

Haymarket  
*Opera company*



FRANCESCA CACCINI

*La liberazione di Ruggiero  
dall'isola d'Alcina*

SEPTEMBER 29 - OCTOBER 1, 2023

JARVIS OPERA HALL AT DEPAUL UNIVERSITY

## *Dear Friends,*

Welcome to the Jarvis Opera Hall for Haymarket's performances of *La liberazione di Ruggiero dall'isola d'Alcina* by the virtuoso composer, singer, and instrumentalist Francesca Caccini. Dating from 1625, it is one of the only surviving operas from the early 1700s and the earliest one by a female composer. Like Handel's *Orlando* (Haymarket audiences will remember our 2021 film starring Bejun Mehta), Caccini's opera is drawn from Ludovico Ariosto's entertaining epic *Orlando Furioso*, which took Europe by storm in the early sixteenth century.

In this showdown between good and evil, the wicked sorceress Alcina ensnares unsuspecting warriors on her enchanted island. After having her way with them, she turns them into plants, animals, and rocks. Fortunately, the good sorceress Melissa saves the day and rescues Ruggiero from a bewitched-vegetable fate.

In other Haymarket news, you will have another chance to hear our acclaimed June production of Hasse's *Marc'Antonio e Cleopatra*, featuring countertenor Kangmin Justin Kim and contralto Lauren Decker, in an encore broadcast on the internationally syndicated Saturday matinee opera series on WFMT, November 18th at 12pm Central Time.

Magic awaits in this chivalric tale set on Alcina's grotesque pleasure island. Enjoy the show—thank you for joining us!

Musically yours,  
*Chase & Craig*



Chase Hopkins  
General Director



Craig Trompeter  
Artistic Director

Haymarket Opera Company presents

# *La liberazione di Ruggiero dall'isola d'Alcina*

MUSIC BY **FRANCESCA CACCINI**

LIBRETTO BY **FERDINANDO SARACINELLI**

**SEPTEMBER 29 - OCTOBER 1, 2023**

*Performance runtime: 90 minutes with no intermission*

## **CAST**

Sophie Michaux  
*Alcina*

Scott J. Brunscheen  
*Ruggiero*

Lindsay Metzger  
*Melissa*

## **VOCAL ENSEMBLE**

Nathalie Colas  
Hannah De Priest  
Michelle Mariposa  
Quinn Middleman  
Justin Berkowitz  
Michael St. Peter  
Dorian McCall  
Schyler Vargas

## **CREATIVE TEAM**

Sarah Edgar, *Stage Director*  
Craig Trompeter, *Music Director*  
Wendy Waszut-Barrett, *Set Designer*  
Stephanie Cluggish, *Costume Designer*  
Megan Pirtle, *Wig and Makeup Designer*  
Brian Schneider, *Lighting Designer*  
Chase Hopkins, *Creative Producer*

## **LEAD SPONSORS**

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## **SUPPORTING SPONSORS**

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David J. Rice, Marjorie Stinespring, and Michael and Jessica Young

*Original production artwork by scenic designer Wendy Waszut-Barrett,  
commissioned by Haymarket Opera Company*

# Haymarket Opera Orchestra

Craig Trompeter,  
*Leader & Harpsichord*  
Jeri-Lou Zike, *Concertmaster*  
Martin Davids, *Violin*  
Wendy Benner, *Violin*  
Anna Steinhoff, *Viola da Gamba*

Lisette Kielson, *Recorder*  
Patrick O'Malley, *Recorder*  
Sally Jackson, *Dulcian*  
Brandon Acker, *Theorbo*  
Lucas Harris, *Theorbo*

Jason Moy, *Harpsichord & Organ*  
Liza Malamut, *Sackbut*  
Ben David Aronson, *Sackbut*  
Paul von Hoff, *Sackbut*  
Garrett Lahr, *Sackbut*

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## Production Team & Run Crew

Jen Smith, *Production Manager*  
Alycia Martin, *Stage Manager*  
Anna Walker, *Assistant Stage Manager*  
Zoe Snead, *Run Crew Head*  
Nik Hunder, Henry Muller, Reagan Stevenson,  
*Scenery Crew*  
Lucy Elkin, *Wardrobe Supervisor*  
Hailey Springer, *Wardrobe Crew*  
Mia Thomas, *Wig Assistant*  
Aliza Feder, Rebecca A. Scott, *Wig and Makeup Crew*

Hannah Andruss, Miguel Armstrong, Jennifer Lightfoot,  
Hailey Rakowiecki, Dylan Rodriguez, Jenna Wilson,  
*Wig Knotters*  
Bryan Back, *Lightboard Operator*  
Jack O'Connor, *Master Electrician*  
Beth Uber, *Draper*  
Teagan Anderson, Abeline Glenzinski, *Stitchers*  
Hannah Bledstein, *Milliner*  
Alessandra Visconti, *Italian Diction Coach*  
Hannah Zizza, *Surttitle Operator*

