

2024



# OPERA CAROLINA

*Founded in 1948 by the Charlotte Music Club, Opera Carolina celebrates its 75th Anniversary Season this year. Annually serving an average of 60,000 people in North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia and Virginia, the Opera presents a wide array of performances, learning programs and community events.*

*The 75th Anniversary Season opens in October with a benefit concert starring superstar ANDREA BOCELLI at the Belk Theater. The company continues the celebration with three iconic Grand Operas – CARMEN, THE MAGIC FLUTE and LA BOHÉME. Visit [operacarolina.org](http://operacarolina.org) for more information.*

*In addition to Grand Opera performances, the Opera invests in expansive Learning and Community Programs Art ■ Poetry ■ Music ■ Concerts, Family Opera Series, Musical Storytime, Pop-Up Concerts, The Patricia and Marcelle Gorelick My Mentor and Me Program, Opera Xpress Educational Touring Company, pARTnership Residencies, The Stephanie and Howard Bissell Student Night at the Opera Program, the Opera Carolina Youth Academy and Academy Chorus, and the Resident Company. Six of the Opera's more than 20 regional artists are featured on today's program.*

*Opera Carolina is the only Charlotte performing arts organization to be featured on national public radio through WORLD OF OPERA. The company's acclaimed performances of Faust and Il Trovatore, as well as the premiere of Richard Danielpour and Toni Morrison's new work Margaret Garner were heard on 90 syndicated stations nationwide.*

Visit  
[www.operacarolina.org](http://www.operacarolina.org)  
for schedule, tickets, and much more.

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# Opera Carolina



*Maestro James Meena*

Artistic Director & Principal Conductor

Entering his 25th season with Opera Carolina, Mo. James Meena's tenure with Charlotte's 75 year-old opera company has been characterized by an unswerving commitment to artistic excellence.

During his tenure, the company has presented eight regional premieres and seven new American operas, including Cold Sassy Tree and Susannah by Carlisle Floyd, Margaret Garner by Richard Danielpour and Toni Morrison, Rise for Freedom by

Adolphus Hailstork, the new musical drama I Dream by Douglas Tappin about the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., the House Music Opera House of Orfeus by Nmon Ford and The Passion of Mary Cardwell Dawson starring international superstar Denyce Graves.

He is regarded as one of America's finest opera conductors, and has performed as guest conductor with orchestras and opera companies across the globe including Die Zauberflöte for the Italian opera houses in Como, Brescia, Pavia, Cremona, Turandot in the Teatro Antiche Taormina and Teatro Greco Siracusa, Tosca at the Luglio Festivale Trapani in Sicilia, a double-bill of Rachmaninoff's rarely-performed Aleko paired with Pagliacci as well as La fanciulla del West, both with New York City Opera; Le nozze di Figaro for Teatro Sociale Rovigo Italy, La Fanciulla del West for five prestigious Italian theaters: Teatro del Giglio, Lucca Italy, Teatro Verdi in Pisa, Teatro Alighieri di Ravenna, Teatro Pavarotti di Modena and Teatro Goldoni di Livorno, a Gala concert with Renee Fleming and the Toledo Symphony Orchestra, La bohème with the prestigious Puccini Festival in Torre del Lago, Le nozze di Figaro, La traviata, Pagliacci, Madama Butterfly and La bohème with Opéra de Montréal.



*Michael Baumgartner*

Director of Production  
Resident Lighting and Video Designer

Opera Carolina's Director of Production and Lighting Designer since 2005, Michael Baumgartner has designed lighting for more than 450 opera productions at regional and international opera companies, including, New York City Opera, Florida Grand Opera, Opera Lyra Ottawa, Manitoba Opera, Santa Fe Opera, Austin Opera, Arizona Opera, Lyric Opera Kansas City, Palm Beach Opera, Toledo Opera, Opera Grand Rapids, Michigan Opera Theater and Virginia Opera.

A graduate of the Yale School of Drama and member of United Scenic Artists-Local 829, Mr. Baumgartner has also served as Director of Production and Resident Lighting Designer for Chautauqua Opera since 1999. Equally at home with digital design and innovative technologies, he has designed and created new digital imagery for over twenty Opera Carolina productions including Turandot, Les pêcheurs de perles, Nabucco, Macbeth, Roméo et Juliette, La fanciulla del west, and I Dream.



# Opera Carolina Performing Artists



*Ramelle  
Brooks*

Bass-Baritone

Ramelle Brooks' noble bass voice has been described as powerful yet full of color and nuance.

