL

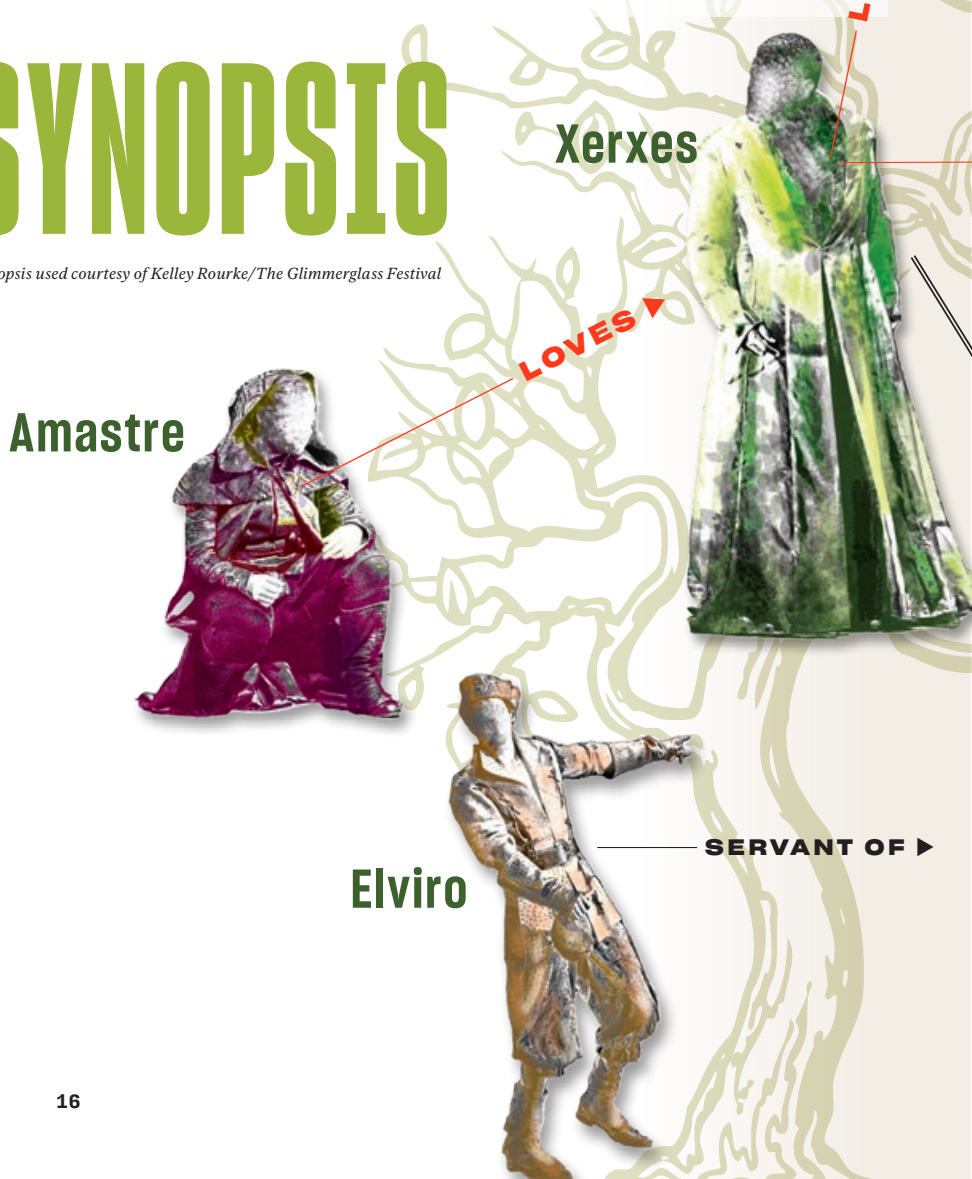
**Detroit Opera Core Orchestra*
Members of the violin sections occasionally rotate

SYNOPSIS

Synopsis used courtesy of Kelley Rourke/The Glimmerglass Festival

Both the emperor Xerxes and his brother, Arsamene, are in love with Romilda, who favors the latter. Atalanta, Romilda's sister, in love with Arsamene, resolves to help Xerxes, reasoning that Arsamene may choose her if he is denied Romilda. To complicate matters further, Amastre, to whom Xerxes was once betrothed, has disguised herself as a man in order to observe the king.

When Romilda rejects Xerxes, the scorned king has Arsamene banished. Atalanta intercepts a letter from Arsamene to Romilda and spreads a series of falsehoods in an attempt to drive a wedge between the couple; however, Romilda and Arsamene's love never falters.



Xerxes tells Ariodate, Romilda's father, that his daughter is to marry "a man of Xerxes's lineage." Although Xerxes means himself, Ariodate assumes the bridegroom will be Arsamene, the king's brother. When Arsamene and Romilda arrive and learn of the king's decree, they immediately wed, astonished. Moments later, Xerxes arrives, furious.

Amastre, still in disguise, asks the king if he would like to see the death of the betrayer, the one who, despite being deeply loved, left in pursuit of another. When Xerxes agrees, Amastre reveals her identity. Xerxes, ashamed, asks her to kill him, but she refuses, and the two are reconciled.

IN CONVERSATION with
Key'mon W. Murrah

***The countertenor speaks about his career path and making his Detroit Opera debut in the high-flying title role of Handel's* Xerxes.**

How did you get started in music?

