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2024-25

CU ★ PRESENTS



College of Music  
UNIVERSITY OF COLORADO BOULDER

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The University of Colorado Boulder, Colorado's flagship university, honors and recognizes the many contributions of Indigenous peoples in our state. CU Boulder acknowledges that it is located on the traditional territories and ancestral homelands of the Cheyenne, Arapaho, Ute and many other Native American nations. Their forced removal from these territories has caused devastating and lasting impacts. While the University of Colorado Boulder can never undo or rectify the devastation wrought on Indigenous peoples, we commit to improving and enhancing engagement with Indigenous peoples and issues locally and globally.

# CU NOW 2025

7:30 p.m., Friday, June 13, 2025

2 p.m., Sunday, June 15, 2025

Music Theatre

Guest Composer, Librettist and Director

**Mark Adamo**

CU NOW General and Artistic Director

**Leigh Holman**

CU NOW Music Director

**Nicholas Carthy**

CU NOW Associate Artistic Director

**Bud Coleman**

Production Director

**Ron Mueller**

Technical Director

**Jeff Rusnak**

Professional Development Consultant

**Laura Lee Everett**

Eklund Opera Program Manager

**Christie Conover**

Stage Manager and Assistant to Composer/Librettist

**Katiann Nelson**

Hospitality and Workshop Assistant

**Quint Hill**

# **Sarah in the Theatre**

a fantasy for singers and orchestra

Music and book by Mark Adamo

## **CAST**

Harpy

Gina Ramos / Imelda Marcus

Vera Tyrrell

Sarah Caldwell

Icarus / Demarre Hall

Tim Martin

Benigno (Ninoy) Aquino

Narrator

Kailyn Martino

Sidney Grimm

Alice Del Simone

Hannah Benson

Miguel Ángel Ortega Bañales

Andrew Konopak

Tyler Middleton

Laura Lee Everett

## **ENSEMBLE**

Mercy Cabot Lee / Meghan Murphy / Laurie Byre (soprano 1)

**Kristina Butler**

Lily Wasserman Gold / Judith Stein (soprano 2)

**Annabella Cox**

Ana Maria Lopez / Leocadia Diaz / Ariadne (mezzo)

**Salleigh Harvey**

Juan Carlos Lopez / Pablo Sanz / King Minos (tenor 1)

**Davian Raggio**

Ramon Lopez / Kurt Jensen / Christopher Koenig / Minotaur (tenor 2)

**Ian Saverin**

Charles Ford / Lavar Johnson / Theseus (baritone)

**Max Vann**

William Crowninshield / Bob McGill / Pete Simms / Ryan Richards

(bass baritone)

**Brandon Tyler Padgett**



# PROGRAM NOTES

## Composer / Librettist's Comments

While I model my Sarah on opera director and conductor Sarah Caldwell, I rely on history for only two other characters. Benigno Aquino's involvement with Sarah's opera company is fictional, but he did court Imelda Marcos, and his political trajectory—his exile, return and assassination—unfolded as I've portrayed. Similarly, Imelda Marcos did support Caldwell's work, and both her story of the Bridge of Love and Vera Tyrrell's account of the torture technique are true.

Most characters are composites. Tim Martin shares a background with the real Jim Morgan—Caldwell's assistant who sheltered her in her final years—but is otherwise invented. Vera Tyrrell combines traits of sopranos Beverly Sills and Shirley Verrett, Caldwell's major collaborators. *Icarus*, the opera, is fictional, though innovative works like it led to Caldwell's engagements with the Metropolitan Opera and New York Philharmonic, and her appearance on the cover of TIME.

Much else is fact: Caldwell pioneered multiethnic casting, was notoriously bad with money and faced protests from Amnesty International over her ties to the Marcos regime. She was burned in effigy in Boston Common—an event that marked the end of her career.

But when working with history, any creator, in any genre, must confront the question: if these persons hadn't existed, if these events hadn't happened, for what narrative purpose might we wish to invent them? In the theatre, I believe history should spark, not replace, drama. Caldwell's greatest strength—her obsessive dedication to her work—was also her undoing. That singlemindedness enabled revolutionary, humane art inside the opera house, yet caused harsh denial and neglect outside it. The deeper question is: what drives someone to see the basic duties of human life as personal failure? What makes them destroy anything to avoid those obligations? *Sarah in the Theatre* is my attempt to answer that.

