

Mondavi Center UCDAVIS



Barbara K. Jackson *Rising Stars of Opera*

Sunday, February 22, 2026 | 2:00 pm
Jackson Hall

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A Season of Debuts and Discovery



Discovery Awaits is the theme of the Mondavi Center's 25-26 Season, continuing and building on last season's commitment to artist debuts. From January through March, 12 of the 14 artists we present will be

appearing for the first time. It's an impressive bunch, if we do say so ourselves!

Our roster of debut artists ranges from those in the early stages of building stellar careers, to established (and in one case legendary) ensembles making their long-awaited first appearances.

The Chicago Symphony Orchestra, led by Maestro Riccardo Muti, are the legends in the lineup, and an ensemble we've been trying to bring to Davis since the Mondavi Center opened more than two decades ago.

Malpaso Dance Company's debut has been a long and winding labor of love. I had the chance to see this incredible company at home in Havana in 2018, after which we immediately booked them for our 19-20 Season. COVID had other plans. It took us eight years to rebook them. It was so worth the wait.

As part of an increased focus on the African diaspora in our programming, we will welcome for the first time the extraordinary Ghanaian singer and storyteller Okaidja Afroso, followed a

few weeks later by the Ndlovu Youth Choir from South Africa. As well, Alsarah & The Nubatones make their debut, bringing their special brand of "East African retro-pop" for two nights in the Vanderhoef Studio Theatre.

Violinist Randall Goosby, who was among our most popular debut artists in the 24-25 Season, returns as part of the debut of the Sphinx Virtuosi. Sphinx is an organization dedicated to increasing representation in classical music and developing exceptional talent. This is our first time working with them on a performance. I'm sure it won't be our last.

It has been impressive and deeply meaningful to witness how the Mondavi Center community has embraced the spirit of discovery and our mission to support rising stars.

For that I am deeply grateful.

Discovery Awaits,

Jeremy Ganter
Executive Director

ROBERT AND MARGRIT MONDAVI CENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS PRESENTS

Barbara K. Jackson *Rising Stars of Opera*

San Francisco Opera Center: Carrie-Ann Matheson, Artistic Director ∞ Markus Beam, General Manager

Adler Fellows: Sadie Cheslak ∞ Alexa Frankian ∞ Sofia Gotch
Mary Hoskins ∞ Thomas Kinch ∞ Gabriel Natal-Báez ∞ Olivier Zerouali

Piano-Conductor Coaches: Ji Youn Lee ∞ Brian Cho

UC Davis Symphony Orchestra: Matilda Hofman, Conductor

PROGRAM

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|---|---------------------------------|
| “Largo al factotum” from <i>Il barbiere di Siviglia</i> Olivier Zerouali (Figaro) | Gioachino Rossini (1792–1868) |
| “Sull’aria” from <i>Le nozze di Figaro</i> Alexa Frankian (Countess Almaviva) • Sofia Gotch (Susanna) | W.A. Mozart (1756–1791) |
| “Mon cœur s’ouvre à ta voix” from <i>Samson et Dalila</i> Sadie Cheslak (Dalila) | Camille Saint-Saëns (1835–1921) |
| “Dunque io son” from <i>Il barbiere di Siviglia</i> Sofia Gotch (Rosina) • Gabriel Natal-Báez (Figaro) | Rossini |
| “Vissi d’arte” from <i>Tosca</i> Mary Hoskins (Tosca) | Giacomo Puccini (1858–1924) |
| “Votre toast” from <i>Carmen</i> Gabriel Natal-Báez (Escamillo) | Georges Bizet (1838–75) |

INTERMISSION

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| Dance from <i>La vida breve</i> | Manuel de Falla (1876–1946) |
| “Ebben! Ne andrò lontana” from <i>La Wally</i> Mary Hoskins (Wally) | Alfredo Catalani (1854–93) |
| “La fleur que tu m’avais jetée” from <i>Carmen</i> Thomas Kinch (Don José) | Bizet |
| “Io son l’umile ancella” from <i>Adriana Lecouvreur</i> Alexa Frankian (Adriana Lecouvreur) | Francesco Cilea (1866–1950) |
| “Glitter and Be Gay” from <i>Candide</i> Sofia Gotch (Cunegonde) | Leonard Bernstein (1918–90) |

Land Acknowledgement

We should take a moment to acknowledge the land on which we are gathered. For thousands of years, this land has been the home of Patwin people. Today, there are three federally recognized Patwin tribes: Cachil DeHe Band of Wintun Indians of the Colusa Indian Community, Kletsel Dehe Wintun Nation, and Yocha Dehe Wintun Nation.

The Patwin people have remained committed to the stewardship of this land over many centuries. It has been cherished and protected, as elders have instructed the young through generations. We are honored and grateful to be here today on their traditional lands.

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About the Program

We're glad you're here.

This afternoon's program offers some of the most fantastic excerpts across all of the classical operatic repertory. We begin in earnest with one of the most famous walk-on arias of all ages: the "Largo al factotum" of Giacchino Rossini's *Barber of Seville*, in which we meet Figaro (he's the barber) for the first time. Many of the pre-cell phone generation, myself included, came to be familiar with this music during their Saturday morning cartoons in Bugs Bunny's "Rabbit of Seville." We end the program with the 20th century with the immensely popular "Glitter and Be Gay" song from Leonard Bernstein's *Candide* — a sparkling (hint: jewels figure prominently in the text) and virtuosic coloratura aria sung by Cunegonde while in Paris.

