

"I hope this season opens up ideas of opera to a new audience, that it feels like something you've never seen or heard before." –Yuval Sharon

Detroit Opera Announces "Collide and Collage," its 2023–24 Season of Opera

Opera season to feature fully staged productions of Puccini's *Madame Butterfly*, Mazzoli's *Breaking the Waves*, Janáček's *The Cunning Little Vixen*, plus a site-specific operatic experience of Cage's *Europerras 3 & 4* and a new "Beyond the Pit" series featuring the Detroit Opera Orchestra and Resident Artists

Music Director Roberto Kalb to conduct Oct. 28 gala featuring Christine Goerke, Rod Gilfry, Key'mon Murreh, Arturo Chacón-Cruz, and Mané Galoyan



Matthew Ozawa will direct a new co-production of *Madame Butterfly* at Detroit Opera in October

DETROIT, April 4, 2023 –Detroit Opera announces its 2023–24 Opera season under the leadership of President and CEO Wayne S. Brown, Gary L. Wasserman Artistic Director Yuval Sharon, Associate Artistic Director Christine Goerke, and Music Director Roberto Kalb. In the coming season, Detroit Opera will present four operas embracing the themes of collision and collage, with stories spotlighting characters who break free and

go against society's norms and expectations—with one presentation challenging European opera tradition itself by transforming it into a collage.

The season will feature major house debuts by director Matthew Ozawa; conductors Stephanie Childress and Kensho Watanabe; singers Gabrielle Barkidjija, Kidon Choi, Kristen Choi, Mané Galoyan, Samantha Hankey, Sharleen Joynt, Elizabeth Polese, David Portillo, Andrew Potter, Alex Rosen, Karah Son, Eric Taylor, Rehanna Thelwell, and Elizabeth van Os.

“One of my missions for Detroit Opera has always been to offer first-time experiences for the Detroit audience to experience the full spectrum of what opera can be about—both contemporary operas and classic operas,” says **Yuval Sharon**. “Three out of four operas this season are debuts in Detroit. The season offers a sense of collage: different elements coming together and resonating with each other to give a much larger picture of what opera can mean for us now.”

“I'm excited to announce Detroit Opera's 2023–24 season of opera and dance, during which we will continue to move American opera forward by emphasizing community and accessibility, artistic risk-taking and collaboration,” says President and CEO **Wayne Brown**. “Our artistic director, Yuval Sharon, and associate artistic director, Christine Goerke, have inspired us with their creative work thus far, and will continue to do so in the coming season. Artistic innovation is a throughline for Detroit Opera, not something new: it goes back to the David DiChiera era and now continues through Yuval's artistic leadership that included last season's sold-out new production of Anthony Davis and Thulani Davis's *X: The Life and Times of Malcolm X*. I am delighted that the 2023–24 season will be the first with our full artistic team in place. In the fall, Yuval and Christine will be joined by Roberto Kalb, who begins his first full season as our music director. Under Roberto's leadership, expect to see a higher profile for the Detroit Opera Orchestra in the community. The kind of innovation that began many decades ago continues in full force today, and I could not be prouder of what this company has achieved, particularly in the past several seasons as we continue to emerge from the pandemic.”

The opera season opens on October 7, when an all-Asian and Asian-American creative team transports Giacomo Puccini's ***Madame Butterfly*** to a fantastical contemporary setting where reality and dreams intersect. The opera tells the story of a tragic East-West culture clash; an American soldier's superficial idea of Japan; a young Japanese woman, and their ideas of marriage in their communities, with heartbreaking consequences. **Kensho Watanabe** conducts and **Matthew Ozawa** directs in a production that offers a view of Puccini's tragedy through a fascinating new lens. *Madame Butterfly* is a co-production with Cincinnati Opera, Pittsburgh Opera, San Diego Opera, and Utah Opera. “One of the great stories of cultural collision in the operatic literature is *Madame Butterfly*, which is so well-loved by audiences but gets at an uncomfortable truth of two cultures not understanding each other, and conflict that ultimately has deep human costs,” says Sharon. “One of the important aspects of doing *Madame Butterfly* today is to

make sure that the people who are telling this story can deal with the representation in a way that truly honors the cultures being depicted. So we're really thrilled that Matthew Ozawa has brought together an entire Asian and Asian-American creative team, bringing to this very Western art form a production that looks in both directions, for an honorable representation of Japanese culture."

