



OPERA D'ORO

MATTEO MANGIALETTI | ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

EXCELSIOR!

AN INAUGURAL GALA

BELLINI, ROSSINI, DONIZETTI, VERDI, & PUCCINI



Dear Friends & Opera Lovers,

Welcome to Opera d'Oro's inaugural performance: EXCELSIOR! I am humbled & grateful that you could join us this evening.

Excelsior, used to denote something of high quality, a standard of excellence – aptly describes the music of tonight's program which features arias & scenes from the operas of the Italian masters: Bellini, Rossini, Donizetti, Verdi, & Puccini. They hail from the Golden Age of Italian opera – a golden age from which *Opera d'Oro* takes its name.

It is a joy to share the stage with these exceptional singers in repertoire that has inspired me since I was a young teenager. Whether this is your first time hearing opera or you're an aficionado, I invite you to sit back and let the magic of music carry you away.

With gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Matteo Mangialetti". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Matteo" on the top line and the last name "Mangialetti" on the bottom line, which is written in a larger, more prominent script.

Matteo Mangialetti
ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

MATTEO MANGIALETTI | ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

After hearing a radio broadcast of Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte* at age 10 -- Matteo Mangialetti was smitten! From that moment his passion for opera has remained an obsession. He became an avid recording collector in his teen years, collecting every voice of opera's illustrious Golden Age: from Luisa Tetrazzini, Claudia Muzio, Rosa Ponselle, Enrico Caruso, Tita Ruffo to Renata Tebaldi, Maria Callas, Franco Corelli, Dame Joan Sutherland, Luciano Pavarotti, Aprile Millo, Leontyne Price. Discovering the operas of Verdi and subsequently the *bel canto* Greats of Bellini, Donizetti & Rossini was a revelatory experience that left him forever changed...



Matteo is a sought-after ballet pianist throughout the Washington metropolitan area. Beginning his career at the Richmond Ballet, he has played for and with Virginia Commonwealth University Dance, BalletNova, The Washington School of Ballet, Maryland Youth Ballet, George Mason University Dance, Chamber Dance Project, and The Kennedy Center among others. Joining The Washington Ballet for their 2018/2019 season, he rehearsed Fokine's *Les Sylphides*, Balanchine's *Serenade*, and Kent's *The Sleeping Beauty* all under the direction of acclaimed ballerina Julie Kent. Inaugurating The REACH at The Kennedy Center, Matteo played in a series of masterclasses with New York City Ballet principal dancer Tiler Peck. He has played ballet classes for Julie Kent, Connor Walsh, Ethan Brown, Elaine Kudo, Victoria Simon, Irina Dvorozenko, and others.

In 2021, he made his musical directing & conducting début in performances of the 1970 version of Sondheim's *Company* with DreamWrights Theatre followed by Menotti's opera *The Telephone* in performances with Opera Susquehanna. Matteo also co-created *The Divas in Drag Italian Opera Company*, a YouTube opera 'company' that seeks to promote the giants of the Golden Age through drag as medium. Inspired by Ira Siff's *La Gran Scena Opera Company* and the series *Who's Afraid of Opera?*, *The Divas in Drag Italian Opera Company* seeks to reach, create, and educate a new generation of opera lovers.

Currently, Matteo is the founding artistic director of *Opera d'Oro* which commences with inaugural performances of Donizetti's masterwork *Lucia di Lammermoor* in 2023.

Under the guidance of renowned soprano Aprile Millo, Matteo is preparing for a summer in Italy at the *OperaVision Academy d'Oro*.