—Mark Adamo

## Dramaturgical Essay: Sarah Caldwell, Benigno Aquino, Imelda Marcos, *Icarus* and the Opera Company of Boston

Sarah Caldwell (1924-2006) was a groundbreaking force in American opera. As founder and director of the Opera Company of Boston for 32 years, she was a visionary whose artistic ambition and fearless programming transformed the cultural landscape. Caldwell staged more than 75 operas, many of them rarely seen or American premieres, all on a shoestring budget. She championed diversity long before it was fashionable, pioneering multiethnic casting and mentoring numerous artists of color.

During the 1970s, Caldwell developed ties with the controversial Filipino First Lady Imelda Marcos, who offered financial support to the Opera Company of Boston. Marcos, a patron of the arts and a figure of opulence, saw in Caldwell's company both a cultural investment and a tool for international imagebuilding. This relationship, however, became a liability when Marcos' regime faced increasing scrutiny for corruption and human rights abuses.

Benigno "Ninoy" Aquino, the chief political rival to Ferdinand Marcos and a vocal critic of the dictatorship, was assassinated in 1983 upon returning from exile in the U.S.—a pivotal moment in Philippine history. In imagining Aquino's fictional connection to Caldwell's opera company, the opera highlights how cultural institutions can become battlegrounds for political ideals and moral choices.

*Icarus*, the opera, is an invention of composer / librettist Mark Adamo, as a representative of the groundbreaking programming which marked Caldwell's legacy. Daedalus, a master craftsman—here recast as the sorceress Daedala—and son Icarus are imprisoned on the island of Crete by King Minos. To escape, Daedala creates wings using feathers and wax. Before their flight, Daedala warns Icarus not to fly too high, as the heat of the sun would melt the wax.

But Icarus, exhilarated by the sensation and the thrill of flight, ignores the sorceress' warning. He climbs too high, too fast, and the sun's heat causes his wings to fall apart. Icarus plunges into the sea, where he drowns. This intersection of opera, politics and personal ambition raises vital questions: What is the cost of visionary leadership? In exploring the life of Sarah Caldwell, we glimpse how opera continues to explore the human struggles for power, purpose and creation.

## Synopsis

### Overview

The narrative toggles between a pivotal moment in 1994, where an older Sarah tries to resurrect her defunct company, and key events from the early 1980s that led to her professional ruin.

### Principal Roles

**Sarah Caldwell:** The driven and brilliant artistic director of the Opera Company of Boston. (dramatic mezzo soprano)

**Harpy/Margaret Caldwell:** A mysterious madwoman who is later revealed to be Sarah's mother. (dramatic coloratura soprano)

**Vera Tyrrell:** A leading African-American soprano and a close colleague of Sarah's. (spinto soprano)

**Icarus/Demarre Hall:** The mythic character of Sarah's opera and the young, talented African-American tenor who portrays him. (lyric tenor)

**Benigno (Ninoy) Aquino:** A former Philippine Senator and a new member of the opera company's board. (bass baritone)

**Gina Ramos/Imelda Marcos:** Sarah's development assistant who later embodies the First Lady of the Philippines. (lyric soprano)

**Tim Martin:** Sarah's loyal executive assistant. (lyric baritone)

## Act One

The opera opens in August 1994 in the decaying Savoy Theatre, the former home of the now-bankrupt Opera Company of Boston. Sarah Caldwell makes a desperate plea to a group of skeptical donors to fund a new season. Her speech is interrupted by a disheveled woman known as the Harpy, whom Sarah aggressively silences by confiscating her dentures. The donors remain unmoved.

The opera now moves into the fantastical realm: Sarah is visited by the ghostly figure of Icarus, the hero of her greatest operatic triumph. He tells her she can save her company if she accomplishes three tasks by the following Friday: perfect the staging of his opera's finale, empower the timid tenor playing him, and pay off a massive debt to the IRS.