The season also includes Missy Mazzoli's heart-wrenching opera ***Breaking the Waves***, inspired by the controversial Lars von Trier film, which tells the story of a woman in an extreme environment in Scotland, defying her community of faith. **Stephanie Childress** will make her Detroit Opera conducting debut leading the cast and Detroit Opera Orchestra in *Breaking the Waves*, a co-production of Opera Ventures, Scottish Opera, Houston Grand Opera, Adelaide Festival and Théâtre National de l'Opéra Comique that was first performed in 2019 at Scottish Opera, directed by **Tom Morris**. "This marks the first mainstage production here that features a woman as the composer, which is something I'm very excited about," says Sharon. "It's a work that tells the story of a woman's agency in an impossible situation, grappling with what it means to be pious and good. It's a powerful and searing work, and Mazzoli's orchestration is oceanic, with soundscapes depicting a deeply human conflict, and collision in so many ways."

Human and animal worlds collide in Leoš Janáček's ***The Cunning Little Vixen***, an enchanting, cinematic modern fable about a clever vixen who tries to outwit her captors. Music Director **Roberto Kalb** conducts, and Artistic Director **Yuval Sharon** directs his production from The Cleveland Orchestra, which uses playful projections to transform singers into forest creatures, with hand-crafted animations that evoke the fable's comic-strip origins. "We are inviting the audience into a deeper reflection of how we interact with nature, think about nature, these forces—animals, trees, the seasons, our relation to the ever-shifting natural world," says Sharon. This will be the first Detroit performance of one of Leoš Janáček's great works; the score features some of the most beautiful music ever written. "This is incredibly family-friendly, and is so fun and mesmerizing," says Kalb. "And the cast is spectacular—I truly think that no theater in the world can boast a better cast than Detroit Opera."

This season's site-specific operatic experience will be pioneering composer John Cage's ***Europers 3 & 4***, which breaks apart European opera tradition and reassembles it as a collage. With pre-recorded music, live singers and pianists, stage actions determined through chance operations, and a digital EuroperaClock taking the place of conductor, Cage's unpredictable, entertaining light-and-soundscape will challenge your eyes and ears. "Cage created *Europers 3 & 4* entirely of recycled materials—arias that everyone is familiar with, classics from European repertoire," says Sharon. "The only catch is that they're all performed at the same time. Through chance operations, singers will perform arias that they select, while pianists play transcriptions of different operas, and phonographs are playing different recordings. The result is something new and original: an exhilarating, bewildering, wonderful work. There are many experiences happening simultaneously, more similar to an installation, or like when you came to the Michigan Theater to see *Bliss* in 2021—it does not have to adhere to our standard ideas of

narrative or experience. It can be so many different things: a true collage of things we know and love.” *Europeras 3 & 4* will be presented at Detroit’s historic Gem Theatre in March 2024. Casting for *Europeras 3 & 4* will be announced later this spring.

On October 28, **Roberto Kalb** will conduct his first concert since joining the Detroit Opera as Music Director: an **Opera Gala** featuring superstar singers including soprano **Christine Goerke**, Detroit Opera’s Associate Artistic Director, plus baritone **Rod Gilfry**, tenor **Arturo Chacón-Cruz**, soprano **Mané Galoyan** and countertenor **Key’mon Murrah**, who had a breakout success at Detroit Opera in the title role of Handel’s *Xerxes* this season. The **Detroit Opera Orchestra** and Detroit Opera **Resident Artists** will perform onstage at the gala, and music will range from Verdi and Bernstein to Spanish *zarzuela* selections. “I’m so thrilled about next season at Detroit Opera, my first officially as music director of the organization. The season offers what Detroit Opera has become known for: a unique lens into traditional repertoire, a breakaway from standardized programming, and a bold introduction to masterpiece repertoire not yet performed in this city,” says Kalb. “I’m also excited that we will be featuring our first concert in a new series we’re calling ***Beyond the Pit***, featuring the Detroit Opera Orchestra and emerging singers from our Resident Artist Program performing in Detroit, outside the opera house.” The focus of the new series is to connect through music with the city of Detroit’s diverse communities. “Projects that speak directly to the community are the way forward.”

Stay tuned later this spring for details of additional community initiatives and special events, which will include the Detroit Opera Orchestra’s “Beyond the Pit” performances. Also to be announced are names of the emerging singers selected to be **Detroit Opera Resident Artists** in the 2023-24 season, the 2023-24 **Dance Season**, and presentations by the **Detroit Opera Youth Chorus**.

Subscriber packages starting at \$80 will be available soon. The purchase of a subscription package allows the patron to enjoy priority seating, easy and free ticket exchanges, savings of up to 40 percent on tickets, exclusive access to pre-paid parking in the Opera House Parking Center, and additional perks. Visit Detroitopera.org or call 313-237-7464 for more details.

The safety of all patrons continues to be a priority for Detroit Opera and the Detroit Opera House. The company will continue to monitor health and safety precautions and will regularly update its website to reflect those precautions when appropriate.