NICHOLAS COWDEN | RESIDENT CHOREOGRAPHER & REGISTA



Nicholas Cowden has always been captivated by the magic of the theatre and its ability to express our human experience. Whether it is through dancing, directing, choreographing, costuming, or producing, he has found himself drawn to the artistic process. In opera, Mr. Cowden is most known for his co-creation of *The Divas in Drag Italian Opera Company*, which showcases brilliant costumes against digital sets, and superb acting. The drag performers bring to life excerpts of classic recordings such as Maria Callas' 1953 Cetra *La Traviata*, the 1930 recording of *Rigoletto* featuring Mercedes Capsir, the 1940 Lina-Bruna

Rosa *Cavalleria Rusticana*, and many more. The work of the *Divas in Drag* has been called, "a true Gaysamtkunstwerk," by parterrebox's La Cieca. Mr. Cowden has directed *The Telephone* for Opera Susquehanna in York, PA and choreographed the overture of Verdi's *La forza del destino* for the Washington Ballet performed at The National Cathedral. He also coaches opera singers on movement, acting, and expression and will be on faculty at Aprile Mollo's Opera Academy d'Oro in Italy next summer.

Currently, Mr. Cowden is a Company Dancer at The Washington Ballet under the direction of Julie Kent and Victor Barbee. In his time with the company he has performed a variety of classical and neoclassical ballets including Fredrick Ashton's *Birthday Offering*, George Balanchine's *Allegro brillante*, and Merce Cunningham's *Duets*.

SUSAN MCQUADE | CLARINET



Susan McQuade has been playing clarinet for over 50 years. She studied clarinet at the National Music Camp (presently known as the Interlochen Arts Camp) and at the University of Michigan. She is a former member of the Capital Wind Symphony and the National Concert Band of America and has played in many orchestras in the Washington, D.C. area. As a member of Helping Hearts Through the Arts, Susan enjoys performing music and dance for local elderly populations.



OPERA D'ORO

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FRANCESCA AGUADO | SOPRANO

American soprano Francesca Aguado has earned praise from *The Washington Post* for her voice's "confident precision and articulation," and most recently by South Florida Classical Review (as Carmen) for her vocal delivery's "immediacy and intensity," and a "dark and opulent tone."

Last season she made several significant solo concert work debuts including Strauss' 4 Last Songs and Mahler Symphony No. 4.

Other past credits include: Mimi (*La bohème*); Rosina (*Il barbiere di Siviglia*); Musetta (*La bohème*), Mother (*Amahl and the Night Visitors*); Ma Joad (suite version of *The Grapes of Wrath*, accompanied by composer Ricky Ian Gordon); Dorabella (*Così fan tutte*); Dinah (*Trouble in Tahiti*); Maurya (*Riders to the Sea*); Zweite Dame (*Die Zauberflöte*).

The 2022/23 season includes the title role of Carmen, Donna Elvira (*Don Giovanni*), as well as various guest soloist appearances in concert and recital series (with another notable debut performing the soprano solo for the Brahms Requiem throughout both the United States as well as abroad in Italy and Austria).

In addition to an active performance calendar, Ms. Aguado proudly maintains a robust online and in person voice studio throughout the year.



LEAH CROWNE | SOPRANO



American soprano Leah Crowne is thrilled to make her debut in the title role of *Lucia di Lammermoor* with Opera d'Oro for their inaugural season. She is known for her "generous and beautiful voice" (Forum Opéra, Béziers, France), her "imperious and striking stage presence" (The Rutland Herald, Middlebury, VT), and her "intensity and impressive agility" (Bergens Tidende, Bergen, Norway). Having made a name for herself performing the role of Puccini's *Turandot*, Ms. Crowne is a highly versatile soprano. "Showcasing the stunning ability to reduce onlookers to fear with her power, while melting hearts with her sensitive *mezza di voce* (The Coloradan, Ft. Collins, CO), she is a true dramatic coloratura soprano following in the footsteps of Dame Joan Sutherland.

Ms. Crowne has sung the title role of Puccini's *Tosca* and *Élisabeth* in Verdi's *Don Carlos* with Sarasota Opera, the title role of *Turandot* with Opera Bergen in Norway, Opera Company of Middlebury in Vermont, Opera Fort Collins in Colorado, and The Mediterranean Opera Studio in Caltagirone, Italy. She has also sung the roles of Mozart's Donna Anna in *Don Giovanni* with Hub Opera Ensemble in Maryland and Contessa Almaviva in *Le nozze di Figaro* with the Bay Area Opera Theater in San Francisco. In 2016, she was cast as the infamous *Salomé* of Richard Strauss with Opera Ft. Collins.

