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43rd Season



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WELCOME TO PENSACOLA OPERA

Pensacola Opera is a non-profit, professional company serving Northwest Florida. Through performances and a variety of innovative educational and community programs, we reach over 40,000 children and adults each year.

Our mission is to enrich the culture of Northwest Florida by producing professional opera performances, educational programs, and other opera-related community events for people of all ages, interests and backgrounds.



In 1983...

a small group of people interested in opera, including singers, parents of singers, singing teachers, professionals and business people, decided that Pensacola could mine our rich local talent to produce quality opera. They created a grassroots, all-volunteer opera company called “Pensacola Chamber Opera.” Sets were created

in the founders’ workshops, sewing machines buzzed in homes to create the costumes, the orchestra and singers were hired and rehearsals staged. The fledgling Chamber Opera successfully produced Mozart’s *Così fan tutte*, in English. This first opera production was performed three times, for a total audience of seven hundred.

Pensacola Opera's founding came on the back end of a "boom" period for regional opera companies around the United States. Prior to the mid-century, opera lovers either had to catch a touring production provided by one of the major companies from cities like New York or LA, or they had to take a trip to those cities to see them in person. Following WWII, cities around the country of various sizes created opera companies that could serve their local communities, providing high-quality arts experiences with a much lower price of entry.

This company started as a way to combine a lot of artistic talent in Pensacola into an art form that celebrates not only music, but theatre and dance as well. They saw that this community was one with the appreciation and culture that could support an opera company, especially considering the long history of older arts organizations such as the Pensacola Symphony, Pensacola Little Theatre, and Pensacola Museum of Art.

In the early 1990s, Pensacola Opera moved to its current performance home at the historic 1800-seat Saenger Theatre in downtown Pensacola. A full-time office, run by volunteers, allowed Pensacola Opera to offer its first season subscriptions and to begin its now nationally-recognized education and community engagement programs.

Pensacola Opera has produced many memorable performances over the years. In terms of revenue and total tickets sold, *Pirates of Penzance*, *Carmen*, and *La bohème* are fan favorites. And who can forget our 2009 presentation of *Aïda* – complete with a live elephant on stage – marking the reopening of the newly renovated Saenger Theatre? In 2019, we had a season of firsts presenting *Romeo and Juliet* and *Florencia in the Amazon*. In addition, Pensacola Opera presented the Florida premieres of *Glory Denied* (2016), *Dead Man Walking* (2017), *As One* (2019), and the world premiere of *The Widow's Lantern* (2010).

Today, Pensacola Opera is a professional non-profit that brings in talent from all over the country. We have a full-time staff of six and are able to offer a mainstage season of opera productions as well as a thriving Studio Artist program, many successful special events, an education initiative that reaches over 11,000 kids per year, and live concerts that we can offer for free to the community.

Pensacola Opera is committed to charting a course for meaningful change in our community, maintaining a focus on equitable and inclusive programming, while honoring the very best of our art form.

**PENSACOLA
OPERA**



FROM THE DESK OF THE General & Artistic Directors

Welcome to our 43rd Anniversary Season! We are thrilled to have you join us. Whether this is your first time with us, or you are an opera aficionado, I think you'll agree that there is a wonderful buzz in the air here in the Saenger Theater that is hard to find elsewhere. We could not be more grateful to our many supporters, sponsors, collaborators, and devoted board leadership. Your continued support and dedication are the driving force behind the magic we create on stage.

Our season officially kicked off with Jake Heggie's *Three Decembers* on September 19 & 21, 2025. Spanning three Decembers in 1986, 1996, and 2006, this intimate, character-driven opera explored the complexities of family, the ache of unresolved grief, and the truths we choose to hide or reveal. *Three Decembers* delivered powerful storytelling through soaring music and raw emotion showcasing two of our Jan Miller Studio Artists and one of Pensacola Opera's favorite performers, Kara Shay Thomson.

On November 5, 2025, we presented *Rock the Runway: Amped* as part of this year's Foo Foo Festival. This year's event marked a groundbreaking partnership with White Tie Rock Ensemble, providing the soundtrack as nearly 60 models took over the Saenger's aisles and stage. This electrified production was a night where art forms collided in the most unexpected way.

Verdi's *La traviata* opens our mainstage season, inviting audiences to discover why it remains one of the most celebrated operas of all time. The combination of Verdi's brilliant music being performed by incredible artists while telling a truly

compelling story will thrill opera newbies and longtime fans alike. Verdi's glorious music and Violetta's moving demise make *La traviata* one of grand opera's most compelling experiences.

We will close our season with Rodgers and Hammerstein's *Oklahoma!* in memory of Allan Benton. This timeless masterpiece brings to life a heartwarming and dramatic tale set in the sweeping plains of the Oklahoma Territory. Packed with unforgettable songs and dynamic characters, *Oklahoma!* is a must-see for theater lovers of all ages and promises a delightful and unforgettable theatrical experience.

Lastly, we hope you will join us for spring fundraising event, Spotlight, featuring our 2025-26 Jan Miller Studio Artists on March 27, 2026. There will be an opportunity to support the education & community engagement programs as we bid farewell to our wonderful artists.

We have truly treasured working alongside all the artists, staff, trustees, volunteers, supporters, and friends who continue to elevate Pensacola Opera season after season. Our future is brighter than ever, and we thank you for your support of this company.

Now sit back, relax and enjoy the show!

Chandra & Corey McKern



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Pensacola Opera Staff

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Corey McKern
Artistic Director

Cody Martin
Music Director

Alex Hilkey
Director of Advancement

Brooke Fleming
Associate Director of Corporate
Engagement and Events

Rebecca Sanders
Patron Services Assistant

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April Kocher
Philomena Madden
Tony McDonald
Jean Norman
Marte Picker
Dr. Michael Riesberg
Carol Stoot
Lynne Tobin
Dr. Louie Watkins
Alea Williams
Trisha Woodburn

Saenger

SAENGER THEATRE INFORMATION



SECURITY, FOOD, AND BEVERAGE

For all events at the Saenger Theatre, patrons will be subjected to a bag and security check. Oversized bags, outside food and beverages, and umbrellas will not be permitted in the theatre. Concessions are on sale for the entirety of the performance. These include light snacks and a full bar with wine, beer, and Coca-Cola products. Please be mindful while enjoying your refreshments in the theatre and unwrap any items before the performance begins.



CONTINUE THE CONVERSATIONS

One hour before each performance, join Music Director Cody Martin for a free, informal, and enlightening introduction to the opera you are about to enjoy. Follow all of our events and more at pensacolaopera.com and check back for updates and info through our social media channels.



CAPTIONS

All of our performances – even those in English – are accompanied by supertitles. Think of the subtitles for a foreign film, but instead of scrolling at the bottom of the silver screen, they're scrolling across the top of the stage.



PHOTOGRAPHY AND CELL PHONE USE

The use of cameras, phones, and other recording devices is strictly prohibited during performances. You are welcome to take photos at intermission and share using the hashtags [#pensacolaopera](https://twitter.com/pensacolaopera) and [#loveopera](https://twitter.com/loveopera) and tagging [@PensacolaOpera](https://twitter.com/PensacolaOpera).



LATE SEATING POLICY

Doors open 90 minutes before each performance. Be mindful of downtown parking and weather conditions as you make your way to the theatre. Once the performance has started, latecomers will be allowed to be seated only at the appropriate intervals as established by the show director. Viewing screens are located in the lower lobbies of the theatre but do not provide audio feedback.

FROM THE DESK OF THE **Board Chair**

Welcome to Pensacola Opera's 43rd Season!

Whether you're a first-time ticket buyer or a season subscriber, we're so glad that you're here to experience a season of heart, hope, and superb storytelling. We pride ourselves on sharing stories with our community of the highest artistic integrity and excellence. Thank you for joining us.

As we welcome forty-three years of Pensacola Opera, we remain committed to serving Northwest Florida by bringing art of the highest caliber to the stage and beyond. The productions you see on this stage require months of planning and hard work by hundreds of artists, staff, and volunteers who come together to share this incredible art form with you. We pride ourselves in the talent that we nurture and the artistic community that we create, culminating in you—the audience—recognizing the artists on stage and sharing in their journeys.

Beyond the stage, I am proud of the work that this company does in our schools and communities bringing music outside of the theatre and into classrooms, libraries, restaurants, bars, and public green spaces. Free and low-cost programming is integral in maintaining a city's diverse cultural landscape and we are so fortunate to have year-round artistic offerings of all kinds, right here in Pensacola.



As we look to the future of this season and beyond, we remain committed to being a cultural cornerstone in our downtown. The Board of Trustees and I are excited as discussions for growth and expansion are on the horizon. We hope you'll join us as we begin to lay plans for the next generation of Pensacola Opera.

Again, thank you for being here today. If you enjoy the production, I would personally encourage you to become a subscriber and/or donor to Pensacola Opera. Your support is what keeps us singing season after season.

Brian Baumgardner

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90TH SEASON

2025-2026

**OCTOBER 11: A CHORAL
SOCIETY MIXTAPE**

**DECEMBER 5 & 6: MESSIAH
SING!**

**MAY 16: MASS OF THE
CHILDREN**



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Chandra McKern: Leading Lady

CELEBRATING TEN YEARS OF VISION AND VOICE

Tell us about your history with Pensacola Opera prior to being named Executive Director:

Our previous Artistic Director, Kyle Marrero, hired me in 2010 to be the Director of Education & Community Outreach at Pensacola Opera. My husband, Corey, had performed with Pensacola Opera and had a relationship with the company prior, so he already knew the area well. At the time, we were living in NYC and I was becoming more interested in arts administration rather than singing, so I decided to make the career change.



In 2013 I was offered the Director of Education position at Nashville Opera and accepted that position. I worked there a little over 2.5 years before I got the call from Pensacola Opera that the Executive Director position was opening up and they wanted me to interview and apply. At the time, I did not feel like I was ready to run an opera company; they brought me in as Managing Director for three years under Jerome Shannon's leadership. I transitioned to Executive Director in 2018 and General Director in 2022.

Tell us about your own opera career:

I was working towards my Masters degree in voice at Indiana University, where I met Corey. During that time, I was hired as a Studio Artist with Central City Opera and Chicago Opera Theatre. After graduating we decided to move to New York City (as most singers do) and made that our home for almost 8 years where I enjoyed working with Tulsa Opera, Nevada Opera, Opera Birmingham, Little Orchestra Society of NY, and more. Eventually, the auditions and daily grind of being an opera singer started to take a toll on me, especially while working a separate full time job at Goldman Sachs. At the end of the day, my anxiety and nerves got the best of me as a performer. I slowly started to realize that I could do more to advance this art form in arts administration than an opera singer. I still love to sing but don't do it very often with our crazy schedules.