Opera often gets the undeserved reputation of being for the elite, or for those who only enjoy 'high art.' But we have to remember in the 18th and 19th centuries, opera was the complete entertainment package, what Richard Wagner later called *Gesamtkunstwerk* (which literally translates as "total art work"), a balanced blend of story, philosophy, sound and visual elements. Regardless, audiences loved it then, and evidence suggests audiences still love it now. Strip away those visual elements — the costumes, scenic elements, lights and props — and we are left with four ingredients: the musicians on stage, a composer, librettist, and you, the audience member. This is why it is important to go to performances in person: to feel the power and passion of these voices as they raise the hairs on your head, and deliver a total work of art, a maximal experience limited only by what humans are capable of, which is nearly unlimited.

Be sure to follow these rising stars in what are sure to become world-class careers — which would surely have greatly pleased this concert's namesake, Barbara K. Jackson. In December 2024, Nadine Sierra (Adler Fellow '12) was the first performer we saw as the world celebrated the reopening of Notre Dame, giving a stunning performance of the *Marseillaise* on its steps. To name a couple others: Peni Pati ('17), a Samoan tenor, and tenor Brian Jagde ('12) once sang as Adlers and at a prior iteration of this concert and they are both in the midst of remarkable operatic careers.

If this is your first experience with opera, your ear will surely be open to the joy and passion of opera from this moment forward.

—Phil Daley

About the Selections

Rossini: "Largo al factotum" from *Il barbiere di Siviglia, ossia L'inutile precauzione / The Barber of Seville, or The Useless Precaution* (1816)

What's happening: What is a *factotum* you ask? Someone who does all manner of work for another (in this case, Count Almaviva). It's one of the most famous walk-on arias of all ages and Olivier Zerouali (Figaro) enters at the top of our program, hailing the factotum of the city, and by and by we learn he's talking about himself in the third person, also mimicking the voices of his adoring customers. Be sure to listen for the dazzling key change and accelerando at the end, not to mention the way Zerouali treats the different voices of his customers. "Ah, bravo, Figaro, bravo, bravissimo." **Some context:** Rossini, merely 24 years old, was commissioned to write his *Barber of Seville* based on the first of the Figaro trilogy plays by French playwright and diplomat Pierre-Augustin Caron de Beaumarchais (1732–99). Given prior operatic successes, this had to be a daunting task. There were jeers on the first night. However, the second night was so successful throngs of people found Rossini at home and cheered his success. Beaumarchais, it should be noted, was an author of the enlightenment and a supporter of France's involvement in America's Revolutionary War, which broke out in the same year his (non-comedic) play premiered, 1775.

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart: "Sull'aria" from *Le nozze di Figaro / The Marriage of Figaro* (1786)

What's happening: Alexa Frankian (Countess Almaviva) and Sofia Gotch (Susanna, the Countess's maid) sing this "little song on the breeze," a lilting melody with only strings, oboes and a bassoon as accompaniment. In the duet, the Countess dictates a letter, which Susanna dutifully writes down. The contents of the letter are designed to trick Count Almaviva — who both women, along with Figaro, known to be a cheater — into a secret romantic rendezvous with Susanna, which they will cleverly use to expose the Count's cheating habits. **Some context:** Mozart's *Marriage of Figaro* is conceived as a continuation of the *Barber of Seville* story, which Rossini used (see above). *The Marriage of Figaro* takes place on only one day, La folle journée (the day of madness). Figaro is here a bass, not a baritone, as is the case with Rossini's Figaro. Figaro is now a personal valet to the Count and manager of the palace staff, including the maids, which is how he knows of Count's philandering habits. The opera is dramatically funny, incredibly popular, and part of the three most well-known operas by Mozart — the other two being *Giovanni* and *Così fan tutte* — all of which share the librettist Lorenzo da Ponte. Albeit out of context, *Sull'aria* was played by a prisoner over the all-announce system in an iconic scene from the 1994 film *The Shawshank Redemption*.

Saint-Saëns: “Mon cœur s’ouvre à ta voix” from *Samson et Dalila* (1876)

What’s happening: Dalila (Sadie Cheslak) professes her love to Samson, who has just professed his (true) love to her. The lyrics begin, ‘My heart opens with your voice’ and end ‘Fill me with ecstasy, I love you!’ Importantly, Dalila’s trying to trick Samson into revealing the source of his biblical strength, which we know comes from his uncut hair. Dalila’s words stretch over long lines, a particularly melismatic and challenging selection for the singer. The orchestration is grand, building toward the end of the aria, climaxing just before (on the stage) Samson echoes Dalila’s proclamation of love, having been just completely seduced by her. **Some context:** Subsequently, of course, Dalila learns Samson’s secret, and, relaying it to her people in arms who cut Samson’s hair off and is blinded, depriving him of his incredible strength. What follows is the well-known *Bacchanale* (dance) in which the Philistines jubilantly rejoice in the capture of the Israelite leader, Samson. The final curtain comes down as Samson regains strength and pulls the pillars of the temple down, killing everyone in sight. Saint-Saëns was a prolific French composer at the height of the Romantic era, mostly known for his orchestral works. He was an accomplished keyboardist, and a longtime organist at the Madeleine church in Paris. But fame and fortune came to those who could get their operas performed and with one already un-performed opera in his repertory, Saint-Saëns badly wanted a success, which came by only because his friend Franz Liszt orchestrated its premiere in Germany in 1877. This is why it was originally performed in German. Saint-Saëns would still not get a French production of it until 1890.