The setting then flashes back to October 1981, during the final technical rehearsals for the world premiere of *Icarus*. The scenes depict Sarah's genius as a director, her meticulous attention to detail and her simultaneous disregard for practical matters. She clashes with her stage manager, Leocadia Díaz, over unpaid wages. During this period, she is warned by the newly appointed honorary board member, former Philippine Senator Benigno (Ninoy) Aquino, to avoid any involvement with his country's First Lady, Imelda Marcos.

In a coaching session, Sarah struggles to get the tenor, Demarre Hall, to sing with genuine passion, urging him to trust his own artistic power. Despite the backstage turmoil and mounting financial pressures, the opening night of *Icarus* is a spectacular success, with Demarre delivering a star-making performance.

The act culminates in May 1983 at a gala celebrating Sarah's recent string of successes, including her conducting debut at the Metropolitan Opera, secured for her by the now-famous soprano Vera Tyrrell. The celebration is shattered by the arrival of IRS agents who reveal the company's debt is far larger than imagined—nearly three times the amount she expected. Facing



financial ruin, Sarah contemplates betraying her artistic principles. Just as she reaches her lowest point, her assistant Tim announces that Imelda Marcos has invited her to lunch.

## Act Two

The second act commences with Sarah's meeting with Imelda Marcos in May 1983. Imelda, portraying herself as a devoted patron of the arts, offers Sarah a substantial sum to train singers in Manila. Seduced by the offer and Imelda's flattery, Sarah dismisses Aquino's warnings and accepts the money.

The narrative jumps forward to November 1983, showcasing the disastrous consequences of Sarah's decision. A rapid series of events unfolds: critics pan her new productions, donors withdraw their support in protest of her ties to the Marcos regime and Amnesty International pickets the theatre. The financial situation deteriorates as Imelda's checks bounce, and the company's unions, including the musicians led by Judith Stein, go on strike over unpaid wages. Sarah's relationship with her loyal assistant, Tim, becomes strained as he confronts her about her financial mismanagement.

The crisis reaches its zenith with the news of Ninoy Aquino's assassination upon his return to Manila. A horrified Vera confronts Sarah, describing a brutal torture method used by the Marcos regime chillingly named "The Bridge of Love," a term Imelda had used to describe a project built by her husband. Vera holds Sarah accountable for her complicity. The act's climax sees protestors, led by Sister Claire O'Shea, burning effigies of Sarah and Imelda on Boston Common. This public humiliation effectively ends Sarah's career.

The scene shifts back to 1994. A defeated Sarah stands before the donors and Vera one last time. The Harpy appears, and Sarah, in a moment of surrender, returns her teeth. The Harpy is revealed to be Margaret, Sarah's mother. Margaret confesses that her own unfulfilled artistic ambitions led her to try to protect her daughter by encouraging her to be less audacious and more conventional.

The donors and her colleagues recount the sad trajectory of her remaining years: a presidential medal, a few minor engagements, a failed teaching job and eventual dependency on Tim, in whose home she will die.

In the opera's final moments, Sarah remains defiant. She summons the spirit of Icarus and, strapped into a winged gondola, ascends as the stage transforms back into the set of her triumphant opera. The opera concludes with a powerful ensemble, a transcendent and prayer-like ode to the soaring, and often destructive, nature of artistic ambition.

*While Caldwell's directing methods varied from production to production, the overwhelming consensus of Caldwell's colleagues was that she inspired them as none else could. Beverly Sills noted, "Some of the most creative work many of us artists have done has been with Sarah."*

*Tenor Jon Vickers agreed, "Her love of the medium was enough to bring out the best in you," and designer Helen Pond, added "Nothing was worse than not working with Sarah."*

*"If you approach an opera as though it were something that always went a certain way, that's what you get. I approach opera as though I don't know it."—Sarah Caldwell*

*"An opera house is a theater, a school, a church, and a community center all rolled into one."—Sarah Caldwell*

*"Art should challenge, question, and inspire."  
—Sarah Caldwell*

# PERSONNEL



**HANNAH BENSON** (Sarah Caldwell) begins her second year as an Artist Diploma student under the private instruction of Abigail Nims this fall. Benson has portrayed roles including die Hexe in *Hänsel und Gretel* and Ruth in *The Pirates of Penzance*. She is looking forward to singing the role of Sister Helen Prejean in *Dead Man Walking* this fall with Eklund Opera. Benson is so grateful for the opportunity to learn and explore the role of Sarah Caldwell in Mark Adamo's workshop of *Sarah in the Theatre* and hopes you enjoy getting to know this work as much as she has!