Sacred work for Ms. Crowne include Bach's Magnificat, Beethoven's Symphony no. 9 and Choral Mass, Brahms's Requiem, Faure's Requiem, Rossini's *Stabat Mater*, and *Petite Messe Solennelle*, Mozart's *Coronation Mass*, *Mass in C minor*, *Requiem*, *Vespers Solennes di Confessore*, and Verdi's *Requiem*, among others.

Awards and accolades include The Wagner Society of New York's "Promising Young Dramatic Voice Award," "The Lyric Opera of Chicago Rising Stars Showcase," "The Metropolitan Opera Guild Dramatic Voice Showcase," finalist in "Concorso di Marcello Giordani, Siracusa, Italia," and full-scholarship award to "The Dolores Zajick Institute for Young Dramatic Voices."

Ms. Crowne is a student of the magnificent Aprile Millo and lives in York, Pennsylvania, with her husband, pianist Scott Crowne and her two daughters.

BEATRICE GILBERT | SOPRANO

Born in Naples, Italy, Beatrice Gilbert moved to the United States as a child and grew up in the Annapolis area. Music and song has always been an important part of her life. Bea began her studies at The Peabody Conservatory and studied privately with baritone Daniel Comegys, and soprano Linda Anderson-Baer. Bea is currently studying with Mary Ruzicka Crook, a former student of Mr. Todd Duncan.



From her first appearance on stage, Beatrice had a diverse and flourishing vocal career. Her first love is opera and has performed with the Capitol Opera Company in Harrisburg, PA in Gian Carlo Menotti's, *The Medium* as Mrs. Nolan and at York College in Igor Stravinsky's, *Mavra* and in Giacomo Puccini's *Suor Angelica* as La Principessa and as the Dew Fairy in Englebert Humperdinck's, *Hansel and Gretel*. She was also a solo performer in the Grand Gala at the Fulton Opera House. Bea is a founding member of the vocal trio Le Dive Divine and has been the resident soprano since 1994 with the Baltimore Mandolin Orchestra, with whom she regularly performs a mixed repertoire of operatic arias, lieder, traditional German and Italian folk music. She is the featured soloist on the BMO's recent CD, *City By the Sea*. And most recently finished her own CD entitled *My Passion for Puccini*.

In addition to classical and operatic music, Bea enjoys sacred music, musical theatre and jazz.

LAURA HEYDT | SOPRANO



"Laura Heydt of York, Pennsylvania literally sparkled as Musetta and her aria Quando m'en vo' was sung with panache!"

– Lancaster New Era.

Other appearances in Puccini operas include the title role in *Suor Angelica*, and Giorgetta in *Il tabarro*. Having a particular love for Menotti she has performed the roles of Lucy in *The Telephone*, The Mother in *Amahl and the Night Visitors*, and on several occasions, Monica in *The Medium*. Other notable roles include Violetta in Verdi's *La traviata* with Repertory Opera Theater of Washington, Cunegonde in Opera Lancaster's production of Bernstein's *Candide*, Susanna in *Le nozze di Figaro*, the title role of Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor*, Despina in *Così fan tutte*, Belinda in Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas*, Gretel in Humperdinck's *Hänsel und Gretel*, and Adina in Donizetti's *L'elisir d'amore*. In 2017 she sang the role of Carmella in the debut of *The Bartender* composed by friend and colleague, Jim Riggs, with Opera Lancaster.

As a concert artist she has performed locally with the York Symphony Orchestra and Chorus, the Hanover Symphony Orchestra, the Baltimore Mandolin Orchestra, and the Harrisburg Choral Society. Under the baton of Maestro Robert Hart Baker, she made several appearances with the York Symphony as soloist for their annual July 4th patriotic celebration, as soprano soloist in Handel's *Messiah*, and as guest artist at the holiday pops concert with the St. Louis Philharmonic Orchestra in St. Louis, MO.

Laura was a student of John Darrenkamp and continued her vocal education in New York City under the instruction of Beth Roberts. Abroad, she was a featured soloist with the American Institute of Musical Studies Festival Orchestra in Graz, Austria.