Rossini: “Dunque io son” from *Il barbiere di Siviglia*

What’s happening: This charmingly funny duet is sung today by Sofia Gotch (Rosina) and Gabriel Natal-Báez (Figaro). It’s full of fast passagework in the strings so emblematic of Rossini’s writing, which is only outdone by the singers’ lightning-fast vocal performance on top. This treatment adds to the playfulness of this duet. After all, Figaro is here soliciting Rosina’s help to write a love note to the Count. The duet builds to a fun moment in which the Count learns Rosina has *already* written the note. And Figaro thought Rosina needed his help to write it! **Some context:** *The Barber of Seville*, as we know, is a comic opera and the delivery of the comedy is based on the covert efforts (and failed covert efforts) of Rosina and Count Almaviva to become an item. This is done with Figaro’s help in dispensing with Bartolo, who is Rosina’s guardian and only wants to marry Rosina for her money. Before this duet happens, in fact, the Count serenades Rosina disguised as a student named Lindoro, who she falls for. Later disguises by the Count include a music teacher and a drunken soldier! In the end, Rosina learns that Lindoro is the Count, and she marries him on the spot having adored the Count to begin with.

Puccini: “Vissi d’arte” from *Tosca* (1899)

What’s happening: Singing the title character’s most famous aria today is Mary Hoskins, who will deliver this pleading and reverent prayer to God. While the story is vastly more complicated and tragic than this, Floria Tosca is a renowned singer, and in love with a painter named Cavaradossi. Scarpia, the head of the police, wants Tosca for himself and captures Cavaradossi and prepares to execute him on an inflated charge. Scarpia offers Tosca an impossible choice: marry him instead and thus spare Cavaradossi’s life, or allow him to die. The words speak for themselves: “I lived for art. I lived for love.” (Shortly following, Tosca manages to kill Scarpia, tragically assuming it will spare Cavaradossi.) **Some context:** Puccini had no problem turning out operas. He could do it quickly, and did it with great success. As synonymous with Italian opera as Verdi, Puccini gave us household-named operas, *Bohème*, *Butterfly*, *Turandot*, and ... *Tosca*. This particular selection is on many “hits from opera” compilation records and for good reason. It’s synonymous with the classic sound of opera: passionate, dramatic, powerful. It’s been featured in film, as the 2024 film about Maria Callas, or to convey a dark and impossible choice, as in a recent episode of *Only Murders in the Building*.

Bizet: “Votre toast, je peux vous le rendre” from *Carmen* (1845)

What’s happening: Gabriel Natal-Báez (Escamillo) sings this memorable song from *Carmen* commonly referred to as the Toreador song. Escamillo the Toreador is a bull fighter and on stage we would have preceded this song with a chorus announcing the march-like tune, with the words “Toréador, en garde!” (Be ready, Toreador!). Escamillo enters a tavern singing the same and over the next two verses hails the glory, passion and fame of being in the bullring and bringing down the prize bull. In the bar he casts his eyes after the title character, Carmen, and the words, over the same melody, become “Toréador, l’amour, l’amour t’attend!” (Toreador, love is waiting for you!). **Some context:** Although the title character and the main storyline revolve around *Carmen*, a gypsy girl, the posters of the opera generally depict the Toreador in his adorned costume. Barbara Jackson, the namesake of this concert, was an accomplished costumer, and made in her own living room the iconic *Traje de luces* (Suit of Lights) which the bullfighters wear, complete with decorative tassels and shiny adornments. Barbara made that costume for the Sacramento Opera and the very same one was later worn on this stage by prior Adler Fellow Jeremy Galyon in a fully staged production of *Carmen* with this orchestra.

Falla: Dance from *La vida breve / Life is Short* (1905)

What’s happening: You’re in Granada, Andalusia, Spain. Home to Flamenco. A wedding celebration is in progress, and this dance takes place. Imagine for a moment that the castanets (which you’ll hear in the percussion section today) are being performed in hand by a flamenco dancer — while dancing in a traditional polka-dotted dress no less — but in the grand patio of a wealthy part of the city, not in a *tablaos* (cave). The heavy brass entrance toward the end briefly represents the interruption by Salud, who shows up, greatly alarming the bride and groom. Nevertheless,

the dance finishes to the delight of hundreds of onlookers.

Some context: Carol A. Hess, UC Davis Distinguished Professor of Music and the author of three books on Falla, explains that although the composer was intrigued by Granada, in 1904, when he began *La vida breve*, he had never visited the magical, Moorish city. His solution? Falla begged friends to rush him postcards of the Albaicín, the area of Granada most celebrated for flamenco even today. This desire for authenticity paid off in Falla's score: amid stretches of late-romantic harmony, passages resembling Italian *verismo*, the plangent "¡ays!", castanets, and cross-rhythms of flamenco prevail. Finally, after living in Paris and Madrid, Falla moved to Granada in 1920, where he spent some of his happiest and most productive years in a modest house at the foot of the Alhambra palace and surrounded by flamenco.

Catalani: "Ebben! Ne andrò lontana" from *La Wally* (1892)

What's happening: Opening with tremolo strings, and a haunting resonance thanks to high woodwinds, the mood is set for this introspective and moving running-away-from-home aria ("Well? I'll go far away") which will undoubtedly hold time itself hostage. The soprano today, Mary Hoskins (Wally), joins the orchestra in a sailing voice that would surely fill the vast and picturesque valleys of the Alps. **Some context:** The opera is about Wally, a young woman who leaves home forever for a charming individual named Giuseppe. Wally's father does not approve. Set in the mountains of lower Austria, it's the perfect setup for how the opera ends: just as Wally and Giuseppe finally pledge themselves to one another, an avalanche buries them forever. It's even more dramatic than that: Giuseppe's voice causes the avalanche that carries him away, and Wally sees him and throws herself into it. The opera isn't performed much, but this aria, "Ebben? Ne andrò lontana," was made highly popular by a 1981 French film noir, *Diva*, in which the American soprano Wilhelmina Wiggins Fernandez sings it, furthering the main character's obsession with her.

