

RUTGERS

Mason Gross School
of the Arts
MUSIC DEPARTMENT

Opera Theater Rutgers

Eduardo Chama and Benjamin Spierman, Co-directors

presents

LA BOHÈME

Music by Giacomo Puccini

Libretto by Luigi Illica & Giuseppe Giacosa

with the Rutgers Symphony Orchestra

Steven White, Guest Conductor

Benjamin Spierman, Stage Director

Thursday, February 9, 2023 | 7:30 p.m.

Friday, February 10, 2023 | 7:30 p.m.

Saturday, February 11, 2023 | 7:30 p.m.

Sunday, February 12, 2023 | 2:00 p.m.

Elizabeth Ross Johnson Theater
New Brunswick Performing Arts Center
New Brunswick, NJ

Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey

PRINCIPAL CAST

Rodolfo, a poet	Siyuan Yin (2/9 & 2/11) Heejae Kim (2/10 & 2/12)
Mimi, a seamstress	Manli Deng (2/9 & 2/11) Lauren Barchi (2/10 & 2/12)
Marcello, a painter	Chris Fistonich (2/9 & 2/11) Stephen Barchi (2/10 & 2/12)
Musetta, a singer	Yaewon Jun (2/9 & 2/11) Hayun Lee (2/10 & 2/12)
Schaunard, a musician	Carl Muhler
Colline, a philosopher	Ziliang Hao (2/9 & 2/11) Vincent Graña (2/10 & 2/12)
Benoit, their landlord	Andreas Psillos
Alcindoro, a councillor of state	Gabriel Lukijaniuk
Parpignol, a toy seller	Michael Laporte
A customs Sergeant	Gabriel Lukijaniuk

Students, townsfolk, street-vendors, soldiers, & waiters:

Abdon Andahur, Lindsay Cherin, Lauren Curnow, Sean Dekhayser, Kira de Oliveira, Jenny Duncan, Willard Eisenhower, Julian Figueroa, Dan Howells, Caitlyn Huetz, Jermaine James, Rebecca Kornhaber, Lizi Kvernadze, Hyune Kwon, Eric Lamp, Xiao Li, Clara Melvin, Cape Miele, Shannon Solazzo, Franchesca Solis

Children:

Treya Ghosh, Gabe Gomes, Helena LeComte, Jeffrey Liu, Ashmi Mehta, Aishani Mukherjee, Catalina Rivera, Valen Roden, Veidika Sen, Mahi Sharma, Narayan Venkatesh, Marjorie Williams, Julia Zhou

ARTISTIC & PRODUCTION STAFF

Conductor	Steven White
Stage Director	Benjamin Spierman
Production Manager	Sue Barr
Scenic Designer	Joshua Rose
Costume Designer	Kim Griffin
Lighting Designer	Sarah Woods
Production Stage Manager	Ray Menard
Chorus Master	Brandon Williams
Principal Coach/Musical Preparation	Saffron Y. Chung
Technical Director/Master Electrician	Cheri Snook
Hair Design	Christianne Bakewell
Assistant Lighting Designer	Chloe Dittloff
Assistant Stage Managers	Kenna Heim, Kat Rich
Supertitles	Benjamin Spierman
Supertitle Operator	Halley Gilbert

MASON GROSS VOICE FACULTY

Eduardo Chama, Head of Voice
Nancy Gustafson
Taina Kataja
Dawn Kotoski-Shicoff
Judith Nicosia
Susan Quittmeyer

SCENE

Place: Paris, France; Time: 1919

Act One – The four Bohemians’ garret (Christmas Eve)

Act Two – The Latin Quarter (the same evening)

Act Three – At the Barrière d’Enfer, one of Paris’ city gates (late February)

Act Four – Back in the garret (some months later)

ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Lauren Barchi (Mimi) is a second-year doctoral candidate in the studio of Eduardo Chama. Previously, she received her Artist Diploma from Rutgers where she performed the roles of Contessa (*Le nozze di Figaro*), Blanche (*Dialogues des Carmélites*), and Lady Billows (*Albert Herring*). She received her bachelor of music degree in vocal performance and music education from Ithaca College and her master of music degree in vocal performance and vocal pedagogy from NYU. In addition to performing, she is the assistant director at Professional Youth Theatre and is on the adjunct voice faculty at Long Island University.