I first started singing in my church. Our mother sings gospel, so we've always had music around us. She taught me and my twin brother, Kay'mon, how to sing. I was going to go the gospel route, until I got into the Youth Performing Arts School. I fell in love with opera at the Governor's School for the Arts, a magnet high school in Louisville, Kentucky. At the Governor's School, I met Alexander T. Simpson—I call him my music "father", he poured so much into my brother and me. He prepared us to go to college, and because of him we both got a full scholarship to the University of Kentucky.

Early on, you considered a career as a tenor. Why did you decide to make the switch to countertenor?

I was singing as a boy soprano from age nine to 18 in a boys' choir. I only switched to tenor because I thought that's what you had to do. I didn't see other people like me being a countertenor, so when I finally decided to try, it was more like a dare to myself. I was out of school and still taking voice lessons—I think I could have had a career as a tenor, but my heart wasn't in it. I saw that a small opera company was doing *Giulio Cesare*. I learned a couple of arias and thought, "if it works, it works, and if it doesn't, I'll move on." So, I recorded my arias and sent them to the opera company. I got my first role as a countertenor, as Tolomeo in that *Giulio Cesare*. I got some good feedback, and from then on, I have been working professionally as a countertenor.

How is the countertenor sound created?

There is a big misunderstanding about how countertenors make sound. I don't feel it's that different from a woman singing: We're singing in our head voice, just like women!

Ornamentation is common in modern music as well as Baroque music. Is there a connection?

I come from a gospel background, and early music is just like gospel. You sing the first phrase as written, and then go back and make it your own, just like in Baroque operas. So, if I'm singing a Baroque opera aria, I will sing it very simple, and then I'll sing it with embellishments—it could be a lot or a little, or just a dynamic change. It's all about making it your own, putting your own soul into it, similar to pop music. Baroque music is very spiritual—being able to put your own soul, your own life into the music, it's the same as gospel.

In *Xerxes*, almost immediately when you come on stage you are singing "Ombra mai fu," one of Handel's most popular, familiar tunes.

I've been singing "Ombra mai fu" since the beginning of my career, so it's very well in my body. It's the aria that I'm most excited to sing.

Tell us about some of the dramatic challenges of taking up the role of Xerxes.

Xerxes is a character who is very hot and cold—he can be mad one second and loving the next, which is also kind of comedic. I love the arias, but learning his mental state is what intrigues me.

Do you come across misconceptions around your voice and the type of roles you play?

There are a lot—some negative and some positive. The most frequent one I hear that I'm trying to break away from is that countertenors can *only* do early music. I believe we are capable of doing more Romantic music, new music, Classical music—we can do as much as we want, and we shouldn't stay in that box if we don't want to. I can do roles which are traditionally female or traditionally male, so I can play around a little bit more, and I think that's exciting and fun.

Anything you'd like to say about making your Detroit Opera debut?

I'm excited to be here. I look back at my favorite singers who grew up in Detroit and worked here, like George Shirley—I've always wanted to follow in his footsteps. The show is going to be super fun. The whole cast is at the top of their game. It's going to be a wonderful time!

This has been edited and condensed for space from the original interview. To hear the full conversation, go to our website, detroitopera.org.

ARTIST

Tazewell Thompson

PRODUCTION DIRECTOR

Tazewell Thompson is an internationally acclaimed director of opera and theater, an award-winning playwright, librettist, teacher, lecturer, and actor. He is the 2020 Music Critics Association of North America Award recipient, as librettist, with composer Jeanine Tesori, for Best New Opera in North America for *Blue*. *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post* named *Blue*: Best in Classical Music, 2019. *Blue* productions at opera houses include Glimmerglass (premiere), Detroit, Seattle, Pittsburgh, Toledo, Dutch National Opera, and upcoming at Washington National Opera, English National Opera, and New Orleans Opera. He recently returned to New York's Lincoln Center to unveil his newly commissioned libretto for *March to Liberation*, as part of the reopening ceremonies of the New York Philharmonic at David Geffen Hall. He has over 150 directing credits, including many world and/or American premieres, in opera houses and theaters throughout the USA, in France, Spain, Italy, Africa, Japan, Canada, and the Netherlands. He received an Emmy Award nomination for Best Direction and Best Classical Production for *Porgy and Bess* Live from Lincoln Center. He holds the record for directing three operas in the same season in three different theaters at the Kennedy Center: *Appomattox*/Philip Glass; *Lost in the Stars*/Kurt Weill, and the American premiere staging of *Cato in Utica*/Vivaldi. He was chosen by Aaron Copland to rewrite the libretto and stage the world premiere of his opera *The Second Hurricane* as part of a city-wide celebration of his 85th birthday. His *a cappella* work, *Jubilee*, about the Fisk Jubilee Singers (45 Negro Spirituals) premiered in 2019 and played for five weeks to SRO Audiences at Arena Stage in Washington, D.C., and was recently produced at the Alabama Shakespeare Festival. His award-winning play *Constant Star*, about Ida B. Wells, has had nationwide productions and is the recipient of nine Barrymore Awards, five NAACP Awards, and three Carbonell Awards. His play *Mary T & Lizzy K* received the Edgerton Foundation New Play Award. His poem *Ghostlight*, about the closing of Broadway theaters during the pandemic, covered the entire page of *The New York Times* Opinion page.

PROFILES

Dame Jane Glover

CONDUCTOR

Acclaimed British conductor Jane Glover, named Dame Commander of the Order of the British Empire in the 2021 New Year's Honours, has been Music of the Baroque's music director since 2002. She's previously been music director of Glyndebourne Touring Opera (1981–85), artistic director of the London Mozart Players (1984–91), and has also held principal conductorships of both the Huddersfield and the London Choral Societies. From 2009 until 2016 she was Director of Opera at the Royal Academy of Music, where she is now the Felix Mendelssohn Visiting Professor. She was recently Visiting Professor of Opera at the University of Oxford, her alma mater.