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## Administration

Chase Hopkins, *General Director*  
Craig Trompeter, *Artistic Director*  
Jianghai Ho, *Development Coordinator*

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*The Liberation of Andromeda* by Piero di Cosimo (1510)



*La liberazione di Ruggiero dall'isola d'Alcina*

*Haymarket Opera Company enriches the musical community of Chicago and the Midwest with performances of 17th- and 18th-century operas and oratorios using period performance practices.*

*Haymarket seeks to engage audiences with passionate performances of familiar as well as forgotten works, staged intimately and guided by close attention to details of the libretti and scores.*

## PROLOGUE

At the occasion of Władysław IV Vasa's visit to Carnival in Medici Florence, the god Neptune and the deified River Vistula bring together Apollo and his chorus of water nymphs to celebrate the great Polish warrior. He had recently brokered a peace treaty with the Ottoman Empire that halted the invasion of Moldavia, and he was hailed in Europe as the "defender of the Christian faith." This is the impetus for telling the story of Alcina and Ruggiero, in which Ruggiero loses himself in decadent love on the island of Alcina and is eventually freed to complete his destiny.

## SCENE ONE

Melissa, the estranged sister of Alcina, enters on a dolphin and explains that she has heard the laments of Ruggiero's betrothed, Bradamante. She is resolved to break the spell that keeps Ruggiero on Alcina's island. Melissa will use her own magic to convert her appearance into that of Atlas, Ruggiero's beloved teacher, in order to convince him to leave Alcina.

## SCENE TWO

As we enter the island of Alcina, we encounter Alcina and Ruggiero relaxing in the afterglow of their love. Alcina is reluctantly called away to tend to her empire and leaves Ruggiero in the care of her damsels. They are joined by a shepherd who entertains Ruggiero with songs celebrating the joy of love. Soon a siren appears and sings Ruggiero into a deep sleep.

Ruggiero is left alone, and Melissa takes this opportunity to enter in the form of his teacher Atlas, who scolds Ruggiero for giving up the glory of war for the pleasures of love. After Alcina's bewitched jewels are removed from his body, Ruggiero is freed from her spell. He vows to resume his warrior life and reunite with Bradamante.

Upon seeing Ruggiero freed from Alcina's spell, human inhabitants of the island, whom Alcina has turned to plants, come out of the shadows and beg to be liberated from Alcina's island. Melissa promises to free them. As Ruggiero exits to prepare for his flight from Alcina's island, Alcina returns to look for him.



*Ruggiero at the court of the sorceress Alcina*  
by Rutilio Manetti (1624)



*Circe and her Lovers in a Landscape*  
by Dosso Dossi (1515)

## Synopsis continued

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Unbeknownst to Melissa, Alcina's confidant Nunzia has been hiding in the shadows during the previous scene. Nunzia tells Alcina the story of Ruggiero's abandonment of her. Alcina vows to win back Ruggiero with tearful proofs of her love. When Ruggiero returns to the scene, he is neither moved by Alcina's tears nor by the reproachful songs of the damsels. Alcina soon gives way to fury and exits.

After Alcina leaves, Melissa reappears. Ruggiero asks her to free Astolfo, Bradamante's cousin whom Alcina had turned into a plant, and all the other enchanted plants.

### SCENE THREE

Just as Melissa frees the enchanted plants, Alcina and her demons enter on a boat made from the bones of orcas. They wreak havoc and threaten Ruggiero, but Melissa is able to stop them and Alcina is finally defeated.

### SCENE FOUR

All of the formerly enchanted people on Alcina's island emerge and celebrate their release with songs and dancing.



**REAL AND IMAGINARY AMAZONS:  
LA LIBERAZIONE DI RUGGIERO  
DALL'ISOLA D'ALCINA**

Midway through Ferdinando Saracinelli's libretto for *La liberazione di Ruggiero dall'isola d'Alcina*, the benevolent sorceress Melissa, temporarily disguised as Atlante, a.k.a. Atlas, the former (male) tutor of Ruggiero, berates the errant young knight for allowing himself to be drawn into a feminine world of sensuality and luxury while the world is at war. When mocking him for having profaned his sword by using it to declare his love for Alcina and ordering him to remove the jewelry and necklaces that adorn his body, Melissa/Atlante reminds him—and the audience—that Ruggiero has foolishly exchanged valor for sensuality, squandering the most crucial masculine virtue in favor of one of the most dangerous feminine vices.