Bizet: "La fleur que tu m'avais jetée" from *Carmen*

What's happening: This aria features Thomas Kinch as Don José, a Corporal. A powerful and yet lyrical selection, Don José is singing to Carmen in the square after she emboldened his approach by throwing a flower at him. The English horn is critical in this aria as it lends a romantic but suspenseful air to the action. Flowing strings, harp, and lots of pushing and pulling of the tempo support the tenor in delivering his passionate admission of love from the heart. **Some context:** Don José, over the course of the opera, becomes increasingly competitive for Carmen's love. Dangerously so. At one point he fires a round at Escamillo. In the final act, Escamillo enters the arena. As the bullfight is about to begin Carmen refuses José's desperate advance and boldly throws the ring he gave her back towards him. Carmen is about to enter the arena to go to Escamillo but before she can, José stabs her and she dies.

Cilea: "Ecco, respiro appena; io son l'umile ancella" from *Adriana Lecouvreur* (1902)

What's happening: In this aria, Alexa Frankian introduces herself to us as Adriana, a fictionalized actress of a prior century. She gracefully enters, enjoying the adulation by others, and answering, at first, "Here I am, and I'm barely breathing," and then in song: "I am the humble servant of the creative spirit." Highly lyrical, and full of passionate high-octave string playing, along with violin, harp and oboe solos, this aria has all we would expect of an actress who has "made it." **Some context:** Adriana loves Count Maurizio, except she thinks he's a mere soldier. The stage manager, Michonnet, who despite loving Adriana in vain, helps her to uncover the fact that the Princess also loves Maurizio. What results is an intense spat between the two women. Spoiler alert: Adriana is in the end killed via a bouquet of poisoned violets sent by the Princess (in Maurizio's name). Cilea's version of the Adriana story is one of a few Adriana operas, but for the most part Cilea's is the one that is performed today. The drama is considered a *verismo* or true-story style of Italian opera, although the poison-laced violets seem only believable with toxicology of the 21st century.

Bernstein: "Glitter and Be Gay" from *Candide* (1956)

What's happening: Sung by Sofia Gotch (Cunegonde) this song is full of inner conflict, which is apparent by the quick changes in tempo and tonality. The song glitters like the sapphires and diamonds or even the champagne mentioned, with several dazzling high notes for a coloratura. Underneath, she's not really happy, which are obvious from her spoken or *sprechstimme* (spoken-singing) words: "Can the brightest brooch shield me from reproach? Can the purest diamond purify my name?" **Some context:** Bernstein's *Candide* doesn't fly off the tongue as quickly as Bernstein's *West Side Story*, but two of its tunes are indelible: "Make Our Garden Grow" and "Glitter and be Gay." The former was used at Bernstein's funeral concert, performed symbolically without its conductor. The show is devilishly funny, based on Voltaire's 1759 novel of the same name. Notably, *Candide* opened on Broadway and not in an opera house although today it's usually performed in limited runs and by opera companies. While the overture is an orchestral showpiece, keep in mind its most delightful melodies come from "Glitter and Be Gay."

—Philip E. Daley

About the Artists

Mezzo-soprano **Sadie Cheslak** was a winner of the 2025 Metropolitan Opera's Laffont Competition and won The Birgit Nilsson Award of the American-Scandinavian Foundation. Cheslak also won first prize at the 2025 Jensen Foundation Vocal Competition, first prize — the Robert Lauch Memorial Award — at the Wagner Society of New York's 2025 Singers Competition, first prize at the Vero Beach Opera 2025 Rising Stars Competition, third prize and The Luana DeVol Prize for the Dramatic Voice at the 2024 SAS Performing Arts Vocal Competition, and fourth overall and the Prize for Most Promising Voice of the Competition at the 2024 NATS Artist Awards. Cheslak was recently a participant with the Merola Opera Program, where she performed the role of La Zia Principessa in *Suor Angelica* scenes. In January, Cheslak covered the role of Madame de la Haltière in Massenet's *Cendrillon* with Cedar Rapids Opera as a Smith Young Artist. In 2024, she sang at Wolf Trap Opera as a Studio Artist, featured in excerpts of Gluck's *Orphée et Eurydice* as Orphée, covered the alto soloist in Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, and covered Mrs. Pascal in a workshop of *The House of Yes* by Kamala Sankaram. Excelling in contemporary opera, Cheslak has workshoped pieces including *prism* by Ellen Reid, which was awarded the 2019 Pulitzer Prize in Music and was a Beth Morrison Projects co-commission, *Black Square* by Ilya Demutsky and the title role in *The Surrogate* by Sky Macklay. Cheslak earned a B.M. in Voice Performance from Concordia College, her M.M. in Voice Performance and Literature from the University of Illinois Urbana Champaign and a Post-master's Certificate in Voice from DePaul University.



Brian Cho is a pianist and coach celebrated for his dynamic artistry and collaborative versatility. In the summer of 2025, he was a participant in the Merola Opera Program. From 2022 to 2025, he served as a Studio Ensemble



Répétiteur and Intern Coach with the Canadian Opera Company, where he assisted on productions including *Faust*, *Don Pasquale*, *The Cunning Little Vixen*, *Fidelio*, *Macbeth* and *Le nozze di Figaro* under conductors Johannes Debus, Speranza Scappucci and Harry Bicket. A passionate advocate for new and diverse voices in opera, he co-founded the Can

of Soup Collective, where he led performances of Menotti's *The Medium* and Lee Hoiby's *Bon Appétit!* Recent highlights include performing Orff's *Carmina Burana* with the Toronto Symphony Orchestra for their season-opening concerts, as well as serving as a Vocal Piano Fellow at the Music Academy of the West, where he worked with renowned mentors including Martin Katz, Margo Garrett, Tamar "Tata" Sanikidze and John Churchwell. Cho is the winner of the 2023 Marilyn Horne Song Competition and recipient of the Patricia and Nicholas Weber Scholarship. He holds both bachelor's and master's of music degrees from the University of Western Ontario, where he was a Dr. Sherwood Fox Music Fellow and Dean's Honor List graduate.