In demand on the international opera stage, Jane Glover has appeared with numerous companies including the Metropolitan Opera; Royal Opera, Covent Garden; English National Opera; Glyndebourne; Berlin Staatsoper; Glimmerglass Opera; New York City Opera; Opéra national de Bordeaux; Opera Australia; Chicago Opera Theater; Opera Theatre of Saint Louis; Luminato; Teatro Real Madrid; Royal Danish Opera; and Teatro La Fenice. A Mozart specialist, she has conducted all the Mozart operas all over the world regularly and her core operatic repertoire also includes Monteverdi, Handel, and Britten.

Jane Glover's discography includes a series of Mozart and Haydn symphonies with the London Mozart Players and recordings of Haydn, Mozart, Schubert, Mendelssohn, Britten, and Walton with the London Philharmonic Orchestra, Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, and the BBC Singers. She is the author of the critically acclaimed books *Mozart's Women* and *Handel in London*. She holds a personal professorship at the University of London, is a Fellow of the Royal College of Music, an Honorary Member of the Royal Academy of Music, and the holder of several honorary degrees. In 2020 she was awarded the Royal Philharmonic Society's Gamechanger Award for her work in breaking new ground for other female conductors.

ARTIST

James Blaszko

REVIVAL DIRECTOR

James Blaszko has been called “a major young, new directing talent” (*The Sunday Mail*) that shows “the potential our increasingly multidisciplinary future holds for both theatrical innovation and inclusion” (howlround.com). A first-generation American raised in a Polish-Pakistani household, Blaszko’s varied education in arts and culture began at an early age and has translated into diverse collaborations across the globe. Before the pandemic, Blaszko staged Puccini’s *Il trittico* at Daegu Opera House (South Korea), the opening ceremony of the Harare International Festival of the Arts (Zimbabwe), and Britten’s *Les Illuminations* with selections of Debussy and Patti Smith at Bay Chamber Concerts (Rockport, Maine). He returned to live performance in 2021 by devising and staging *Puccini and Verdi Play Ball* with Tulsa Opera in their city’s baseball stadium.

Blaszko’s collaborations with Cuban filmmaker Adolfo Mena Cejas include *Tell the Story*, a documentary for John Doyle’s Classic Stage Company about the seminal New York productions of Stephen Sondheim’s *Assassins* over the past 30 years, and *Zenon*, which was selected by the New Haven Documentary Film Festival in 2020. His next digital work, a commission from Catapult Opera with composer Tamar-kali and writer Carl Hancock Rux, premiered in late 2022. He is currently the tour producer of *The Peculiar Patriot* by Liza Jessie Peterson, which will be presented next at Detroit Public Theatre in 2023. @jamesblaszko

PROFILES

Key'mon W. Murrah

XERXES

Keymon W. Murrah, a countertenor heralded for his wide range and "hot-coals core of tone", is a native of Louisville, Kentucky. In 2020, he was heard on the stage of the Metropolitan Opera as a semi-finalist in the company's National Council Auditions after winning the Nashville District Auditions. In the summer of 2021, he received high praise for his performances as a Fleming Fellow at the Aspen Music Festival, where he was heard as Bertarido in Handel's *Rodelinda* and in several concerts featuring a wide range of works from Baroque to contemporary. In the current season, he appears at the Bolshoi in Moscow as a competitor in Operalia, makes his company and role debut in the title role of Gluck's *Orfeo ed Eurydice* with Seattle Opera, and will be heard in concert with the Rochester Oratorio Society and the American Baroque Opera Company. Recent competition successes include winning the 2021 Eleanor McCollum Competition for Young Singers with Houston Grand Opera and the 2020 Premiere Opera + NYIOP Vocal Competition.

Murrah has been heard with University of Kentucky Opera Theatre and Bluegrass Opera in performances of *Die Fledermaus*, *Die Zauberflöte*, *Les contes d'Hoffmann*, and *La bohème*. His most notable roles are Mingo in *Porgy and Bess* and creating the role of the Spiritual Man in Ernst Bacon's *A Tree on the Plains*. He has also sung the role of Tolomeo from Handel's *Giulio Cesare* with Red River Lyric Opera and Asprano in Vivaldi's *Montezuma* with American Baroque Opera Company. Recently, Murrah toured with the American Spiritual Ensemble and in the summer of 2020, he was a Young Artist with the Glimmerglass Festival.

ARTIST

Lauren Snouffer

ROMILDA

Recognized for her unique artistic curiosity in world-class performances spanning the music of Claudio Monteverdi and Johann Adolph Hasse through to Missy Mazzoli and Sir George Benjamin, American Lauren Snouffer is celebrated as one of the most versatile and respected sopranos on the international stage.

