



Season 32

PROGRAM
2025 - 2026



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SATURDAY, MARCH 28, 2026



Matthew Burns,
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PERFORMANCES BY

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SEASON 32

2025-2026

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Thank You,



for supporting El Paso Opera
and the arts in El Paso

EL
PASO
OPERA

From the PRESIDENT

Welcome to El Paso Opera's 2025-2026 Season!

As we begin this exciting new year together with El Paso Opera, I am filled with gratitude—for our dedicated artists and staff, for the leadership that has guided this organization forward, and most of all, for you, our remarkable El Paso audience. Your enthusiasm, curiosity, and love for live performance are what make this organization thrive. Every season, you remind us why opera matters and why—since I first joined the Board years ago—I have believed so deeply in one of our past taglines: Opera, it's in your life.

This season's productions reflect the vibrancy, diversity, and spirit of our region. Each performance offers a unique way to experience the emotional depth and artistic beauty that opera brings to our shared cultural landscape.

We open with Puccini's beloved *La Bohème*—a timeless story of friendship, love, and the bittersweet beauty of everyday life. Its music and characters resonate across generations, reminding us of the universal experiences that connect us all. Bringing this masterpiece to El Paso is both an artistic celebration and a tribute to the human stories that shape our community.

Our season continues with Opera Uncorked—a joyful and welcoming event that invites audiences, new and familiar, to experience opera in a relaxed and festive setting. These gatherings highlight what makes El Paso Opera so

special: shared moments of discovery, laughter, and connection. They showcase opera as something approachable, vibrant, and truly belonging to everyone.

We conclude the season with *Bohemios*, a captivating zarzuela that reflects the cultural richness of the Paso del Norte region. Its Spanish-language storytelling, lyrical charm, and lively spirit celebrate the traditions and heritage that make our community unique. Presenting *Bohemios* allows us to honor those roots and expand our artistic reach in meaningful ways.

As a Board, we remain committed to strengthening accessibility, cultivating innovation, and deepening our engagement throughout the region. Our goal is to continue welcoming more voices, more stories, and more audiences into the world of opera—because this art form lives most fully when it is shared.

On behalf of the Board of Trustees, thank you for supporting El Paso Opera and for being part of our journey. We are honored to share this season with you and look forward to welcoming you into the theater for a year of unforgettable experiences.

Enjoy the show—

and here's to an inspiring season ahead!



President of the Board of Trustees

¡Bienvenidos a la temporada 2025–2026 de El Paso Opera!

Al comenzar este emocionante año nuevo junto con El Paso Opera, me siento lleno de gratitud: por nuestros dedicados artistas y equipo, por el liderazgo que ha guiado a esta organización a lo largo de los años y, sobre todo, por ustedes, nuestro extraordinario público de El Paso. Su entusiasmo, curiosidad y amor por los espectáculos en vivo son lo que hace prosperar esta organización. Cada temporada nos recuerdan por qué la ópera importa y por qué—desde que me uní a la Junta hace años—he creído tan profundamente en uno de nuestros lemas anteriores: La ópera está en tu vida.

Las producciones de esta temporada reflejan la vitalidad, diversidad y espíritu de nuestra región. Cada presentación ofrece una forma única de experimentar la profundidad emocional y la belleza artística que la ópera aporta al paisaje cultural que compartimos.

Abrimos con la queridísima *Bohème* de Puccini—Una historia atemporal de amistad, amor y la agri dulce belleza de la vida cotidiana. Su música y sus personajes resuenan a través de generaciones, recordándonos las experiencias universales que nos conectan a todos. Traer esta obra maestra a El Paso es una celebración artística y homenaje a las historias humanas que moldean nuestra comunidad.

Nuestra temporada continúa con Opera Uncorked—un evento alegre y acogedor que invita a públicos, tanto nuevos como

conocidos, a experimentar la ópera en un entorno relajado y festivo. Estas reuniones destacan lo que hace tan especial a El Paso Opera: momentos compartidos de descubrimiento, risas y conexión. Presentan la ópera como algo accesible, vibrante y verdaderamente perteneciente a todos.

Concluimos la temporada con *Bohemios*, una zarzuela cautivadora que refleja la riqueza cultural de la región del Paso del Norte. Su narración en español, su encanto lírico y su espíritu animado celebran las tradiciones y el patrimonio que hacen única a nuestra comunidad. Presentar *Bohemios* nos permite honrar esas raíces y ampliar nuestro alcance artístico de formas significativas.

Como Junta Directiva, seguimos comprometidos con fortalecer la accesibilidad, fomentar la innovación y aumentar nuestra participación en la región. Nuestro objetivo es seguir dando la bienvenida a más voces, historias y públicos al mundo de la ópera, porque esta forma de arte cobra vida al compartirse.

En nombre de la Junta Directiva, gracias por apoyar a El Paso Opera y por formar parte de nuestro camino. Nos sentimos honrados de compartir esta temporada con ustedes y deseamos darles la bienvenida al teatro durante un año de experiencias inolvidables.

Disfruten del espectáculo—¡y brindemos por una temporada inspiradora!


Presidente de la Junta Directiva

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**EL
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From LEADERSHIP

As your El Paso Opera Leadership Team, we are delighted to welcome you to our 32nd Season! *La Bohème* marks our first collaboration as a leadership team and our first presentation under the artistic direction of Cherry Duke—an exciting milestone for all of us and for the organization. More importantly, it reflects our renewed commitment to the cultural life of El Paso. This season, our shared goals center on two guiding principles: creating meaningful artistic experiences in our unique “theater,” and ensuring that more of our community can experience the power of opera—up close, together, and in ways that resonate far beyond a single performance.

When we began envisioning this season, *La Bohème* immediately rose to the top of our list. Its timeless story and unforgettable melodies embody everything we cherish about opera. For many, *La Bohème* is their entry point into the art form; for longtime devotees, it beckons as a compelling classic that always delivers its emotional power with fresh immediacy. Whether this is your first or your fifteenth, we hope tonight's journey to Paris stays with you long after the final note.

In St. Rogers Depot, you're invited to experience Puccini's rendering of artists on the fringe of society in a brand-new way: Helena Binder's reimagining of the story in 1920s Paris amplifies the action, the romance, the heartbreak. With the orchestra behind you painting the

atmosphere in sonic technicolor and the singing actors igniting the room before you, you will be enveloped in the sound and the story for a uniquely immersive, full-body encounter.

Voices bloom just feet away, the emotional current of the music flows straight into your body, and the entire tale unfolds as if you're standing inside it.

As a companion piece, we are thrilled to present *Bohemios*. Inspired by the same source material as *La Bohème*, *Bohemios* is another tale of Parisian artists finding love and seeking success. Operatic but not quite an opera, *Bohemios* is a zarzuela—a Spanish musical-theater genre that interweaves spoken dialogue with classical singing. We're excited to present *Bohemios* in four different locations throughout our community, with all performances free and open to the public. This exemplifies our enduring commitment to bring exceptional art directly to the people of El Paso. Learn more about this bilingual presentation in the Ópera en la Comunidad section later in this program and at epopera.org.

Thank you for being here, for contributing to the future of opera in El Paso. Your presence makes this moment truly special—enjoy the performance.

Arienne Marcee
Executive Director

Cherry Duke
Artistic Director

Como equipo directivo de El Paso Opera, nos complace darles la bienvenida a nuestra temporada número 32. *La Bohème* marca nuestra primera colaboración como equipo directivo y nuestra primera presentación bajo la dirección artística de Cherry Duke—un logro emocionante para todos nosotros y para la organización. Más importante aún, es que refleja nuestro renovado compromiso con la vida cultural de El Paso. Esta temporada, nuestros objetivos comunes se centran en dos principios guías: crear experiencias artísticas significativas en nuestro “teatro” tan único y garantizar que más miembros de nuestra comunidad puedan experimentar el poder de la ópera—de cerca, juntos y de formas que resuenen mucho más allá de una sola representación.