He has been afforded the opportunity to sing roles in operas such Crespel/Schémil in *Les contes d'Hoffman*, Dr. Grenvil in *La Traviata*, Angelotti in *Tosca*, Sarastro in *Die Zauberflöte*, Doctor 6 in *The Falling and Rising*, Norton in *La Cambiale di Matrimonio*, Nardo in *La Finta Giardiniera*, Dr. Dulcamara in *L'elisir d'amore*, and Dick Deadeye in *H.M.S. Pinafore*.

His musical credits include *Smokey Joe's Cafe* and *The Carousel*. Ramelle is also a vibrant soloist with regional choruses and orchestras. He holds a Doctor of Musical Arts and Master of Music in Performance from the University of South Carolina and a bachelor's degree in Music Education (Voice K-12) from Fayetteville State University. Currently, Ramelle serves as an Assistant of Professor of Voice at South Carolina State University.

He supplements his academic experience serving as Director of Music at Second Calvary Baptist Church in Columbia, South Carolina. Ramelle also holds membership in the National Association of Teachers of Singing and Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc.



*Johnnie  
Felder*

Tenor

Johnnie J. Felder, is a native of Vance, South Carolina, and is a graduate of Benedict College, earning the Bachelor of Arts in Music.

Following his matriculation at Benedict, Felder earned the Master of Music and Doctor of Musical Arts degrees in Vocal Performance from the University South Carolina School of Music.

Felder has also undergone extensive vocal studies in the opera studio of the American Institute of Musical Studies (AIMS) in Graz, Austria, and in the opera soloist program of the Varna International Music Academy (VIMA) in Varna, Bulgaria.

An active teaching artist, Felder continues to perform regularly throughout the southeastern region, nationally, and abroad. A Principal Artist in Opera Carolina's Resident Artist program (Charlotte, NC), Felder has been featured in operatic and concert roles such as Peter, the Honey Man in the Gershwins' *Porgy & Bess*, Beethoven's Ninth Symphony (Augusta Choral Society), Spoleto Festival USA and North Carolina premieres of Rhiannon Giddens and Michael Abels' opera - *Omar* (Carolina Performing Arts, Chapel Hill, NC), Peter, Honey Man (North Carolina Opera), Tamino in Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte*, Nemorino in Donizetti's *L'elisir d'amore*, Reverend Jesse Jackson in Douglas Tappin's *I Dream*, Count Belfiore in Mozart's *La Finta Giardiniera*, and several solo recitals and concerts throughout the United States.

Dr. Felder serves as Assistant Professor of Music & Director of Choral Activities at South Carolina State University (Orangeburg, SC) and is on the voice faculty at the USC School of Music (Columbia, SC), where he teaches applied voice and diction for singers.

Dr. Felder's research interests include the performance, preservation, and continued scholarship of opera, art song, and choral literature by composers of the African Diaspora and beyond.



# Opera Carolina Performing Artists



*Zachary Hugo*  
Baritone

Acclaimed for his “vibrant and ringing” sound, last season Zach’s made his principal role debut as Sharpless in Puccini’s *Madama Butterfly*.

The 2023/24 season saw him make his company debut with Opera Grand Rapids as Marcello in their production of *La bohème* as well as covering the roles of Alfio and Tonio for Opera Carolina’s double feature of *Cavalleria Rusticana* and *I Pagliacci*.

Most recently, he has been seen as Il Conte in *Le Nozze di Figaro* with International Lyric Academy/Opera Carolina and as Pluto in the sold-out preview performance of Nmon Ford’s highly anticipated new opera *House of Orfeus*. Mr. Hugo reprised the role of Pluto for an October concert performance with Detroit Opera with further performances to be announced.

Other notable engagements include Germont (Cover) in *La Traviata* and Scarpia (Cover) in *Tosca* with Opera Carolina, Schaunard in *La Bohème* and Belcore in *L’elisir d’amore* with Central Piedmont Opera Theater, and Silvio in *I Pagliacci* and Sharpless in *Madama Butterfly* with Opera Experience Southeast.

Mr. Hugo’s training also includes graduate studies in conducting, leading to productions of Gluck’s *Orpheé et Eurydice*, Purcell’s *Dido* and *Aeneas*, and Mozart’s *Così fan tutte* under his baton. A native of South Carolina, Mr. Hugo holds a B.M. in Vocal Performance and a M.M. in Conducting from Winthrop University. Additionally, he is an active teacher of voice and piano in the Charlotte area. During the 75th Anniversary Season, Zach will reprise the role of Marcello in *La bohème*.



*Corey  
Raquel Lovelace*  
Soprano

Corey Raquel Lovelace hails from Chicago, but has happily made her new home in the Carolinas.