Hailed by Opera Canada as "abundantly talented" and praised for her "radiant, surging sense of purpose" (San Francisco Chronicle), Canadian soprano **Alexa Frankian** brings to the stage a rare fusion of youthful freshness and interpretive depth. In 2024, Frankian joined the Merola Opera Program, debuting as a "simple, unaffected,



and beautifully sung" Mimì in Puccini's *La bohème* (San Francisco Classical Voice). Her performances drew acclaim for their emotional honesty and musical richness, including her "voluptuously rich Russian" in the title role of Tchaikovsky's *Iolanta*. Invited back for a second Merola season in 2025, she expanded her repertoire with excerpts as the title role from Puccini's *Suor Angelica*, Alice Ford from Verdi's *Falstaff*, and Fidelia from Puccini's *Edgar*. As a Resident Artist at the Academy of Vocal Arts (AVA) in Philadelphia, Frankian has performed roles including Countess Almaviva in Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro*, Suzel in Mascagni's *L'Amico Fritz* and Despina in Mozart's *Così fan tutte*. She has distinguished herself on the competition stage as well, receiving Encouragement Awards from the Metropolitan Opera Laffont Competition (Philadelphia and Buffalo-Toronto Districts) and as the youngest finalist and third-prize winner at the 2023 Mildred Miller International Voice Competition. She has appeared in groundbreaking contemporary productions such as the North American premiere of the Yiddish opera *Bas Sheve* and the Dora-nominated world premiere of Alice Ho's *The Monkiet King*. A graduate of the University of Toronto (B.M.) and the Glenn Gould School of the Royal Conservatory (Artist Diploma), Frankian performed Madame Lidoine in Poulenc's *Dialogues des Carmélites*, Older Woman in Dove's *Flight* and Coach in Chan Ka Nin's chamber opera, *Ice Time*.

Italian American soprano **Sofia Gotch** has been praised for the “brightness and clarity” of her sound and her “command of style and diction” (Voce di Meche). In 2025, Gotch was a participant in the Merola Opera Program and was named a Semifinalist in the Metropolitan Opera Eric & Dominique Laffont Competition. She was awarded Third Prize in the Gerda



Lissner International Vocal Competition, the Giulio Gari International Vocal Competition and the James Toland Vocal Arts Competition. Additionally, she received an Encouragement Award in the Gerda Lissner Lieder-Song Competition. Gotch is exceptionally grateful to have continued her training in leading young artist programs, where she received intensive training and performed in a wide range of repertoire under the guidance of renowned faculty and guest artists at Classic Lyric Arts (2022 and 2023), the Aspen Music Festival and School (2024 Renée Fleming Fellow) and Merola Opera Program (2025). Recent performance credits include Alice in Merola Opera Program’s production of *Le Comte Ory*; Almirena in Manhattan School of Music’s production of *Rinaldo*; Juliette in MSM’s *Roméo et Juliette*; La Fée in MSM’s *Cendrillon*; Titania, the Fairy Queen, in MSM’s *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*; Sharp Ears, the Vixen in MSM’s *The Cunning Little Vixen*; soprano soloist in Mahler’s Fourth Symphony with the MSM Symphony Orchestra; high soprano soloist in Matthew Aucoin and Peter Sellars’ production of *Music for New Bodies* with both the American Modern Opera Company and the Aspen Music Festival and School. Gotch holds a master’s degree and postgraduate performance diploma from the Manhattan School of Music. She studies with Ruth Golden and received her bachelor’s degree in music and in English (Creative Writing Emphasis) from the University of Puget Sound in Tacoma, Washington.

Matilda Hofman has a varied and busy conducting schedule. Reviewers have described her conducting as “taut and finely controlled” and giving “a striking sense of purpose.” She is Music Director of the Diablo Symphony Orchestra, conductor-in-residence for the Emyrean Ensemble at UC Davis and Artistic Director of the Left Coast Chamber Ensemble.



Matilda also serves as a cover conductor for the San Francisco Symphony. Guest engagements in California include Festival Opera, the Fremont Symphony Orchestra, Sierra Summer Festival, San Francisco Ballet, Sacramento Ballet, Earplay, and Stanford University. She has also worked at Sacramento Opera as assistant to Michael Morgan.

In Europe, Matilda has performed at the Salzburg Festival, Berliner Festspiele, Holland Festival, Ruhrtriennale, Luzern Festival, Paris Autumn Festival, and at the Guggenheim in Bilbao. She has worked with Ensemble Modern, Ensemble Recherche, SWR Sinfonie-orchester, Bochumer Symphoniker and Kammerakademie Potsdam and has performed alongside Maestro Ingo Metzmacher in several performances of Luigi Nono’s *Prometeo*. In 2018 she was on the faculty for the soundSCAPE new music festival in Italy. Matilda works with both instrumental and choral groups, and prepared Chorwerk Ruhr for their tremendously successful debut with the Berlin Philharmonic in MusikFest Berlin, with George Benjamin conducting. Matilda is a committed educator. Recently she was conductor-in-residence at the University of the Pacific, and a guest conductor at the Eastman School of Music. She serves on the faculty at UC Davis, where she has also directed the Early Music Ensemble, including performances of *St. John’s Passion* and Tomás Luis Victoria’s Requiem. In fall 2019 and 2021 Matilda was a resident artist at Oberlin Conservatory of Music, working and performing with the Contemporary Music Ensemble, Sinfonietta and the Opera.