I am incredibly fortunate to still be doing what I love and trained for, just on the other side of the table.



What are some of the biggest areas of growth at Pensacola Opera you've seen over the past 10 years?

In the past 10 years, I would say the Jan Miller Studio Artist Program has seen some of the biggest growth within our organization. The level of artistry we bring in every season continually gets better. Cody has truly crafted a competitive and reputable young artists training program that brings back many of our alumni to be featured in the mainstage productions.

Our audiences continue to be captivated by the extraordinary performances and exceptional production quality on our mainstage. We continue to operate with responsible fiscal management that is balanced with our artistic vision. The more we have embraced innovation and creating unique events for new audiences, the more solid our financial position has become.

I would be remiss if I did not mention my incredibly talented staff. We have grown so much as an organization both financially and artistically, but I truly believe that we have the perfect "dream team" to accomplish anything. We all continually work together to address and identify stakeholders and develop new strategies to maximize visibility, fundraising, and revenue opportunities.

What do you love most about your job?

The people! I am beyond grateful for the leadership of our Board of Directors, an incredibly talented staff, amazing artists, and supportive arts community. I love meeting the new group of Jan Miller Studio Artists every season and watching them grow as artists over the course of the year. It is an amazing feeling to advance something you believe in with a talented group of people who are equally committed to connecting with our community.

Live opera is one of the most spectacular experiences anyone can have. The great singing, the great music, the great stories all working together to make great LIVE performances. There is nothing like it.

What are some accomplishments you've made with the company that you're especially proud of?

I am so proud of the way we sustained the company, as well as the art form, during the global pandemic. Pensacola Opera came out fiscally stronger as an organization thanks to government support and the very generous donations from individual supporters. The opera world saw artists innovate and evolve in new and exciting ways, keeping the art form alive and vibrant at a time when we needed music more than ever. Pensacola Opera was one of the first companies to pay out their artists fees when the world shut down.

Some other accomplishments I am proud of are receiving an Impact 100 Grant: In Perfect Harmony during Covid and receiving a Sunday's Child Grant to produce Laura Kaminsky's opera As One.

What is your vision for Pensacola Opera for the next ten years?

I am committed to remaining a sustainable institution of service to Pensacola, first and foremost.

In the next ten years, my vision for Pensacola Opera is to be operating and performing in a brand new building with a state of the art performance venue on what is now our current parking lot we purchased last summer. I envision this new performance venue to be a bustling hub for all the local arts organizations, while creating a "community-centric" performance center and event space. This new home will expand Pensacola Opera's mission in exciting ways, allowing us to engage our community year-round with a broader range of programming while also addressing a critical need for affordable performance and rehearsal space in our thriving city.

Artistically, I would love to add one more opera to our mainstage season at the Saenger Theatre, with the addition of performing new works and recitals in our own venue. We plan to continue producing innovative events that bring in new audiences with the continuation of Pensacola Opera's long standing artistic excellence. I believe we have the right creative team not only to maintain our high artistic standards, but also to successfully attract new audiences to our beloved musical form.

"Ultimately, I want to make sure that our staff is proud of our work, our board is excited about what we're producing, we are meeting the needs of the community, the artists feel appreciated and safe in a creative environment, and our audiences can feel it. I look forward to moving into the next phase for Pensacola Opera with my husband by my side as the Artistic Director. I am deeply grateful for the support of the Pensacola Opera community and look forward to seeing the company thrive in the years to come. I believe that our best moments are yet to come."



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2026

Mainstage Season

PENSACOLA
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OPERA IS NOT A MONOLITH.

If you've attended a Pensacola Opera performance in recent seasons, you will surely understand how true of a statement that is. Just this season alone, audiences have had the opportunity to experience a stirring, intimate, American chamber opera; a lush, romantic, heartbreaking Italian masterpiece; and a golden-age Broadway musical. All of these pieces bring together the best that opera has to offer: stunning visuals, killer voices, and unforgettable storytelling.

Jake Heggie's 21st century chamber opera *Three Decembers* kicked off our season at the Mainstage Theatre on campus at the University of West Florida. Featuring a cast of just three singers and an orchestra of just 12 players, this 90-minute opera told the story of a family on the verge of collapse, due to secrets that finally unravel after decades of deception. I was so thrilled to hear plenty of positive feedback about this piece—both from people who had never seen an opera before, as well as from seasoned operagoers trying something new.



Our mainstage season kicks off with one of the most beloved, heartwrenching pieces in the operatic repertoire: Giuseppe Verdi's timeless *La traviata*. This opera contains some of the most difficult music ever written for a soprano to sing, which we've entrusted to the ever capable Bizhou Chang, a graduate of our Jan Miller Studio Artist Program who has continued to excel in her career here in Pensacola and beyond. Joining us as her lover, Alfredo, is tenor Andrew Morstein. Andrew made a big mark when he debuted the role of Edgardo with us in 2024. His sensuous, resonant tenor is a perfect fit for Alfredo's romantic vocalisms, paired with his strengths as an actor and storyteller.

Finally, we close our season with one of the most influential pieces of the American musical repertoire. When Rodgers & Hammerstein's *Oklahoma!* premiered on Broadway in 1943, it changed the entire landscape of what musical theatre would become in the decades ahead. The duo's first collaboration, *Oklahoma!* put the storytelling above all else, building on some of the success of Hammerstein's 1927 collaboration with Jerome Kern, *Show Boat*. As far as musicals go, it doesn't get much more operatic than Rodgers's vocal writing, paired with Hammerstein's unmatched ability to weave a story through both dialogue and song. Our cast of incredible actors is headlined by real-life couple Cadie and Jonathan Bryan as Laurey and Curly, making their debuts with us.

Whichever genre or period of performance you prefer, I hope that your experience with Pensacola Opera is a positive one that stays with you long beyond our time together in the theatre. Thank you for supporting the art that these hundreds of artists come together to create, and thank you for joining us on this theatrical journey we're about to embark on.

Cody Martin

PENSACOLA OPERA MUSIC DIRECTOR

Verdi's
La Traviata

January 23 + 25, 2026

Music by
Giuseppe Verdi

Libretto by
Francesco Maria Piave

Based on the play
The Lady of the Camellias by Alexandra Dumas

Running time
2 hours 45 minutes, including two 15-minute intermissions

Performed in
Italian, with English supertitles by Brett Finley

First performance
March 6, 1853 at the Teatro La Fenice, Venice

Last performed by Pensacola Opera
2015-16 Season, Sixth Company Production



Cast



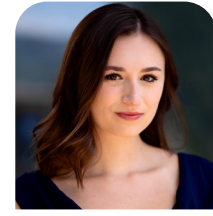
Violetta Valéry
Bizhou Chang[°]



Alfredo Germont
Andrew Morstein



Giorgio Germont
Dennis Jesse



Flora Bervoix
Christine Boddicker^{*^}



Barone Douphol
Jason Edelstein^{*^}



Gastone de Letorières
Xiaojie Ji^{*}



Marchese d'Obigny
Jack Chandler[°]



Annina
Denique Isaac^{*^}



Dottore Grenvil
J. Taylor Hightower^{*}



Giuseppe
Michael Wyatt



Messenger
Carlo Canapa

Creative Team

Conductor
Cody Martin



Stage Director
Rebecca Herman^{*}



Production Stage Manager | Alayna Powell
Assistant Stage Manager | Nadine Andrews
Choreographer | Debi Janea^{*}
Costume Designer | Glenn Avery Breed, *Wardrobe Witchery*
Wardrobe Supervisor | Kendall Dayton
Hair & Makeup Designer | Brittany Rappise
Lighting Designer | Connie Smith
Set Designer | Peter Dean Beck
Scenery produced and provided by Utah Symphony / Utah Opera
Rehearsal Pianist | Marine Eckert^{*^}

Ballet Pensacola Dancers:
 Sunnat Temirov, Elena Damiani,
 Annabel Fobert, Eliza Sell, Payton
 Wilson
Costumes Built By:
 Kendall Dayton, Laura Lane, Edee
 Green, Darcie Whitworth,
 Aubrey Leger
Dressers:
 Aubrey Leger, Darcie Whitworth,
 Annaleese Fraser, Caroline Becker,
 Joshua Ageaoili

* Pensacola Opera mainstage debut ^ 2025-26 Jan Miller Studio Artist ° Jan Miller Studio Artist alumnus

La traviata Synopsis

courtesy of the Metropolitan Opera

Act I

Violetta Valéry knows that she will die soon, exhausted by her restless life as a courtesan. At a party she is introduced to Alfredo Germont, who has been fascinated by her for a long time. Rumor has it that he has been enquiring after her health every day. The guests are amused by this seemingly naïve and emotional attitude, and they ask Alfredo to propose a toast. He celebrates true love, and Violetta responds in praise of free love. She is touched by his candid manner and honesty. Suddenly she feels faint, and the guests withdraw. Only Alfredo remains behind and declares his love. There is no place for such feelings in her life, Violetta replies. But she gives him a camellia, asking him to return when the flower has faded. He realizes this means he will see her again the following day. Alone, Violetta is torn by conflicting emotions—she doesn't want to give up her way of life, but at the same time she feels that Alfredo has awakened her desire to be truly loved.

Act II

Violetta has chosen a life with Alfredo, and they enjoy their love in the country, far from society. When Alfredo discovers that this is only possible because Violetta has been selling her property, he immediately leaves for Paris to procure money. Violetta has received an invitation to a masked ball, but she no longer cares for such distractions. In Alfredo's absence, his father, Giorgio Germont, pays her a visit. He demands that she separate from his son, as their relationship threatens his daughter's impending marriage. But over the course of their conversation, Germont comes to realize that Violetta is not after his son's money—she is a woman who loves unselfishly. He appeals to Violetta's generosity of spirit and explains that, from a bourgeois point of view, her liaison with

Alfredo has no future. Violetta's resistance dwindles and she finally agrees to leave Alfredo forever. Only after her death shall he learn the truth about why she returned to her old life. She accepts the invitation to the ball and writes a goodbye letter to her lover. Alfredo returns, and while he is reading the letter, his father appears to console him. But all the memories of home and a happy family can't prevent the furious and jealous Alfredo from seeking revenge for Violetta's apparent betrayal.