**KRISTINA BUTLER** (Soprano Ensemble 1 / Mercy Cabot Lee / Meghan Murphy / Laurie Byre) is a 2025 master's graduate of CU Boulder. While at CU, she appeared as Lady Valerie (*Cabildo*), Gretel (*Hänsel und Gretel*), Edith (*Pirates of Penzance*), was a finalist in the 2024 Concerto Competition and soprano for the 2024 Composer Fellows' Initiative. Recent operatic roles include Littler Daughter (*Proving Up*), Billie Jean King (*Balls*), and covers Nella (*Gianni Schicchi*) and Pamina (*Die Zauberflöte*). This summer, she sings Zerbinetta (*Ariadne auf Naxos*) with the Chicago Summer Opera Program. Butler was a finalist for the 2025 Colorado Bach Ensemble Competition and 2021 recipient of the Fulbright Research Grant to Ecuador.

**ANNABELLA COX** (Soprano Ensemble 2 / Lily Wasserman Gold / Judith Stein), a native of Richmond, Virginia, received a BM in vocal/choral music education and Certificate in disability studies from Virginia Commonwealth University in 2024. Cox is studying for an MM in voice pedagogy and performance at the University of Colorado Boulder with Abigail Nims. Since in Boulder, Cox has enjoyed performing as Mabel in Eklund Opera's *Pirates of Penzanze* and with the Opera theater singers, Baroque Renaissance Consort, and Boulder Symphony Chorus. Cox is so excited and grateful for the opportunity to participate in CU NOW and with Mark Adamo.



**ALICE DEL SIMONE** (Vera Tyrrell), soprano and San Francisco Bay Area native, holds a BA in vocal performance from UC Davis and an MM in voice pedagogy and performance from the University of Colorado Boulder, where she is studying for a DMA under Andrew Garland and Jennifer Bird-Arvidsson. Recent performance highlights include Bubikopf in *Der Kaiser von Atlantis* (Ullmann) with Colorado MahlerFest, and numerous other operatic and concert roles. Del Simone has been fortunate to perform in four Eklund Opera productions and is thrilled to return for a second CU NOW. She also maintains a small private voice studio and conducts research exploring student-specific effective vocal techniques.



**SIDNEY GRIMM** (Gina Ramos / Imelda Marcos) obtained her Master of Music in vocal performance from the University of Colorado Boulder this spring, studying in the studio of Jennifer Bird-Arvidsson. At CU, she performed as Susanna in scenes from *Le Nozze di Figaro*, Littler Daughter in Missy Mazzoli's *Proving Up*, Gretel in Engelbert Humperdinck's *Hänsel und Gretel*, and Kate in *Pirates of Penzance*. She was a semifinalist in the 2024 Ekstrand competition, and placed in the Denver Lyric Opera Guild competition this spring. She will be performing the role of Valeria in Tom Cipullo's *Mayo Buckner* this summer at the Seagle Festival.



**SALLEIGH HARVEY** (Mezzo Ensemble / Ana Maria Lopez / Leocadia Diaz / Ariadne), mezzo soprano, is a native of Greenville, South Carolina. She is studying for an Artist Diploma in opera/solo voice performance from CU Boulder where she studies with Jennifer Bird-Arvidsson. She received her MM in Vocal Performance from the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music where she studied with Kenneth Shaw. Recent performances include Hänsel in Humperdinck's *Hänsel und Gretel* (Eklund Opera), Lucretia in Britten's *The Rape of Lucretia*, Madame de Croissy in Poulenc's *Dialogues des Carmélites* (CCM Opera), Ensemble in Carlos Simon's *The Highlands* (Cincinnati Opera's OF:NW) and Old Baroness (cover) in Barber's *Vanessa* (Spoleto Festival USA).