As Music Director of the Diablo Symphony Matilda initiated a strong and vibrant education program, which now includes music to schools in the Contra Costa area, family concerts and an instrument drive. As Artistic Director of Left Coast Chamber Ensemble she successfully implemented Pathways, a new program that gives opportunities to underrepresented emerging composers. Presenting a diversity of musical voices is a central part of her approach to making music. She holds degrees from Cambridge University, the Royal Academy of Music (Viola Performance), and the Eastman School of Music (Conducting), and has studied as a conducting fellow at the Aspen Music Festival and School. Her mentors include Ingo Metzmacher, Martyn Brabbins and Neil Varon. She studied viola with Garfield Jackson, Martin Outram, and Tatiana Masurenko. She has received awards from the League of American Orchestras and the Conductors Guild of America. When Matilda is not making music, she can be found hanging out with her kids or working as a Wilderness Ranger in the Trinity Alps.

Soprano **Mary Hoskins** has been hailed as a “standout” with a voice that is “clear and utterly effortless” (The Opera Tattler). Last year at San Francisco Opera, she performed a Cretan Woman in *Idomeneo* and covered Kitty Hart in Jake Heggie’s *Dead Man Walking* and Second Flower Maiden in *Parsifal*.



A participant of the 2024 Merola Opera Program, her assignments included the title role in the final scene of *Ariadne auf Naxos* in the Schwabacher Summer Concert, as well as an excerpt from *Fidelio* and Strauss’s showstopping aria “Zweite Brautnacht” from *Die Ägyptische Helena* for the Merola Grand Finale concert. Hoskins

won first place at the 2024 Palm Springs Opera Guild Vocal Competition and in 2022 and 2023 performed as a studio artist with Wolf Trap Opera for two summers, covering the title role of Pauline Viardot's *Cendrillon* and performing in the Festival's 2020 recorded scenes concert as Fiordiligi in *Così fan tutte*, Mimì in *La bohème*, Mary in Gregory Spears's *Fellow Travelers* and the First Lady in *Die Zauberflöte*. Other notable roles include the title roles of Puccini's *Suor Angelica* and Handel's *Theodora*. She is a two-year alumna of Dolora Zajick's Institute for Young Dramatic Voices, where she was featured in the Final Concert, performing arias from *Don Giovanni* and *Pagliacci*. She has performed the roles of the Countess in *Le nozze di Figaro* and Nella in *Gianni Schicchi* with Utah Vocal Arts Academy. A graduate of Brigham Young University, where she received both her bachelor's and master's degrees, Hoskins initially learned to love singing from her family's car trip belting sessions. She discovered opera just after high school and has loved it ever since.

Thomas Kinch is a Welsh tenor quickly establishing himself as an exciting young performer. He recently appeared with Utah Opera as Florestan in Beethoven's *Fidelio*, and will soon appear with San Diego Opera as Don José in *Carmen*. His assignments with San Francisco Opera have included Don José in *Carmen*, Melot in *Tristan und Isolde*, First Armored Man in *The Magic Flute*, Amelia's Servant in *Un Ballo in Maschera*, as well as the cover of Luke in *Poul Ruders* and Paul Bentley's *The Handmaid's Tale*. He recently performed Macduff in Verdi's *Macbeth* with Paisley Opera / Scottish Opera, returning after performing Turiddu in a 2022 adaptation of *Cavalleria Rusticana* (A Paisley Kiss) and made his American professional debut as Licio in Spontini's *La Vestale* with Teatro Grattacielo in New York. Kinch was a 2022 Associate Artist for Welsh National Opera, where he was the First Armored Man in a new production of *The Magic Flute* and covered Vitek in *The Makropulos Case*. He participated in Dolora Zajick's Institute for Young Dramatic Voices and was a 2021 new generation artist with Iford Arts, performing Canio in the double bill of *Cavalleria Rusticana* and *Pagliacci*, where he was described as a "remarkable Canio with emotion and strength to knock you out of your seat" (Opera Scene). In this double bill, Kinch jumped in at the last minute as Turiddu alongside Susan Bullock as Santuzza and Paul Carey Jones as Alfio, giving a performance of "raw emotion and power" that "defied his years" (Opera Scene). In 2022, Kinch returned to Opera Bohemia to sing Pinkerton in *Madame Butterfly*, and in 2019 he made his international debut as Turiddu with Sri Lanka Opera. In 2020, Kinch toured the UK with Opera Up Close as Pinkerton, where his vocally powerful performance "stole the first half" (View from the Cheap Seat). Other recent engagements have included Turiddu with Edinburgh Grand Opera; Alfredo in *La traviata* and Cavaradossi in *Tosca* and Turiddu with North Wales Opera.



Adler Fellow **Ji Youn Lee** is an accomplished pianist who recently completed her Master of Music in Collaborative Piano at The Juilliard School. She earned a Bachelor of Music in Piano Performance from the New England Conservatory (NEC), graduating with honors in 2020. While at NEC, she was awarded first place in the Concerto Competition and performed with the New England Conservatory Symphony at Jordan Hall. Last year, she was on the San Francisco Opera music staff for *La bohème*, *Dead Man Walking*, and *Bohème Out of the Box*. Lee has collaborated with renowned orchestras, including the Brockton Symphony, the Broad Street Orchestra and the Hawaii Symphony. Other notable achievements include prizes from the Duo Competition at the Music Academy of the West, the Ke'alohe International Piano Competition and the Jacob Flier International Piano Competition. A participant of the Merola Opera Program in 2024, Lee played and coached the third act of *La bohème* for the Schwabacher Summer Concert and helped musically prepare *Don Giovanni*. Her rich experiences with Merola deepened her understanding of vocal collaboration and enhanced her appreciation of the opera art form. Through her musical endeavors and performances, she continually aspires to connect with new audiences.