At the masked ball, news has spread of Violetta and Alfredo's separation. There are grotesque dance entertainments, ridiculing the duped lover. Meanwhile, Violetta and her new lover, Baron Douphol, have arrived. Alfredo and the baron battle at the gaming table and Alfredo wins a fortune: lucky at cards, unlucky in love. When everybody has withdrawn, Alfredo confronts Violetta, who claims to be truly in love with the Baron. In his rage Alfredo calls the guests as witnesses and declares that he doesn't owe Violetta anything. He throws his winnings at her. Giorgio Germont, who has witnessed the scene, rebukes his son for his behavior. The baron challenges his rival to a duel.

Act III

Violetta is dying. Her last remaining friend, Doctor Grenvil, knows that she has only a few more hours to live. Alfredo's father has written to Violetta, informing her that his son was not injured in the duel. Full of remorse, he has told him about Violetta's sacrifice. Alfredo wants to rejoin her as soon as possible. Violetta is afraid that he might be too late. The sound of rampant celebrations are heard from outside while Violetta is in mortal agony. But Alfredo does arrive and the reunion fills Violetta with a final euphoria. Her energy and exuberant joy of life return. All sorrow and suffering seems to have left her—a final illusion, before death claims her.



Director's Notes

REBECCA HERMAN

La Traviata, one of the most beloved operas in the repertoire, is often celebrated for its brindisi, grand parties, and soaring melodies. Yet beneath the champagne and waltzes lies a story of social friction and human fragility.

In revisiting Verdi's masterpiece,

our production seeks to draw back the velvet curtain and reveal its enduring themes: class tension, forbidden love, and the paradoxical honor of the outcast.

Verdi saw humanity in people from all walks of life and was drawn to Alexandre Dumas fil's *La Dame aux camélias*, itself based on Dumas's own affair with the courtesan Marie Duplessis. Adamant

that *La Traviata* was a modern story reflecting his own era, Verdi saw an opportunity to humanize a frequently ostracized segment of society: the courtesans. Opera houses initially resisted, preferring the comfort of historical distance. Though the opera premiered in 1853, it was not until the 1880s that Verdi's full intention was realized, with the settings and costumes of the day finally being showcased.

At the center of our story stands Violetta Valéry. Her fierce determination to experience life in its fullness propels the drama, even as that intensity threatens to consume her. Her famous cry of "Sempre libera" (Always free) is not merely a party anthem; it is a shield - armor she wears to protect herself from the terrifying vulnerability of true intimacy. She understands that to love is to risk great pain, yet she boldly chooses to lay down that armor for Alfredo.

Alfredo's youthful, reckless devotion, shaped by the optimism and entitlement of station, is intoxicating. Their country home becomes an intimate refuge, a different kind of shield from the outside world. Yet it is Violetta who understands the true cost of their forbidden union, and it is she who protects Alfredo from the consequences.

Into this fragile dynamic steps Giorgio Germont, a man guided by a quiet, unyielding love for his children and a deeply ingrained sense of family honor. He arrives seeing only a "fallen woman," but he leaves having encountered a woman of profound moral courage. The respect Germont develops for Violetta is genuine and hard-won, briefly bridging the chasm between their social worlds.

However, the true antagonist of *La Traviata* cannot be overcome by courage, sacrifice, or virtue. Consumption's relentless toll cannot be stopped, and Act III unfolds as the all-too-recognizable tragedy of time running out for someone far too young. The consequences of tuberculosis permeated every level of Verdi's society, as the disease persists globally today, and audiences at the time would have been intimately acquainted with its harsh reality.

As you watch tonight, I invite you to be swept away by the beauty of Verdi's soaring melodies and the effervescent parties, but most importantly, to see the humanity in the woman at the center of it all: her courage, her sacrifice, and her fierce, fleeting embrace of life.





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Artist Spotlight

Bizhou Chang, Violetta in *La traviata*



Photo by Meg Burke Photography, Pensacola Opera

What are some of your favorite roles that you've had? Which ones do you still aspire to get? I.e. Any "bucket list" ones?

Actually, Violetta is at the top of my bucket list, so it is really a dream come true! My other favorite roles are Gilda in Verdi's *Rigoletto* and Donizetti's three Tudor queens. Some of my favorite roles I have played in the past are Mimì in *La Bohème*, Tatyana in *Eugene Onegin*, and Fiordiligi in *Così fan tutte*.

You have a long history with Pensacola Opera! Tell us a little bit about it.

My first professional contract after graduate school was with Pensacola Opera. I worked as an artist in residence (now Jan Miller Studio Artist) for the 2019-2020 season. Pensacola Opera has given me so many opportunities both on the mainstage and in the community in the past five years, and these experiences played a crucial role in guiding me to become the artist I am.

Tell us about you as an individual.

I was born and raised in Northeast China, and I lived in Shanghai for seven years. I love Pilates, hiking, running, cycling, cooking, baking and spending time with friends I feel close to.

Tell us a bit about you as a singer and why you're excited to be in this role with Pensacola Opera.

I have been singing since childhood—music and singing has always been the way I express myself. However, I didn't start training as an opera singer until 10 years ago when I first moved to the US. My musical training at Boston Conservatory at Berklee gave me the opportunity to delve into the world of opera and many tools to pursue a career in opera.

Violetta has been my dream role since I started my journey in opera 10 years ago. I always love a challenge, and Violetta is the Mount Everest for lyric sopranos. Learning this role has been a journey of self-discovery, and a process of discovering what is possible in my instrument. I am excited about all the risks I will be taking and the merely opportunity to bring this timeless score to life. Pensacola has been a home away from home for me, and the trust from Pensacola Opera gives me the courage and a safe space to sing this role for the first time.



Photo by Ashleigh Ann Gardner, Opera Orlando



Photo by Terry Gilliam, Opera Columbus

Why do you think opera is still relevant today and what would you say to convince someone to attend for their first time?

I believe opera is and will always be relevant, because it is an art form that deeply rooted in culture and humanity. If you need humanity, you need opera. For someone who is attending opera for the first time, I will say: "Would you like to experience all the art forms that exist in the world at the same time? Would you like to experience the ultimate power of human voice? Or simply to experience something that is much bigger than us all?"

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RODGERS & HAMMERSTEIN'S
OKLAHOMA!
MARCH 13 + 15, 2026



Presented in Loving Memory by
Allan Benton

Music by

Richard Rodgers

Book & Lyrics by

Oscar Hammerstein II

Based on the play

Green Grow the Lilacs by *Lynn Riggs*

Running time

2 hours 30 minutes, including one 20-minute intermission

Performed in

English, with English Supertitles

First performance

March 31, 1943 at the St. James Theatre, NYC

Pensacola Opera Debut

OKLAHOMA! is presented by arrangement with Concord
Theatricals on behalf of The Rodgers & Hammerstein Organization
www.concordtheatricals.com

Cast



Curly McLain
*Jonathan Bryan**



Laurey Williams
*Cadie J. Bryan**



Ado Annie Carnes
Rachel Fitzgerald°



Will Parker
Micah Perry°



Jud Fry
Ron Dukes°



Aunt Eller
*Emily Pulley**



Andrew Carnes
Joe Tomko



Ali Hakim
*Timothy Fitz-Gerald**



Gertie Cummings
Denique Isaac^



Ike Skidmore
Jason Edelstein^



Cord Elam
Greg Watson



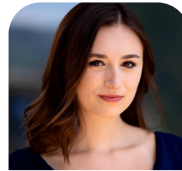
Fred
Xiaojie Ji^



Slim
Jordan Svendsen



Ellen
Abigail Mallory



Kate
Christine Boddicker^



Vivian
Hannah Kivisalu

Creative Team

Conductor
Jerome Shannon



Stage Director
Corey McKern



Production Stage Manager | Nadine Andrews
Chorus Director | Cody Martin
Choreographer | Brenda Jean Hamilton
Dance Captain | Noah Cuoco
Costume Designer | Glenn Avery Breed, Wardrobe Witchery
Wardrobe Supervisor | Kendall Dayton
Hair & Makeup Designer | Brittany Rappise
Lighting Designer | Connie Smith
Set Designer | Steven C. Kemp
Production originally designed for and created by The Indiana University Jacobs School of Music Opera and Ballet Theater
Rehearsal Pianist | Marine Eckert*^

Dancers: Brianne LaPoint, Kadance Jablon, Olivia Giaconi

Costumes Built By: Kendall Dayton, Laura Lane, Edee Green, Darcie Whitworth, Aubrey Leger

Dressers: Aubrey Leger, Darcie Whitworth, Annaleese Fraser, Caroline Becker, Joshua Agcaoili

* Pensacola Opera mainstage debut ^ 2025-26 Jan Miller Studio Artist °Jan Miller Studio Artist alumnus

Oklahoma! Synopsis

Courtesy of Concord Theatricals

Act I

In the territory of Oklahoma, just after the turn of the century, Aunt Eller sits churning butter on the porch of her family's farm. Curly, a handsome cowboy, comes to call. Aunt Eller knows he's come to ask Laurey to the Box Social, even though he and Laurey are too proud to admit it. Laurey appears, denying Curly's goading assumption that she'd been listening to their conversation. She feigns disinterest as Curly describes the ride he's arranged, should she accept his invitation. Laurey calls his bluff. It appears Curly has made up such a surrey.

Will Parker stumbles in, having just won a steer-roping contest at the Kansas City Fair. The prize was \$50 – just what Ado Annie's father told her he'd need to marry her. Will shows off his new picture-peep toy, called "The Little Wonder," to his homecoming crowd. Excitedly, he tells them all about his trip. Will leaves to find Ado Annie as Curly returns. He asks Aunt Eller plain out: If it's not him, whose affection does Laurey lean to? Jud Fry, the hired hand on the farm, appears and reveals that he asked Laurey to the Box Social. When Laurey doesn't deny this, Curly confirms his date with Aunt Eller, revealing the surrey he'd described was hired for real after all. Curly leaves, bragging again about his hired ride while Laurey, stunned, hides her envy.

Once he's gone, Laurey begs Aunt Eller not to go with Curly so she doesn't have to ride alone with Jud. Laurey just didn't want to give Curly the satisfaction of going with her. Eller brushes aside Laurey's fears as Ado Annie and the peddler Ali Hakim arrive. Aunt Eller has a bone to pick with the peddler about a past purchase. Laurey tells Ado Annie that Will is looking for her. Ado Annie wasn't counting on Will being back so soon – the peddler is driving her to the Box Social. Laurey is tickled by Ado's inability to choose between the two. She hates disappointing a beau when he's paying a call.