Baritone **Stephen Barchi** (Marcello) is a New York native who has performed extensively in the United States and Germany. Last year he sang at Theater Aachen as Ludovic in *La Belle et la Bête* and as Dancaïro in *Carmen*. Previous credits include Nicholas in *Vanessa* with the Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin, Aeneas in *Dido and Aeneas* at Deutsche Oper Berlin, and Belcore in *L'elisir d'amore* at Oper Schloss Maxlrain. He was also a Flemish Deputy in *Don Carlo* at Oper Leipzig and appeared with Kammeroper Hamburg as Ali in *Adina* and Cascada in *Die lustige Witwe*. Barchi holds a BM from The Juilliard School and was a Resident Artist at the Academy of Vocal Arts in Philadelphia.

Manli Deng (Mimi) is an AD student with Eduardo Chama at Mason Gross School of the Arts. She was spotted by the opera conductor Louis Salemno, who invited her from China to the United States for further study as a young artist at Maryland Lyric Opera Institute. Her recent opera engagements include Huniu in *Rickshaw Boy*, Dama di Lady Macbeth in *Macbeth*, Helene in *Hin und Zurück*, Fiordiligi in *Così fan tutte*, and Belinda in *Dido and Aeneas*. Future credits include returning to Maryland Lyric Opera for her role debut as Gran Sacerdotesa in *Aida* in May 2023.

Baritone **Chris Fistonich** (Marcello), currently residing in Princeton, New Jersey, is a PhD Immunologist and cybersecurity researcher turned opera singer. Chris has been hailed as a “voluminous, beefy baritone” with “supple variation of dynamics” (South Florida Classical Review), and as a “strong baritone” (Schmopera). Future engagements include Baron Scarpia (*Tosca*) with Garden State Opera, and the title role in *Don Giovanni* with Aquilon Music Festival. Recent engagements include Escamillo (*Carmen*), Ben (*The Telephone*), Mr. Gobyneau (*The Medium*), Count Danilo (*The Merry Widow*), Vodník (*Rusalka*), Peter (*Hänsel und Gretel*), and Pandolfe (*Cendrillon*).

Hailed as a “born storyteller”, **Vincent Graña** (Colline) enchants audiences with his “mellifluous, smoothly produced” bass voice. Graña has performed across the country, including the stages of Opera San Jose, Teatro Nuovo, Dayton Opera, Opera Santa Barbara, Aspen Opera Center, and Pacific Opera Project. He is a second year DMA student under Eduardo Chama, in whose studio he earned his bachelor’s and master’s degrees. Recent engagements include singing Rafael

and Adam in Haydn's *The Creation* and Colline in *La bohème*, both with Dayton Opera. Last season, he sang Bottom in Opera Theater Rutgers' production of Britten's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Upcoming engagements include singing with the extra chorus in The Metropolitan Opera's new production of Wagner's *Lohengrin*.

Ziliang Hao (Colline) is a bass-baritone and a second-year doctoral student in voice performance at the Mason Gross School of the Arts at Rutgers University. He currently studies with Eduardo Chama. He obtained his master's degree in voice and opera at the Mannes School of Music and his bachelor's degree in acting and opera at the Central Academy of Drama in Beijing, China.

Yeawon Jun (Musetta), a full lyric coloratura soprano, was born in Seoul, South Korea and is now based in New York City. She has been seen as Mimi in *La bohème*, as Luigia in Donizetti's *Viva la mamma*, as Sophia in Massenet's *Werther*, and as Tytania in Britten's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. She earned bachelor's and master's degrees at Yonsei University and studied under tenor Moolim Kang. She received a Professional Studies Diploma at the Mannes School of Music under Diana Soviero. Currently, she is pursuing a doctor of musical arts degree in voice performance at Rutgers University under Judith Nicosia.