She made her a spectacular debut as Nedda in *Pagliacci* last season, filling in at the 11th hour for an indisposed Barbara Frittoli. She made her role debut as Leonore in *Fidelio* with the Mid-Ohio Opera Company in 2023, and last year retired to the concert stage premiering new works by Ukrainian composer, Sophia Pavlenko-Chandley. She made her debut as the title role in Carlisle Floyd’s *Susannah* and covered the title role in Adriana Lecouvreur. Corey returned to the opera stage post-pandemic performing Mimi in *La bohème* with Opera North, and she made her company debut with Opera Carolina as Musetta.

Internationally, she has performed in China with the iSING! Music Festival and made her European debut with the American Institute of Musical Studies in Graz, Austria. Additional performing credits include; Cendrillon in *La Cendrillon*, Kate in *Connection Lost: The Tinder Opera*, Donna Anna in *Don Giovanni*, and Lady Billows in *Albert Herring*. She continues to shine on the Opera Carolina stage this season as Frasquita in *Carmen*, First Lady in *The Magic Flute* and Musetta in *La bohème*.



# Opera Carolina Performing Artists



*Amber Rose  
Romero*  
Soprano

Hailed for her effervescent and iridescent voice, Amber has performed principal roles with opera companies across the United States, including the Utah Festival Opera, NC Summer Opera, Greensboro Opera, Signature, Inc., NH Piccola Opera, the Miami Music Festival and Opera Fusion in an impressive array of roles including Zerbinetta in Strauss' Ariadne auf Naxos, Olympia in Offenbach's Les contes d'Hoffmann, Adele in Johann Strauss' Die Fledermaus, Nanetta in Verdi's Falstaff, the Dew Fairy in Humperdinck's Hansel und Gretel, and Zerlina in Mozart's Don Giovanni.

She makes her principal role debut with Opera Carolina this season as The Queen of the Night in The Magic Flute.



*Johnathan  
Stanford  
White*  
Tenor

Tenor, Johnathan Stanford White began his Operatic studies at the College of Charleston in 2004 while working on his BA in Vocal Performance. In 2011, he was selected to sing at the Jussi Bjorling Centennial Celebration at Gustavus College at the Jussi Bjorling Concert Hall. Since moving to Charlotte and joining the Opera Carolina as a Resident Company Member in 2013, Johnathan has become a staple in the classical music scene.

He made his Opera Carolina debut in Turandot as the Emperor in 2015, and has since assailed numerous roles during his tenure with the Opera, including Don Ottavio in Don Giovanni, Spoletta in Tosca, Trique in Yvgeny Onegin and last season as Peppe in Pagliacci, Goro in Madama Butterfly and Pang in Turandot. Johnathan is also an accomplished symphonic soloist performing throughout the East Coast.

He made his international debut performing the three comedic roles in Les contes d'Hoffmann with the International Lyric Academy, Vicenza, Italy. During the Opera's 75th he will star as Tamino in The Magic Flute.



*Melinda  
Whittington*  
Soprano

Opera Carolina's Prima Donna, Melinda Whittington joined the roster of the Metropolitan Opera for its productions of Macbeth and Philip Glass' Akhnaten, and the roster of the Lyric Opera Chicago for its production of Eugene Onegin. Previously with Opera Carolina, she has portrayed Violetta in La traviata, Tatyana in Eugene Onegin, Contessa in Le nozze di Figaro, Lauretta in Gianni Schicchi, and Zweite Dame in Die Zauberflöte.

This coming season, she will return for both Micaëla in Carmen and Mimí in La bohème. Among the soprano's other recent performances is her debut with Minnesota Opera as Mimí, Arizona Opera as Donna Anna in Don Giovanni and a return for the title role of Rusalka, Utah Opera for Donna Anna, Ash Lawn Opera as Fiordiligi in Così fan tutte, and North Carolina Opera for both Nedda in Pagliacci and Ada in Higdon's Cold Mountain. She has also sung the title role of Arabella with Pittsburgh Festival Opera, Juliette with Opera Birmingham and Pensacola Opera, Micaëla in Carmen with Greensboro Opera, and Donna Elvira in Don Giovanni with Green Mountain Opera. She sang Micaëla and Marie Antoinette in Corigliano's The Ghosts of Versailles with Wolf Trap Opera, and subsequently returned to the company for a birthday concert celebration honoring the composer.

Ms. Whittington is a former Resident Artist of the Academy of Vocal Arts, where she performed Marguerite in Faust and Fiordiligi in Così fan tutte. She has been a semi-finalist of the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions, first place winner of the Opera Birmingham competition, third place winner in Fort Worth Opera's McCammon Voice Competition, twice winner of the Charlotte Opera Guild Competition, and an encouragement award winner in the Gerda Lissner International Vocal Competition. She is a former participant in the prestigious Merola Opera Program in association with San Francisco Opera at which she performed scenes as the title role in Donizetti's Anna Bolena, Barber's Vanessa, and Bizet's Le jolie fille de Perth.