Lauren Snouffer increasingly is in demand on the world's most prestigious concert stages and in the 2022–23 season, collaborations include Mahler's Second Symphony with Franz Welser-Möst and the Cleveland Orchestra. Also with Cleveland she sings John Adams's *El Niño* with the composer on the podium, Mozart's Mass in C minor, K.427 with Manfred Honeck and the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, Handel's *Jephtha* with Dame Jane Glover and Music of the Baroque, Handel's *Messiah* with Masaaki Suzuki and the San Francisco Symphony, J.S. Bach's Mass in G major, BWV 236 with Bernard Labadie and the Handel & Haydn Society, Beethoven's Ninth Symphony with Jaap van Zweden and the New York Philharmonic, and Hans Abrahamsen's *Let Me Tell You* with Alan Gilbert conducting the NDR Elbphilharmonie Orchester. Operatic performances of the season include *Die Zauberflöte* in a return engagement with the Opernhaus Zürich, *Le nozze di Figaro* with Houston Grand Opera, *Il barbiere di Siviglia* at Austin Opera, and debuts at Santa Fe Opera in Monteverdi's *Orfeo* with a world premiere orchestration by Nico Muhly and at Detroit Opera in these performances of *Xerxes*. Last season Lauren Snouffer made her debut at the Opéra national du Rhin in the lead role of *The Snow Queen* by Hans Abrahamsen, and was in two new productions with Opernhaus Zürich: the title role in the world premiere of *Girl with a Pearl Earring* by composer Stefan Wirth and as Argene in Pergolesi's *L'Olimpiade* in a new production conducted by Ottavio Dantone.

PROFILES

Sun-Ly Pierce

ARSAMENE

Chinese-American mezzo-soprano Sun-Ly Pierce is quickly distinguishing herself as an exciting communicator and artist in the opera world. During the 2022–23 season, she makes her Detroit Opera debut as Arsamene in these performances of Handel's *Xerxes*, returns to Houston Grand Opera as Jack in Dame Ethel Smyth's epic 1906 opera *The Wreckers*, and makes her house debut at Opera Philadelphia in a role debut as Emilia in Rossini's *Otello* alongside tenor Lawrence Brownlee. This season Sun-Ly debuts four new roles on stage at Houston Grand Opera: Stéphano (*Roméo et Juliette*) directed by Tomer Zvulun; sing Sister Mathilde and cover Blanche de la Force (*Dialogues des Carmélites*) directed by Francesca Zambello and conducted by music director Patrick Summers; Second Lady (*Die Zauberflöte*) in the Barrie Kosky and Suzanne Andrade production under the baton of Jane Glover; and Mercédès (*Carmen*) led by Lidiya Yankovskaya. Additional appearances include reviving her portrayal of Mozart's *Second Lady* for Des Moines Metro Opera; joining the Aspen Music Festival in a role debut as Donna Elvira in *Don Giovanni* and mezzo-soprano soloist in a concert of Felix Mendelssohn's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*; and covering the role of Bao Chai in Bright Sheng's *Dream of the Red Chamber* with San Francisco Opera.

A native of Clinton, New York, Sun-Ly holds a Bachelor of Music in Vocal Performance degree from the Eastman School of Music and is an alumna of the Graduate Vocal Arts Program at Bard College Conservatory of Music where she studied with Dawn Upshaw, Kayo Iwama, and Erika Switzer. She completed her training as a member of the Houston Grand Opera Studio in May 2022.

ARTIST

Vanessa Cariddi

AMASTRE

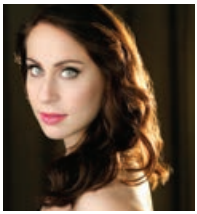
Since her professional debut at the Metropolitan Opera, mezzo-soprano Vanessa Cariddi has appeared as Carmen, Waltraute, Siegrune, Suzuki, Maddalena, Dorabella, Rosina, Gondí, Hedwige, Little Buttercup, and Nicklausse, among others, at opera houses and companies including the Metropolitan Opera, New York City Opera, Seattle Opera, Sarasota Opera, Pittsburgh Opera, On Site Opera, Bel Canto at Caramoor, and on stages in Europe, Asia, and South America. Her concert work includes Berlioz's *Les nuits d'été*, Verdi's *Requiem*, Délage's *Four Hindu Poems*, Rossini's *Petite messe solennelle*, J.S. Bach's B Minor Mass and Christmas Oratorio, and recital repertoire spanning from the Baroque era to living composers.

Vanessa is a frequent collaborator on new works, including performances and workshops of Nico Muhly's *Dark Sisters*, Osvaldo Golijov's *Ainadamar*, Tobias Picker's *American Tragedy*, Rufus Wainwright's *Prima Donna*, and other works from opera to song, throughout her career.

Some of her impressive reviews include praise like, "a mezzo-soprano of extraordinary gifts," "luminescent," "noble and eloquent," and "A mezzo to watch."

Vanessa was twice a vocal fellow at the Tanglewood Music Festival and has been a young artist at Opera Theatre of Saint Louis. She is a graduate of the Manhattan School of Music, and lives in New York City.

PROFILES



Elizabeth Sutphen

ATALANTA

"Impressive coloratura soprano" (*The New York Times*) Elizabeth Sutphen has garnered praise for her sparkling voice and her ability to "soar deftly through stratospheric trills and arpeggios" (*Financial Times*). Praised as "exquisite" by *The Guardian*, Elizabeth's 2022–23 season includes a return to the role of Sophie in *Der Rosenkavalier* at the Salzburger Landestheater, and a company debut with Detroit Opera as Atalanta in Handel's *Xerxes*. The 2021–22 season included her Palm Beach Opera debut as Valencienne in *The Merry Widow* and her debut with Atlanta Opera as Chrisann Brennan in *The (R)evolution of Steve Jobs* by Mason Bates and Mark Campbell.