Korea-born lyric tenor **Heejae Kim** (Rodolfo) has worked with the New York City Opera, Seoul Metropolitan Opera, Regina Opera, and Mannes Opera. With NYCO, he sang Don Ramiro in *La Cenerentola* at Bryant Park. Kim has also been heard as Edgardo (*Lucia di Lammermoor*), Nemorino (*L'elisir d'amore*), Rinnuccio (*Gianni Schicchi*), Tito (*La clemenza di Tito*), Don Ottavio (*Don Giovanni*), Il Duca (*Rigoletto*), and (The Incredible) in *Andrea Chénier* in the USA and Korea. Kim has also sung the world premieres of several contemporary operas, including Jof in *The Seventh Seal* with Brazilian Opera and Brahms in *Clara* with its composer, Victoria Bond. He holds a BM from Seoul National University, an MM from Mannes School of Music, and a Certification of Opera Fellow from Boston University Opera Institute. He is now studying for a DMA at Rutgers with Eduardo Chama.

Michael Laporte is happy to be singing Parpignol with Opera Theater Rutgers. Earlier this winter, Laporte sang the role of Nemorino in Donizetti's *L'elisir d'amore* with Opera Magnifico, and last year he sang Lysander in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* with Opera Theater Rutgers. Coming up later this spring, he will sing Aeneas in Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas*, and cover Jaquino in *Fidelio* with Opera Company of Middlebury. He is pursuing a master of music degree studying with Dawn Kotoski-Shicoff.

Hayun Lee (Musetta) is a Korean soprano based in New York. Recent credits include Despina in *Così fan tutte* (Chicago Summer Opera), Ilia in *Idomeneo* (Mannes Opera, scenes concert), Susanna in *Le nozze di Figaro* (Mannes Opera, Da Ponte Project), and First Lady in *Die Zauberflöte* (Ewha Womans University).

Lee earned her bachelor's degree in voice at Ewha Womans University and a master's degree at Mannes School of Music in New York under Diana Soviero and Bryan Wagorn. Currently, she is pursuing her doctorate from Rutgers University under Dawn Kotoski-Shicoff. She is excited to be making her role debut with Opera Theater Rutgers.

Gabriel Lukijaniuk (Alcindoro/Sergeant) recently finished the voice performance program at Rutgers, where he studied under Eduardo Chama. At Rutgers, he sang with the Glee Club and Kirkpatrick Choir, where he was featured as a soloist in Haydn's *The Creation*. He also performed with Opera Theater Rutgers in their productions of Monteverdi's *L'Orfeo* (Pastore IV) and Benjamin Britten's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Snug). In 2017, Gabriel was selected to be in the high school honor choir at the ACDA National Conference in Minneapolis which was workshopped and conducted by Eric Whitacre. He is currently a member of the Philadelphia Symphonic Chorus led by Joe Miller and performs alongside the Philadelphia Symphony Orchestra under the baton of Yannick Nézet-Séguin. In addition, he is the Baritone Emerging Young Artist at the Ars Musica Chorale based in Ridgewood.

Carl Muhler (Schaunard) is a bass-baritone currently pursuing a master's degree in voice performance at Mason Gross School of the Arts, studying with Eduardo Chama. He holds an undergraduate degree in voice performance from the same institution. This past summer, Carl sang the role of Papageno (*Die Zauberflöte*) at the Trentino Music Festival. With Opera Theater Rutgers, Carl has sung the roles of Peter Quince (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*), Plutone (*L'Orfeo*), Hermann (*Les contes d'Hoffmann*), and Amantio (*Gianni Schicchi*) in full, and has completed partial performances of Leporello (*Don Giovanni*), Bottom (*A Midsummer Night's Dream*), Figaro (*Le nozze di Figaro*), and Don Alfonso (*Così fan tutte*).

Andreas Psillos (Benoit) is a baritone currently studying under Eduardo Chama as an undergraduate at Mason Gross. He has previously played Peter in *Hänsel und Gretel* at the Trentino Music Festival. He is also a section leader at the Church of the Sacred Heart in South Plainsfield and a bass in the Rutgers Kirkpatrick Choir. He is currently preparing for his upcoming junior recital this coming spring.

Tenor **Siyan Yin** (Rodolfo) is a first-year DMA candidate at Rutgers University under the tutelage of Dawn Kotoski-Shicoff. Previous credits include *Die Fledermaus* (Alfredo), *Alexander's Feast* (King Alexander), and *Le nozze di Figaro* (Basilio). He is also the tenor soloist in the Trinity Church.