**ANDREW KONOPAK** (Tim Martin) is working toward an MM in vocal performance and pedagogy, studying with Professor Andrew Garland. Before starting at CU, Konopak graduated with a BM from CSU Long Beach, and then worked professionally around Southern California for seven years where he became known for his “rich clarion baritone” (San Diego Story), singing with San Diego and Los Angeles Opera Choruses and performing in concerts around the area. Since coming to Colorado, Konopak has sung bass solos in both Handel’s *Messiah* and Bach’s B minor *Mass* with Longmont symphony, Pirate King in Gilbert & Sullivan’s *Pirates of Penzance*.



**KAILYN MARTINO** (Harpy) is a soprano from Pittsburgh. She is a DMA student at CU Boulder, studying with soprano Jennifer Bird-Arvidsson. She received a MM in erformance and pedagogy from CU BM in performance from Baldwin Wallace Conservatory. Martino is proud to be with CU NOW for a third year. Her recent appearances include Laretta in *Gianni Schicchi*, Norina in *Don Pasquale*, Littler Daughter in *Proving Up*, Nannetta in *Falstaff*, Elle in *La Voix Humaine* and Younger Alyce in *Glory Denied*. She performs with Opera Fort Collins, Boulder Opera, Art Song Colorado, Longmont Symphony Orchestra, Cleveland Opera Theater and more.



**TYLER MIDDLETON** (Benigno Aquino) is a Knoxville, Tennessee native, a passionate storyteller and a lyric baritone—in that order, more or less. He is based in the Detroit metro area, where he recently graduated with a Master of Music in voice and opera from the University of Michigan. Recent credits include Angelotti in *Tosca* with South Bend Lyric Opera, Marcello in *La Bohème* with No-Fly Productions and a season as an outreach artist with Motor City Lyric Opera. Middleton is thrilled to be making his Colorado debut with CU NOW and looks forward to beginning an Artist Diploma in voice at CU Boulder under Professor Andrew Garland this fall. More than anything, he's just glad to be back in the mountains.



**MIGUEL ÁNGEL ORTEGA BAÑALES** (Icarus / Demarre Hall) is a tenor, pianist and conductor born in Tijuana, Baja California, México. Ortega is working towards a doctoral degree in vocal performance and pedagogy at CU Boulder, studying voice with Professor Matthew Chellis. He serves as teaching assistant for CU Boulder's vocal pedagogy department. Recent performances include Captain Smith in Yeston's *Titanic*, Fenton in Verdi's *Falstaff*, Rodolfo in Puccini's *La Bohème*, tenor soloist in Bach's Weihnachts *Oratorium*, as well as conductor for Boulder Opera Company's Opera in the Park 2023 - *The Ring* by Wagner. Distinguished with the First Prize in the Denver Lyric Opera Guild's vocal competition, 2024 edition.



**BRANDON TYLER PADGETT** (Bass Baritone Ensemble / William Crowninshield / Bob McGill / Pete Simms / Ryan Richards) is a recent graduate of CU Boulder's master and Artist Diploma Programs. This is Padgett's fourth opportunity working with CU NOW. Recent credits include Geppetto in Jonathan Dove's *Pinocchio* and Lescaut in Jules Massenet's *Manon*, both productions of the Boulder Opera. Padgett's past roles with Eklund Opera include Germont in Verdi's *La traviata*, Claudio in Handel's *Agrappina*, and the titular character in Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin*. Padgett is so excited to work with CU NOW and Mark Adamo on this reflective, semi-biographical work of one of opera's greatest modern proponents who left long shadows in her career's wake.

**DAVIAN RAGGIO** (Tenor Ensemble 1 / Juan Carlos Lopez / Pablo Sanz / King Minos) is a Houston-area native currently in the Master of Music in voice performance and pedagogy program at CU Bolder. He was last seen playing Frederic in Eklund Opera's *Pirates of Penzance*. Outside of school, Raggio performs throughout Colorado with Cantare Montibus, Boulder Opera Company, Boulder Philharmonic, Central City Opera and Opera Theatre of the Rockies. Other credits include Marco in *The Gondoliers*, Don Ottavio in *Don Giovanni*, Fabrizio in the *Light in the Piazza*, Il contino belfiore in *La finta Giardiniera*, and Javier in *Luisa Fernanda*. Raggio is a student of Matthew Chellis and Nicholas Perna.