Elizabeth has performed leading roles in houses around the world, including Sophie in *Der Rosenkavalier* with the Glyndebourne Festival, Zerbinetta in *Ariadne auf Naxos* with both the Théâtre du Capitole de Toulouse and Oper Frankfurt, and Faustina in Tarik O'Regan and John Caird's *The Phoenix* with Houston Grand Opera. Most recently, she was praised by *Schmopera* for her "impeccable comedic delivery" and "ability to sing flawlessly...with dexterity and finesse" for her Des Moines Metro Opera debut as the delightfully zany La Folie in Rameau's *Platée*.

Elizabeth is a graduate of The Juilliard School (B.M. 2012, M.M. 2014) as well as a proud alumna of the Opera Theatre of Saint Louis (Gerdine Young Artist 2014, 2015; Richard Gaddess Festival Artist 2016); the Internationale Meistersinger Akadamie (2015); and the Solti Accademia (2016).

ARTIST

Nicholas Newton

ARIODATE

Hailed for his "polished vocal technique" and "heart-tugging emotional communication" (*San Diego Story*), Nicholas Newton is garnering due attention as an up-and-coming bass-baritone in the classical music world. During the 2022–23 season, he makes a Dallas Opera debut as Monterone in *Rigoletto*. Other operatic highlights of the season include a Detroit Opera debut in these performances of Handel's *Xerxes*, *Salome* at Houston Grand Opera, and an engagement with the Lyric Opera of Chicago to cover the role of Peter in Richard Jones's acclaimed production of *Hansel und Gretel*. Last season Nicholas made a Santa Fe Opera debut as Don Basilio in a new production of *Il barbiere di Siviglia* directed by Stephen Barlow. He created the roles of Daddy/Tim in the Houston Grand Opera world premiere of Joel Thompson and Andrea Davis Pinkney's *The Snowy Day* and was Friar Laurence in *Roméo et Juliette*.

Nicholas completed his training at the Houston Grand Opera Studio in the 2020–21 season and performed Billy King in the world premiere of Damien Sneed's *Marian's Song* and Monterone in *Rigoletto*. An avid concert performer and recitalist, he is an alumnus of Ravinia's Steans Music Institute and has toured with renowned pianist Kevin Murphy, and performed at the Tucson Desert Song Festival.

Nicholas trained as a Studio Artist and Filene Artist with Wolf Trap Opera, a Young Artist with Aspen Music Festival, in the Young Artists Vocal Academy of Houston Grand Opera, and in San Diego Opera's Opera Exposed program. A 2021 Sullivan Award winner, he earned his Bachelor of Music degree in Vocal Performance from San Diego State University and his Master of Music degree in Vocal Performance from Rice University.

PROFILES

Michael Sumuel

ELVIRO

American bass-baritone Michael Sumuel, lauded as having "vocals that are smooth and ingratiating" (*Daily Camera*), will return to the Metropolitan Opera in the 2022–23 season, singing Belcore in *L'elisir d'amore*. Other debuts include The Father in *Blue* with English National Opera, Elviro in *Xerxes* with Detroit Opera, and Figaro in *Le nozze di Figaro* with Pittsburgh Opera. In concert, Michael will perform Mozart's *Requiem* with the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra and James Conlon, J.S. Bach's Cantatas BWV 61 and 140 with the Handel and Haydn Society in Boston, open Washington Concert Opera's season, perform in a gala with soprano Tammy Wilson, and return to Mercury Houston for Handel's *Messiah*. Finally, with Pacific Chorale, he will take part in a European tour, performing in Haydn's *Lord Nelson Mass* and Florence Price's *Abraham Lincoln Walks at Midnight*.

Last season Michael performed as Figaro in *Le nozze di Figaro* with Seattle Opera, Escamillo in *Carmen* for his debut with Santa Fe Opera, a concert of arias to open the Dallas Opera season, the King in Massenet's *Cinderella* with the Metropolitan Opera, Leporello in *Don Giovanni* with Opera San Antonio, and Escamillo with Chicago Opera Theater. Highlights of past opera seasons have included, among others, as Masetto in a new production of *Don Giovanni* at the Lyric Opera of Chicago; Tom in the world premiere of Christopher Theofanidis's *Heart of a Soldier* and Elviro in Handel's *Xerxes*, as well as Papageno in *Die Zauberflöte* and Schaunard in *La bohème* at Houston Grand Opera; Junius in *The Rape of Lucretia* at Glyndebourne Festival Opera; and Escamillo at Norwegian National Opera and Ballet.

A Texas native, Michael is an alumnus of the Houston Grand Opera Studio, the Merola Opera Program at San Francisco Opera, and the Filene Young Artist program at Wolf Trap Opera.

ARTIST

John Conklin

SET DESIGNER

John Conklin has designed for the Metropolitan Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, San Francisco Opera, Santa Fe Opera, Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, Glimmerglass Opera, and the opera companies of Houston, Seattle, Dallas, Washington, and Minneapolis, among others. Abroad he has worked at the English National Opera, the Bayerische Staatsoper, and the Australian Opera. In addition, he served as Director of Production for New York City Opera, Associate Director of Glimmerglass Opera, and he is currently Artistic Advisor to Boston Lyric Opera. He recently retired from teaching at the Tisch School of the Arts at New York University.