LOGAN TARWATER | BASS-BARITONE

Bass-Baritone Logan Tarwater has recently appeared in Winter Harbor Music Festival's production of *Il barbiere di Siviglia* in the role of Don Basilio, as well as part of the Brevard Music Center's Janiec Opera Company: performing the roles of Zuniga in *Carmen*, the Governor/Innkeeper in *Man of La Mancha*, and covering the role of Basilio in *Il barbiere di Siviglia*. Other recent appearances include Zuniga with Loudoun Lyric Opera, singing in the ensemble for Rossini's *La cenerentola* with Annapolis Opera and Frank Maurrant in an online production of Kurt Weill's *Street Scene* with the YAA Classical: Voice program.



Logan lives in the Greater Washington D.C area where he also works in elementary education and caters to the whims of Monte, the chihuahua-mix.

ÉMILE JOSEPH WEEKS | TENOR



Émile Joseph Weeks is a "world class tenor with a rich, lyrical sound and beautiful legato capabilities," (international director Anthony Pilavachi), "thrilling high notes" (Oyster Mill Theater Review), and an "old world charm," (Randmsan Artist Management).

Mr. Weeks has sung the roles of Rinuccio Puccini's *Gianni Schicchi* and Cavaradossi in *Tosca*, Turridù in *Cavalleria rusticana* and Canio in *Pagliacci*, Calàf in *Turandot* with Opera Susquehanna in York, and covered Poisson in *Adriana Lecouvreur* with Baltimore Concert Opera. He has also sung the title role in Mozart's *Der Schauspieldirektor* with the Bay Area Opera Theater in San Francisco, and Man One in Jason Robert Brown's *Songs for a New World* with Oyster Mill Theater in Harrisburg.

Mr. Weeks has also performed numerous concerts and galas, including the Appell Center Pride Benefit Gala in York, "A Verdi Gala" with Maestro James Harp and many more in the Baltimore/ Washington, DC area.

Mr. Weeks lives in Baltimore, MD and studies with Maria Russo and Aprile Millo. He is excited to debut the role of Edgardo in Opera d'Oro's *Lucia di Lammermoor*.

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*Introduzione,
Tema, e Variazioni*
Susan McQuade, clarinet

Bel raggio lusinghier
SEMIRAMIDE
Francesca Aguado, soprano

Come un'ape ne' giorni d'Aprile
LA CENERENTOLA
Logan Tarwater, bass-baritone

Regnava nel silenzio
LUCIA DI LAMMERMOOR
Laura Heydt, soprano

Casta Diva
NORMA
Leah Crowne, soprano

Al dolce guidami
ANNA BOLENA
Francesca Aguado, soprano

Ah, sì ben mio
IL TROVATORE
Émile-Joseph Weeks, tenor

Ah, fors'è lui
LA TRAVIATA
Laura Heydt, soprano
Émile-Joseph Weeks, tenor

La mia letizia infondere
I LOMBARDI
Émile-Joseph Weeks, tenor

Sì, mi chiamano Mimi
LA BOHÈME
Beatrice Gilbert, soprano

Vecchia zimarra, senti
LA BOHÈME
Logan Tarwater, bass-baritone

In questa reggia
TURANDOT
Leah Crowne, soprano
Émile-Joseph Weeks, tenor

GIOACHINO ROSSINI



Introduzione, Tema, e Variazioni per clarinetto

In his 1976 book *Clarinet*, Jack Brymer writes “*Brilliant. Probably not by Rossini... the original manuscript has at the start ‘Andante di Rossini’ indicating that he wrote the tune rather than the variations.*” Although musicologists debate Rossini’s authorship, the opening adagio theme is from his *Mosè in Egitto*. The subsequent theme that launches these sparkling variations can be found in *La donna del lago*.

Composed in 1822, this work is representative of the capacities of the clarinets of the era... which were equipped with only 5 to 8 keys! The lyrical line of the clarinet in this piece is quintessential *bel canto*.

“Bel raggio lusinghier.”