# Opera Carolina Repertoire

## From *Il barbiere di Siviglia* – Gioacchino Rossini

*(The Barber of Seville)*

Overture  
Una voce poco fa  
La calunnia

Opera Carolina Orchestra  
Amber Rose  
Ramelle Brooks

## The music of Umberto Giordano

Amor ti vieta from *Fedora*

Johnathan White

## The music of Giacomo Puccini

Chi'il bel sogno di Doretta from *La rondine*  
Questo amore from *Edgar*  
O mio babbino caro from *Gianni Schicci*

Corey Lovelace  
Zachary Hugo  
Amber Rose

## The music of Giuseppe Verdi

Tacea la notte placida from *Il trovatore*  
Eri tu from *Un ballo in maschera*  
La donna e' mobile from *Rigoletto*

Melinda Whittington  
Zachary Hugo  
Johnathan White

## The music of W.A. Mozart

Duet, Sul aria from *Le nozze di Figaro*

Melinda Whittington  
Amber Rose

## The music of Eduardo di Capua

O sole mio

Johnathan White

## From *La bohème* – Giacomo Puccini

Che gelida manina  
Si, mi chiamano Mimi  
Quando me'n vo  
Vecchia zimmara

Johnnie Felder  
Melinda Whittington  
Corey Lovelace  
Ramelle Brooks

## From *Turandot* – Giacomo Puccini

Nessun dorma

Johnnie Felder

## From *La Traviata* – Giuseppe Verdi

Brindisi

Melinda Whittington  
Johnathan White

# The Opera Carolina Orchestra

## First Violin

Kari Giles  
Corine Brouwer  
Susan Blumberg  
Dustin Wilkes-Kim  
Judy Meister  
Eliza Johnson  
Amanda Gentile  
David Strassberg

## Second Violin

Tatiana Korpova  
Cynthia Burton  
Fabrice Dharamraj  
Kirsten Allen  
Michelle Thompson  
Emily Chatham

## Viola

Kirsten Swanson  
Shawn Snider  
Piotr Swic  
Anna Swic

## Cello

Grace Anderson  
Oksana McCarthy  
James Churchill  
Jill Fung

## Double Bass

Eric Thompson  
Nixon Bustos

## Flute

Jennifer Dior  
Amy Orsinger  
Whitehead

## Oboe

Teil Taliesin  
Matthew Covington

## Clarinet

Dylan Lloyd  
Joshua Bottoms

## Bassoon

Stephanie Lipka  
Lori Tiberio

## Horn

Andrew Merideth  
Tim Papenbrock  
Christopher Griffin  
Judith Thompson

## Trumpet

Eric Millard  
Marisa Youngs

## Trombone

Justin Isenhour  
Tom Burge  
Arthur Haecker

## Timpani

Stephanie Wilson

## Percussion

Rick Dior  
Brice Burton

## Harp

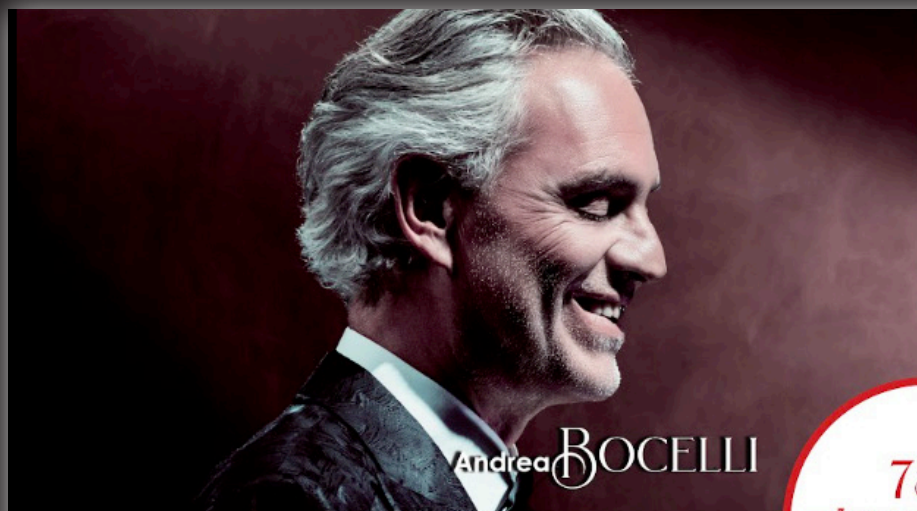
Andrea Mumm





2024 – 2025 Season

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Andrea BOCELLI



Bizet CARMEN

75<sup>TH</sup>  
ANNIVERSARY  
SEASON



Mozart THE MAGIC FLUTE



Puccini LA BOHÈME