**IAN SAVERIN** (Tenor 2 Ensemble / Ramon Lopez / Kurt Jensen / Christopher Koenig / Minotaur) is a recent graduate from the BM Musical Theatre program at CU Boulder. This is his first time working with CU NOW. Regional Credits: Billy Crocker in *Anything Goes*, Rum Tum Tugger in *Cats*, Radames in Elton John's *Aida*, Sam in Ned Rorem's *Our Town*, Ensemble in *Oliver!* and Monty Navarro u/s in *A Gentleman's Guide to Love and Murder*. CU Boulder Credits: Thomas Andrews in *Titanic*, Bardolfo in *Falstaff*, Billy Flynn in *Chicago*, Bobby Strong in *Urinetown*, Sky Masterson in *Guys and Dolls* and Kurt Kelly in *Heathers*.



**MAX VANN** (Baritone Ensemble / Charles Ford / Lavar Johnson / Theseus) is a recently graduated master's student who majored in vocal performance and pedagogy. He studied with Andrew Garland and Julie Simson while at CU Boulder and has been involved with many Eklund Opera productions including Pierre Lafitte in *Cabildo*, Father in *Hansel und Gretel* and Samuel in *Pirates of Penzance*.





**MARK ADAMO** (Guest Composer and Librettist) is the Grammy-nominated composer-librettist of the operas *Little Women* (after *Alcott*; 1998) and *Lysistrata* (after *Aristophanes*; 2005,) both for Houston Grand Opera; *The Gospel of Mary Magdalene* (2013) with Sasha Cooke in the title role, for San Francisco Opera; and *Becoming Santa Claus* (2015,) for Dallas Opera, as well as the librettist of *The Lord of Cries* (after *Euripides and Stoker*; 2021) to a score by John Corigliano, for Santa Fe Opera. Recent career highlights include his stage direction of a new production of *Lysistrata* for Odyssey Opera (February 2025), which has been recorded and will be released on CD by Pentatone in 2026; more performances of *Last Year*, his concerto for cello and orchestra, led by Leonard Slatkin and Nicole Paiement and featuring cellist Inbal Segev, in Nashville, Las Vegas and Chicago; and the release, on Pentatone, of Boston Modern Orchestra Project's recording of *The Lord of Cries*, conducted by Gil Rose with a cast led by Anthony Roth Costanza, which was nominated in 2024 for the Grammy Award for Best Opera Recording of the year.

The 2022-23 season welcomed premieres in London (Opera Holland Park) and Buenos Aires (Teatro Colon) of *Little Women*, which followed more than 150 productions on five continents since the opera's premiere. (Houston Grand Opera's 2000 revival of *Little Women*, the original cast of which featured Joyce DiDonato, was released on CD in 2001 and on DVD and Blu-ray in 2010.) A new production in 2021 of *Becoming Santa Claus* for Chicago Opera Theater, conducted by Lidiya Yankovskaya, followed that opera's release on DVD in 2015. The 2021 season saw the co-commission and multicity premiere performances of *Last Year* in New York, San Francisco,



Houston and Omaha, with conductors Jeri-Lynne Johnson and Mei-Ann Chen, and cellist Jeffrey Zeigler.

Other notable commissions include *The Racer's Widow* for Sasha Cooke and the New York Festival of Song; *Aristotle* for Thomas Hampson and the Jupiter String Quartet, commissioned by Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center; *August Music* for flute duo and strings, for Sir James and Lady Jeanne Galway; *Four Angels: Concerto for Harp and Orchestra* for the National Symphony Orchestra; and the cantata *Late Victorians*, for Eclipse Chamber Orchestra, which recorded it on its all-Adamo recording for Naxos. His choral work has been commissioned and performed by Chanticleer, Conspirare, The Esoterics, Young People's Chorus of New York City and The New York Virtuoso Singers.