Ado Annie interprets Ali Hakim's offer to take her to "paradise" – an upstairs room at the hotel in Claremore – as a proposal of marriage, but his intentions are much simpler. Laurey's concerns

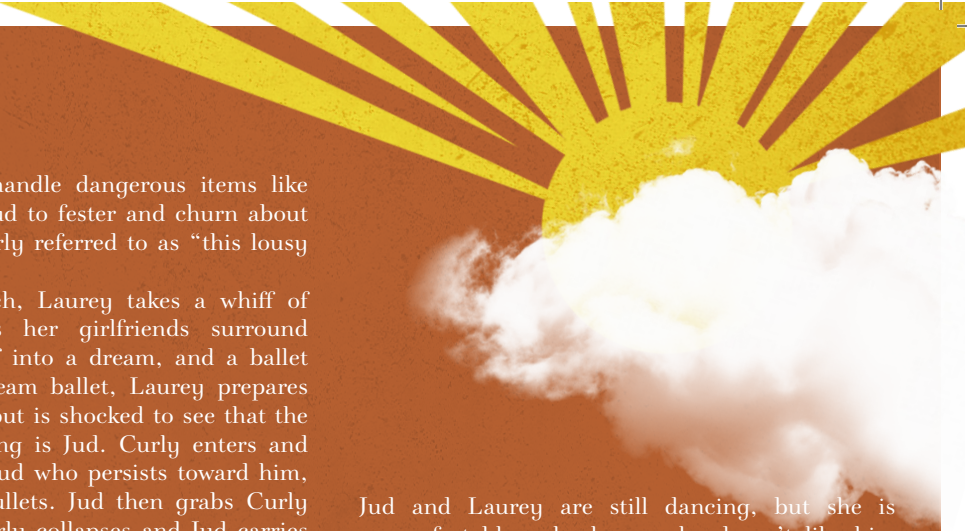
about making up her mind prompt Ali to sell her a bottle of Egyptian Smelling Salts said to have the ability to decide a difficult choice. Will unexpectedly arrives, announcing his return. Will tells Ado Annie about his \$50 cash prize. Unfortunately, he spent it on gifts for her and no longer has the money to give her father.

Feeling rebuffed by Laurey, Curly takes up with Gertie Cummings, who flirts with him as the women prepare lunch baskets. Laurey declares her independence. Ado Annie tells Ali Hakim she has promised herself to Will Parker, and Ali is relieved. Ado Annie's father, Andrew Carnes, enters with shotgun in hand, and learns that Will Parker spent the \$50 needed to take Ado's hand in marriage. He also hears about the "purty" talking Ali's been giving his daughter and suggests to Ali, opportunistically with his gun, that it indeed does sound like a marriage proposal. Ado Annie leaves, excited to tell the girls about her engagement to the peddler, leaving Ali Hakim to vent his frustration.

Curly is now taking Gertie Cummings to the Box Social, and when she leaves, he mentions to Laurey that everyone's expecting him to take her instead. Playfully, they wonder how such outlandish rumors begin. Curly plainly asks if she wants to tell Jud she'd rather go with him, but Laurey says she can't. Curly sets off to visit Jud to understand why. In his smokehouse, Jud polishes his gun as Curly notices photos of naked women on his wall. Curly, noting a rope hanging from the shed's wall, says, "You could hang yerself on that, Jud," manipulating Jud into fantasizing about killing himself. Jud warns Curly to stay away from Laurey, but Curly's provocation spurs Jud into firing a warning shot. Calmly, C u r l y shoots a bullet straight through one of the roof's knotholes just before Aunt Eller interrupts.

Ali tries to sell Jud more naked postcards, but Jud is interested in something else: "The Little Wonder," a picture-peeping toy with a surprise blade that pops out from a spring, meant to stab the





says he doesn't handle dangerous items like that, and leaves Jud to fester and churn about living in what Curly referred to as "this lousy smokehouse".

Back on her porch, Laurey takes a whiff of smelling salts as her girlfriends surround her. She drifts off into a dream, and a ballet begins. In the dream ballet, Laurey prepares for her wedding, but is shocked to see that the man she's marrying is Jud. Curly enters and tries shooting at Jud who persists toward him, immune to the bullets. Jud then grabs Curly by the throat. Curly collapses and Jud carries Laurey away over his shoulder as she blows a kiss to Curly's dead body. Laurey suddenly awakens as Jud shakes her from her reverie. It's time to go to the Box Social. Curly, who had arrived unexpectedly, stands alone, defeated, watching Laurey and Jud leave together.

Act II

At the Box Social, the crowd is dancing, and Carnes begins to sing a song about the necessary bond between cowboys and farmers. Aunt Eller is elected auctioneer for the coveted lunch hampers; the men will bid on individual boxed meals prepared by the town's women. Will confronts Ali about his apparent engagement to Ado Annie and challenges the legitimacy of his love for her. Will knows his love for Ado is real because of all the gifts he bought her with the \$50 he was supposed to use to win her father's favor. Ali suggests he could buy some of the gifts back, to peddle, if Will was willing to sell them. Ali pays Will generous prices for each gift. Will, ignorant of the "Little Wonder's" sinister utility, sells it to Jud, eventually making all \$50 back.

The auction is now down to the final two hampers: Laurey's and Ado Annie's. Ali Hakim wins Ado's basket after Will almost loses the \$50 once more, leaving Will still eligible to marry Ado in the eyes of her father. Laurey's basket is a popular lunch, but Jud keeps outbidding everyone by a few bits until Aunt Eller can't wait for another bid any longer. Curly steps in and sells his saddle, horse and gun, outbidding Jud's entire savings of two years: \$42.31. Curly wins and Aunt Eller ends the auction abruptly. Now that Will and Ado Annie are engaged, Will wants Ado Annie's to stop having fun with other fellas. With some convincing, she agrees as best she can, and they share a kiss.

Jud and Laurey are still dancing, but she is uncomfortable – he knows she doesn't like him and regards him as a filthy hired hand. Growing angrier, Jud makes a vague threat and Laurey fires him on the spot. It's her family's farm, after all, and she has the right to hire and fire people. Jud storms off. Laurey sits, terrified, looking for Curly, who then appears. She can't hide her desperation to be safe with him, the one she trusts and desires. Laurey explains her fear of Jud, and Curly promises to make it all right. They flirt, and he begs her to marry him. She says yes, and he elatedly declares his love for her.

Three weeks later, Laurey and Curly are married. The newlyweds and their friends all come out to the back of the house, cheering and celebrating. Suddenly, Jud arrives uninvited and the celebrations pall. Jud claims he is there to give the groom a gift, but first he wants to kiss the bride. As Jud moves in to kiss Laurey, Curly pulls him back and Jud punches him. The fight continues until Jud pulls a knife on Curly. When Curly throws him, Jud lands on his own knife, groans, and lies still on the ground. The crowd tries to help, but Jud is dead.

The newlyweds are distraught. There's nothing that can be done about Jud, but Cord Elam, a Federal Marshal, thinks Curly should turn himself into the judge that night, despite their train leaving town in 20 minutes. Aunt Eller suggests to Andrew, the judge, that they hold an informal court there. Cord Elam disagrees at first, but Andrew decides they can give Curly a fair trial without locking him up on his wedding night. Andrew, as the Judge, guides Curly into a self-defense plea. Cord Elam suggests he doesn't feel right about this, but Aunt Eller and the wedding attendees, now witnesses for the court, support the Judge's immediate verdict of not guilty. Everyone hurriedly gets the newly wedded couple into the surrey, waving them off to their honeymoon.

Director's Notes

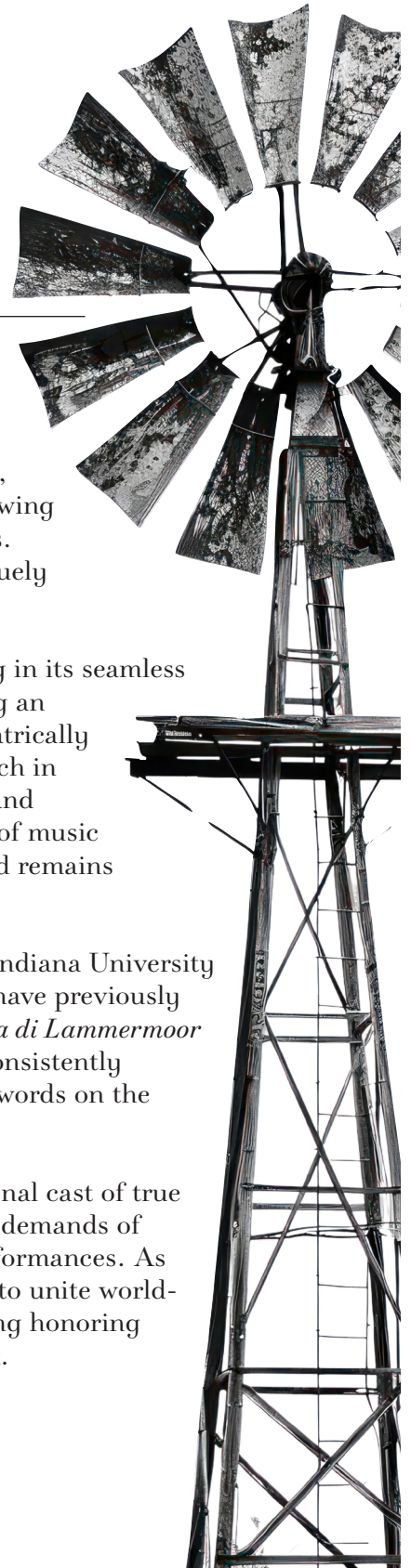
COREY MCKERN

Oklahoma! is a masterpiece of American musical theater. As an opera company, we are devoted to telling stories shaped by enduringly beautiful music, partnering with a full symphony orchestra, and allowing the power of the human voice to transport audiences. *Oklahoma!* offers all of that richness through a uniquely American lens.

Premiering in 1943, the musical was groundbreaking in its seamless integration of song, dance, and storytelling, creating an experience that is both emotionally moving and theatrically exhilarating. Golden Age musical theater shares much in common with grand European opera, and Rodgers and Hammerstein's collaboration exemplifies this union of music and drama. Their work has stood the test of time and remains deeply resonant for today's audiences.

For this production, we are thrilled to partner with Indiana University and to present scenic designs by Steven Kemp. We have previously collaborated with Steven on *La Bohème* (2023), *Lucia di Lammermoor* (2024), and *Le Nozze di Figaro* (2025). His artistry consistently enhances every production, bringing the notes and words on the page vividly to life through stunning scenic realism.

We are equally fortunate to be joined by an exceptional cast of true singing actors—artists who meet the rigorous vocal demands of this score while delivering nuanced, compelling performances. As an opera company producing a musical, our goal is to unite world-class, traditional singing with modern, realistic acting honoring both the musical and theatrical integrity of the work.