Audience members well acquainted with Lodovico Ariosto's *Orlando furioso*, the sixteenth-century chivalric poem on which Saracinelli based the libretto set musically by Francesca Caccini, might have viewed the scene with some puzzlement. Where was the magic ring Melissa carried for the express purpose of jolting Ruggiero to his senses? Some perceptive listeners might have recognized Melissa's words from a different, albeit similar context, for Saracinelli borrowed parts of the speech directly from another well-known Renaissance epic, Torquato Tasso's *Gerusalemme liberata* [*Jerusalem liberated*]. There, an actual (not disguised) male figure utters the words, as the Christian knight Ubaldo attempts to break through the enchantment afflicting his comrade Rinaldo, who like Ruggiero is under the spell of an enchantress, this time Armida.

Caccini's Melissa has no need of a magic ring. In controlled musical speech she orders Ruggiero to divest himself of his emasculating garb. And her words have the desired effect: Ruggiero immediately throws off his bangles and ornaments and declares his readiness to rejoin the battle. Melissa goes on to liberate not only Ruggiero, but all Alcina's enchanted captives, eventually emerging victorious in a showdown with Alcina herself.

Forceful commands emanating from female mouths would have been quite common in the Florence of 1625, the year of the work's first performance. At the time the city was under the direct control of two women: Grand Duchess Maria Magdalena, widow of Grand Duke Cosimo II de' Medici, and Christine of Lorraine, Cosimo's mother. This had been the case since February 1621, when Cosimo's death left his ten-year-old son as heir to the throne. Cosimo had established in his will that his wife and mother should serve as regents, supported by a council of advisors, until his son reached his eighteenth birthday. It was Maria Magdalena, who was also a Habsburg archduchess and sister to the current Holy Roman Emperor, who commissioned *La liberazione* to honor the state visit of her nephew Władysław, heir to the Polish throne and hoped-for husband to her daughter Margherita. The work was performed at her own recently renovated Villa Poggio Imperiale. And she was the dedicatee of both its published libretto and score. *La liberazione* was but the most recent in a string of commissions through which Archduchess Maria Magdalena promoted images of assertive, virtuous women, figures with which she wanted to associate herself. She sponsored operas featuring heroic female protagonists, one of which, Marco da Gagliano's



*Circe and her Lovers in a Landscape* by Dosso Dossi (1515)

## Program Notes continued

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*La regina Sant'Orsola* [Queen Saint Ursula], received its second performance as part of the Polish prince's state visit. In Andrea Salvadori's libretto for that work, Saint Ursula barks out orders similar to those of the opera's male generals, who direct armies of Hun and Roman troops, while Ursula commands her band of 11,000 virgins. Like her male counterparts, and like Melissa, Ursula expects to be obeyed. Saint Ursula also appeared in a painted lunette fresco in the archduchess's audience room in her villa, the physical space most closely linked to her political persona. Nine other female sovereigns and saints joined Ursula in the room's frescoes, including Queen Isabella of Castile and Saint Catherine of Alexandria. The archduchess commissioned similar frescoes for her bedroom and its antechamber, there focusing on female saints and biblical heroines such as Judith, whose daring decapitation of the Assyrian general Holofernes with her own sword Artemisia Gentileschi depicted artistically for the Medici court around 1620. Judith would return as the title character in Marco da Gagliano's opera *La Giuditta* of 1626.



*Judith Beheading Holofernes* by Artemisia Gentileschi (1620)

Archduchess Maria Magdalena was also the dedicatee of literary works intended to remind readers of the long history of women's contributions. She herself is featured in a biographical essay in the third volume of Christofano Bronzini's treatise entitled *Della dignità, e nobiltà delle donne* [On the dignity and nobility of women] (Florence, 1622–1632).

*La liberazione di Ruggiero dall'isola d'Alcina* can thus be viewed within the context of Archduchess Maria Magdalena's other commissions, and its protagonist, Melissa, compared to the saints and biblical heroines that dominated them. Melissa shares with these women assertive texts condemning sensual love, and operatic characters such as Judith and Saint Ursula may well have delivered their texts with the same sort of musical forcefulness Melissa exhibits throughout Caccini's work. The music for these other operas has been lost, so an understanding of them is limited to whatever information their librettos contain.

In general, the music of Caccini's *La liberazione* resembles that found in the operas of her Florentine contemporaries: characters deliver their speeches primarily in recitative, which ranges from expressively neutral to highly impassioned. Music-focused moments such as tuneful or florid songs are reserved for use in specific dramatic situations, such as when the immoderate Alcina imitates the siren's song in her own ornamented eruption, the only instance in the entire work in which a principal character sings a florid passage. Choruses serve to add variety to the musical palette and help to articulate the dramatic structure.