PROFILES

Sara Jean Tosetti

COSTUME DESIGNER

Sara Jean Tosetti is a New York City–based costume designer, originally from Paris, France. Previous designs include *Salome* (LA Opera, directed by David Paul); *Xerxes*, *Cato in Utica* (Glimmerglass Festival, directed by Tazewell Thompson); the world premiere of Laura Kaminsky's *As One* (Brooklyn Academy of Music, directed by Ken Cazan); *Radamisto* (Julliard, directed by James Darrah); *Carmen*, *Orpheus in the Underworld*, *Rinaldo*, *Cendrillon* (CCO); *Das Rheingold* (Virginia Opera, directed by Mary Birnbaum); *A Flea in Her Ear* (Del Rep & Westport, directed by Mark Lamos); *Manuscript*, *The Exonerated* (Daryl Roth Theatre, directed by Bob Balaban); *The Maids*, *'Tis a Pity She's a Whore* (Red Bull Theatre at the Duke, directed by Jesse Berger); *Company*, *West Side Story*, *Much Ado About Nothing* (Barrington Stage Company, directed by Julianne Boyd); *The Heart of Robin Hood*, *Into the Woods*, and *Richard III* (Hudson Valley Shakespeare Festival). Additional credits include the Metropolitan Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Opera Bastille, Caesars Palace in Las Vegas, multiple Broadway shows, and various films and TV shows, including *Dickinson*, *Jane Eyre*, *The Americans*, *POSE*, and *The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel*. She was awarded the Princess Grace Award in Design as well as the Bel Geddes Design Enhancement Award. She is a Barrington Stage Company Associate Artist, where she received the Berkshire Theatre Critics Award for Best Costume Design for the last Ten Years.

Sara has a BFA and MFA from New York University's Tisch School of the Arts, with Outstanding Achievement in Design. She is a proud member of IATSE Local 829.

ARTIST

Robert Wierzel

LIGHTING DESIGNER

Robert Wierzel has worked with artists and directors from diverse disciplines and backgrounds, in opera, theater, dance, museums, and contemporary music, on stages throughout the country and abroad. His NYC Broadway productions include *Lady Day at Emerson's Bar & Grill*, the musical *FELA!* (Tony Award nomination), and David Copperfield's *Dreams and Nightmares*. Wierzel has designed productions with opera companies in New York (Glimmerglass Festival, New York City Opera), Paris, Tokyo, Norway, Toronto, Vancouver, Wexford, Atlanta, Boston, Seattle, Houston, Dallas, Portland, Denver (Opera Colorado), Washington, D.C, Minneapolis, and Chicago (Lyric Opera & Opera Theatre), among others. Wierzel's dance work includes over 35 years with Bill T. Jones and the Bill T. Jones/ Arnie Zane Company. He has designed at most regional theaters across the country, including the Alliance Theatre (Atlanta), American Conservatory Theater, Shakespeare Theatre (Washington, D.C.), Chicago Shakespeare Theater, Guthrie Theater, Goodman Theatre, and the Mark Taper Forum, among many others.

Future projects include the operas *Das Rheingold* at Atlanta Opera and *Romeo & Juliet* at Glimmerglass Festival.

Wierzel is a creative partner at Spark Design Collaborative and is on the faculty of New York University's Tisch School of the Arts, Design for Stage & Film.

PROFILES

Joanne Middleton Weaver

WIG & MAKEUP DESIGNER

Born in England, Joanne Middleton Weaver came to the United States in the late 1980s. She began apprenticing with Elsen Associates at what was then Washington Opera, now Washington National Opera. Joanne has since designed at many opera companies throughout the U.S. during her 30-year career: Glimmerglass Opera, Sarasota Opera, Palm Beach Opera, and Des Moines Metro Opera, to name a few. She has designed for Detroit Opera (previously Michigan Opera Theatre) since 1995. Her credits there include *La bohème*, *The Passenger*, *Frida*, *Margaret Garner*, *Cyrano*, *Faust*, and make-up design for *X: The Life and Times of Malcolm X*.

Fountain of Tears (Ainadamar):
A PREVIEW

Opera meets flamenco in Osvaldo Golijov's *Fountain of Tears* (*Ainadamar*), which reimagines the life of revolutionary poet Federico García Lorca, whose political views and sexual orientation led to his violent death during the Spanish Civil War. Brazilian director Deborah Colker's production powerfully blends dance, projections, and poetry.

Golijov's cinematic, GRAMMY Award–winning score grabs you from the very first beat—weaving together influences from around the world in a mesmerizing mixture of opera and the traditional song and dance of Andalusia, including flamenco and rumba rhythms.

Olivier Award–winning choreographer and director Deborah Colker, renowned for her work with Cirque du Soleil and for the opening ceremony of the 2016 Olympics in Brazil, makes her hotly anticipated opera debut, bringing her signature grit, energy, and passion to the stage.

●

"Flamenco rhythms that crackle irresistibly with energy" – *The Times* (UK)

"A simultaneous hit on all the senses" – *The Scotsman* (*UK*)