On a personal note, my professional debut as a singer was as Curly in *Oklahoma!* in New Orleans in 2000. I have lived with this extraordinary piece for many years and I am deeply excited to collaborate with this cast and creative team to bring this production to life in Pensacola.

This performance would not be possible without the generous support of Allen Benton. A devoted lover of musical theater—particularly dance—this production is dedicated to her memory, with Pensacola Opera’s deepest gratitude for her friendship and enduring support.

Mailande, painter with panache

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Artist Spotlight

Jonathan & Cadie Bryan, Curly & Laurey in *Oklahoma!*



How did you all meet and how do you navigate married life as professional artists? Do you get to perform together regularly?

We met in undergrad at Louisiana State University, became fast friends, and fell in love carpooling twice a week to a cross-town church choir job. We've been incredibly lucky to continue moving through this career at the same pace. It takes effort and intentionality to build a life together while pursuing this crazy career, but we also don't know any other way to navigate this world than to do it together. We've been together for 13 years, and those years encapsulate college, living three time zones apart while we did our time as resident artists across the country from each other, countless rejection emails, international debuts, and all the other highs and lows that this industry has in store. We couldn't do it without each other. Our relationship is the bedrock on which our careers are built. Understanding that makes everything else fall into place. It can be hard spending so much time apart on the road, but we always know who's going to be the first person we talk to in the morning, and the last voice we hear before bed. This season is the first in which we've been able to perform together more than once, and it's turning out to be everything we could've hoped for. We wish we could keep the family tour going forever!

Tell us a bit about yourselves as singers and why you're excited to be in these roles with Pensacola Opera.

Jonathan: Music has dominated my life for as long as I can remember, and musical theater has been a part of my story from the beginning. My first musical memory is singing along to a Michael Crawford Phantom of the Opera tape in my grandmother's car every day after school. Seeing "Defying Gravity" in the national tour of Wicked in 8th grade was the moment I knew I had to become a performer. To get a chance to sing Curly in Oklahoma! -- a show many consider to be the perfect musical -- is a dream come true!

Cadie: I think I've generally enjoyed music and singing since I was born. I loved singing in choir growing up, and I really loved movies and daydreamed about being a famous actress one day. My high school's spring musicals were my first real introduction to live theater and solo singing, and I've had a sweet spot for the Golden Age musicals since then. It wasn't until I went to college that I saw my first opera and fell in love with the classical scene. I feel so lucky to be able to sing and act in both styles, and Laurey is a role I've always wanted to do!

What does it mean to get to perform together?

Performing together onstage means your biggest fan and confidant is right there in the arena with you. It's incredibly empowering, bringing a comfort that allows us to take bigger risks as singing actors. The only real challenge is that we both have strong ideas and like to take the lead, so we have many spirited debates about how we think a scene should go between rehearsals! For this show specifically, our complete familiarity with each other is a major advantage for the dialogue. Not only can we practice our lines together at home, we are also intimately familiar with each other's speech patterns. It usually takes a couple of weeks for dialogue scenes to really gel as performers get used to each other's tendencies, but we can come into this one with a nice head start.

Tell us about yourselves as individuals.

J: I'm from Dallas, Texas, and like every good Texan, I let you know it! I love football (rabid LSU fan and personal victim of the Dallas Cowboys), fishing, good barbecue, and western wear. I love walks with Cadie and our dog Izzy, and trying out breweries I've never heard of in new cities with Cadie, who knows more about craft beer you'd ever guess!

C: I was born and raised in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. Naturally, I love to cook, and I make a pretty mean gumbo. A few of my favorite things are: yoga, becoming a regular at a local coffee shop, thrift/antique shopping, being outside (whether hiking or sunbathing on the beach), and quality time with Jonathan and close friends.

What are some of your favorite roles that you've had? Which ones do you still aspire to get? Any "bucket list" ones?

Jonathan: My two favorite roles I've ever performed are the title role in *Don Giovanni* and Beaumarchais in *Corigliano's The Ghosts of Versailles*. They're polar opposites on the musical spectrum, but both are incredibly liberating in their own right. As the Don, it's just so fun to be bad. You spend the whole night terrorizing your castmates and get dragged to Hell at the end of the show. What more could you want?! Beaumarchais was incredible because the role is so varied in its demands, and it is so rarely performed that there are almost zero expectations for how it should be performed—a rarity in this field, where we routinely sing roles that have been repeatedly presented for 400 years. Getting to shape a character vocally and dramatically with virtually no boundaries was the most empowering experience of my young career. The dream role I have yet to perform is Eugene Onegin. I'm a sucker for Tchaikovsky's music, and I'm not sure there's ever been a role written more perfectly for the baritone voice. Maybe I'll get to sing it someday across from Cadie J. Bryan as Tatiana...?

Cadie: A few of my favorites so far are Susanna in *Le nozze di Figaro*, which was a dream role from the start; Marian in *The Music Man*—such a wonderful character and story; and recently, a very cool experience as Milada in Smetana's *Dalibor*, definitely the most intense and dramatic character I've had yet to play. I consider myself a singing actor, and I fall in love with characters as much as their music, so I have a very long list of roles I'd like to do! I have a more standard list of classics like Violetta, Juliette, Mimi, Tatiana and Rusalka.



Anything else you'd like to share or add?

It is such a joy to spend some time making art in this vibrant community. We hope you enjoy this show even half as much as we enjoyed making it!



You are both making your Pensacola Opera mainstage debut! What have been some of your other favorite cities or companies you've performed with so far?

J: Wolf Trap Opera gave me my first ever paycheck as an opera singer, and you'd be hard-pressed to find a more nurturing environment for young talent. The Glimmerglass Festival was the first company to take a chance on me as a leading man, and I can never repay them for the confidence they gave me in doing so—not to mention the ART they make up there! The Atlanta Opera was where I first cut my teeth as a resident artist, and every time I go back, it feels like home.

C: I have to name the companies that developed me as a young artist, Arizona Opera and Des Moines Metro Opera, because they feel like home to me. Some of my favorite cities in which I've performed in are Santa Fe, Toronto, Atlanta, New Orleans, Winston-Salem, and Boston.

Why do you enjoy being a crossover artist and what would you say to someone who said that opera companies shouldn't produce musical theatre?

J: As an artist and storyteller, I'd be a fool to limit myself to one method of artistic expression. Some stories are best told operatically, and some require dialogue and a dance number. Some of the best music ever written was written for Broadway, and I want to sing the best music ever written! Golden Age musicals like *Oklahoma!* were composed before the advent of the microphone, and were thus written for classically trained voices that can project into a theater without amplification. I don't understand why someone would think "La ci darem" is more musically sophisticated than "People Will Say We're in Love" -- it's truly more difficult to sing the latter. Musical Theater is one of America's unique contributions to the musical landscape of the world, and these Golden Age roles were written for the voices one finds at the opera house. Why wouldn't an American patron of the arts want to enjoy uniquely American art sung the way it was meant to be sung? Loosen up your tie and enjoy a night of songs you can't help but sing along to!

C: I think it provides a wonderful variety for audiences and season ticket holders, and frankly, I think classical singers are technically and stylistically a better fit for so much of the musical theater repertoire. I love having the ability to crossover and tell as many stories as possible, and I don't find that musicals are any less dramatic, relatable, moving, and/or thoroughly entertaining than opera.

*Jan Miller*studio
ARTISTS
PENSACOLA OPERA





The Artists in Residence Program at Pensacola Opera began in 2003, igniting from the board president at the time, Jan Miller. She made it the focal point of the company's mission to enrich the culture of Northwest Florida through a wide variety of operatic and educational programming. Starting with a group of three singers and a pianist performing Seymour Barab's operatic adaptation of *Little Red Riding Hood*, the Artists in Residence Program quickly gained a devoted following in our community. Each year since, these talented emerging artists have appeared in a variety of education and community engagement performances, reaching tens of thousands of children, adults, and families each season.

Over the past 20 seasons, more than 90 singers, pianist/coaches, and stage managers have gone through the program, many of them going on to national and international performing careers, or transitioning into administrative roles within the industry. In recent seasons, Pensacola Opera has doubled down on its commitment to developing and nurturing these talented artists, providing invaluable one-on-one coaching and career development in addition to a wide breadth of performance experience.

Today, the Jan Miller Studio Artist program brings in 5 artists each season to participate in mainstage programming and act as community ambassadors for the Opera by touring to local schools for a children's opera production and Opera Up Close workshops, and visiting local restaurants, community centers, and parks for free concerts and pop-up performances throughout the season.

Jan has always been a fierce fundraiser and promoter for the company's in-school programming, which reaches over 10,000 area children each year. As part of the renamed program, Pensacola Opera continues the commitment to mentoring and empowering emerging talent in the opera world, setting them up for successful careers ahead.





Meet the 2025-26 Studio



Denique Isaac
SOPRANO

Hometown | Baltimore, MD

Education | M.M. Indiana University Jacobs School of Music, B.M. Washington Adventist University

Recent Work | 2025 Central City Opera Apprentice Artist; *Cendrillon*, Cedar Rapids Opera; *L'elisir d'amore*, Annapolis Opera

This Season at Pensacola Opera | Bea in *Three Decembers*, Annina and Violetta (cover) in *La traviata*, Ensemble and Laurey (cover) in *Oklahoma!*, Stepsister/Fairy Godmother in *Cinderella* (education tour)



Christine Boddicker
MEZZO-SOPRANO

Hometown | Hinsdale, IL

Education | M.M. University of Houston, B.M. Michigan State University

Recent Work | *Cendrillon*, Cedar Rapids Opera; *Amadigi di Gaula*, Ars Lyrica Houston; *Roméo et Juliette*, Lyric Opera of Kansas City

This Season at Pensacola Opera | Madeline (cover) in *Three Decembers*, Flora in *La traviata*, Ensemble and Ado Annie (cover) in *Oklahoma!*, Cinderella in *Cinderella* (education tour)



Jason Edelstein

BARITONE

Hometown | Paramus, NJ

Education | M.M. Boston Conservatory at Berklee, B.M. Indiana University Jacobs School of Music

Recent Work | 2025 Renée Fleming Artist, Aspen Music Festival; *Così fan tutte*, BoCo Opera; *Flight*, Janiec Opera Company at Brevard Music Center

This Season at Pensacola Opera | Charlie, *Three Decembers*; Baron Douphol & Germont (cover), *La traviata*; Ensemble & Curly (cover), *Oklahoma!*; Stepfather, *Cinderella* (education tour)



Xiaojie Ji

TENOR

Hometown | Guangzhou, China

Education | D.M.A. Michigan State University, M.M. Manhattan School of Music, B.M. China Conservatory of Music

Recent Work | 2025 Opera Neo Studio Artist; *The Magic Flute*, Opera de Metro; *La Cenerentola*, MSU Opera

This Season at Pensacola Opera | Gastone and Alfredo (cover) in *La traviata*, Ensemble and Will Parker (cover) in *Oklahoma!*, Prince Charming in *Cinderella* (education tour)



Marine Eckert

PIANIST

Hometown | Geneva, Switzerland

Education | A.D. & M.M. University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music, B.M. Haute Ecole de Musique de Lausanne

Recent Work | *A Midsummer Night's Dream* & *La finta giardiniera*, CCM; *The Thinker*, Cincinnati Art Museum

This Season at Pensacola Opera | Pianist & associate coach for *Three Decembers*, *La traviata*, & *Oklahoma!*, Pianist & music director for *Cinderella* (education tour)



A woman in a red, sequined, off-the-shoulder dress is singing on a stage. She is captured in profile, facing left, with her mouth open and hands gesturing. The stage is dimly lit with blue spotlights. In the background, there are two large, circular stage lights and a floral arrangement. The overall atmosphere is dramatic and professional.