Cuando empezamos a idear esta temporada, *La Bohème* se situó inmediatamente en lo más alto de nuestra lista. Su historia imperecedera y sus melodías inolvidables encarnan todo lo que apreciamos de la ópera. Para muchos, *La Bohème* es su puerta de entrada a esta forma de arte; para los devotos de toda la vida, es un clásico irresistible que siempre transmite su fuerza emocional con una frescura inmediata. Tanto en su primera o en su decimoquinta vez, deseamos que este viaje a París permanezca en sus memorias mucho después de la última nota musical.

Los invitamos a experimentar en St. Rogers Depot una nueva interpretación de Puccini sobre los artistas marginados de la sociedad: la reinterpretación de Helena Binder de esta obra en el París de los años veinte amplifica la

acción, el romance y el desamor. Con la orquesta pintando la atmósfera en tecnicolor sonoro y los cantantes encendiendo la sala ante ustedes, el sonido y la trama los envolverán de una forma única y totalmente inmersiva.

Las voces florecen frente a uno, la corriente emocional de la música fluye directamente y toda la obra se desarrolla como si uno estuviera dentro de ella.

Como obra complementaria, nos complace presentar *Bohemios*. Inspirada en la misma fuente que *La Bohème*, *Bohemios* es otra historia sobre artistas parisinos que encuentran el amor y buscan el éxito. Operística, pero sin llegar a ser una ópera, *Bohemios* es una zarzuela, un género teatral musical español que entrelaza diálogos hablados con canto clásico. Estamos muy contentos de presentar *Bohemios* en cuatro lugares diferentes de nuestra comunidad de forma gratuita y abierta al público. Esto ejemplifica nuestro compromiso permanente de llevar el excepcional arte directamente a la gente de El Paso. Para más información sobre esta presentación bilingüe, visite la sección Ópera en la Comunidad más adelante en este programa o epopera.org.

Gracias por estar aquí y contribuir al futuro de la ópera en El Paso. Su presencia hace que este momento sea realmente especial. Disfruten de la función.

Arienne Marcee
Directora Ejecutiva

Cherry Duke
Directora Artística

Thank You
Huthsteiner
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LA BOHÈME

G I A C O M O P U C C I N I



*Set in Paris in the 1920s, a group of struggling artists
navigate love while facing the harsh realities of life.*

PRESENTED BY EL PASO OPERA AND ST. ROGERS DEPOT

"There is never any ending to Paris and the memory of each person who has lived in it differs from that of any other," wrote Ernest Hemingway in his memoir of his years in 1920s Paris, *A Moveable Feast*. In choosing to present *La Bohème*

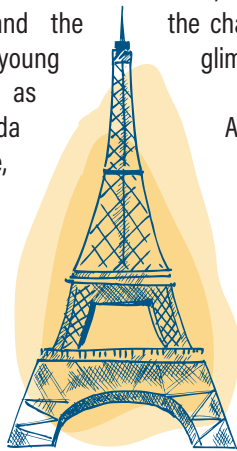
as a memory — a flashback — I was reminded of Hemingway and the *Années Folles*, a time when young writers and artists such as Hemingway, F. Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald, D. H. Lawrence, Picasso, Dalí, and Josephine Baker, engendered an explosion of art and culture in the City of Lights. It was also a time of international tension, as France sought to enforce German reparations after World War I, and the global economy raised concern.

This reflective novel, written well after Hemingway had returned home, recalled a film I had seen back in 2011 called *Midnight in Paris*. In it, a contemporary screenwriter named Gil Pender visits Paris with his fiancée. He's obsessed with the 1920s and wishes he could go back to that era when so many writers and artists lived in the city. And he does just that. Every night, as the clock chimes midnight, a 1920s taxi rolls up and takes him back to this era where he meets Hemingway, the Fitzgeralds, Dalí, and Gertrude Stein, among others. It's an elusive world, much like our memories of the past.

The elusive quality of the film, along with this quote from Hemingway's book, inspired me to create a world of memory, as our writer, Rodolfo, recalls the friends and lovers he encountered during his time as a Bohemian in Paris. As if writing a memoir, as Hemingway did, he "conjures" the characters into the story. We are glimpsing his memory.

As the new year begins, we naturally take stock of the year that has ended. Though as a nation or community, we may have experienced the same events, each of us remembers them with perspective, analysis, the realization of dreams and the bitter taste of disappointment. Some of us will be scarred, some strengthened. The question remains, shall we look forward with fear and dread or with hope and anticipation?

As the Bohemians of our story struggle with the tribulations of their day, changes in women's roles, inflation despite a rising stock market, anxiety about national security, the threat of tuberculosis, they still yearn to pursue art and literature and navigate the ups and downs of young love. Rodolfo conjures the characters of his past, chronicling their story from his own perspective, as Hemingway recalled his Paris of the 1920s, and as we contemplate the year ahead.



"There is never any ending to Paris"

Helena Binder
Stage Director

"París no se acaba nunca, y el recuerdo de cada persona que ha vivido allí es distinto del recuerdo de cualquier otra," escribió Ernest Hemingway en sus memorias sobre los años que pasó en el París de los años veinte, tituladas *París era una fiesta*. Al decidir presentar *La Bohème* como un recuerdo –un flashback– me acordé de Hemingway y de los años locos, una época en la que jóvenes escritores y artistas como Hemingway, F. Scott y Zelda Fitzgerald, D. H. Lawrence, Picasso, Dalí y Josephine Baker provocaron una explosión artística y cultural en la Ciudad de la Luz. También fue una época de tensión internacional, ya que Francia intentaba hacer cumplir las reparaciones alemanas tras la Primera Guerra Mundial y la economía mundial generaba preocupación.



**"París no se
acaba nunca"**

Esta novela reflexiva, escrita mucho después de que Hemingway regresara a casa, me recordó una película que había visto en 2011 llamada *Medianoche en París*. En ella, un guionista contemporáneo llamado Gil Pender visita París con su prometida. Él está obsesionado con los años veinte y desea poder volver a esa época en la que tantos escritores y artistas vivían en la ciudad. Y eso es precisamente lo que hace. Cada noche, cuando el reloj da la medianoche, un taxi de los años veinte se detiene y lo lleva de vuelta a esa época donde conoce a Hemingway, los Fitzgerald, Dalí y Gertrude Stein, entre otros. Es un mundo inalcanzable, muy parecido a nuestros recuerdos del pasado.

La cualidad intangible de la película, junto con esta cita del libro de Hemingway, me inspiró para crear un mundo de recuerdos, en el que nuestro escritor, Rodolfo, rememora a los amigos y amantes que conoció durante su época bohemia en París. Como si escribiera unas memorias, al igual que Hemingway, él "evoca" a los personajes en la trama. Nosotros vislumbramos sus recuerdos.

Al comenzar el nuevo año, es natural que hagamos balance del año que termina.

Aunque como nación o comunidad hayamos vivido los mismos acontecimientos, cada uno de nosotros los recuerda con perspectiva, análisis, la realización de sueños y el amargo sabor de la decepción. Algunos saldremos marcados, otros fortalecidos. La pregunta sigue siendo:

¿debemos mirar hacia el futuro con miedo y temor o con esperanza y anticipación?

Mientras los bohemios de nuestra historia luchan contra las tribulaciones de su época, los cambios en el papel de la mujer, la inflación a pesar del alza de la bolsa, la ansiedad por la seguridad nacional y la amenaza de la tuberculosis, siguen anhelando dedicarse al arte y la literatura y navegar por los altibajos del amor juvenil. Rodolfo evoca a los personajes de su pasado y narra su historia desde su propia perspectiva, al igual que Hemingway recordaba su París de los años veinte y nosotros contemplamos el año que tenemos por delante.

Helena Binder
Directora de Escena

LA BOHÈME

JAN. 30, 2026 – FEB. 7, 2026 | ST. ROGERS DEPOT

Runs approximately 2 hours 15 minutes, including a single 20-minute intermission.

Reduced orchestration by Kyle Naig.