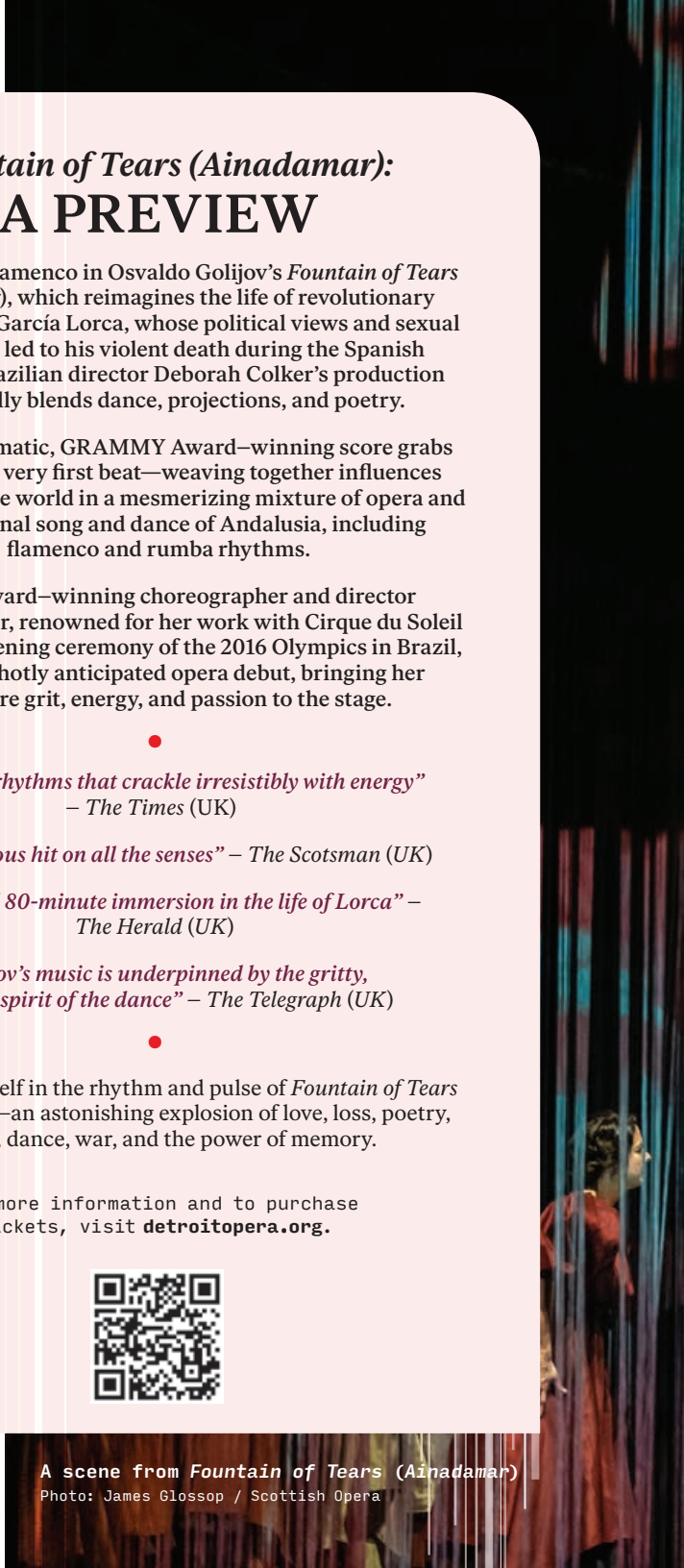
"A powerful 80-minute immersion in the life of Lorca" – *The Herald* (*UK*)

"Golijov's music is underpinned by the gritty, physical spirit of the dance" – *The Telegraph* (*UK*)

