

# Detroit Opera

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

November 29, 2022

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## Soprano Catalina Cuervo and Detroit Opera Resident Artists to perform free holiday concert in English and Spanish at Most Holy Redeemer Church, Dec. 17



Catalina Cuervo photo by Alicia Mar Torres Toro

DETROIT, November 29, 2022—Powerhouse Colombian–American soprano **Catalina Cuervo** returns to Detroit to perform a special gala program at Detroit’s Church of the Most Holy Redeemer, in the heart of Mexicantown, on December 17 at 7pm. The free concert will feature holiday classics and sacred pieces in English, Latin, and Spanish. Also performing will

be guitarist **Álvaro Andrés Bermudez**; pianist **Nathalie Doucet**, Detroit Opera's Head of Music; and four emerging artists—soprano **Melanie Spector**; mezzo-soprano **Gabrielle Barkidjija**; tenor **Leo Williams**, and baritone **Ben Reisinger**. Spector, Barkidjija, Williams, and Reisinger are participants in Detroit Opera's highly competitive 2022–23 Resident Artist Program, selected from among hundreds of singers who applied for the program.

The holiday concert is a direct result of Detroit Opera's ongoing work to deepen connections with the Southwest Detroit community. In 2016, Detroit Opera board member Jesse Venegas and his wife, Yesenia, formed a partnership with Holy Redeemer Church. Presentations at the church have included concerts by Catalina Cuervo in 2017 and soprano Cecelia Violeta López in 2019, and Gian Carlo Menotti's *Amahl and the Night Visitors* in 2018.

### **IF YOU GO:**

Catalina Cuervo, soprano  
Detroit Opera Resident Artists  
    Melanie Spector, soprano  
    Gabrielle Barkidjija, mezzo-soprano  
    Leo Williams, tenor  
    Ben Reisinger, baritone  
Álvaro Andrés Bermudez, guitar  
Nathalie Doucet, piano  
Most Holy Redeemer Church  
1721 Junction Avenue, Detroit  
December 17, 2022, 7pm

### **About Catalina Cuervo**

Fiery Colombian-American soprano Catalina Cuervo is regarded as one of the world's leading voices of Latin American repertoire. She has performed the title role of Astor Piazzolla's tango opera *Maria de Buenos Aires* more than 80 times at companies including New York City Opera, Florida Grand Opera, Arizona Opera, Atlanta Opera, and Cincinnati Opera, and has frequently portrayed painter Frida Kahlo in Robert X. Rodriguez's 1991 opera *Frida*. Other operatic roles include Nedda in *Pagliacci*, Magda in *La Rondine*, Mimì and Musetta in *La Bohème*, Adriana in the zarzuela *Los Gavilanes*, and Amapola in the zarzuela *La Leyenda del Beso*. Cuervo's 2022–23 season includes her role debut as Elisetta in Cimarosa's *Il matrimonio segreto* with Florida Grand Opera; Micaëla in Bizet's *Carmen* at Anchorage Opera; Maria in Piazzolla's *Maria de Buenos Aires* with Opera San Antonio; and the title role in *Frida* at Opera Naples. She made her debut in October with Fort Worth Opera, performing in two programs she curated, the first ("El Fuego de una Mujer") featuring art songs, arias, and folkloric music from Mexico, Cuba, Colombia, Puerto Rico, Brazil and Argentina, and the second ("Noches de Zarzuela") featuring Spanish zarzuela music by Jacinto Guerrero, Federico Moreno Torroba, and Soutullo-Vert. She has performed with the Detroit Symphony, New Mexico Philharmonic, Atlanta Symphony, St. Louis Symphony and Filarmonica de Medellín, among others, and will make her debut in December with Florida's New World Symphony. In addition to singing opera, she is one of the leading voices of symphonic rock/metal music in Colombia.