CAST & PRODUCTION TEAM

ROLE

ARTIST

Rodolfo	Ganson Salmon
Mimi	Danielle Talamantes
Marcello	Levi Hernandez
Musetta	Jessica Sandidge
Colline	Daniel Klein
Schaunard	Jonathan Hays
Alcindoro, Benoit	Kerry Wilkerson
Parpignol	Carlos Barraza Treviño

PRODUCTION TEAM

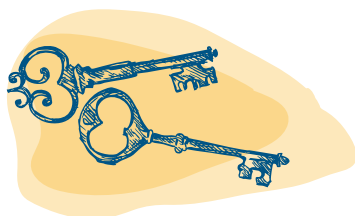
Conductor/Music Director	Kyle Naig
Stage Director	Helena Binder
Lighting Designer	Marissa Diaz
Costume Designer	Alan Michael Smith
Chorus Master	Dr. Elisa Fraser Wilson
Rehearsal Pianist	Luciano Laurentiu
Chorus Rehearsal Pianist	Flor de la Garza
Production Manager	Adrian Salas
Stage Manager	Itzel Martinez
Assistant Stage Manager	Malori Cade
Second Assistant Stage Manager	Maya Lavin
Props Master	Arely Garcia
Costumers	Carlos de la Garza-Garcia
	Luis Eddie Wilson
	Daniela Carranco
Makeup & Wig Technician	Isabella Candelaria
Director of Video Content	Will Seyffert
Supertitles Creator	Antonio Motta
Supertitles Operator	Coleman Spears

ORCHESTRA

BANDA, ACT II

Concertmaster/Violin I..... Stephanie Meyers
 Violin I..... Leslee Way
 Violin I..... Vanessa Cedillos
 Violin II..... Jasmine Vazquez
 Violin II..... Shelly Wood
 Violin II..... Cristina Leony
 Viola..... Susan Hernandez
 Viola..... Laura Campbell
 Cello..... Michael Way
 Cello..... Alina Vazquez
 Bass..... Will Scholten
 Flute/Piccolo..... Joy Zalkind
 Oboe..... Francisco Javier Renteria
 Piano..... Laura Blakely

Piccolo..... Johanna Romero
 Piccolo..... Karen Carillo
 Trumpet..... Adrian Luna
 Trumpet..... Andree Gomez
 Drum..... Israel Vasquez



CHORUS

Chorusmaster

Dr. Elisa Fraser Wilson

Adult Chorus

Carlos Barraza Treviño ^{1 2}
 Jessica Broaddus ²
 Edward Brown
 Samantha Dávalos ²
 Nicholas Gallegos
 Cynthia Hill ²
 Ariañ Labrado ³
 Tom Lewis-Woo
 Sara Lopez ³
 Holly Kara Mesarch ²
 Antonio Motta
 Sarah Neely ²
 Annie Pennies ²
 Isabella Ramirez ²
 Edgar Reyes
 Kevin Sandberg

Chorus Rehearsal Pianist

Flor de la Garza

Children's Chorus

Luna Aguirre
 Charlotte Bowcutt
 Ireland Bowcutt
 Caleb Crawford
 Maximilliano Frias
 Violet Jimenez
 Salmapaola Mata

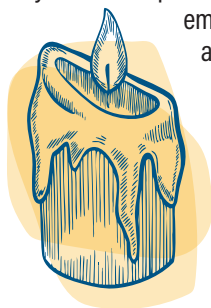
Supernumeraries

Salvador Alí Mendoza
 Luis Valdez

¹ Pargnol ² El Paso Opera Artist Ambassador ³ Children's Choir Coach

ACT I

The poet Rodolfo lives in a shabby garret in Paris with his friends and other ex-pats, the painter Marcello, the philosopher Colline and the musician and part-time gigolo Schaunard. On Christmas Eve they are having difficulty staying warm but after tricking the landlord to forgo the rent, they go off to the Café Momus to celebrate. Rodolfo lags behind to finish writing an article when his neighbor, a shy seamstress named Mimì, comes by looking for a light for her candle. Despite her obviously frail condition, the two are drawn to each other and after pledging their love, go off to join the others at the Café Momus.



ACT II

The Bohemians are enjoying the Christmas Eve festivities and the outdoor café when Musetta, Marcello's former lover, arrives on the arm of her new, older companion, Alcindoro. She taunts Marcello with her popularity but ultimately, still very much in love with him, feigns an aching foot and sends Alcindoro running off in search of another pair of shoes. Musetta and Marcello embrace as a parade comes by and all the Bohemians join in the celebratory atmosphere.

ACT III

Well into winter, Musetta and Marcello are living above a tavern where he paints and she gives singing lessons. They can't stop fighting, mostly because of Musetta's flirting and Marcello's jealousy. Mimì arrives, much sicker than before, looking for Marcello's help. Rodolfo has broken up with her and left under the pretext that she is unfaithful to him. He has been staying at the tavern and when he comes out, Mimì hides. She overhears the real reason Rodolfo has left her. He can see that Mimì is getting sicker and he is wracked with guilt and shame that he hasn't the money to provide better care for her. Mimì, shocked and distraught at news of the truth, makes her presence known and she and Rodolfo agree to stay together until the spring. Meanwhile, Marcello and Musetta fight bitterly and she leaves him.

ACT IV

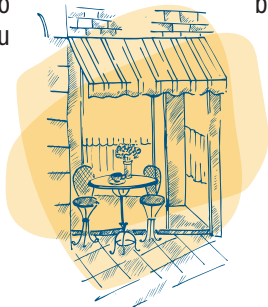
As spring blooms, Rodolfo and Marcello are back living in the garret with Colline and Schaunard, lamenting how much they miss Mimì and Musetta. Some lively antics are interrupted when Musetta arrives unexpectedly to say that the failing Mimì is waiting outside and wants to see Rodolfo one last time. Rodolfo carries her in and they recall their love and happy times together as the others contemplate how to pay for some medicine. Musetta and Marcello reconcile and Colline and Schaunard each bid Mimì farewell. In a quiet moment, Mimì dies leaving Rodolfo distraught.

ACTO I

El poeta Rodolfo vive en una deteriorada buhardilla en París con sus amigos y otros expatriados: el pintor Marcello, el filósofo Colline y el músico y gigoló ocasional Schaunard. En Nochebuena tienen dificultades para mantener el calor, pero después de engañar al propietario para que les perdone el mes, se van al Café Momus a celebrar. Rodolfo se queda atrás para terminar de escribir un artículo cuando su vecina, una tímida costurera llamada Mimì, se acerca en busca de fuego para encender su vela. A pesar de su evidente fragilidad, los dos se sienten atraídos el uno por el otro y, tras jurarse amor eterno, se reúnen con los demás en el Café Momus.

ACTO II

Los bohemios disfrutan de las festividades de Nochebuena y de la terraza del café cuando Musetta, la ex-amante de Marcello, llega del brazo de su nuevo y maduro compañero, Alcindoro. Ella se burla de Marcello con su popularidad, pero al final, aún muy enamorada de él, finge que le duele el pie y envía a Alcindoro a buscar otro par de zapatos. Musetta y Marcello se abrazan mientras pasa un desfile y todos los bohemios se unen al ambiente festivo.



ACTO III

En pleno invierno, Musetta y Marcello viven encima de una taberna donde él pinta y ella da clases de canto. No dejan de pelear, sobre todo por los coqueteos de Musetta y los celos de Marcello. Mimì llega, mucho más enferma que antes, buscando la ayuda de Marcello. Rodolfo ha roto con ella y se ha marchado con el pretexto de que ella le es infiel. Él se ha estado quedando en la taberna y, cuando sale, Mimì se esconde. Ella escucha por casualidad la verdadera razón por la que Rodolfo la ha abandonado. Él ve que Mimì está cada vez más enferma y se siente consumido por la culpa y la vergüenza de no tener dinero para proporcionarle mejores cuidados. Mimì, conmocionada y angustiada por la verdad, sale de su escondite y ambos acuerdan permanecer juntos hasta la primavera. Mientras tanto, Marcello y Musetta discuten acaloradamente y ella lo abandona.