Carrie-Ann Matheson has a multi-faceted international career as a pianist, conductor and educator. She is currently the Artistic Director of the world-renowned San Francisco Opera Center and Merola Opera Program. A native of Canada, Matheson began her career at the Metropolitan Opera, working as assistant conductor, prompter, pianist and vocal coach. Following a long tenure at the Met, she joined the conducting and coaching staff at Opernhaus Zürich and also worked at festivals such as the Salzburger Festspiele and the Seiji Ozawa Matsumoto Festival.



Especially in demand as a recital pianist, her collaborations have brought her to the great stages of the world with many of the world's leading opera singers, including Piotr Beczala, Benjamin Bernheim, Diana Damrau, Joyce DiDonato, Jonas Kaufmann and Rolando Villazón. In August 2024, her debut recording, *Douce France*, with tenor Benjamin Bernheim was released on the prestigious Deutsche Grammophon label. Matheson is passionate about nurturing the next generation of opera singers and pianists, and in addition to her work in San Francisco, she is a masterclass clinician and guest coach at leading institutions worldwide. Her collaborations have

included the Canadian Opera Company Ensemble Studio, International Opera Studio (Opernhaus Zürich), Atkins Young Artist Program (The Mariinsky Theatre), Lindemann Young Artist Development Program (The Metropolitan Opera), Ryan Opera Center (Lyric Opera of Chicago), Music Academy of the West, Aspen Music Festival and the International Vocal Arts Institute. She is currently also a member of the faculty at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music. Matheson assisted such conductors as James Levine, Fabio Luisi, Yannick Nézet-Séguin, and Gianandrea Noseda, before making her conducting debut in 2015 at Opernhaus Zürich, where she has conducted works such as *La finta giardiniera*, *Don Pasquale* and *Iphigénie en Tauride*, among others. In addition to her work with opera singers, she has performed in chamber music concerts with members of the New York Philharmonic, the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra, the Cleveland Orchestra, the Chamber Orchestra of Europe, the Montreal Symphony Orchestra, and Philharmonia Zürich.

Matheson holds degrees from the University of Prince Edward Island (B.Mus.Ed), the Cleveland Institute of Music (M.Mus in Collaborative Piano), the Manhattan School of Music (Professional Studies Diploma in Vocal Accompanying) and is an alumna of the Metropolitan Opera's Lindemann Young Artist Development Program. She has served as juror for competitions including the Metropolitan Opera's Laffont Competition, The Butler International Vocal Competition, the Schmidt Vocal Arts Competition and the Richard Tucker Foundation Auditions. Recent and upcoming engagements for Matheson include recitals at prestigious venues across the world, including Teatro alla Scala (Milan Italy), the Munich Opera Summer Festival (Munich, Germany), the Verbier Festival (Verbier, Switzerland), the Vienna State Opera (Vienna, Austria), Opéra de Paris (Paris, France) and Opera de Monte-Carlo (Monaco), among others. In addition to her work onstage and in the opera rehearsal room, Matheson is an International Coaching Federation certified personal and leadership coach, specializing in working with artists who are striving to achieve their full potential.

Gabriel Natal-Báez is a Puerto Rican baritone with a blossoming career in opera, art song and concert work. As a versatile singer with a repertoire that spans from the Baroque and classical eras to contemporary works, Natal-Báez finds his greatest artistic expression in the Romantic and Bel Canto repertoire, where his artistic mission is to tell deeply



human stories that resonate across time. Natal-Báez has performed Marullo in *Rigoletto* with Teatro Lirico d'Europa and Le Podestat in *Le docteur Miracle*. With the Shepherd School of Music at Rice University, he has appeared as Beaumarchais in *The Ghosts of Versailles*, Aeneas in *Dido and Aeneas*, and Tarquinius (cover) in *The Rape of Lucretia*. In May 2025, he

premiered the role of the Explorer in Theo Chandler's new chamber opera, *Breathe in Light*. Last summer, he joined the Merola Opera Program, covering the role of Raimbaud in *Le comte Ory* and performing on the Songfest: "A Grand Night for Singing." His versatility also extends to the vibrant world of Zarzuela, where he has performed in multiple productions with Ópera de Puerto Rico. Recently, he sang alongside his teacher and renowned soprano Ana María Martínez in "Noche Española," a concert celebrating Latino Heritage Month with Zarzuela and Latin American repertoire. In December he made his debut with the Puerto Rico Symphony Orchestra. Last season, Natal-Báez was a semi-finalist in Houston Grand Opera's "Concert of Arias" and a winner of the Puerto Rico District of the Metropolitan Opera Eric and Dominique Laffont Competition, where he also received the "La Zarzuela" Prize and went on to place third in the Gulf Coast Region. In addition to his work as a singer, Natal-Báez holds a bachelor's degree in humanities with a concentration in painting — a lifelong passion that fosters his sensitivity toward the musical world.