Adamo's first engagement with CU NOW was in 2017, when Leigh Holman kindly invited him to direct a new, chamber version of *The Gospel of Mary Magdalene*, which is being readied for publication. These performances of the first act of *Sarah in the Theatre* are in support of the world premiere of the full opera, Odyssey Opera's first commission, to be conducted by Gil Rose and introduced in Boston in autumn 2027. His music is published exclusively by G. Schirmer. [markadamo.com](http://markadamo.com).

**NICHOLAS CARTHY** (Music Director/Conductor) is in his 20th season with Eklund Opera. He studied at the Mozarteum in Salzburg, Austria. He served as musical assistant to Bernard Haitink and Sir Georg Solti at the Salzburg Festival and to Daniel Barenboim in Paris, Chicago and Bayreuth. Carthy has conducted opera

productions in Vienna, Salzburg, Oslo, Stockholm, Winterthur, Milan, Rome, Naples, Bonn, Eugene and Tel Aviv. He has conducted orchestras including the Colorado Symphony, Nordwestdeutsche Philharmonie, Orchestra RAI di Torino, Orchestra San Carlo di Napoli and the Accademia Filarmonica Roma. As a collaborative pianist he has performed in many of the world's great halls, including Carnegie Hall, Suntory Hall, Wigmore Hall, the Bolshoi Theatre and the Musikverein Vienna. He is music director of the Helgeland Sinfonietta and the Toppen International Summer School in Norway. He is well known for his public lectures at the University of Colorado and beyond, and is occasionally heard on the radio, spreading around his uncurbable enthusiasm for music and history.

**BUD COLEMAN** is honored to work again with Eklund Opera, having directed the CFI student operas every summer for CU NOW since 2015. Other Eklund credits include appearing as Frosch in *Die Fledermaus* and directing *Red Hot and Cole* and *A Grand Night for Singing*. Now professor emeritus, Coleman was the inaugural Roe Green Professor of Theatre at the University of Colorado Boulder and former Chair of the Department of Theatre & Dance. Coleman has directed and choreographed many musicals and operas, including the musical *Company* in Vladivostok, Russia, and the Thai premiere of *Fiddler on the Roof*.

**CHRISTIE CONOVER** (Eklund Opera Program Manager) returned to her alma mater in 2017 to coordinate operations of the opera program. Beyond her dedication to the program, Conover maintains an active solo career having performed lead roles with Komische Oper

Berlin, Minnesota Opera, Opera Colorado and Central City Opera. She has also appeared in concert with the Colorado Symphony, Colorado Music Festival and Colorado Springs Philharmonic, among others. Conover fondly remembers her many roles with Eklund Opera and singing in the inaugural CU NOW.

**LAURA LEE EVERETT** (Professional Development Consultant) has more than two decades of experience in opera production and stage management, collaborating with some of the most renowned conductors, directors, designers and singers in contemporary opera. Currently Everett is the executive director of the United States Institute for Theatre Technology (USITT). Formerly Chief Programs Officer for OPERA America, Everett produced the *Opera America Songbook* (a collection of 50 commissioned songs for the opening of the National Opera Center), created the programming series Onstage at the Opera Center. She also launched the Women's Opera Network webpage, was a major player in the creation of the Opera Grants for Women Composers programs, and inaugurated the Awards for Digital Excellence in Opera.



**QUINT HILL** (Hospitality and Workshop Assistant) tenor, is a senior working toward a Bachelor of Music in musical theatre from the University of Colorado Boulder, studying under Matthew Chellis. A native of Charlotte, North Carolina, he would like to thank his family for their unwavering support of his craft. Previous credits include Edward Bloom (*Big Fish*), Amos Hart (*Chicago*) and Harold Bride (*Titanic*).

**LEIGH HOLMAN** (CU NOW General and Artistic Director) Director of the Eklund Opera Program and founder of CU NOW (New Opera Workshop) at the University of Colorado Boulder, is a passionate advocate for new American opera. Through CU NOW, established in 2010, she has cultivated a vital space for the creation and development of contemporary works. Holman has brought numerous distinguished composers and librettists to Boulder, including Jake Heggie, Gene Scheer, Mark Adamo, Tom Cipullo, Kamala Sankaram, Libby Larsen, Mark Campbell, Herschel Garfein and Lori Laitman, providing students invaluable collaborative experiences and shaping the future of opera.