2026
Season Artists



Nadine Andrews

Stage Manager | Madera, CA

Assistant Stage Manager, *La traviata* / Stage Manager, *Oklahoma!*

Pensacola Opera Debut: *H.M.S. Pinafore*, 2021

Career Highlights:

Madama Butterfly, Washington National Opera

Margaret Garner, Detroit Opera

La bohème, Opera Tampa



Glenn Avery Breed

Costume Designer | Cantonment, FL

Pensacola Opera Debut: *The Magic Flute*, 2008

Career Highlights

Aïda, Opera Southwest

Die Fledermaus, Cedar Rapids Opera

Elixir Of Love, Toledo Opera



Cadie J. Bryan

Soprano | Baton Rouge, LA

Laurey, *Oklahoma!*

Pensacola Opera Debut

Career Highlights:

Of Mice And Men, Des Moines Metro Opera

Pagliacci, Piedmont Opera

Dalibor, Bard Summerscape



Jonathan Bryan

Baritone | Dallas, TX

Curly, *Oklahoma!*

Pensacola Opera Debut

Career Highlights:

The Ghosts Of Versailles, The Glimmerglass Festival

Grounded, The Metropolitan Opera

Pagliacci, Piedmont Opera



Jack Chandler

Baritone | Arlington, VA

Marchese, *La traviata*

Pensacola Opera Debut: *Carmen*, 2021

Career Highlights

Carmina Burana, Choral Society of Pensacola

Così fan tutte, Pensacola Opera

A Streetcar Named Desire, Florida State Opera



Bizhou Chang

Soprano | Liaoning, China
Violetta, *La traviata*

Pensacola Opera Debut: *Don Giovanni*, 2020

Career Highlights

La bohème, Opera Orlando
Le nozze di figaro, Opera Columbus
Turandot, Opera Southwest



Kendall Dayton

Wardrobe Supervisor | Pensacola, FL

Pensacola Opera Debut: *Lucia di Lammermoor*, 2024

Career Highlights

Three Decembers, Pensacola Opera
Ride The Cyclone, UWF Theatre
Oklahoma!, Pensacola Opera



Ron Dukes

Bass | Indianapolis, IN
Jud Fry, *Oklahoma!*

Pensacola Opera Debut: *The Magic Flute*, 2022

Career Highlights

Mozart Requiem, Indy Symphonic Choir & Orchestra
Salome, Cincinnati Opera
Lalovavi, Cincinnati Opera



Rachel Fitzgerald

Soprano | Bloomington, IN
Ado Annie, *Oklahoma!*

Pensacola Opera Debut: *The Marriage of Figaro*, 2025

Career Highlights

Don Giovanni, Santa Fe Opera
Così fan tutte, Tel Aviv Summer Opera
The Merry Widow, Opera Project Columbus



Tim Fitz-Gerald

Tenor | Pensacola, FL
Ali Hakim, *Oklahoma!*

Pensacola Opera Debut

Career Highlights

The Boy From Oz, Broadway
Wicked, Chicago Company & First National Tour
Titanic The Musical, First National Tour



Brenda Jean Hamilton

Choreographer | Pensacola, FL
Choreographer, *Oklahoma!*

Pensacola Opera Debut: *Pagliacci*, 2025

Career Highlights

Wicked, Broadway
Radio City Rockettes, Radio City Music Hall
Dirty Rotten Scoundrels, 1st National Tour



Rebecca Herman

Stage Director | Austin, TX
Stage Director, *La traviata*

Pensacola Opera Debut

Career Highlights

Don Giovanni, The Florentine Opera
The (R)Evolution Of Steve Jobs, Washington National Opera
The Barber of Seville, Madison Opera



J. Taylor Hightower

Baritone | Hattiesburg, MS
Dr. Grenvil, *La traviata*

Pensacola Opera Debut

Career Highlights

Il Tabarro, Mobile Opera
Cavalleria Rusticana, Opera Mississippi
Susannah, Southern Opera And Musical Theater



Debi Janea

Choreographer | Pensacola, FL
Choreographer, *La traviata*

Pensacola Opera Debut

Career Highlights

Choreographer & Director
Ballet Penscola



Dennis Jesse

Baritone | Baton Rouge, LA
Germont, *La traviata*

Pensacola Opera Debut: *The Barber of Seville*, 1995

Career Highlights

Gianni Schicchi, Anchorage Opera
Così fan tutte, Palm Beach Opera
Lo Frate 'Nnamorato, Fio Mondo



Cody Martin

Music Director | Pensacola, FL
Conductor, *La traviata*
Chorus Director, *Oklahoma!*

Pensacola Opera Debut: *María de Buenos Aires*, 2017

Career Highlights

H.M.S. Pinafore, Opera Grand Rapids
Pagliacci, Pensacola Opera
Rusalka, Des Moines Metro Opera



Corey Mckern

Artistic Director | Pensacola, FL
Stage Director, *Oklahoma!*

Pensacola Opera Debut: *The Marriage of Figaro*, 2007

Career Highlights

The Marriage of Figaro, Pensacola Opera
Pagliacci, Opera Louisiane
Messiah, Tallahassee Symphony



Andrew Morstein

Tenor | Chicago, IL
Alfredo, *La traviata*

Pensacola Opera Debut: *Lucia di Lammermoor*, 2024

Career Highlights

Il Barbiere di Siviglia, Opera Theatre of St. Louis
Le nozze di Figaro, Salzburg Festival
La Cenerentola, Arizona Opera



Micah Perry

Tenor | Brookings, SD
Will Parker, *Oklahoma!*

Pensacola Opera Debut: *The Marriage of Figaro*, 2025

Career Highlights

Romeo and Juliet, Opera Theatre of Saint Louis
Pagliacci, Opera San Jose
Carmen, Austin Opera



Alayna Powell

Stage Manager | Kansas City, KS
Production Stage Manager, *La traviata*

Pensacola Opera Debut: *Aida*, 2017

Career Highlights

Cruzar La Cara De La Luna, Amarillo Opera
Turandot, Lyric Opera of Kansas City
Porgy and Bess, Lyric Opera Of Kansas City



Emily Pulley

Mezzo-Soprano | College Station, TX
Aunt Eller, *Oklahoma!*

Pensacola Opera Debut

Career Highlights

Three Decembers, Eugene Opera
Sweeney Todd, Opera Omaha
Carmen, Central City Opera



Brittany Rappise

Hair & Makeup Designer | Pensacola, FL

Pensacola Opera Debut: *Romeo & Juliet*, 2019

Career Highlights

The Shining, Nashville Opera
Silent Night, Florida Grand Opera
The Barber Of Seville, Knoxville Opera



Jerome Shannon

Principal Guest Conductor | Pensacola, FL
Conductor, *Oklahoma!*

Pensacola Opera Debut: *Rigoletto*, 2002

Career Highlights

The Tales of Hoffmann, Washington National Opera
Andrea Chénier, Nashville Opera
Dead Man Walking, Pensacola Opera



Connie Smith

Lighting Designer & Production Manager | Mobile, AL

Pensacola Opera Debut: *The Marriage of Figaro*, 2025

Career Highlights

Come From Away, University of West Florida
Still Rising, Choral Society of Pensacola
Three Decembers, Pensacola Opera



Joe Tomko

Actor | Pensacola, FL
Andrew Carnes, *Oklahoma!*

Pensacola Opera Debut: *Carousel*, 2023

Career Highlights

Die Fledermaus, Pensacola Opera
Instructor, UWF Theatre
Member, Aea & Sag

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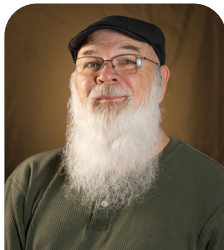


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Aleksandra Gregg, Principal
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Abigail Walker, Principal*+

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Christmas Cabaret with Jonathan Beyer
& Amanda Crider

Studio Artist Salon with the
2024-25 Jan Miller Studio Artists

Summer Songs with
Allanda Small Campbell

She Sings with Rachel Fitzgerald

Holiday Cabaret with
Corey McKern & Emily Pulley



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OPERA

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November 5, 2025
Saenger Theatre



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Education & Community



PENSACOLA
OPERA

Calendar of Events

Brown Bag Opera

Strauss & Sandwiches, Pizza & Puccini! This monthly lunch recital series invites the community to spend their lunch break with the Opera - eat and enjoy favorite arias, duets, and popular songs.

September 23, 2025

October 21, 2025

November 11, 2025

January 20, 2026

February 17, 2026

March 17, 2026



Opera Al Fresco

This special pop-up concert series brings live music to parks and green spaces around town.

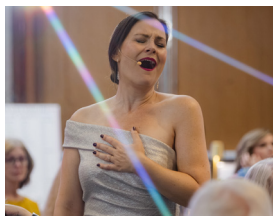
October 19, 2025



Jukebox Gala

Over a gourmet four-course dinner, world-class opera singers serenade you tableside. A preview of our upcoming season starts off the night – but the rest of the entertainment is up to you! Bid on popular selections from opera and musical theater to be performed for the winner, course by course.

September 6, 2025



Opera After Dark

Bathed in the glow of neon lights, Opera After Dark is a cabaret-style concert blending the beauty of opera and classical singing with the vibrant energy that only ignites after dark.

August 7, 2025

October 17, 2025

December 18, 2025



Foo Foo Fest

A 12-day Arts & Culture Festival sponsored by ACE, Foo Foo Festival grants 12 financial awards to local nonprofits to host a unique event, performance, or experience to boost tourism in Pensacola each fall.