But *La liberazione* is not an opera: the title pages of both libretto and score refer to the work as a *balletto*. The work concludes with stage directions indicating the incorporation of an extended, multi-part *ballo*, which celebrates Melissa's vanquishment of Alcina. The ballo begins when, in a brief dialogue with Melissa, one of the ladies recently freed from Alcina's enchantments beseeches her benefactor to liberate the ladies' lovers, to which Melissa agrees. The ladies and their knights dance to music not included in Caccini's score, after which a chorus of liberated knights sing of their joy. Then, according



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to the score, “there follows a ballo on horseback” [*ballo a cavallo*], again without providing music.

By commissioning a work that incorporated a horse ballet, Archduchess Maria Magdalena visibly aligned her patronage with that of her late husband, the individual most associated with the introduction of dramatic equestrian entertainments to Florence. The first of these took place in 1608 as part of the festivities celebrating Maria Magdalena’s marriage to then Crown Prince Cosimo II. As grand duke, Cosimo II commissioned two horse ballets in 1616, the second of which celebrated the visit of his future son-in-law Prince Federico della Rovere of Urbino. Perhaps Maria Magdalena sought to emulate this event nine years later when she sponsored *La liberazione*. One of her principal diplomatic goals for the visit, after all, was to convince Prince Władysław to marry her daughter.

The marriage negotiations did not proceed as the archduchess hoped, but *La liberazione* was a success, according to contemporary accounts. By sponsoring an entertainment that combined opera and horse ballet, Maria Magdalena demonstrated the Medici court’s promotion of two genres which, according to their inventors, revived and also improved on their ancient Greek models. Although she did not actually ride in the event, she attended its rehearsals and likely oversaw its details. Contemporary biographer Bronzini singled out Maria Magdalena’s equestrian skills, asserting, “She was born to horsemanship and grand maneuvers; in cavalry drills she acquired with her eyes the discipline learned by all the lords at court.” He reminds his readers of her role in past equestrian entertainments:

*Nor were festivities or tournaments ever performed . . . at which she did not want to be present, to see everything rehearsed, to hold the script, to be exceptionally attentive (not like a curious spectator, but as a discerning and diligent observer), in order to remind and advise (as she often did), seeing what of this or of that might be lacking something, and to speak her opinion with wise judgment.*

Maria Magdalena’s participation in these festivities led to their success, Bronzini claims, and her own equestrian abilities, coupled with her skill with firearms, made her a formidable hunter, worthy of the epithet “a new amazon in Tuscany.”

Like Melissa, whose forceful speech joined with the visage of a male authority figure to compel Ruggiero to submit to her will, Archduchess Maria Magdalena controlled what audience members heard and saw. In Villa Poggio Imperiale they witnessed representations of forceful women whose actions liberated their people and determined the outcome of historical events. This was the role Maria Magdalena appears to have envisioned for herself, both within the grand duchy and as part of the larger European community then engaged in the Thirty Years’ War. Melissa concludes her scene with Ruggiero by encouraging him to join her in quickly taking up arms, for she worries that “a short delay can destroy great honor.” Archduchess Maria Magdalena, that “new amazon in Tuscany,” undoubtedly concurred.

—Kelley Harness, *University of Minnesota*



**Kelley Harness**, Associate Professor of Musicology at the University of Minnesota, is the author of two books on Florentine theatrical genres: *Echoes of Women’s Voices: Music, Art, and Female Patronage in Early Modern Florence* (2006) and *Singing of Arms and Men: Florence and the Balletto a Cavallo in the Seventeenth Century* (forthcoming).



# *L'Amant Anonyme*

BY JOSEPH BOLOGNE,  
THE CHEVALIER DE SAINT-GEORGES

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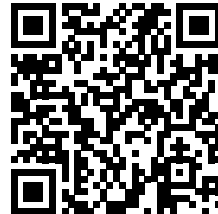
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### JUSTIN BERKOWITZ | VOCAL ENSEMBLE

TENOR

Justin Berkowitz, tenor, is thrilled to return to Haymarket Opera! At Haymarket, he has portrayed Arnalta / Nutrice in *L'incoronazione di Poppea* and Phantase in *Ariane et Bacchus*. With Chicago Opera Theater last season, Berkowitz appeared as Steve Todd and Arnold Murray in *The Life and Death(s) of Alan Turing* and as Mayor Upfold in *Albert Herring*. He has appeared with Central City Opera, Opera Naples, St. Petersburg Opera, Chicago Philharmonic, Rockford Symphony, Mobile Symphony Orchestra, and Opera on the James, among others. This winter, he returns to Chicago Opera Theater as Chief of Police in Shostakovich's *The Nose*.