ABOUT THE STAFF

Saffron Y. Chung (Principal Coach) was born in Seoul, Korea, and now resides in New York City. She chose her path in music early at Oberlin College, where she was the first recipient of a double major in piano performance and vocal accompanying. She also has a master of music degree in accompanying from the University of Cincinnati, College-Conservatory of Music. She has served as an assistant conductor of opera companies such as Chautauqua Opera, El Paso Opera, Florida Grand Opera, Glimmerglass Opera, Madison Opera, New York City Opera, Sarasota Opera, Syracuse Opera, Utah Festival Opera Company, and Wichita Grand Opera, under the batons of Harry Bicket, Richard Buckley, Christian Capocaccia, Barbara Day Turner, Victor DeRenzi, John DeMain, Raymond Harvey, Kynan Johns, Eugene Kohn, David Larsen, Robert Lyall, Stewart Robertson, Louis Salemno, Steven Sloane, Bob Tweten, and Steven White.

Chung has worked as a vocal coach and collaborative pianist, preparing hundreds of singers for auditions, concerts, opera performances, and recitals. Aside from the classical operatic and art song repertoire, she specializes in contemporary opera. Her recent international engagements include a tour with New York City Opera to Abu Dhabi and Dubai, where she was the music director for Bizet's *Carmen*.

Kim Griffin (Costume Designer): NYC Theatre Credits: *Comedy of Errors* (Boomerang Theater Company), *Run* (Born Dancing). Regional Theatre Credits Include: Sesame Street Mardi Gras Parade (SeaWorld San Antonio), *Time Stops: A New Musical* (Kravis Arts Center), *Incident at Our Lady of Perpetual Help*, *West Side Story*, *Big River*, *Miss Nelson is Missing*, *Romeo & Juliet* (Florida Repertory Theatre), *Primrose*, *La Périchole* (Ohio Light Opera), *Happy Journey to Trenton and Camden* (Williamstown Theatre Festival). *Big*, *The Musical* (Theatre Under the Stars), *And Then There Were None* (Stageworks). Educational Credits include *Hometown to the World*, *Don Giovanni*, *Il tabarro*, *Suor Angelica* (University of Minnesota Opera), *Il tabarro*, *Gianni Schicchi* (Rutgers Opera Theatre). Griffin also works as a draper and stitcher for Manhattan Theatre Club, Playwrights Horizons, LaGuardia High School and New York University. She has stitched for events such as The Met Gala, The Golden Globes and New York Fashion Week. Visit her website at www.kimgriffin.net and her Instagram @kimgriffincostume

Ray Menard (Production Stage Manager) began his musical studies as a child on piano and clarinet and attended the New England Conservatory of Music before turning his interest to the stage. He received a BFA in theater from the Pratt Institute and joined the New York City Opera, where he spent nine years as Staff Director and Artistic Administrator. In 1987, he joined the Metropolitan Opera as Stage Manager and in 2010 became the Met's Production Stage manager, retiring from that position in 2022. He has served on the Board of Governors, as Treasurer, and is the current President of the American Guild of Musical Artists.

Menard is a devoted advocate for arts education as a music instructor and as adjunct Assistant Professor at the Columbia University School of the Arts. He has been a recipient of the Julius Rudel Award for excellence in Artistic Administration, and the Del Hughes Award for lifetime achievement in the art of Stage Management.

Joshua Rose (Scenic Designer) is an avid lover of opera as a member of the audience as much as a designer. This is his fourth production of *La bohème*. Other favorite operas to design include *Elixir of Love*, *Tales of Hoffmann*, *La Traviata*, *Madama Butterfly*, *Gianni Schicchi*, *Suor Angelica*, *Magic Flute*, *Hansel and Gretel*, and many more. Joshua designed both lighting and scenery for the December 2022 Opera Theater Rutgers production of *The Medium*. Thanks to Jim, Percy, and Isaac for their patience and support.