Rock the Runway: Amped

November 5, 2025



Gallery Talks

In collaboration with the Pensacola Museum of Art, discover intersections between music and visual arts featuring speakers from the opera in collaboration with art curators.

January 8, 2025 at 6 PM

(La Traviata)

March 7, 2025 at 11 AM

(Oklahoma)

La traviata

Verdi's timeless romance opens our 43rd Season on the historic Saenger Theatre stage in Downtown Pensacola.

January 23 + 25, 2026



Bourbon & Broadway

Pensacola Opera loves Broadway...and bourbon! The Jan Miller Studio Artists host an evening of Broadway favorites, paired with a guided bourbon tasting and barbecue dinner.

February 19, 2026



Oklahoma!

Rodgers & Hammerstein's classic musical closes our 43rd Season on the historic Saenger Theatre stage in Downtown Pensacola.

March 13 + 15, 2026



Spotlight

Enjoy a chance to dine and donate to our education and Jan Miller Studio Artist program.

March 27, 2026





Opera Up Close

Our Studio Artists visit local middle & high school classrooms to perform well-known opera arias and songs, introduce students to opera terminology, and discuss the business of opera.

Studio Artist Education Tour

Each season, our Studio Artists present a fully-staged opera that's designed just for young audiences! The Education Tour visits over 30 local school systems and libraries.

Cinderella Tea Party

September 27, 2025

Cinderella Library Dates:

October 4, 2025

November 1, 2025

March 21, 2026



Overture: Opera Summer Camp

Pensacola Opera's experienced music staff—alongside special guest teachers—will lead children through music, theatre, and dance instruction culminating in their very own opera production.
July 2026

To keep up with all of Pensacola Opera's events and programming, visit PensacolaOpera.com/upcoming-events



PENSACOLA
OPERA

OPERA:
Pass it On

DONATE A TICKET, CREATE A MEMORY

Donate the cost of a ticket, and we'll pass that seat on to someone in our community who otherwise wouldn't be able to attend. Together, we can fill the house with music and generosity.





**Do you
remember
your first
classical
music
experience?**

Each year, over 30,000 children, adults, and families in our region experience opera in some form—many for the very first time.

Pensacola Opera’s education and community programs are the heartbeat of our mission, bringing the magic of live performance into schools, libraries, community centers, and more. Our touring children’s opera packs a fully-staged, costumed, live production into a 40-minute performance geared toward grades K-4. And our Opera Up Close program delivers a “crash course on opera” to middle and high school students, bringing them into the conversation and allowing them to make discoveries through arias and duets. These in-school offerings compliment our full schedule of free community concerts, special performances, and educational opportunities for learners of all ages.

2025 BY THE NUMBERS

50
children’s opera
performances in schools &
libraries

11
Opera Up Close
presentations in middle &
high schools

1,408
miles driven to education &
community performances

41
schools visited

12,598
people reached through
education & community
performances

Qventure: See Yourself On Stage



2025 Opera Camp

Twenty-five campers ages 8 - 13 put on their very own production of *La traviata*, learning all the music and roles in just one week

25
children
6
days
20+
hours of musical
instruction

FIND YOUR REASON
TO GIVE. FIND YOUR Y.



When you give to the Y, you create safe spaces for children right here in our community—spaces where they can fuel their imaginations, live healthier, and learn to work well with others.



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Pensacola Opera's Voices for Change provides unique opportunities for at-risk and disadvantaged children to experience the professional performing arts firsthand.

The arts can play a crucial role for at-risk youth, especially in addressing healing and trauma. The arts provide an outlet to process their emotions so they can begin the healing process and build resiliency. Additionally, the arts develop individual creativity and self-expression, improve academic achievement, and enhance their social, cognitive, and critical thinking skills.

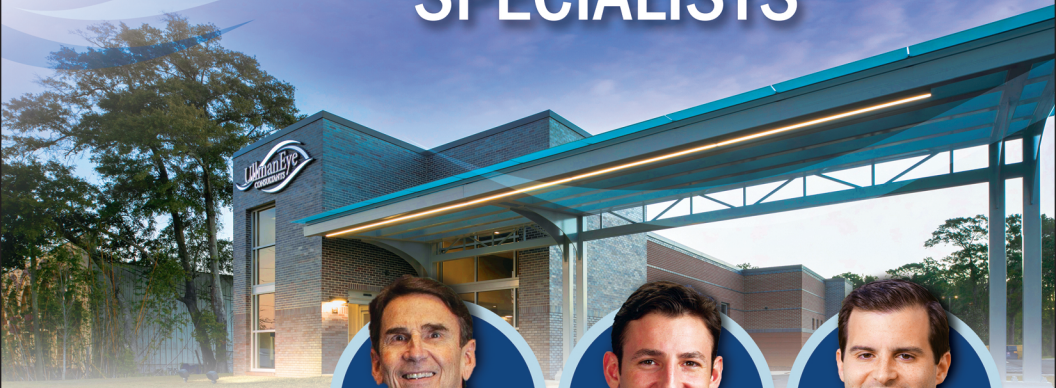
Last season, we also partnered with Dixon School of the Arts & Sciences for a more in depth program, including a vocal masterclass with our Jan Miller Studio Artists and a session with Wardrobe Witchery, where they learned the ins and outs of costume design! We were also honored to have two children from the program perform a selection from their spring musical, *Annie* at our Spotlight Event!

As the program has grown, and in an effort to serve even more students in our community, we open the final dress rehearsal of a Pensacola Opera production to all local non-profits that serve at-risk and disadvantaged children. All children in attendance are invited to a pre-show reception and have the chance to meet and mingle with opera staff and artists.





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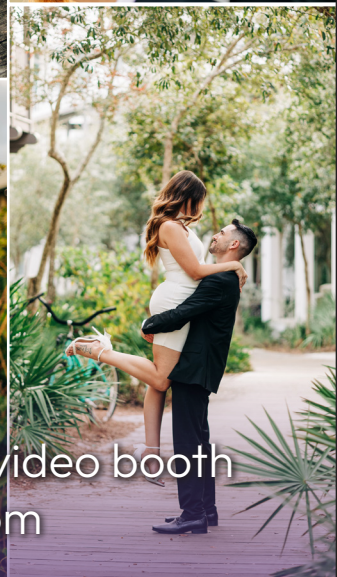
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Bravi! is a volunteer organization of opera-loving people from all walks of life who come together to support the mission of Pensacola Opera. Bravi! members volunteer their time and talents in our mainstage productions, education and community events, fundraising events, and more.

Active Bravi! Members

Teresa Albert	Colleen McCoy
Marilyn Alvarez	Maureen McNeill
Mary Beckham	Rita Miller
Judy Cannon	Erin Moline
Holly Caverly	Jean Norman
Sooz Cobb	Randy Nunemaker
Ashley Decker	Chris Paul
Laura Dees	Julie Pecchia
Michele Edge	Jade Perry
Rhonda Ford	McKenzie Price
Theresa Goodyear	Leigh Proctor
Anna Gorbunova	Vanessa Rabb
Riley Hart	Jessica Reeves
Bird Hinze	Anna Grace Robinette
Mary Holway	Cecilia Rojas
Jacob Hyer	Ryan Southwell
Dominic Lauber	Jordan Svendsen
Hope Letko	Payton Tanner
Becky Link	Petrea Tomko
Susi Lyon	Mary Varner
Abigail Mallory	Megan Washington
Asherah Mathews	Louie Watkins
Myishola Matthews	Gregory Watson
Michael Matthews	

FRANK BROPHY Volunteer of the Year *Recipients*

Debbie Mann, 1993
 Mary Ann Glaeser, 1994
 Sandy Palmer, 1995
 Ron and Ann Peake, 1995
 Sam Waite, 1996
 Harry Gruber, 1996
 Marjorie Oakes, 1997
 Ken Rutledge, 1998
 Richard Cannon, 1999
 Irva Stroux, 2000
 Thomas Gernon, 2001
 Frank Brophy, 2002
 Frank Cutrone, 2003
 Judy Strong, 2004
 Judy Cannon, 2004
 Vaughan Hedrick, 2005
 Diane Collins, 2006
 Mary Riesberg, 2007
 Eleanor Asplinden, 2008
 Sandra Houston, 2009
 Betty Roberts, 2010
 Kathleen McBride, 2011
 Judy Cannon, 2012
 Mary Poss, 2013
 Anne Wallace, 2014
 Lloyd and Laura Knisbell, 2015
 Susi Lyon, 2016
 Jennifer Fernandez, 2017
 Sue Stephenson &
 Don Robinson, 2018
 Laura Dees, 2019
 Greg Seltzer, 2020
 Pensacola Opera Chorus, 2021
 Sooz Cobb, 2022
 Julie Pecchia, 2023
 Rebecca Sanders, 2024
 Petrea Tomko, 2025

2025 Volunteer of the Year



PETREA TOMKO

How were you introduced to Pensacola Opera?

Having just moved back here to my hometown from New York in 1984, because my dad told me Pensacola was ready for PA's, I almost immediately met Dr. Nell Potter, a beloved member and well-known, well-loved supporter of the Pensacola Opera. She had been the first female physician in town, and hired me as the first female Physician Assistant in town. (Pensacola was NOT quite ready for us, at least me as a PA, though!) My dad was in the opera chorus then, too. My first memory from that year was their building a set at New World Landing for their opera that year—I can even remember where I sat for that opera.

Pretty quickly I met my future husband (actually the boy-next-door, Joe) while on his way to move to LA. We married and moved. Fast forward a few decades later that had seen us move back here, raise and homeschool two sons, 11 years of care for both

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36th
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February 28, 2026

Showtime
May 8-10, 2026

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QR code

our moms, and voilà!, three years ago, I found myself free of a lot of responsibilities and had the chance to pursue some of my long-held passions with opera being a primary one.

My love of opera came completely from my dad who played it often in our home growing up. I continued during my PA education in New York, riding around Long Island listening to the Met on Saturday afternoons or one of the cassettes of Pavarotti and Sutherland duets. I was hooked.

Why did you want to volunteer with us?

This newfound free time immediately called my name to get involved with the Pensacola Opera. I had known quite a few folks who had been in the chorus over the years, but had not known any of the staff and found myself immediately smitten with every single one I met. I'm still a dilettante when it comes to opera, but I simply wanted to learn as much as I could and still want to help as much as I can and obviously hear those stupendous voices and music as often as possible. Some of the sounds they create can literally have me in tears even if I don't understand the first word they are singing or what they are singing about. They simply pierce straight through to my heart.