### SCOTT J. BRUNSCHEEN | RUGGIERO

TENOR

Haymarket Opera Company audiences have seen and heard Scott J. Brunscheen in *Ariane et Bacchus* (Marais), *L'Oronthea* (Cesti), and *L'isola disabitata* (Haydn). Other operatic credits include Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte* and *Don Giovanni*, Poulenc's *Dialogues des Carmelites*, Donizetti's *La Favorite*, Rossini's *La Cenerentola* and *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, Britten's *Turn of the Screw*, and Ravel's *L'heure espagnole*. Brunscheen has also been soloist in oratorio and chamber works such as Mozart's *Requiem*, Haydn's *The Creation*, Handel's *Judas Maccabaeus* and *Messiah*, Orff's *Carmina Burana*, multiple Bach cantatas, and Rameau's *Orphée*.



### NATHALIE COLAS | VOCAL ENSEMBLE

SOPRANO

A native of Strasbourg, France, Nathalie Colas is an artist and cofounder of Chicago-based Third Coast Baroque, Liederstube, and new music ensemble Fonema Consort. In demand as a soloist, she was recently heard in Ravel's *Shéhérazade* with The Symphony of Oak Park, in Bach's *Christmas Oratorio* with Chicago Choral Artists, and in Purcell's *Welcome to All the Pleasures* with Music of the Baroque. She has been a featured soloist with Newberry Consort, Alchemy Viols, Incantare, Bella Voce, Bach Society of Saint Louis, and more. This season's engagements include Schoenberg's *Pierrot Lunaire* in St Charles, and Handel's *Dixit Dominus* with Handel Week Festival.



### HANNAH DE PRIEST | VOCAL ENSEMBLE

SOPRANO

With "a voice that is theater itself" (*Classique News*), lyric soprano Hannah De Priest's recent credits include her Kennedy Center debut (Opera Lafayette, *La serva padrona*), European debut at the Innsbruck Early Music Festival (Gilde, *L'amazzone corsara*), and multiple productions with Boston Early Music Festival. De Priest has garnered attention at numerous important competitions, including 2nd Prize at the 2021 International Cesti Competition for Baroque Singing.



### MICHELLE MARIPOSA | VOCAL ENSEMBLE

MEZZO-SOPRANO

Filipino-Chinese mezzo-soprano Michelle Mariposa was a finalist in the 2023 Lyndon Woodside Oratorio-Solo Competition and in the 2023 Shreveport Opera Competition. Mariposa was a 2023 apprentice singer at the Santa Fe Opera, where she covered Pastore 3 in Monteverdi's *L'Orfeo*, and is currently a young artist with Chicago Opera Theater. Other operatic roles include Ruggiero in Handel's *Alcina*, Third Lady in Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte*, and the title role in Menotti's *The Medium*. She completed a master's degree in voice at Northwestern University, and a bachelor's degree in voice and psychology at the University of the Philippines.



### DORIAN McCAL | VOCAL ENSEMBLE

BASS-BARITONE

Dorian McCal has been praised by *The New York Times* for “his rich lows” and by *Musical America* as “[benefitting] from his freely produced bass-baritone and his winning stage presence.” Recently, McCal performed Fabrizio in Ricci's *Crispino e la comare* at the Teatro Nuovo, and upcoming engagements include Cedar Rapids Opera's *Lift Every Voice* as Resident Teaching Artist. This season also brings chamber work with Chicago's Unity Temple (Lieberson's *The Coming of Light*) and Baltimore debuts with Handel Choir of Baltimore (*Messiah*) and Bel Cantanti Opera (*La sonnambula*).



### LINDSAY METZGER | MELISSA

MEZZO-SOPRANO

Lindsay Metzger is noted for her “easy stage manner and refined voice” (*Chicago Classical Review*). In the 2023-24 season, Metzger performs as the alto soloist for Beethoven's 9th Symphony with the Southwest Michigan Symphony Orchestra, sings the role of the Songbird in *La périchole* with Florentine Opera, and reprises her role in *Anna Karenina* with the Joffrey Ballet. During the 2022-23 season, Metzger returned to Dallas Opera to sing the Sandman and cover Hansel in *Hansel and Gretel*, joined the roster of the Metropolitan Opera to cover Flora in *La traviata*, returned to Haymarket Opera Company to sing Nerone in *L'incoronazione di Poppea*, and sang Stéphanie in *Roméo et Juliette* with Opera San Antonio, as well as singing in the Joffrey Ballet's *Anna Karenina*. Metzger recently made her company debut with Austin Opera as Cherubino in *Le nozze di Figaro*, covered Niklausse in *Les Contes d'Hoffmann*, and joined Washington Concert Opera as Miss Rose in *Lakmé*.