Benjamin Spierman (Stage Director) has seen his work critically acclaimed all over the USA. Opera Today praised his production of *Lucia di Lammermoor* for Opera San Jose as “riveting stuff.” Other work has included *La bohème* for Syracuse Opera (“great visual appeal” – CNY Café Momus) and *Turandot* for Dayton Opera (“the most intimate, best-characterized production I’ve seen” – Dayton City Paper).

Spierman is general director at Bronx Opera, where he directed the NYC premières of Kirke Mechem’s *The Rivals* and the Weber/Mahler posthumous collaboration, *Die drei Pintos*. He is also co-artistic director of Oswego Opera in upstate New York, where he has directed *Don Giovanni*, *H.M.S. Pinafore*, and a Trumped-up *Mikado*. Other work includes Verdi’s *Falstaff* and Massenet’s *Cendrillon* for Rutgers (winners of National Opera Association prizes). Recently, he led Bronx Opera’s return to the stage (*La Clemenza di Tito*, performed in his own English version). In 2022, he directed three premieres: *Sacco and Vanzetti* (Marc Blitzstein, finished by Leonard Lehrman), Charles Abeles’ *The Golden Cage* (written at Oswego’s Fort Ontario Refugee Shelter during WWII), and Andrew Ager’s *Dracula* (New Opera Lyra Ottawa, his international debut). Spierman holds a B.A. with honors from Lehman College. He is a native of The Bronx, where he lives with his wife, soprano Hannah Spierman.

Steven White (Conductor) was praised by Opera News as a conductor who “squeezes every drop of excitement and pathos from the score.” One of America’s premiere operatic and symphonic conductors, he made his acclaimed Metropolitan Opera debut in 2010, conducting performances of *La traviata* starring Angela Gheorghiu. Since then, he has conducted Metropolitan Opera performances with such stars as Plácido Domingo, Natalie Dessay, Thomas Hampson, and Dmitri Hvorostovsky. With a vibrant operatic repertoire of over eighty titles, Maestro White’s extensive engagements have included performances with New York City Opera, L’Opéra de Montréal, San Diego Opera, Utah Opera, Opera Colorado, Pittsburgh Opera, Michigan Opera Theater, Opera Omaha, Baltimore Opera, New Orleans Opera, and many others.

Some highlights of Maestro White's 2022-23 season include his debut with the Wexford Opera Festival in Ireland and return engagements at the Metropolitan Opera, Arizona Opera and Opera Omaha. As Artistic Director of Opera Roanoke, he will conduct Benjamin Britten's monumental *War Requiem* in a collaborative performance with the music department of Virginia Tech University.

Brandon Williams (Chorus Master) is an Associate Professor at Rutgers University, where he was the recipient of the 2020-21 Rutgers Provost's Award for Excellence in Teaching Innovations and the 2021-22 Rutgers Presidential Fellowship for Teaching Excellence Award. He also appears internationally as a guest conductor, clinician, and presenter. Dr. Williams has published articles in the *Choral Journal* and the *Music Educators Journal*, and he is editor of the book *Choral Reflections: Insights from American Choral Conductor-Teachers*. Dr. Williams also has several choral compositions and arrangements published with Hal Leonard, Colla Voce, and Morningstar Music Publishers. He holds degrees from Western Illinois University, the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, and Michigan State University, and an Artist Teacher Diploma from the Choral Music Experience-Institute for Choral Teacher Education.

Sarah Woods (Lighting Designer) (she/her) is a lighting designer for live performance and film. Recent credits include *Billy & The Situation* (Asylum NY), *Space Traders* and *Jimmy Naughton & Friends in Concert* (Williamstown Theatre Festival). She was assistant designer for *Living and Breathing* (Two River Theater) and *we are continuous* (Williamstown). She is a proud graduate of Mason Gross School of the Arts, Class of 2022. woodsighting.com

RUTGERS SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA PERSONNEL

Violin I

Ann-Frances Rokosa
Eunmin Woo
Wenting Bian
Morning Doleon
Ruihong Chang
Yu-Pei Lai
Zoe D'Amico
Janai Vazquez-Diaz
Ana Constantin
Vishnu Halikere

Violin II

Olivia Moaddel
Wan-Chun Hu
Lindsey Jones
Tianpei Ai
Maggie Faulkner
Shaina Carinha
Elly Ha
Jasmine Quarishi
Maya Grove