**NATHÁLIA KATO GIORDANO** (Assistant Music Director) is based in Pittsburgh since 2022, where she is highly sought after for her expertise in collaborative piano. She is an adjunct professor of voice at Duquesne University, where she serves as vocal coach and music director of the Opera Workshop. Prior to this appointment, she served as staff pianist at the University of Wyoming (2020-2022). Kato holds MM and DMA degrees in collaborative piano from the University of Colorado Boulder and maintains a close professional relationship with her alma mater, returning to Boulder every summer since 2019 to be on the artistic team of CU NOW. She has been mainly involved as music director of the Composer Fellows' Initiative, which provides her with the opportunity to work with distinguished American composers such as Tom Cipullo and Jake Heggie.

**JENN MELCHER GALVIN** (Properties Designer and Scenic Artist), MFA, joined Eklund Opera at CU Boulder in 2007, and she has considered it her professional home ever since. Galvin has painted for prestigious

summer companies including the Colorado Shakespeare Festival and Ohio Light Opera. Locally, Galvin has worked for Macky Auditorium, BDT Stage, Chataqua Auditorium and BETC. Her hobbies include fiction, needlecraft and hiking. In 2010, Galvin walked 400 miles of an ancient pilgrimage road across Northern Spain called the Camino de Santiago. She thanks her cat Nutmeg, husband Peter and son Dominic for their love and support.

**RON MUELLER** (Production Director) has served Eklund Opera as technical director and now production director for more than a quarter of a century. He has also designed scenery and/or lighting for many Eklund productions in that time, most recently *Titanic*, *Postcard from Morocco* and *Agrippina*. Also a BETC ensemble member, he designed scenery for last season's *The Children*, and a dozen others over the last decade. He has also designed scenery or lighting for productions at Crested Butte Music Festival, Skylight Opera Theatre, Colorado Shakespeare Festival, Boulder's Dinner Theatre, Theatre X, Milwaukee Chamber Theater, Boulder Broadway Company, CU Theatre and Dance and the University of Denver's Lamont School of Music.



**KATIANN NELSON** (Assistant to Mark Adamo / Stage Manager), originally from Waterford, Wisconsin, is a recent graduate from CU Boulder with a master's degree in voice performance, studying under Abigail Nims. In 2023, she graduated from Carthage College (Kenosha, Wisconsin) with undergraduate degrees in vocal music education, piano and clarinet performance. Nelson has enjoyed singing Hänsel in *Hänsel und Gretel*, and other opera credits include Meg in *Falstaff*, Teller Daughter in



*Proving Up*, and Chorus in *La Boheme* (Opera Colorado). She has participated as a finalist in the Denver Lyric Opera Guild Competition (Denver), the Patricia Crump Vocal Competition (Milwaukee), and the CU Boulder Concerto Competition. She looks forward to performing *Dritte Dame* at Prague Summer Nights this summer!



**MATTHEW SEBALD** (pianist coach) is known for his bold performance presence. Professional engagements include continuo player for the NMPAS performance of Bach's *St. John Passion* and a trip to the XVIII World Saxophone Congress in Croatia where he collaborated with Scott Sandberg (UND) in the premiere of Catherine McMichael's *Duality* for tenor saxophone and piano. As a solo pianist, some of his accolades include winner of the 2016 Bismarck-Mandan Symphony Orchestra Concerto competition and UND's 2015 Mozart Piano Concerto competition, and runner-up for the 2017 Greater Grand Forks Concerto Competition. He holds a Master of Music and Doctor of Musical Arts degree in collaborative piano from the University of Colorado Boulder. Sebald's research in CU's doctoral program has provided practical tools for beginning vocal coaches, specifically through a written guidebook that compliments the literature available for this fascinating field.

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*Current as of Feb. 10, 2025.*

*Photo credit: Glenn Asakawa.*