ACTO IV

Con la llegada de la primavera, Rodolfo y Marcello vuelven a vivir en la buhardilla con Colline y Schaunard, lamentándose de lo mucho que extrañan a Mimì y Musetta. Sus animadas travesuras se ven interrumpidas cuando Musetta llega inesperadamente para decirles que Mimì, la cual se encuentra muy débil, está esperando afuera y quiere ver a Rodolfo por última vez. Rodolfo la lleva dentro y ambos recuerdan su amor y los momentos felices que pasaron juntos, mientras los demás piensan en cómo pagar los medicamentos. Musetta y Marcello se reconcilian y Colline y Schaunard se despiden de Mimì. En un momento de tranquilidad, Mimì muere dejando a Rodolfo desconsolado.



Redolfo
Ganson Salmon

"Dashing lyric tenor" (*The New York Times*) Ganson Salmon has gained recognition for his "powerful and nuanced" performances. (*Opera News*) Most recently he made his role debut as the Duke of Mantua in *Rigoletto* with Indianapolis Opera. Last season he performed as Pinkerton in *Madama Butterfly* with Opera in Williamsburg and Ernesto in *Don Pasquale* with Opera Tampa. He also made his last-minute Kennedy Center debut jumping in as Anatol in *Vanessa* with the National Symphony Orchestra. In the 2023-24 season, he performed Roméo in *Roméo et Juliette* with Arizona Opera and Alfredo in *La traviata* with Muddy River Opera. Ganson is an alumnus of Ravinia's Steans Music Institute's Program for Singers and the Gerdine Young Artist Program at Opera Theatre of St. Louis. He received his Master's in Voice/Opera from Mannes School of Music. Ganson is a native and resident of Indianapolis, Indiana.



Mimi
Danielle Talamantes

Praised for her "velvety, dark-hued soprano that has a limpid seductiveness," Mexican-American soprano Danielle Talamantes has appeared with leading companies across the U.S., including The Metropolitan Opera in *Carmen* and *Nabucco*. Highlights of her 2025-26 season include Vaughan Williams' *Dona Nobis Pacem* with Chorus Austin, *Brahms' Requiem* with Choralis, and Verdi's *Requiem* with the Greensboro Symphony. Recent seasons brought performances of Haydn's *Creation*, Britten's *War Requiem*, and Orff's *Carmina Burana*, as well as acclaimed recital collaborations with her husband, bass-baritone Kerry Wilkerson. On the opera stage, she has sung Violetta in *La traviata*, Susannah, and Donna Anna in *Don Giovanni*, among others. Talamantes' recordings include *At That Hour: Art Songs by Henry Dehlinger* (Avie Records), *Canciones españolas*, and *Heaven and Earth: A Duke Ellington Songbook* (MSR Classics).



Marcello
Levi Hernandez

El Paso native, baritone Levi Hernandez has been engaged internationally by some of the most prestigious opera houses throughout the world, including The Metropolitan Opera, Los Angeles Opera, San Francisco Opera, Komische Oper Berlin, and Houston Grand Opera where he debuted as Sharpless in *Madama Butterfly*. This season, Mr. Hernandez makes exciting returns to Virginia Opera as Magnifico in *La Cenerentola*, Opera Colorado as Sharpless in *Madama Butterfly*, and is thrilled to return home to El Paso Opera as Marcello in *La Bohème*. Most recently he returned to Madison Opera for *Il barbiere di Siviglia* and Lyric Opera of Chicago for *La Bohème*. In addition, he sang Lescaut in *Manon Lescaut* with the Washington Concert Opera, *Handel's Messiah* with the Tucson Symphony, reprised the role of Alvaro in *Florença en el Amazonas* with North Carolina Opera, and performed Mozart's *Requiem* with the Utah Symphony.



Musetta
Jessica Sandidge

Soprano Jessica Sandidge has performed in a wide range of roles from bel canto to contemporary with The Metropolitan Opera, New York City Opera, Sarasota Opera, and American Opera Projects, Pacific Opera Project, and Angels Vocal Art. She recently returned to St. Petersburg Opera to reprise the role of Susannah, and appeared as an opera singer in Season 4 of Apple TV's *The Morning Show*. Additional credits include Hanna Glawari in *The Merry Widow* with Musica Viva in Hong Kong, and the title role in *Manon Lescaut* with Opera Festival of Chicago. Ms. Sandidge has performed as a concert soloist at Carnegie Hall, David Geffen Hall, Rose Hall, and the Walt Disney Concert Hall. Upcoming performances include the Foreign Princess in *Rusalka* with Opera Modesto, *Passion for Puccini* with Opera Las Vegas, and soprano soloist with the Los Angeles Symphony.



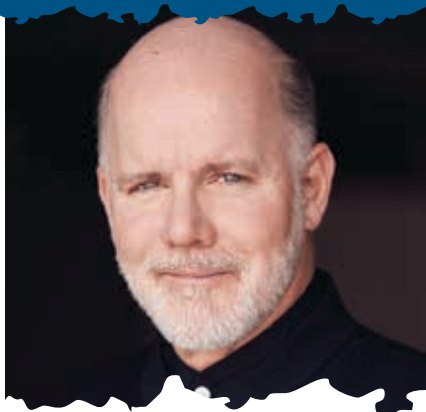
Colline
Daniel Klein

Daniel Klein, praised by *The New York Times* for his "stentorian bass-baritone" and "dark, steely voice," is known for his powerful and nuanced performances across a wide range of repertoire. Recent appearances include Seattle Opera, Opera on the James, Teatro Grattaciolo, Opera Company of Middlebury, and Sacramento Opera. In 2023, he appeared as Judge Moriarty and Stanley in Huang Ruo's *Bound* with Seattle Opera and performed the title role in *Gianni Schicchi* with both Opera on the James and the New Jersey Festival Orchestra. Daniel is delighted to return to El Paso Opera, where he was a young artist and previously sang Marco in *Gianni Schicchi*. He also appeared in the world premiere of Eric Moe's *Artwork of the Future*, named one of New York City's top ten classical performances of 2023. Daniel serves on the voice faculty of the Aaron Copland School of Music at Queens College and will return to Teatro Grattaciolo as Prospero in the world premiere of Joseph Summer's *The Tempest*.



Schaunard
Jonathan Hays

During the 2025–26 season, baritone Jonathan Hays will be heard as Actor #7 in *All Is Calm: The Christmas Truce of 1914* at Opera Steamboat and in recital in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. Last season, Mr. Hays performed the roles of Sam in *Trouble in Tahiti* and F. Scott Fitzgerald in *The Ghosts of Gatsby* at Mobile Opera, reprised King Melchior in Central City Opera's annual production of *Amahl and the Night Visitors* and sang selected arias and duets in Italian Opera in Concert with El Paso Opera and El Paso Symphony Orchestra. In 2023–24, he anchored Central City Opera's summer season as Fred Graham/Petruchio in *Kiss Me, Kate!*, sang Belcore in *L'Elisir d'Amore* at Anchorage Opera, performed Rodgers and Hammerstein hits in the Colorado Springs Philharmonic's production of *Some Enchanted Evening*, and debuted at Tri-Cities Opera as Don Bartolo in *Le Nozze di Figaro*.



Alcindore & Benoit
Kerry Wilkerson

Bass-baritone Kerry Wilkerson commands the stage with warmth, wit, and a resonant presence that captivates audiences in opera houses and concert halls across the country. His career began as a chorister with the celebrated Robert Shaw Festival Singers and the elite U.S. military choruses before emerging as a sought-after soloist in opera, oratorio, and recital. He has performed with major ensembles including the National Symphony Orchestra, National Philharmonic, Pacific Symphony, Greensboro Symphony, Jacksonville Symphony and La Jolla Symphony. Highlights include acclaimed performances of Handel's *Messiah* from coast to coast, multiple appearances in Mendelssohn's *Elijah*, and his Carnegie Hall debut in Vaughan Williams' *Sancta Civitas*. A passionate advocate for American composers, Wilkerson is devoted to premiering the works of his friend and collaborator, Henry Dehlinger, and often shares the stage with his wife, soprano Danielle Talamantes.