SEMIRAMIDE

Semiramide, Rossini’s final Italian opera, premiered at the Teatro di San Carlo in 1823. Written for the waning vocal powers of the great soprano Isabella Colbran, for whom Rossini had also created 10 other dramatic roles, *Semiramide* is an exemplar of the genre called *opera seria*. In this scene, Semiramide, Queen of Babylon, awaits the return of Arsace, her general, with whom she has fallen in love. She sings of her joy, but little does she know, Arsace is in fact her long-lost son...

“Come un'ape ne' giorni d'Aprile.”

LA CENERENTOLA

Based on *Cendrillon* of Charles Perrault, the 25 year-old Rossini composed *La cenerentola* in just 24 days! At its premiere in 1817, the opera was initially met with hostility but in the 19th century went on to rival Rossini’s other great comedic masterpiece, *Il barbiere di Siviglia*. In this scene, Prince Ramiro’s valet Dandini is disguised as his master in order to help the prince investigate the marital possibilities at the home of Don Magnifico. He sings that although he has hopped like a bee from “lily” to “rose”, he cannot find a woman who is special enough to become his wife. Meanwhile, he makes asides to Prince Ramiro (who is disguised as a courtier) about how well he is doing.

GAETANO DONIZETTI

“Regnava nel silenzio.”

LUCIA DI LAMMERMOOR

Gaetano Donizetti composed *Lucia di Lammermoor* in 1835 for the Teatro di San Carlo in Naples. Based on Sir Walter Scott's *Bride of Lammermoor*, Donizetti's *Lucia* hauntingly encapsulates the genre of *dramma tragico*. He was reaching the height of his reputation as an opera composer: Rossini had recently retired and Bellini died shortly before the premiere of *Lucia*. To quote Sir Charles Mackerras, this left Donizetti “the sole reigning genius of Italian opera.” In this scene, Lucia Ashton waits for her lover of the opposing Ravenswood clan, Edgardo. She narrates to Alisa, her handmaid, of an evening when the ghost of a woman appeared to her on the fountain's edge, a woman who was killed by Edgardo's ancestor. Alisa sees this as a bad omen but Lucia, very much in love, rhapsodizes ecstatic on the joy Edgardo brings her.



“Al dolce guidami.”

ANNA BOLENA

His second opera on a Tudor subject, Donizetti's *Anna Bolena* had its premiere at the Teatro Carcano in Milan on December 26, 1830. Giuditta Pasta sang the title role with the 19 year-old Elisa Orlandi as Giovanna Seymour. In the opera's final scene, Anne Boleyn is imprisoned and awaiting execution. In her cell, she has a vision of her wedding to the King and imagines she sees Percy whom she asks to take back to her childhood home. After regaining her senses, she is told that Henry VIII is marrying Jane Seymour. She says she does not swear revenge on the couple and as the guards enter she faints.

VINCENZO BELLINI



“Casta Diva.”

NORMA

The title role of *Norma* – “one of the most taxing and wide-ranging parts in the entire repertory” – is one of the most difficult in the soprano repertoire. It calls for great range, control, and flexibility as well as containing a wide range of emotions: conflict of personal and public life, romantic life, maternal love, friendship, jealousy, murderous intent, and resignation. Like Donizetti's *Anna Bolena*, *Norma* was written for the great soprano Giuditta Pasta. In this scene, after declaring that Rome will perish one day, Norma, the high-priestess of the Druids, approaches the altar with mistletoe in-hand. She prays to the goddess to shed peace up on the earth, the peace she created in heaven. She calls for all to complete the rites and then clears the uninitiated from the grove. To herself, she declares that she cannot hurt Pollione, the Roman proconsul with whom she secretly has children. She desires that their relationship return to the way it used to be.

GIUSEPPE VERDI

“Ah, sì ben mio.”

IL TROVATORE

Il trovatore is based on Antonio García Gutiérrez's play *El trovador* (1836). It was García Gutiérrez's most successful play, one that Verdi Scholar Julian Budden describes as “a high flown, sprawling melodrama flamboyantly defiant of the Aristotelian unities, packed with all manner of fantastic and bizarre incident.” It premiered at the Teatro Apollo in Rome in 1853, where it “began a victorious march throughout the operatic world.” In this scene, Manrico, the troubadour of the title, and Leonora are preparing to be married. She is afraid; the battle with the Conte di Luna is imminent and Manrico's forces are outnumbered. He assures her of his love, even in the face of death. When news of his mother Azucena's capture reaches him, in his famous cabaletta, he summons his men and prepares to attack.