What is one of your favorite Bravi! memories?

My favorite Bravi memory is from my first year of volunteering when I got to help with the auditions for the following year's studio artists. The other volunteer and I were listening to each audition, and visiting with these delightful young people, when we heard this one singer. We were immediately taken with her, both vocally and personally. We said to each other, "Oh, how we hope she gets the position!" Sure enough, she did, and she filled every bill anyone could have hoped for.

What all have you done with Pensacola Opera?

Beginning that first year, my husband and I decided we wanted to get to know the studio

artists if they had the time and the inclination. Because they live pretty much with each other 24/7 while they are here, we offered our home for them as a place to get away, get a home-cooked meal, or go out just by themselves, or in a smaller group. It's turned out to be hugely fulfilling. We've loved every single one of them, and continue to stay in touch as the years go by!

Besides that role as a volunteer, I've also helped at the receptions before and during the big operas at the Saenger, stuffed programs, calligraphed invitations, helped sell T-shirts, handed out event info at the Pensacola Museum of Art for the big kids' day at the arts, helped with setup of the set for the Children's Opera at Big Lagoon, to name a few things. ALL were fun.

Tell us more about you!

Besides calligraphy, and learning to paint so I can marry image and word, I spend my time reading, doing Pilates, being on the Foundation Board of ARC-Gateway, the Advisory Council of the Pensacola Symphony Orchestra, and have recently joined the PSO Guild. I'm in Bible Study Fellowship in an international study group, and am a very happy member of Pinewoods Presbyterian Church. I just finished my 950th straight day of Duolingo trying to learn Norwegian. My younger son, Samuel, lives there with his wife from Bergen, Norway, and they have our two granddaughters, Aurora and Ashild, both under 3. Our other son, Noah, is a great chef and is moving back here this very day. You will see my husband, Joe, around the opera almost as much as I am. He's a great supporter and an even greater actor! You might even have seen him IN the opera here. Laughter seems to follow him. I am blessed!

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Die Fledermaus, 19XX

PENSACOLA OPERA PRODUCTION HISTORY

2025-26

Verdi, *La traviata*
Rodgers & Hammerstein, *Oklahoma!*

2024-25

Mozart, *The Marriage of Figaro*
Leoncavallo, *Pagliacci*

2023-24

Donizetti, *Lucia di Lammermoor*
Strauss, *Die Fledermaus*

2022-23

Puccini, *La bohème*
Rodgers & Hammerstein, *Carousel*

2021-22

Mozart, *The Magic Flute*
Rossini, *The Barber of Seville*

2019-20

Mozart, *Don Giovanni*
Verdi, *Il trovatore*
Kaminsky, *As One*
Easy to Love (Concert)

2018-19

Gounod, *Roméo et Juliette*
Catan, *Florenzia en el Amazonas*
Some Enchanted Valentine (Concert)

2017-18

Puccini, *Madama Butterfly*
Leigh, *Man of La Mancha*
Piazzolla, *María de Buenos Aires*

2016-17

Verdi, *Aida*
Heggie, *Dead Man Walking*
Cipullo, *Glory Denied*

2015-16

Verdi, *La traviata*
Lehár, *The Merry Widow*
Heggie, *Out of Darkness*
The 3 Tenors (Concert)

2014-15

Puccini, *La bohème*
Gilbert & Sullivan, *The Pirates of Penzance*
Menotti, *The Medium*

2013-14

Bizet, *Carmen*
Rossini, *La Cenerentola*
Mozart, *Così fan tutte*

2012-13

Sondheim, *Sweeney Todd*
Rossini, *Il barbiere di Siviglia*
Puccini, *Tosca*
Monteverdi, *L'incoronazione di Poppea*

2011-12

Puccini, *Madama Butterfly*
Verdi, *Rigoletto*
Bizet, *La tragédie de Carmen*

2010-11

Adamo, *Little Women*
Puccini, *Turandot*
Argento, *Postcard from Morocco*

2009-10

Ott, *The Widow's Lantern* (World
Premiere)
Kern, *Show Boat*
Mascagni/Leoncavallo,
Cavalleria Rusticana/Pagliacci

2008-09

Mozart, *Così fan tutte*
Verdi, *Aida*

2007-08

Mozart, *Die Zauberflöte*
Puccini, *La bohème*

2006-07

Mozart, *Le nozze di Figaro*
Verdi, *La traviata*

2005-06

Bizet, *Carmen*

Donizetti, *Lucia di Lammermoor*

2004-05

Rossini, *Il barbiere di Siviglia*

Gershwin, *Porgy & Bess*

Puccini, *Madama Butterfly*

2003-04

Puccini, *Tosca*

Donizetti, *L'elisir d'amore*

2002-03

Lehár, *The Merry Widow*

Puccini, *Turandot*

2001-02

Mozart, *Don Giovanni*

Verdi, *Rigoletto*

2000-01

Humperdinck, *Hansel and Gretel*

Puccini, *La bohème*

Verdi, *La traviata*

1999-00

Strauss, *Die Fledermaus*

Mozart, *Die Zauberflöte*

Giordano, *Andrea Chénier*

1998-99

Puccini, *Madama Butterfly*

Donizetti, *Don Pasquale*

1997-98

Gilbert & Sullivan, *Gala*

Mozart, *Le nozze di Figaro*

Bizet, *Carmen*

1996-97

Sondheim, *Passion*

Puccini, *Tosca*

Donizetti, *Lucia di Lammermoor*

1995-96

Puccini, *La bohème*

Verdi, *Il trovatore*

1994-95

Verdi, *La traviata*

Rossini, *Il barbiere di Siviglia*

1993-94

Strauss, *The Gypsy Baron*

Verdi, *Rigoletto*

1992-93

Leoncavallo, *Pagliacci*

Menotti, *The Telephone*

Donizetti, *L'elisir d'amore*

1991-92

Herbert, *Naughty Marietta*

Gilbert & Sullivan, *The Pirates of Penzance*

1990-91

Puccini, *Madama Butterfly*

Strauss, *Die Fledermaus*

1989-90

Lehár, *The Merry Widow*

Bizet, *Carmen*

1988-89

Romberg, *The Student Prince*

Puccini, *La bohème*

1987-88

Mozart, *Così fan tutte*

1986-87

Verdi, *La traviata*

Humperdinck, *Hansel and Gretel*

1985-86

Mascagni, *Cavalleria Rusticana*

Mozart, *Le nozze di Figaro*

1984-85

Puccini, *Gianni Schicchi*

Gilbert & Sullivan, *H.M.S. Pinafore*

1983-84

Mozart, *Così fan tutte*

Gilbert & Sullivan, *The Pirates of Penzance*



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ATLAS OYSTER HOUSE: Stands by it's name as the place in Pensacola to find delicious oysters. On the water, historic Downtown Pensacola. Dine inside or out. Classic hand-crafted cocktails, sixteen beers on tap, expansive oyster offerings, sushi, seafood towers, burgers, small plates and entrees. Bicycle, car and boat parking available.



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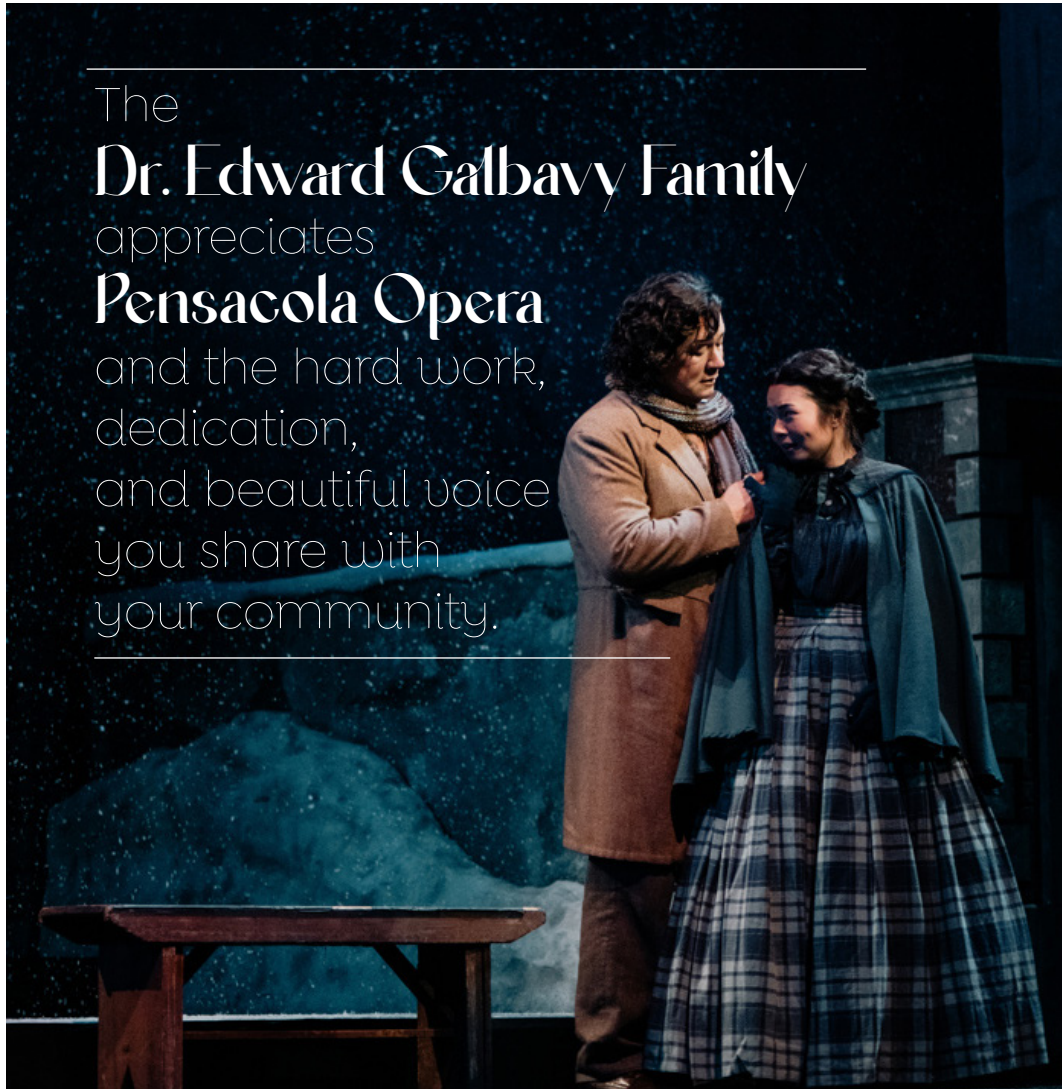
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