Parpignol
Carlos Elias Barraza Treviño

Carlos Elias Barraza Treviño, a Mexican tenor from Chihuahua, holds a bachelor's degree in music education from The University of Texas at El Paso. He earned a master's degree in Voice Performance and Pedagogy from Arizona State University, and is currently completing his doctorate in Vocal Performance, also at ASU. Carlos has performed as a guest soloist for the Mount Desert Summer Chorale in Bar Harbor, Maine, the ASU Concert Choir, Arizona Masterworks Chorale, and several other professional choirs in the Phoenix metropolitan area. His larger opera roles include Tonio in *La fille du regiment*, Tom Rakewell in *The Rake's Progress*, and Orfeo in Monteverdi's *L'Orfeo*. Beyond performing, he teaches voice, piano, and guitar at Prestige Music Academy in Phoenix and is dedicated to elevating vocal artistry and education through performance and pedagogy. Carlos has been an El Paso Opera Artist Ambassador since 2024.



Conductor
Kyle Naig

Conductor and pianist Kyle Naig originally hails from Des Moines, Iowa. Kyle has conducted dozens of productions of opera and musical theatre at Opera Orlando, Opera Montana, Pacific Opera Project, Penn Square Opera, San Francisco Conservatory, Pocket Opera, Opera Laguna, Simpson College, and LOLA (Austin, TX). He has appeared as music staff on over fifty productions at companies including Houston Grand Opera, Los Angeles Opera, Dallas Opera, Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, Glimmerglass Festival, Des Moines Metro Opera, Central City Opera, Opera North Carolina, Lyric Opera of Kansas City, Opera Santa Barbara, Opera Memphis, and many others. In the 2025-26 season, Kyle leads productions at Opera Montana (Pauline Viardot's *Cinderella*) and Pacific Opera Project (Auber's *Fra diavolo*), and appears at Houston Grand Opera (*The Barber of Seville* and *Messiah*) as cover conductor. He is a graduate of the Houston Grand Opera Studio.



Stage Director
Helena Binder

Helena Binder's imaginative productions have been seen at many of the finest companies in the United States including New York City Opera, Dallas, Minnesota, Atlanta, Palm Beach, Pittsburgh, Portland, Anchorage, Toledo, First Coast and Shreveport Opera, Opera Idaho, Saratoga, Omaha, Chattanooga, Opera North and Wolf Trap among many others. As choreographer, she has collaborated with Frank Corsaro, Simon Callow, and Christopher Alden for New York City, Dallas, and Pittsburgh Operas, and The Glimmerglass Festival. An accomplished actor, Helena has been seen in roles ranging from Peter Pan to Shakespeare's Juliet, and was a member of the band Blotto, that recorded the hit, "I Wanna Be A Lifeguard," about which a documentary has recently been released. Named a "Union Notable" by her alma mater, Union College, she holds an M.A. from New York University and studied acting at Circle in the Square. She has been on the faculty of Union College, Boston University, and the New England Conservatory.

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EL
PASO
OPERA

Introducing ÓPERA EN LA COMUNIDAD

We believe that opera should feel close, welcoming, and woven into the fabric of our city. That spirit is at the heart of Ópera en la Comunidad.

Our spanish-language, “opera lite” touring project brings performances to neighborhoods across el paso. Tickets are required, but they are free, making this experience accessible to everyone.

This season’s community production, *Bohemios*, introduces audiences to the vibrant world of zarzuela. Sung in Spanish with English spoken dialogue, this bilingual staging provides an easy and inviting point of entry for first-time operagoers, while offering something fresh for longtime lovers of lyric theatre. *Bohemios* is drawn from the same source material that inspired Puccini’s *La Bohème*, giving audiences a chance to experience Parisian bohemians through a distinctly Spanish lens.

Performed by our own EPO Artist Ambassadors with Resident Pianist Flor de la Garza, the project embraces an intimate, conversational atmosphere—neighbors sharing stories with neighbors, connecting

through music that feels both new and deeply rooted. Our tour travels across the entire city, with performances hosted by:

- **Mexican Consulate** (*Downtown*)
- **Sylvia Carreón Recreation Center** (*Lower Valley*)
- **The Beast Recreation Center** (*Far East*)
- **Keystone Heritage Park** (*Upper Valley*)

The production is shaped by stage director Henry MacCarthy, whose past research on zarzuela gives him a natural affinity for this repertoire. His insight helps us highlight what makes zarzuela special—its blend of spoken and sung storytelling, its humor, and its immediacy—while keeping the experience warm, approachable, and community-centered.

Thank you for supporting a season that brings opera not just to the stage, but to the neighborhoods that make El Paso extraordinary. We look forward to seeing you on the tour.

Cherry Duke
Artistic Director

Presentamos ÓPERA EN LA COMUNIDAD

En El Paso Opera creemos que la ópera debe ser cercana, acogedora y estar integrada en el tejido de nuestra ciudad. Ese espíritu es la esencia de Ópera en la Comunidad.

Nuestro proyecto itinerante de "ópera ligera" en español que lleva representaciones a los diferentes sectores de El Paso. Se necesitan boletos, pero estos son gratuitos, lo que hace que esta experiencia sea accesible para todos.

La producción de esta temporada, *Bohemios*, introduce al público en el vibrante mundo de la zarzuela. Cantada en español con diálogos en inglés, esta puesta en escena bilingüe ofrece una introducción fácil y atractiva para quienes acuden a la ópera por primera vez, además de aportar algo nuevo a los amantes del teatro lírico de toda la vida. *Bohemios* se inspira en la misma obra que inspiró *La Bohème* de Puccini, lo que brinda al público la oportunidad de conocer a los bohemios parisinos a través de una perspectiva claramente española.

Interpretada por nuestros Artistas Embajadores de EPO junto con la pianista Flor de la Garza, la obra crea un ambiente íntimo y conversacional en el que los vecinos comparten historias y conectan a

través de una música que resulta nueva y profundamente arraigada a la vez. Nuestra gira recorre toda la ciudad, con funciones ofrecidas por:

El Consulado de México (*zona centro*)

Centro recreativo Sylvia Carreón
(*valle bajo*)

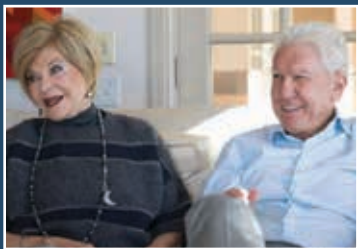
Centro recreativo The Beast
(*zona este*)

Parque Keystone Heritage (*valle alto*)

La producción está dirigida por el director de escena Henry MacCarthy, cuya investigación previa sobre la zarzuela le confiere una afinidad natural por este repertorio. Su visión nos ayuda a destacar lo que hace especial a la zarzuela —su mezcla de narración hablada y cantada, su humor y su inmediatez— al tiempo que mantiene la experiencia cálida, accesible y centrada en la comunidad.

Gracias por apoyar una temporada que lleva la ópera no solo al escenario, sino también a las diferentes zonas que hacen de El Paso un lugar extraordinario. Esperamos verlos en la gira.

Cherry Duke
Directora artística



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**We are honored to recognize
Mr. and Mrs. J. Kirk & Judy Robison
with our 2025-2026
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The Robisons' philanthropy has long been a cornerstone of El Paso's cultural and civic life. Their generous support of numerous organizations enriches the region, and El Paso Opera is deeply grateful to be among the beneficiaries of their kindness and vision.



Community **COMMITMENT**

At El Paso Opera, community service is a guiding principle, and our **Artist Ambassadors** embody that mission.

These accomplished local singers—and our Resident Pianist—are often the first way El Pasoans encounter opera: in parks, markets, hospitals, community centers, and neighborhood festivals.

They bring high-quality performance to everyday spaces, ensuring that opera in our city remains accessible, vibrant, and rooted in genuine civic engagement. Their work strengthens the cultural fabric of the Borderland, and we are proud to have them representing El Paso Opera across our community.