Viola

Pietro Moltini
Mia Zhang
Hannah Dara
Dan Yao
Hsuan Chen

Cello

Mark Serkin
Shuyi Zhang
Hannah MacLeod
Michael Ziegler
James Hwang
Walker Harris
Oliver Cole

Bass

Seojin Kim
Bernie Levinson
Mitchell Goodman-Sprouse

Flute/Piccolo

Hanna Kim
Pavana Karanth
Boeun Lee (Piccolo)

Oboe/English Horn

Dan Shengquan
Bailey Eng
Tyler Selvig (English Horn)

Clarinet/Bass Clarinet

Tanner Age
Dan Spielman
Matthew Charuka (Bass Clarinet)

Bassoon

Jonathan LiVolsi
Hannah Stroh

Horn

Will Sizemore
Stefan Williams
Rebecca Karu
Jisun Oh
Christine Stinchi

Trumpet

Hugh Ash
Joe Marta
Julia Guarnaccia

Trombone

Kevin Casey
David Casazza
Matthew Wall

Harp

Shenna Yang

Timpani

Robert Lenau

Percussion

Yu-Cheng Chang
Sean White

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Opera Theater Rutgers would like to thank the many faculty and staff of Mason Gross School of the Arts who have made these performances possible. We are extremely grateful.

Jason Geary, Dean, Mason Gross School of the Arts

Steven Kemper, Director, Department of Music

Maureen Hurd, Associate Director, Department of Music

Patty Mancuso, Senior Department Administrator

Christopher Delgado, Administrative Coordinator

Jennifer Guarino, Front Office Manager

Jessalyn Traino, PR and Marketing Specialist

Ximena Dilizia, Business Assistant

Rebecca Cypess, Associate Dean for Academic Affairs

Jennifer Stauffer, Production Manager, Theater

Allen Cutler, Prop Master, Theater

David Gordon, Academic Director of Design & Production, Theater

Donald Holder, Head of Lighting Design, Theater

Denise Wagner, Costume Shop Manager, Theater

Ellen Jaegersen, Interim Chair, Theater

Andrew Elliott, Technical Director, Theater

Nate Morgan, Lighting Supervisor, Theater

Maritza McGraw, Director of Operations & Events

J.J. Cooper, Kirkpatrick Chapel Manager & Concert Bureau Coordinator

Christiane Cayea, Mason Gross PAC Ticket Office

**Opera Theater Rutgers would also like to thank the following
for their support of our production:**

Patrick Gardner

David Gordon

Cameron Henry

Lauren McLaughlin

Val Ramshur

Hannah Spierman

Denise Wagner

Sandra Walker

ABOUT THE MUSIC DEPARTMENT

The mission of the Music Department at Mason Gross School of the Arts is to develop well-educated professional musicians who have a deep historical and theoretical understanding of all aspects of music. With access to all the resources of a music conservatory situated within a nationally ranked research university, students receive traditional, well-grounded conservatory training and preparation for the ever-changing world of the arts. The Music Department's 33 full-time and approximately 50 part-time faculty include principals and members of the New York Philharmonic, the Philadelphia Orchestra, the Metropolitan Opera Orchestra, and the New Jersey Symphony Orchestra, among other distinguished ensembles. Approximately 500 students are enrolled in the department's seven degree programs: bachelor of music, bachelor of arts, master of music, master of arts, artist diploma, doctor of philosophy, and doctor of musical arts.

ABOUT MASON GROSS SCHOOL OF THE ARTS

Mason Gross School of the Arts is a vibrant community of artists and scholars committed to pursuing excellence, innovation, and inclusivity. Its mission is to create socially relevant art, foster diverse programming and curricula, cultivate community partnerships, and advance the arts through teaching, creative activity, advocacy, and research that contributes to the public good. Comprising 1,200 undergraduate and graduate students across programs in music, theater, dance, filmmaking, and art & design, Mason Gross is housed within Rutgers–New Brunswick, a premier Big Ten research university that serves some 50,000 students and is the flagship campus of Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey.

RUTGERS
Mason Gross School
of the Arts