“Ah, fors'è lui.”

LA TRAVIATA

La traviata is one of the most frequently performed operas of all time. Based on *La Dame aux camélias* (1852), the play by Alexandre Dumas fils, it had its premiere in 1853 at the Teatro La Fenice in Venice. Verdi wished to follow Dumas in giving the opera a contemporary setting, but the theatre insisted that it be set in the past. It was not until the 1880s that “realistic” productions were staged. In this scene, Violetta ponders the offer of Alfredo's love. But she concludes that she needs freedom to live her life and flutter from pleasure to pleasure.

“La mia letizia infondere.”

I LOMBARDI ALLA PRIMA CROCIATA

A *drama lirico* premiering in 1843, Julian Budden writes that *I lombardi* was “very much a child of its age; a grand historical novel with a patriotic slant.” Verdi dedicated the score to Maria Luigia, the Hapsburg Duchess of Parma, who died a few weeks after the premiere. The opera concerns the Lombards at the first crusades. In this scene, Oronte, son Acciano the ruler of Antioch, sings of his love for Giselda who is the daughter of his father's enemy.

GIACOMO PUCCINI



**“Sì, mi chiamano Mimì.”
LA BOHÈME**

One of the most popular operas of all time, Puccini's *La bohème* premiered in 1896 at the Teatro Regio, conducted by the 28 year-old Arturo Toscanini.

It is based on *Scènes de la vie bohème* by Henri Murger. The story is set in Paris around 1830 and shows the Bohemian lifestyle of a poor seamstress and her artist friends. The premiere was at the Teatro Regio, conducted by the 28 year-old Arturo Toscanini. In this scene, after Rodolfo tells Mimì that he is in love with her, he asks her to speak about herself. She tells him that her name is Lucia and knows not why they call her Mimì. She speaks of her life and her pastimes.

**“Vecchia zimarra, senti.”
LA BOHÈME**

After Mimì has collapsed on the staircase, she is carried into the attic room. On the cusp of death, she says that her hands are cold. In order to buy her something to keep her hands warm, Musetta pawns her jewelry and in this aria Colline decides to sell his overcoat, to which he sings farewell.

**“In questa reggia.”
TURANDOT**

Posthumously completed by Franco Alfano, *Turandot* premiered at Teatro alla Scala in 1926 with Rosa Raisa in the title role. The opera, set in ancient China, involves Prince Calàf who seeks to marry Princess Turandot. In order to obtain permission to marry her, he must solve three riddles. Any wrong answer will result in his execution. In this scene, Turandot explains to Calàf that the game-of-riddles are to avenge her ancestor, who was violated and murdered when a warlord conquered her country.

SPECIAL THANKS TO:

Event Coordinator.....Nicholas Cowden
BalletNova Artistic Director.....Matthew Powell
BalletNova Director of Enrichment/Adult Programs.....Constance Walsh
BalletNova Operations Manager.....Kathy Paczak
Stage Manager & Lighting.....Rachel Scherer
Catering.....The Italian Store
Printed Programs.....SimplytoImpress
Event Photographers.....Rafael Bejarano & Jessy Dick

Volunteers:

Candy Braden
Lori Clark
Melissa Cowden
Joshua Cowden
Carmita Signes

And unending gratitude
to the great soprano Aprile Millo
for her artistry, teaching, wisdom & guidance.



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BALLETNOVA
CENTER FOR DANCE

The
Italian
STORE



PERA
Susquehanna



OPERA D'ORO
MATTEO MANGIALETTI | ARTISTIC DIRECTOR
PRESENTS

LUCIA DI LAMMERMOOR

GAETANO DONIZETTI

MAY 13 & 14, 2023
THE FREDGREN STUDIO THEATRE
AT BALLETNOVA