Thank You
2025-26

ARTIST AMBASSADORS:

Carlos Barraza Treviño

Jessica Broaddus

Samantha Dávalos

Cynthia Hill

Holly Kara Mesarch

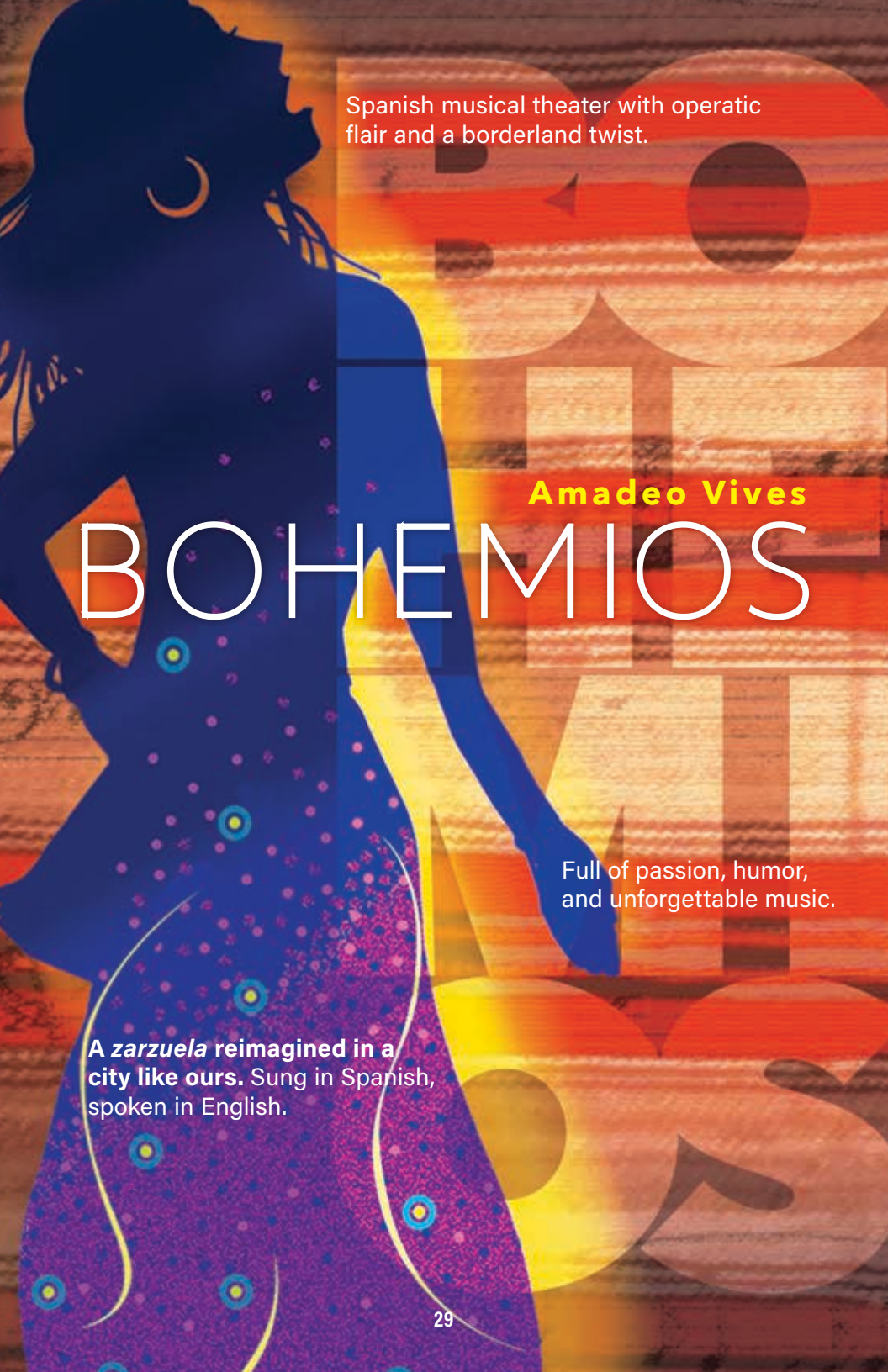
Sarah Neely

Annie Pennies

Isabella Ramirez

Flor de la Garza,

Resident Pianist



Spanish musical theater with operatic
flair and a borderland twist.

Amadeo Vives

BOHEMIOS

Full of passion, humor,
and unforgettable music.

**A zarzuela reimagined in a
city like ours.** Sung in Spanish,
spoken in English.

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BOHEMIOS

Music by Amadeo Vives | Words by Perrin y Pelacios

Runs approximately 1 hour

May 28, 6:00 PM

Consulado General de México

May 29, 12:30 PM

Sylvia A. Carreon Recreation Center

May 30, 12:30 PM

The Beast Recreation Center

May 31, 7:00 PM

Keystone Heritage Park

CAST & PRODUCTION TEAM

ROLE

ARTIST

Roberto, a composer	Carlos Barraza Treviño*
Victor, a poet/librettist.....	Samantha Dávalos*, Isabella Ramirez*
Cossette, aspiring opera singer	Sarah Neely*, Holly Kara Mesarch*
Pelagia, the building porter	Annie Pennies, Cynthia Hill*
Juana, a shopgirl	Cynthia Hill*, Jessica Broaddus*
Cecilia, a shopgirl	Isabella Ramirez*, Annie Pennies*
Girard, a patron of the arts	Norman Lewis
Marcelo, Cossette's father	Antonio Motta

PRODUCTION TEAM

Conductor	Brian Downen
Stage Director	Henry MacCarthy
Pianist	Flor de la Garza
Production Manager.....	Adrian Salas
Technical Support	Salvador Alí Mendoza
Director of Video Content	Will Seyffert

**Artist Ambassador*

Bohemios paints a light, charming portrait of young artists – full of ambition, humor, and romantic possibility.

Rather than Puccini's tragic take on the same source material, this zarzuela centers on optimism and the bright energy of bohemian life. Composer Amadeo Vives underscores this tone with graceful, French-tinged melodies and bursts of distinctly Spanish passion.

The story begins in the attic room shared by Roberto, an aspiring composer, and his friend Victor, a struggling librettist. As they work on their opera, they are interrupted by Cossette, the lovely neighbor whose habit of singing Roberto's tunes annoys and flatters him in equal measure. Cossette's father, Marcelo, arrives needing Roberto's coat so he can accompany her to a crucial audition at the opera house; he and the two friends head out, leaving Pelagia, the caretaker, with their key.

Cossette soon enters, confiding to Pelagia that she admires Roberto but must focus on her career. Impulsively, she slips Roberto's new score into her bag, planning to sing it at the audition. After she leaves, Roberto discovers invitations left behind by Girard, a scheming neighbor, and by two flirtatious shopgirls. He chooses the shopgirls' dinner invitation and goes out.

Later, in a lively square, Victor encounters Cossette, who ignores his flirtations. When Roberto arrives, Cossette hides—only to bristle when she sees him entertaining the shopgirls. Once she reveals herself, Roberto directs his full attention to her, and a tentative romance begins. Still determined to sing at her audition, Cossette goes off with Girard, Marcelo, and Victor.

The final scene takes place at a party at the opera house. Girard tries to impress everyone by pretending to have powerful artistic connections, misleading both Roberto and Victor about the value of their work. When they discover his lies, tempers flare but soon dissolve as Cossette prepares to audition. Marcelo is too nervous to play for her, and she asks Roberto to accompany her instead. Realizing she intends to perform his own music, Roberto agrees, and their duet charms the assembled crowd.

The zarzuela closes in a warm, hopeful glow: Cossette's career is poised to begin, Roberto and Victor's opera now has an eager audience, and love may finally take root among these young bohemians.



Bohemios pinta un ligero y encantador retrato de jóvenes artistas, llenos de ambición, humor y posibilidades románticas.

A diferencia de la trágica versión posterior de Puccini sobre el mismo tema, esta zarzuela se centra en el optimismo y la brillante energía de la vida bohemia. El compositor Amadeo Vives subraya este tono con elegantes melodías de influencia francesa y explosiones de pasión claramente española.

La historia comienza en la buhardilla que comparten Roberto, un aspirante a compositor, y su amigo Víctor, un libretista en apuros. Mientras trabajan en su ópera, son interrumpidos por Cossette, la encantadora vecina cuya costumbre de cantar las melodías de Roberto le molesta y le halaga a la vez. El padre de Cossette, Marcelo, llega necesitando el abrigo de Roberto para poder acompañarla a una audición crucial en la ópera; él y los dos amigos se marchan, dejando a Pelagia, la cuidadora, con su llave.