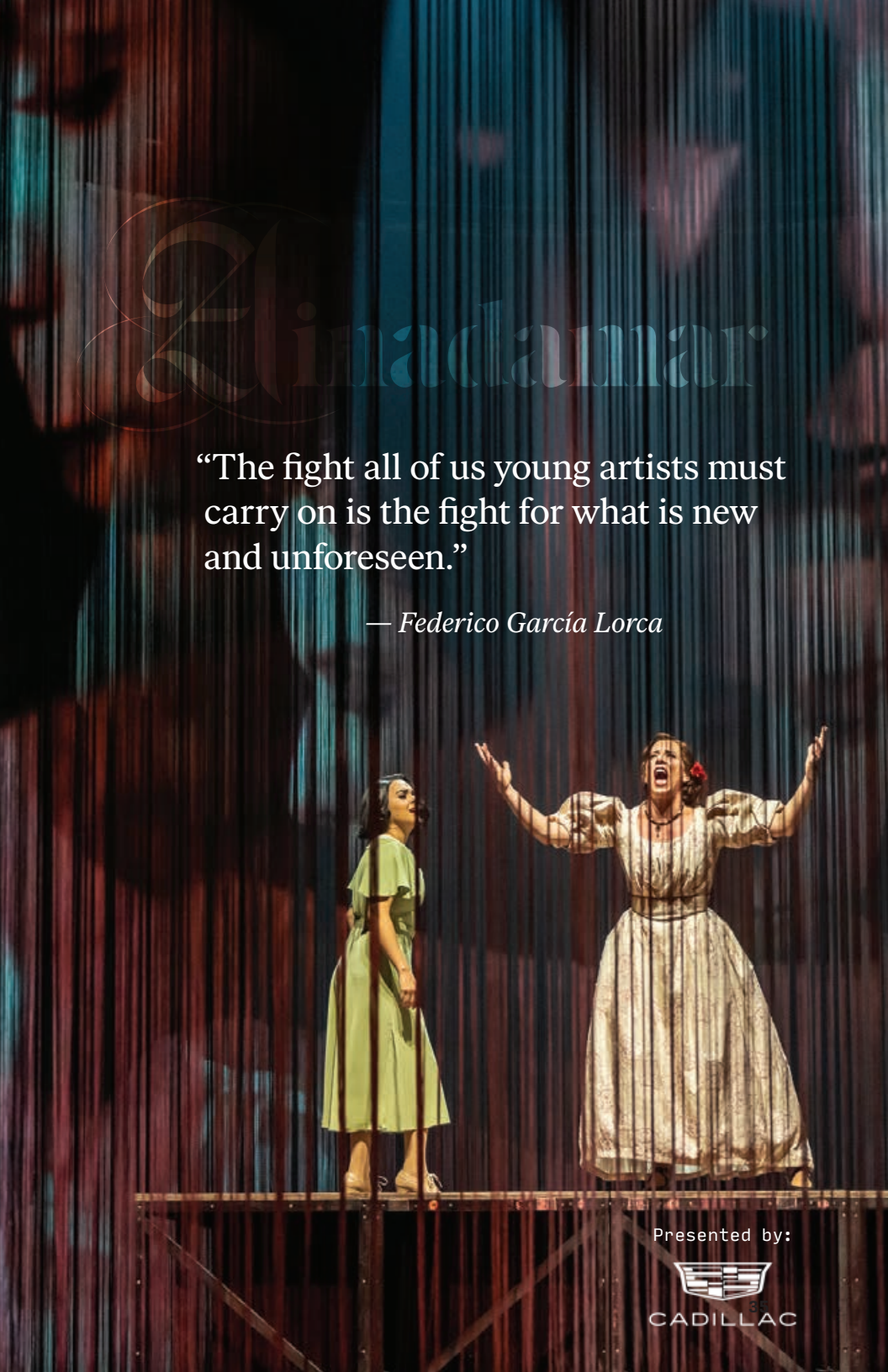
●

Immerse yourself in the rhythm and pulse of *Fountain of Tears* (*Ainadamar*)—an astonishing explosion of love, loss, poetry, music, dance, war, and the power of memory.

For more information and to purchase tickets, visit **detroitopera.org.**



A scene from *Fountain of Tears* (*Ainadamar*)
Photo: James Glossop / Scottish Opera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“The fight all of us young artists must carry on is the fight for what is new and unforeseen.”
— Federico García Lorca
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A scene from *Fountain of Tears* (*Ainadamar*)
Photo: James Glossop / Scottish Opera

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In remembrance of our founder and long-term general director, The David DiChiera Artistic Fund has been established to support and honor his artistic vision.

This fund enables Detroit Opera to produce compelling opera, present innovative dance, and engage with thousands of students and members of our community through our educational and outreach programs. Most importantly, it allows Detroit Opera to preserve David's legacy and his dedication to the young people of Southeast Michigan and young emerging artists from all over the country.

Detroit Opera gratefully acknowledges the generous corporate, foundation, and individual donors whose gifts to The David DiChiera Artistic Fund were made before December 31, 2022.

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The Detroit Opera Board of Directors began the first phase of fundraising for Detroit Opera House capital improvements in January 2020. This multi-phase capital campaign grew from recommendations identified in the facilities master plan completed by Albert Kahn Associates, Inc. Scheduled facility improvements and upgrades will shape the patron experience at the Opera House for years to come.

We look forward to sharing full details about the capital campaign in the coming months. Until then, we extend heartfelt thanks to the following donors who made contributions that enabled capital improvements to begin.

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The Italian word avanti means "ahead," or "forward." Detroit Opera's Avanti Society represents a designated group of friends who have made plans to include Detroit Opera in their estates—whether by will, trust, insurance, or life income arrangement. We are grateful for the generosity and foresight of those listed below, who have chosen to declare their intentions and join the Avanti Society. ***Thank You Avanti Society Members!***

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IN CASE OF EMERGENCY

Please observe the lighted exit signs located throughout the theater. In the event of an emergency, remain calm and walk, do not run, to the nearest exit. Ushers and security personnel are trained to assist. An emergency medical technician (EMT) is onsite during most events. Contact an usher or staff member if you need medical assistance.

GUEST SERVICES – Vincent Lobby

There are a variety of amenities located in guest services for your comfort and use. Wheelchairs, booster seats*, earplugs, assisted listening devices, feminine hygiene products, basic first aid items, and more are complimentary and available for your convenience. Coat check is also available. This area is located on the Madison Street side of the building. **Limited quantity*

PHOTOGRAPHY, RECORDING, AND CELL PHONE USE

Photography and/or recording during any performance is strictly prohibited. Photographs taken in the lobby areas, before or after a performance, and during intermission are welcome. As a courtesy to all guests, please turn off all electronic devices and refrain from use during the performance.

RESTROOMS

Women's restrooms are located off the Ford Lobby (Broadway Street entrance) and down the stairs, and on third floor (Madison Street entrance). Men's restrooms are located under the Grand Staircase and on the third floor (Broadway Street side). There are two sets of elevators or stairs available to access all third-floor restrooms. All third-floor restrooms are wheelchair accessible (women's restroom, press 3R in the elevator). There are single-use unisex wheelchair accessible restrooms on the first floor of the Broadway Street side of the building and the Madison Street side of the building. There is also a wheelchair accessible women's restroom on the Broadway Street side of the building.

NO SMOKING

The Detroit Opera House is a non-smoking facility. This includes e-cigarettes, vapes, and other "smokeless" products.

USHERS

Ushers are stationed throughout the building to assist patrons as needed. Please direct questions, concerns, and feedback to them during your visit. Enjoy volunteering? Please go to guest services or the Detroit Opera website, www.detroitopera.org/volunteers, for information on becoming a volunteer.

LOST AND FOUND

During the performance, lost and found is located in guest services. Unclaimed items are logged and taken to the Safety and Security office after each performance. To inquire about a misplaced or lost item, please call 313-961-3500. Items left over 30 days will be discarded or donated.

RECORDING IN PROGRESS

Entry and presence on the event premises constitute your consent to be photographed, filmed, and/or otherwise recorded, and to the release, publication, exhibition, or reproduction of any and all recorded media for any purpose whatsoever in perpetuity in connection with Detroit Opera and its initiatives. By entering the event premises, you waive and release any claims you may have related to the use of recorded media of you at the event.

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