### **SOPHIE MICHAUX | ALCINA**

MEZZO-SOPRANO

Praised for her “warm, colorful mezzo” by *Opera News*, French mezzo-soprano Sophie Michaux’s recent solo engagements include Holofernes in Scarlatti’s *La Giuditta* (Haymarket Opera), a Hawaii tour (*Les Délices*), the alto solos in Handel’s *Dixit Domino* (Upper Valley Baroque), and DeFalla’s *El Amor Brujo* (Lowell Chamber Orchestra). She has collaborated with the symphony orchestras of Boston, Chicago, San Francisco, and Nashville; Boston Early Music Festival, Haymarket Opera Company, Roomful of Teeth, Cappella Mediterranea, Blue Heron, Lorelei Ensemble, Ruckus, and others.



### **QUINN MIDDLEMAN | VOCAL ENSEMBLE**

MEZZO-SOPRANO

Praised for her “fine, warm mezzo-soprano voice,” Quinn Middleman is known for her dynamic artistry and stage presence. In the 2023-24 season, she appears as the Third Lady in *Die Zauberflöte* with Annapolis Opera, Ježibaba/*Rusalka* with Opera Ithaca, and Podtochina & the Countess in *The Nose* with Chicago Opera Theater. Middleman joined The Santa Fe Opera as a member of the 2023 Apprentice Singers Program. She has previously appeared with Columbus Symphony Orchestra, Pittsburgh Opera, Utah Opera, Utah Symphony, Des Moines Metro Opera, Madison Opera, Opera Birmingham, Chautauqua Opera, and Central City Opera.



### **MICHAEL ST. PETER | VOCAL ENSEMBLE**

TENOR

Michael St. Peter is a Chicago-based tenor known for his “warm, beautiful and true” singing (*Chicago Classical Review*). His career has led to performances on notable stages in Chicago, New York, and London at such as Pritzker Pavilion, Carnegie Hall, and Wigmore Hall respectively. He has been engaged as an artist with Opera Theatre of St. Louis, Tulsa Opera, Hawai’i Symphony Orchestra, and Music of the Baroque. Previous credits with Haymarket Opera Company include The Moore in Lampe’s *The Dragon of Wantley*, Acis in Handel’s *Acis and Galatea*, and most recently Colin in *L’amant anonyme* by the Chevalier de Saint-Georges, Joseph Bologne.



### **SCHYLER VARGAS | VOCAL ENSEMBLE**

BARITONE

Mexican-American baritone Schyler Vargas is establishing himself as a versatile young talent, bringing interdisciplinary performances to the operatic, theatrical, and concert stages. Notable credits include performing at Carnegie Hall in *Iolanthe* by Gilbert & Sullivan alongside Christine Ebersole and Santino Fontana, premiering *UNKNOWN* by Shawn Okpebholo (featured on *The PBS News Hour* and NPR), and winning the Rocky Mountain District in the Metropolitan Opera’s Laffont Competition twice. Role highlights include: Papageno in *Die Zauberflöte*, Count Almaviva in *Le nozze di Figaro*, Wolf and Cinderella’s Prince in *Into the Woods*, and Riff, Diesel, and Chino in *West Side Story*.

## Creative Team Notes and Biographies

### SARAH EDGAR | STAGE DIRECTOR

*La liberazione di Ruggiero dall'isola di Alcina* embodies in the sorceress Alcina two major fears of early modern Europe: the military might of the Ottoman Empire and the sexual power of women. Several magical operas of the period feature the seductive, evil sorceress as the exotic Other who will emasculate the European hero and strip him of his predestined glory. More examples that are basically the same story include *Armide* by Jean-Baptiste Lully and *Alcina* by George Frideric Handel.

It is so interesting that Francesca Caccini, the first known female opera composer, took Alcina for her subject matter. It was commissioned by the Regent Archduchess of Florence, Maria Magdalena of Austria, at the occasion of Władysław IV Vasa's visit to Carnival in the year 1625. The story of Alcina and Ruggiero is chronicled in both *Orlando Furioso* (Ludovico Ariosto) and *Gerusalemme Liberata* (Torquato Tasso), and these epics were well known to all educated Europeans at the time. These

stories are based on the struggle between Christian Europe and the Muslim Middle East during the Crusades, making it relatable to the ever-present issue of Ottoman invasion of Eastern Europe in the seventeenth century.

What I love about Caccini's *La liberazione di Ruggiero dall'isola d'Alcina* is the opportunity to play in Alcina's magical fantasy world. Water nymphs, a shepherd, a siren, enchanted plants, and furious demons all invite the exploration of the seventeenth-century infatuation with the sensuous and the strange. We all love a good villain, but why? Setting aside the politics of seventeenth-century Europe, we can see ourselves in the sorceress Alcina: in losing ourselves to a doomed love, in the rage that threatens to overtake our senses at times of emotional crisis, and in the knowledge that there is both good and evil in human nature.