Cossette entra poco después y le confiesa a Pelagia que admira a Roberto, pero que debe centrarse en su carrera. Impulsivamente, mete la nueva partitura de Roberto en su bolso, con la intención de cantarla en la audición. Después de que ella se marcha, Roberto descubre unas invitaciones que le han dejado su intrigante vecino Girard y dos coquetas vendedoras. Elige la invitación a cenar de las vendedoras y sale.

Más tarde, en una animada plaza, Víctor se encuentra con Cossette, quien ignora sus coqueteos. Cuando llega Roberto, Cossette se esconde, pero se enfada al verlo entreteniendo a las vendedoras. Una vez que sale de su escondite, Roberto le presta toda su atención y comienza un romance indeciso. Aún decidida a cantar en su audición, Cossette se va con Girard, Marcelo y Víctor.

La escena final tiene lugar en una fiesta en la ópera. Girard intenta impresionar a todos fingiendo tener poderosas conexiones artísticas, engañando tanto a Roberto como a Víctor sobre el valor de su trabajo. Cuando descubren sus mentiras, los ánimos se caldean, pero pronto se calman cuando Cossette se prepara para la audición. Marcelo está demasiado nervioso para tocar para ella, y ella le pide a Roberto que la acompañe. Al darse cuenta de que ella tiene la intención de interpretar su propia música, Roberto acepta, y su dúo encanta al público reunido.

La zarzuela termina con un cálido y esperanzador resplandor: la carrera de Cossette está a punto de comenzar, la ópera de Roberto y Víctor cuenta ahora con un público entusiasta y el amor puede que finalmente eche raíces entre estos jóvenes bohemios.

Bohemios

CAST & CREATIVES

Carlos ELIAS BARRAZA TREVIÑO

Carlos Elias Barraza Treviño, a Mexican tenor from Chihuahua, holds a bachelor's degree in music education from The University of Texas at El Paso. He earned a master's degree in Voice Performance and Pedagogy from Arizona State University, and is currently completing his doctorate in Vocal Performance, also at ASU. Carlos has performed as a guest soloist for the Mount Desert Summer Chorale in Bar Harbor, Maine, the ASU Concert Choir, Arizona Masterworks Chorale, and several other professional choirs in the Phoenix metropolitan area. His mainstage debut with El Paso Opera was in the role of Franz. Additional roles include Tonio in *La fille du regiment*, Tom Rakewell in *The Rake's Progress*, and Orfeo in Monteverdi's *L'Orfeo*. Mr. Barraza teaches voice, piano, and guitar at Prestige Music Academy in Phoenix. An El Paso Opera Artist Ambassador since 2024, Carlos was a featured soloist in *Bon Appétit!* and *Encores and Overtures*.



Jessica BROADDUS

Jessica Broaddus is a Mexican American soprano celebrated for her expressive artistry in opera and musical theatre. A recent graduate of The University of Texas at El Paso, she studied music education and theatre. Notable roles include Gretel in *Hansel und Gretel* with Varna International, Josephine in *H.M.S. Pinafore* with the Gilbert and Sullivan Company of El Paso, and Woman #1 in *I Love You, You're Perfect, Now Change* with No Strings Attached Theatre. Jessica created the role of The Stork in the world premiere of *The Fox and The Cookie* with Opera UTEP. In 2022, she was a Junior Artist with El Paso Opera, performing in #CurbsideOpera and assisting with the main stage production of *Frida*. Recently, Jessica returned to Music on Site to perform the role of Barbarina in *Le Nozze di Figaro*. She became an El Paso Opera Artist Ambassador in 2025 and was a featured soloist in *Encores and Overtures*.



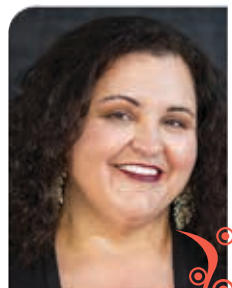
Samantha DÁVALOS

Samantha Dávalos is a Mexican American soprano from El Paso. She earned a bachelor's degree in vocal performance from The University of Texas at El Paso and a master's from Arizona State University in voice, musical theatre, and opera performance. Her favorite roles include the title role in Puccini's *Suor Angelica*, Anna Murrant in *Street Scene*, Linda Morales in *Hometown to the World*, and Harriett Beecher Stowe in *The Infinite Energy of Ada Lovelace*. A frequent performer with El Paso Opera, her roles include Calavera in *Frida*, a soloist in EPO's concert *Mozart by Moonlight*, Celeste #2 and Harriet Pawling in *Sunday in the Park with George*, and featured soloist in *Bon Appétit!* and *Encores and Overtures*. Ms. Dávalos is also a music educator in the Ysleta Independent School District.



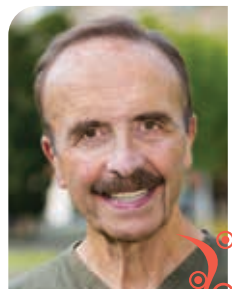
Cynthia HILL

Cynthia Hill is a dedicated artist and educator. She has performed both in the United States and abroad, with her most recent performance as Marcellina from Mozart's *Le Nozze di Figaro* in Saluzzo, Italy. After several years of living and performing in South Florida, El Paso native Cynthia Hill is thrilled to return to the El Paso stage. Cynthia became an El Paso Opera Artist Ambassador in 2024 and has been a featured soloist in *Bon Appétit!* and *Encores and Overtures*. While her dedication to her own artistic development shines through in every performance, Miss Hill also dedicates herself to helping other aspiring young singers through her work as a public-school educator. She believes that music, specifically vocal music, helps shape, mold, and build the character necessary for success in all aspects of life.



Norman LEWIS

Norman Lewis has enjoyed a 55-year career in the professional theatre, including a Broadway appearance in the notorious Oh! Calcutta, regional productions with such stars as Lana Turner, George Chakiris, Kim Hunter, and Loretta Swit, and 22 years as Producing Artistic Director of the Forestburgh Playhouse, the oldest professional summer theatre in New York. Appearing with the Theatre Guild's Theatre at Sea program, he has shared the stage with such legends as Zoe Caldwell, Jean Stapleton, Claire Bloom, Patricia Neal, Anne Jackson, Eli Wallach, Gena Rowlands, Patrice Munsel, Donna McKechnie, George Grizzard, Jerry Orbach, Rue McClanahan, Ed Asner, Shirley Jones, Dick Cavett, and many others. Since retiring to Las Cruces in 2008, he has worked frequently on local stages, including UTEP Dinner Theatre, Madeline Park Shakespeare Festival, American Southwest Theatre Company, Las Cruces Community Theatre, El Paso Community Theatre, and the No Strings Theatre Company.



Holly KARA MESARCH

After receiving her bachelor's degree in Vocal Performance, Holly Kara Mesarch spent 20 years teaching voice and directing choirs while raising her family. After receiving the "Most Promising Singer" award at the 2014 NATS voice competition, she was a Chamber Choir singer with El Paso Choral Society, and the director for a community presentation of Handel's *Messiah* from 2016–19. Holly returned to the stage as Irene Malloy in *Hello, Dolly!* at UTEP Dinner Theatre in 2019 and in 2023 debuted as a soloist with El Paso Opera as Annina in *La Traviata*. Notable roles include Susanna from *Le nozze di Figaro*, Despina from *Così fan tutte*, and Adele from *Die Fledermaus*. An EPO Resident Artist/Artist Ambassador for many seasons, Holly has been a featured soloist in multiple EPO events, including *Bon Appétit!* and *Encores and Overtures*. In addition to performing, Holly serves as EPO's Director of Impact and Engagement and teaching artist, all while balancing family life with her husband and five sons.



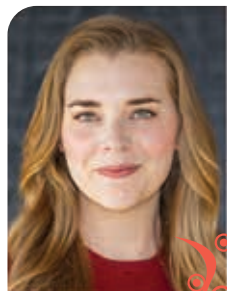
Antonio MOTTA

Antonio Motta, baritone, is a former Resident Artist with El Paso Opera and a proud UTEP alumnus. He has performed as a chorus member in multiple past productions of El Paso Opera, including *La Traviata*, *Pagliacci*, and *West Side Story*. He played the Soldier in *Sunday in the Park with George*, and was a featured soloist in *Mozart by Moonlight*, *Encores and Overtures*, and *Bon Appétit!* Other collaborations include performances with El Paso Symphony Orchestra, the University of North Texas Opera, and Opera UTEP.