Last year with San Francisco Opera, baritone **Olivier Zerouali** performed the roles of Marullo in *Rigoletto*, Motorcycle Cop in Jake Heggie and Terrence McNally's *Dead Man Walking* and a Trojan Man in *Idomeneo* and covered the role of Schaunard in *La bohème*. He was a 2024 participant in the Merola Opera Program where he sang Silvio in the love duet from *Pagliacci*, was a featured soloist on the chamber music recital "Song As Drama," covered the role of Masetto in *Don Giovanni* and performed Malatesta in a scene from *Don Pasquale* at the Merola Grand Finale. He has performed the roles of Robert in *Iolanta*, Slook in Rossini's *Il cambiale di matrimonio*, Betto in *Gianni Schicchi* and Brother in Kurt Weill's *Seven Deadly Sins*, all with Yale Opera Theatre. In 2023 he performed Mercutio in *Roméo et Juliette* for his debut with the Glimmerglass Festival. Other roles include Papageno in *Die Zauberflöte*, Pandolfe in Massenet's *Cendrillon*, the title role of *Le nozze di Figaro* and Zaretsky / Captain in *Eugene Onegin*. He also workshopped two new operas with Highlands Opera Studio: Olivia Shortt's *The Museum of the Lost and Found* and Ashley Au's *Inertia*. Zerouali completed his undergraduate studies at SUNY Purchase's Conservatory of Music, completed his master's degree at Yale University, and has received training with the Merola Opera Program, Glimmerglass Festival, Young Artists Vocal Academy of Houston Grand Opera, Highlands Opera Studio and Berlin Opera Academy.



UC Davis Symphony Orchestra

Matilda Hofman, Conductor
Petter Chatterjee, Teaching Assistant and Assistant Conductor
Maleelah Acker and Nicolas Carvajal, Librarians

—Names appear in seated order.—

VIOLIN I

Devon Bradshaw, *concertmaster*¹⁵
Joshua Lee, *concertmaster*¹⁵
Elbert Lin¹⁶
Henson Li¹⁷
Marco Rocha
Beatrice Ho
Melissa Rosowsky¹⁸
Chantale Tso
Raphael Moore¹⁹
Mong Kim
Barbara Shacklett
Quyen Tan
Bryce Chang
Kayneesa Coats
Jacqueline Oerding

VIOLIN II

Cynthia Bates, *principal*²⁰
Shaelynn Cuenca, *assistant principal*²¹
Isaiah Tran, *assistant principal*²¹
Dylan Younoszai
Ella Johnson
Aarna Singla
Ivan Navarro
Lian Blaisdell
Michelle Fu
Anton Nelson
Lily-Lou
Bella Goudeau
Genesis Lemus
Rainia Wei
Reagan Ochalek

VIOLA

Thomas Renton, *principal*²²
Maya True-Fogel²³
Natanya Khartat²⁴
Joshua Fisher
Marquez Vigil
Nidhi Deshmukh
Anastasia Karp
Hank Xia

CELLO

Eric Wang, *principal*²⁵
Zizhao Leslie Wang²⁶
Mia Stoliartchouk²⁷
Sophy Chang²⁸
Andrew Chung
Carina Wang
Karin Murakami
Dylan Hanson
Dina Nabizhan

BASS

David Reagon, *co-principal*²⁹
Ethan M. Bryant, *co-principal*²⁹
Sophie Aleksandrovich
Keziah Tarusenga
Mike Schwagerus
Eric Price

FLUTE

Siran Wang, *principal*¹
Eliza King, *assistant principal*²
Shuhan Wang
Raquel Suarez
Ellie Chen

PICCOLO

Shuhan Wang
Ellie Chen

OBOE

Curran Neely, *principal*³
Veronica Pavlicek, *assistant principal*

OBOE / ENGLISH HORN

Veronica Pavlicek
Teadora Grimberg

CLARINET

Robert Brosnan, *principal*⁴
Evan Choi, *assistant principal*
Larry Li, *assistant principal*
Samuel Gegax

BASS CLARINET

Jee Young Bhan
Robert Brosnan

BASSOON

Zoe Plateau, *principal*⁵
Lucas Brito, *co-principal*
Charlotte Lucas

CONTRABASSOON

Lucas Brito

HORN

Nathan Conrad, *principal*⁶
Chelsea Zhang, *co-principal*
Jimmy Wu
Maleelah Acker
Angelina Mejia
Cara Jones

TRUMPET

Valley Stewart, *principal*⁷
Colin Matthewson

TROMBONE

Burkhard Schipper, *principal*⁸
Jacob Steenis⁹
Zachariah Freisen¹⁰

TUBA

Geoffrey Tian, *principal*¹¹

PERCUSSION

Claire Zheng, *principal*¹²
Callum Clark

HARP

Kerstin Allvin
Julia Crossan¹³

Supernumerals correspond to named seats. See following page.

Named seats

.....

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Michael J. Malone Trombone by Brian McCurdy & Carol Anne Muncaster⁹

Brian McCurdy Bass Trombone by Barbara K. Jackson¹⁰

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Calvin B. Arnason Principal Harp by Ben & Lynette Hart¹³

Orchestral Piano by Jane, Dwayne & Donald Matteson¹⁴

Cynthia Bates Concertmaster by Debra Horney, M.D.¹⁵

Damian Ting Assistant Concertmaster by Damian Siu Ming Ting¹⁶

Clairelee Leiser Bulkley Violin I by Clairelee L. Bulkley and Ralph Bulkley¹⁷

Ralph and Judy Riggs Violin I¹⁸

Raphael S. Moore Violin I, in memory of Dr. Irena Anna Henner, by Jolanta Moore¹⁹

Fawzi S. Haimor Principal Violin II by Barbara K. Jackson²⁰

Shari Benard-Gueffroy Assistant Principal Violin II²¹

Jocelyn Morris Principal Viola, by James & Jocelyn Morris²²

John T. Bakos Assistant Principal Viola, in memory of Dr. John & Grace Bakos²³

Dr. Kathy Glatter and Danny Maurantonio in memory of Dr. Tom and Mickey Glatter²⁴

Herman Phaff Principal Cello by Herman & Diane Phaff²⁵

Tracy McCarthy Cello by Brian & Louanne Horsfield²⁶

Eldridge Moores Cello Eldridge & Judith Moores²⁷

Louise McNary Cello by Don McNary²⁸

Barbara K. Jackson Principal Bass²⁹

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