**Sarah Edgar** specializes in eighteenth-century stage performance. In addition to her work with Haymarket Opera Company, she is an associate director of the New York Baroque Dance Company. As a dancer with the

New York Baroque Dance Company, she has performed at Drottningholm Theater in Sweden, the International Händelfestspiele Göttingen, Danspace at St. Mark's Theater, the Guggenheim Museum, and the Potsdam Sanssouci Music Festival. From 2006-2012, she lived in Cologne, Germany, and toured Europe as a freelance dancer, performing in Italy, Germany, Belgium, Switzerland, and France. She has taught master classes in baroque dance at numerous universities in the United States and in Germany, and has given several lectures at symposia for eighteenth-century performance. She has been an adjunct professor at DePaul University, Wheaton College, and Northwestern University. She holds a BFA summa cum laude in dance performance from The Ohio State University, and an MA in Tanzwissenschaft from the Hochschule für Musik und Tanz Köln.

*Ruggiero Arrives on the Island of Alcina*  
by Hyacinthe Collin de Vermont (1740)



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## CRAIG TROMPETER | CONDUCTOR

Opera as a genre was in its infancy when *La liberazione di Ruggiero dall'isola d'Alcina* was first performed in 1625. The premiere of Jacopo Peri's *L'Euridice*, considered by scholars to be the first opera, had taken place in Florence in 1600. Both pieces were court entertainments, which displayed the wealth and prestige of the Medici family and were used to make political alliances through marriage.

Our opera's composer, Francesca Caccini, made her singing debut as a teenager alongside her famous father Giulio Romano Caccini in *L'Euridice*. She lived and worked during a period of great musical innovation. Several Italian composers in her circle, including her father and Peri, were seeking ways to recreate for modern audiences the expressive potency of Greek drama. Mistakenly believing that Greek drama had been sung, they promoted a style of composition wherein a single singing voice would declaim text over a simple harmonic bass line. In 1601 Giulio Caccini published his *Le nuove musiche*, a set of such monodies with detailed performance instructions. This "new" music worked exceptionally well in theatrical settings, and soon through-sung musical dramas—what we now call "opera"—took Europe by storm.

The considerable musical forces required for Francesca Caccini's opera were typical of these opulent court spectacles. We are fortunate that a score of the piece was printed (also at great cost) to commemorate the occasion. Like all scores, this text provides only the "bare bones" —notes, rhythms, and some sparse ornamentation. Modern performers must decide which instruments will accompany the solo voices as the characters deliver their monologues and dialogues. Plucked instruments (lutes and harpsichords) seem best suited to these moments in the score, as their decaying sound allows for easy comprehension of the text. When Caccini does not specify instrumentation, we must also make choices about how to accompany choruses and whether strings and/or winds will play the many short instrumental *sinfonie*. Bringing the work to the stage requires additional instrumental music for scenic changes and transitions, so I have inserted a few works by Caccini's contemporary, Salamone Rossi, a violinist and composer who worked in Mantua.

We are fortunate to be able to call upon today's expert players of such uncommon instruments as the curtal (an early version of the bassoon—*dulciana* in Italian) and the sackbut (*trombone* in Italian and in modern usage) to complement the Haymarket core of bowed and plucked instruments.