Detroit Opera **2023–24 Opera Season**

Complete casting to be announced later this spring

Madame Butterfly

October 7, 13, & 15, 2023
Detroit Opera House

Music by Giacomo Puccini
Libretto by Luigi Illica and Giuseppe Giacosa
Based on the play by David Belasco
Sung in Italian with projected English translations
Director: Matthew Ozawa
Conductor: Kensho Watanabe
Scenery design: Kimie Nishikawa and dots
Costume design: Maiko Matsushima
Lighting design: Yuki Nakase Link
Co-Production of Detroit Opera, Cincinnati Opera, Pittsburgh Opera, San Diego Opera,
and Utah Opera

Cio-Cio-San, Madame Butterfly: Karah Son (soprano)
Lt. Pinkerton: Eric Taylor (tenor)
Suzuki: Kristen Choi (mezzo-soprano)
Sharpless: Nmon Ford (baritone)
Goro: Julius Ahn (tenor)
The Bonze: Kidon Choi (baritone)

Performance dates:
Saturday, Oct. 7, 2023, 7:30pm
Friday, Oct. 13, 2023, 7:30pm
Sunday, Oct. 15, 2023, 2:30pm

Europeras 3 & 4
March 8, 9, & 10, 2024
Gem Theatre, Detroit

Music by John Cage: a 70-minute collage of opera arias
Director: Yuval Sharon
Cast to be announced

Performance dates:
Friday, March 8, 2024 at 7:30pm
Saturday, March 9, 2024 at 7:30pm
Sunday, March 10, 2024 at 2:30pm

Breaking the Waves
April 6, 12, & 14, 2024
Detroit Opera House

Music by Missy Mazzoli
Libretto by Royce Vavrek
Inspired by the Lars von Trier film *Breaking the Waves*
Conductor: Stephanie Childress
Co-production of Opera Ventures, Scottish Opera, Houston Grand Opera, Adelaide
Festival and Théâtre National de l'Opéra Comique

Bess: Sharleen Joynt (soprano)
Jan: Ben Taylor (baritone)
Mother: Elizabeth van Os (soprano)
Dodo: Gabrielle Barkidjija (mezzo-soprano)
Dr. Richardson: David Portillo (tenor)
Church Councilman: Nathan Stark (bass-baritone)
Terry: Robert Mellon (bass-baritone)

Performance dates:
Saturday, April 6, 2024, 7:30pm
Friday, April 12, 2024, 7:30pm
Sunday, April 14, 2024, 2:30pm

The Cunning Little Vixen
May 11, 17, & 19, 2024
Detroit Opera House

Music by Leoš Janáček
Libretto by Janáček, based on a story by Rudolf Těsnohlídek
Sung in Czech with English supertitles
A Cleveland Orchestra production
Director: Yuval Sharon
Conductor: Roberto Kalb
Animation creation: Walter Robot Studios (Bill Barminsky & Christopher Louie)
Projection and lighting design: Jason H. Thompson
Costume design: Ann Closs-Farley
Mask design: Cristina Waltz

The Forester: Michael Sumuel (bass-baritone)
Fox Golden-Strip (Lisak): Samantha Hankey (mezzo-soprano)
The Vixen (Sly Little Fox): Mané Galoyan (soprano)
The Parson: Alex Rosen (bass)
Schoolmaster/Mosquito: David Cangelosi (tenor)
Harasta: Andrew Potter (bass)
Forester's Wife/Woodpecker: Rehanna Thelwell (mezzo-soprano)
The Rooster: Elizabeth Polese (soprano)

Performance dates:

Saturday, May 11, 2024, 7:30pm

Friday, May 17, 2024, 7:30pm

Sunday, May 19, 2024, 2:30pm

About Detroit Opera

Detroit Opera (formerly Michigan Opera Theatre), one of the nation's most vibrant nonprofit arts organizations, aspires to influence the future of opera and dance with a goal of invigorating audiences through new and re-imagined productions, relevant to current times. It is creating an ambitious standard for American opera and dance that emphasizes community, accessibility, artistic risk-taking, and collaboration. Founded in 1971 by the late Dr. David DiChiera, Detroit Opera is led by President and CEO Wayne S. Brown; Yuval Sharon, Gary L. Wasserman Artistic Director; Associate Artistic Director Christine Goerke; Music Director Roberto Kalb; Artistic Advisor for Dance Jon Teeuwissen; and Board Chairman Ethan Davidson. For more information, visit www.detroitopera.org. Follow the company on Facebook and Instagram (@DetroitOpera), LinkedIn (Detroit Opera), as well as Twitter (@DetOperaHouse).

PRESS CONTACT:

Jennifer Melick, jmelick@detroitopera.org, 973-985-5499 (m)

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