Sarah NEELY

Sarah Neely is a versatile performer whose work spans opera, musical theatre, and film. Recent credits include Celeste #1 in *Sunday in the Park with George*, Helen in *Fun Home*, and Annelle in *Steel Magnolias*. She also appeared as the soprano soloist in Handel's *Messiah* with the Las Cruces Symphony Orchestra. Sarah holds a Master of Music in Voice Performance and Pedagogy from the University of Texas at San Antonio and a Bachelor of Music from West Texas A&M University. She currently serves as Instructor of Voice and Director of Lyric Theatre at New Mexico State University. Ms. Neely has been an El Paso Opera Resident Artist/Artist Ambassador for several seasons and was a featured soloist in several EPO events, including *Bon Appétit!* and *Encores and Overtures*.



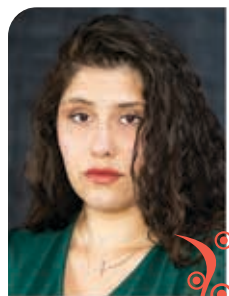
Annie PENNIES

Noted for her dynamic crossover versatility, Annie Pennies is a true singing actress. Her opera roles include Carmen, Meg (*Falstaff*), Hänsel (*Hänsel und Gretel*), La Principessa (*Suor Angelica*), Forester's Wife (*A Cunning Little Vixen*), Atalanta (*Xerxes*), and Mrs. Nolan (*The Medium*). In musical theatre, she has sung Doralee (*9 to 5*), the title role in *Aida*, Adelaide (*Guys and Dolls*), Foster Wilson (*Annie Get Your Gun*), and Cinderella (*Into the Woods*). Annie originated the role of Cecilia Gallerani in the world premiere and European tour of *Caterina's Son*. She is a co-creator of an original cabaret, *Bite of the Apple*. Annie has been an El Paso Opera Resident Artist/Artist Ambassador for several seasons and was a featured soloist in several EPO events, including *Bon Appétit!* and *Encores and Overtures*. In addition, Ms. Pennies serves on the Kinesiology faculty at New Mexico State University and the Voice faculty at The University of Texas at El Paso.



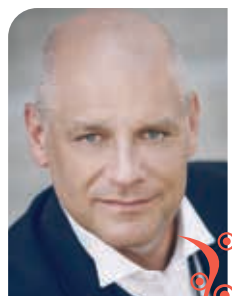
Isabella RAMIREZ

Mezzo-soprano Isabella Ramirez is an El Paso native and senior music education major at The University of Texas at El Paso. With Opera UTEP, she performed the role of Mariana in the full-scale production of the zarzuela *Luisa Fernanda* and created the role of The Goat in the world premiere of *The Fox and the Cookie*. In the summer of 2023, she was a studio artist at Opera in the Ozarks, where she played the role of Cinderella in a children's adaptation of Rossini's *La cenerentola*. She is a principal artist with the Gilbert and Sullivan Company of El Paso and sings with the Hillcrest Baptist Church Choir. Isabella was part of the inaugural cohort of El Paso Opera Junior Artists in 2021. She became an EPO Artist Ambassador in 2025 and was a featured soloist in *Encores and Overtures*.



Brian DOWNEN CONDUCTOR

Brian Downen is an Associate Professor at the University of Texas at El Paso, where he teaches applied voice and conducts the treble choir, Cantare. On the operatic stage, he has sung roles in more than 85 productions for opera houses worldwide. Mr. Downen is known for his portrayals of leading men in the bel canto operas of Mozart and Rossini, including numerous productions of *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, *La Cenerentola*, *L'Italiana in Algeri*, *Don Giovanni*, and *Die Zauberflöte*. He debuted at the Metropolitan Opera in 2016 as Lord Cecil in Roberto Devereux and returned in 2018 as Triquet in Eugene Onegin. Recent engagements include Philemon in the Haydn marionette opera *Jupiter's Journey to the Earth* with the Little Opera Theatre of New York; Gastone in *La Traviata* with El Paso Opera, and Goro in *Madama Butterfly* with Opera Louisiana. Downen is the winner of the 2024 "American Prize in Voice in the Men's Professional Art Song Division."



Henry MACCARTHY STAGE DIRECTOR

Henry MacCarthy, stage director. Equally comfortable directing opera, musical theatre, and theatre, Henry MacCarthy's directing credits include titles by Bizet, Mozart, Verdi, J. Strauss, Donizetti, Ravel, Puccini, and Menotti, among others. Most recently, he directed a new version of Humperdinck's *Hänsel und Gretel* for Opera Omaha, as well as the premiere in Latin America of Sondheim's *Sweeney Todd*. Dr. MacCarthy has been part of the directing staffs at Houston Grand Opera, Baltimore Opera, Indianapolis Opera, and Opera North, among other companies. In addition to directing and devising his own work, A well-respected and established educator, Dr. MacCarthy has taught at Johns Hopkins University and Gustavus Adolphus College in the United States, and Kansai Gaidai University in Japan. He currently serves as Associate Professor and Chair of the Department of Theatre and Dance at The University of Texas at El Paso. He holds a Master's degree in Opera Directing from Indiana University and a Ph.D. in Theatre from Ohio University.



Flor DE LA GARZA PIANIST

El Paso native Flor de la Garza holds a bachelor's degree in piano performance from the University of Texas at El Paso and a master's in piano performance with an emphasis in collaborative piano from New Mexico State University. Her past credits include assistant music director and pianist for UTEP Opera and for the Doña Ana Lyric Opera in collaboration with NMSU. She has also produced and directed the music of her own company's staged works that have included zarzuelas, pastorelas, and themed recitals. De la Garza currently serves as an independent collaborative pianist for various educational and cultural events, including degree recitals at the undergraduate and graduate level for vocalists and instrumentalists, and as Resident Pianist for El Paso Opera. She is also the music director at St. Patrick's Cathedral and adjunct faculty in the Department of Music at The University of Texas.


A black and white photograph of a piano keyboard, showing the white and black keys. The image is used as a background for the advertisement text.

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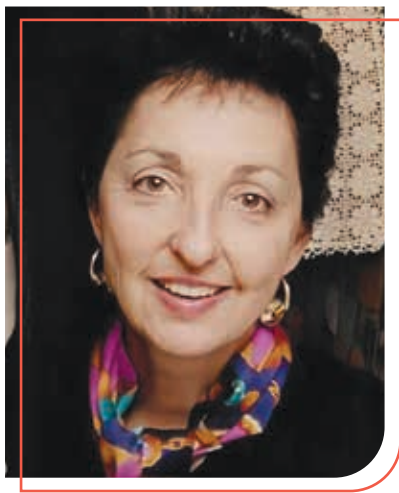
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I N M E M O R I A M



Sara
SHILOFF



was a dedicated opera—and El Paso Opera—lover! Her history of support for this organization goes back farther than our current recording system. She and her husband Bob were stalwart supporters and attended all our events. When health issues began to prevent their physical attendance of our events, their interest, love and support didn't wane. Her bequeathment to El Paso

Opera allowed us to attend a national opera conference together as a team, ensuring her last donation has an impact on the future of our organization! Sara passed away in early 2025, preceded in death by Bob in late 2023. We find joy in knowing they are together again and hopefully enjoying some opera and baseball!



John
HERNANDEZ



joined the El Paso Opera orbit as a vendor in 2019 but quickly became a friend of the organization. John always had a lot of ideas of ways he and his organization could support El Paso Opera and enjoyed thinking out of the box. He became a sounding board for staff and enjoyed helping with our events, including being a part of our Casino Night committee. His first opera was also his favorite—our 2020 presentation of *Pagliacci* was unlike

anything he'd seen before and something he mentioned often. The void John left as a vendor is hard to fill. The void he left as our friend is even harder.

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