Florencia en el Amazonas

A mystical journey into the jungle... and beyond

NOVEMBER 9, 12, 15, 17, 2019
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2019-20 SEASON
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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

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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
IN ORDER OF VOCAL APPEARANCE:
Riolobo  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

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.

Season Sponsor:
These performances have received special funding from The Pittsburgh Foundation.

Tuesday Night Sponsor:
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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

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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.

SYNOPSIS continued on next page
SYNOPSIS, continued

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

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 Cincinatti 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.
ARTIST BIOGRAPHIES, continued

SANDRA PIQUES EDDY: PAULA
Recent engagements include: Rosina/Ill 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, Iramante/Idomeneo with Boston Lyric Opera and Florentine Opera; Dorabella/Cosi 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 LOUTSION: 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/Elektro 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/Elektro 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 Symphony, 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/Il 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/Le nozze di Figaro 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/Leoní’s Lorcacolo, and Salomon/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 in 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 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.
CRAIG VERN: RÍOLOBO
A former Pittsburgh Opera Resident Artist, Craig Vern was last seen on the Pittsburgh Opera stage in the title role of Don Giovanni, Marcello/Lo 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/Cosi 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/Cosi 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. Vern 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 Fraquita/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 Ullae.

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 Madame 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 Lyrical-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’Brien 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.
ARTIST BIOGRAPHIES, continued

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 premieres of Hospice, Pointing At The Moon, Troubadour, Tiger Style!, Native Guard, The Geller Girls, What I Learned in Paris, Blush, 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 Holländer, 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, Balletic 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.

AARON RHYNE: ORIGINAL PROJECTION DESIGNER
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), Florencica 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.

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, Spoletto 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 Undertow, 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.
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 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. Lesniak 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.

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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 Álvaro 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 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 intermediator 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!

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

– Jose Maria Condemi
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Violin I</th>
<th>Violin II</th>
<th>Viola</th>
<th>Cello</th>
<th>Bass I</th>
<th>Bass II</th>
<th>Oboe</th>
<th>Bass Clarinet</th>
<th>Bassetoon</th>
<th>Clarinet</th>
<th>Percussion</th>
<th>Harp</th>
<th>Piano</th>
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<tr>
<td>Concertmaster</td>
<td>Principal Second</td>
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<td>Mary Beth Schotting</td>
<td>Sara Schaft</td>
<td>Louise Farbman</td>
<td>Elisa Kohanski</td>
<td>Christopher Wilson</td>
<td>Robert Driscoll, Jr.</td>
<td>Albert Wrublesky</td>
<td>Linda Morton Fisher</td>
<td>Evan Geiger</td>
<td>Mary Beth Skaggs Malek</td>
<td>Erik Fung</td>
<td>Glenn Lewis</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assistant Concertmaster</td>
<td>Jamu Baile</td>
<td>Rebecca Rothermel</td>
<td>Paula Tuttle</td>
<td>Karen Lee Stone</td>
<td>Alix Reinhardt</td>
<td>Kathryn Ambrose</td>
<td>Matthew Litterini</td>
<td>Principal</td>
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<tr>
<td>Juan C. Jaramillo</td>
<td>Jesse Thompson</td>
<td>John McCarthy</td>
<td>Joseph Bishkoff, Jr.</td>
<td>Andrew Kohn</td>
<td>Jason Kohn</td>
<td>Allen Kohn</td>
<td>Matthew Litterini</td>
<td>Principal</td>
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## CHORUS & SUPERNUMERARIES

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Soprano</th>
<th>Tenor</th>
<th>Supernumeraries</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lilly Abreu</td>
<td>William Buchanan</td>
<td>Grace Colligan</td>
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<tr>
<td>Charlene Canty</td>
<td>Jeffrey Gross</td>
<td>Xander Kope</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adrianna Cleveland</td>
<td>Eric Haines</td>
<td>The Principal Artists, Choristers,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Betsy D’Emidio</td>
<td>Richard Mikol</td>
<td>and Production Staff employed in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meghan DeWald</td>
<td>David Scoville</td>
<td>this production are members of the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sasha Piastro-Tedford</td>
<td>Mark Spindike</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**VIOLIN I (Trio)**
- Charles Stegeman
- Mary Beth Schotting
- Anne Moskal
- Luis Rojas
- Gabriella Faetini

**VIOLIN II (Trio)**
- Jennifer Madge
- Sara Schaft
- Jamu Baile
- Jennifer Cowles
- Jesse Thompson
- Rachel Williams

**VIOLA (Principal)**
- Jennifer Gerhard
- Louise Farbman
- Rebecca Rothermel
- Kathleen Melucci
- John McCarthy

**CELLO (Principal)**
- Kathleen Melucci
- Elisa Kohanski
- Paula Tuttle
- Joseph Bishkoff, Jr.

**TRUMPET (Principal)**
- Christopher Wilson
- Karen Lee Stone

**TROMBONE (Principal)**
- John Sebastian Vera
- Taylor Jones

**TENOR (Principal)**
- William Buchanan
- Jeffrey Gross
- Eric Haines
- Richard Mikol
- David Scoville
- Mark Spindike

**SOPRANO (Trio)**
- Lilly Abreu
- Charlene Canty
- Adrianna Cleveland
- Betsy D’Emidio
- Meghan DeWald
- Sasha Piastro-Tedford

**ALTO (Trio)**
- Lisa Brovey Kovach
- Barbara McDonough
- Eva Rainforth
- Veronika Schmidt
- Kathryn Ambrose Sereno
- Jenifer Weber

**BASS (Principal)**
- Brian Barrett
- Eric Garber
- Joseph Helinski
- J. Patrick McGill
- Joshua Mulkey
- Jordan Ringer

**PIANO (Principal)**
- Glenn Lewis

**LIBRARIAN**
- Eleanor Cameron

**PERSONNEL MANAGER**
- Robert Boldin

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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.

OBSURCTED 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.

STAGE AREA
Limited to performers, staff, and authorized visitors.

RESTROOMS
Lounges for ladies and gentlemen are located on the Gallery, Promenade, and Mezzanine levels. Restrooms for patrons with physical disabilities are located on the Grand Lobby level.

TICKET SERVICES AND BOX OFFICE HOURS
Tickets to all performances may be purchased at the Box Office at Theater Square, Penn Avenue, between Sixth and Seventh Streets. Hours of operation are Monday - Saturday, 9:00 AM - 9:00 PM; Sunday, 12:00 - 6:00 PM. In conjunction, the Benedum Center and Byham Theater box offices will be open on performance days, two hours before curtain time, through intermission.

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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 412-456-666 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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