## About Álvaro Andrés Bermudez

Álvaro Bermudez is a guitarist and composer in high demand all over South Florida, where he performs with the finest jazz and classical musicians, on studio recordings, and in song recitals with his wife, mezzo-soprano Misty L. Bermudez. His Trio Los Clasicos ensemble plays regularly in the Miami area and has been engaged for performances in Atlanta and Boston. He has collaborated with the French Horn Collective, a Miami-based ensemble specializing in the French jazz style developed by Django Reinhardt in Paris during the 1930s, with performances in Gainesville, Jacksonville, and Miami. He was guitarist for Florida Grand Opera's 2019 production of Robert Xavier Rodriguez's *Frida*, starring soprano Catalina Cuervo as Frida Kahlo. Bermudez's compositions include *Mi Amado para Mi*, a setting of the first chapter of the Song of Solomon, and *Orpheus with His Lute*, both premiered by Miami's Seraphic Fire chamber ensemble; and *Danzas del Silencio*, a choral and guitar collaboration with Seraphic Fire in partnership with Miami's New World Center that blends Colombian dance rhythms with Bach's orchestral structure. Bermudez is a native of White Plains, New York and earned his bachelor's and master's degrees in jazz studies from Florida International University. He currently heads the guitar program at Ronald Reagan Senior High School's Classical Arts Academy in Doral, Florida, where his students have been admitted to programs including Boston's Berklee College of Music and the Frost School of Music at the University of Miami.

## About Detroit Opera

Detroit Opera aspires to influence the future of opera with a goal of invigorating new audiences through new and re-imagined productions, relevant to current times. It is creating an ambitious standard for American opera that emphasizes community, accessibility, artistic risk-taking, and collaboration, led by Yuval Sharon, Gary L. Wasserman Artistic Director; Associate Artistic Director Christine Goerke; Music Director Roberto Kalb; and President and CEO Wayne S. Brown. Upcoming 2022-23 productions at Detroit Opera include a revival of Tazewell Thompson's Glimmerglass production of Handel's *Xerxes* (March 4–12), directed by James Blaszkowski and conducted by Dame Jane Glover, and Golijov's *Ainadamar* (April 8–16), the latter a co-production with Opera Ventures, Scottish National Opera, and the Welsh National Opera, directed by Deborah Colker and conducted by Paolo Bortolameolli.

## About Detroit Opera's Resident Artists

Sopranos Melanie Spector and Elizabeth Polese; mezzo-soprano Gabrielle Barkidjija; tenor Leo Williams, and baritone Ben Reisinger are the inaugural participants in Detroit Opera's 2022–23 Resident Artist Program. In the company's newly reworked residency model, spearheaded by Associate Artistic Director Christine Goerke and Head of Music Nathalie Doucet, all five Resident Artists commit to an intensive program of voice, movement, and language while living in Detroit from September 2022 through June 2023. The program builds on the strong foundations of the Studio Artist program founded in 2015 by Dr. David DiChiera while embodying the forward-looking leadership of Artistic Director Yuval Sharon and President and CEO Wayne S. Brown, using individualized study and direct performing

experience to provide world-class professional opportunity to the next generation of opera talent. In addition to their hands-on training, Resident Artists have opportunities to perform with Detroit Opera in mainstage productions. In keeping with Detroit Opera's longstanding focus on making opera accessible to the surrounding community, Resident Artists are forging direct ties to Detroit through recitals, concerts, and other collaborations with local schools, nonprofit organizations, businesses, and institutions. For more information about this year's Resident Artists, visit <https://detroitopera.org/detroit-opera-resident-artists/>.

### **About Church of the Most Holy Redeemer**

The Church of the Most Holy Redeemer is located in the heart of Mexicantown in Detroit. The church has a long and robust history in the Archdiocese of Detroit as a multicultural, welcoming space for families from a diverse array of backgrounds. The magnificent, imposing church at Junction Avenue and Vernor Highway first opened on May 30, 1923; the bell tower followed three years later. The complex, designed by Donaldson & Meier, consumes an entire block, comprising the church, rectory, elementary and high schools, a convent and an activities hall. Today, it is the largest Latino parish in the city, and has offered Mass in Spanish since 1969.