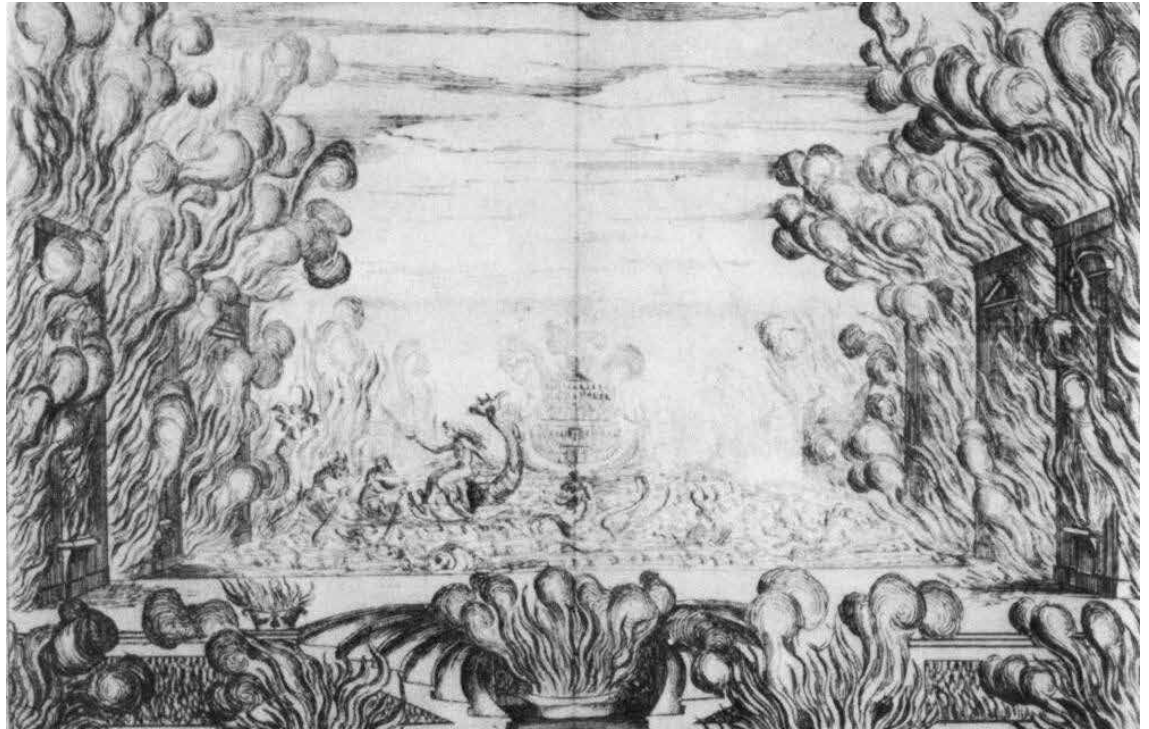
**Craig Trompeter** is the founder and artistic director of Chicago's acclaimed Haymarket Opera Company. He has performed with Second City Musick, Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Chicago Opera Theater, Music of the Baroque, the Smithsonian Chamber Music Society, and the Oberlin Consort of Viols. Among other prestigious venues where he has appeared are the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Art Institute of Chicago, the Glimmerglass Festival, the Brooklyn Academy of Music, and the Valletta International Baroque Festival in Malta. His engagements as a soloist include the Ravinia Festival, the annual conference of the American Bach Society, the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, and Music of the Baroque. Trompeter has recorded works of Mozart, Bologne, Biber, Boismortier, Marais, Vivaldi, Handel, Greene, Henry Eccles, and a potpourri of Elizabethan composers on the Harmonia Mundi, Cedille, and Centaur labels. As a modern cellist, he premiered several chamber operas by MacArthur Fellow John Eaton, performing as actor, singer, and cellist. In 2003 he founded the Feldenkrais® Center of Chicago where he teaches Awareness Through Movement® and Functional Integration®. Trompeter conducts the Early Music Ensemble at the University of Chicago and teaches Baroque Performance Practices at Northwestern University.

## Biographies continued

WENDY WASZUT-BARRETT | SET DESIGNER

*La liberazione di Ruggiero dall'isola d'Alcina*, Scene 3, with Alcina's Island on Fire. Design by Giulio Parigi (1625)

The Isle of Alcina is a lush landscape, home to magical plants and mythical creatures. When familiarizing myself with the opera's plot, I quickly became overwhelmed with the numerous scenic requirements of an enchanted land with hidden dangers. There was just so much to consider, almost too much, when looking at the Baroque staging possibilities. I had to rein myself in after our first production meeting and consider the very realistic limitations of the Jarvis Opera Hall stage.



Although it is a beautiful space and happy home for Haymarket productions, there are a few challenges for staged performances. For example, there is not enough space above the stage to raise any scenic element out of sight. There are no floor traps for surprise entrances or exits. There is minimal space offstage, prohibiting the storage of larger scenic items. None of this is impossible to overcome, and in many ways I share the same struggles as Baroque designers. Our solution for staging *La liberazione di Ruggiero dall'isola d'Alcina* was to build our own theater.

This scenic design explores Baroque technical theater on a manageable scale. The proscenium opening is only 8'-6" wide by 8'-6" high. The upstage area is only 8'-0" deep. The decision allowed us to embrace not only the many fantastical elements, but also historical accuracy. It was an opportunity to build roll drops, sliding panels, and wave machines, as well as operating stage machinery during the production. It has also afforded us an opportunity to frame the painted scenery with our own proscenium arch. We hope that you enjoy stepping back in time.



**Wendy Waszut-Barrett** is an author, artist, and historian, specializing in design and scenic art for historic productions and venues. She is the founder and president of Historic Stage Services, LLC, a company specializing in the documentation, restoration, and replication of historic stage settings. For over three decades, her passion has advanced the preservation of historic stage scenery and the training of scenic artists in lost scene painting techniques. Recent productions include *Pirates of Penzance* and *The Sorcerer* for the Gilbert & Sullivan Very Light Opera Co. (Minneapolis). Recent publications include *Sosman & Landis: Shaping the Landscape of American Theatre* (TheatreInitiative Berlin's *Die Vierte Wand* 011) and *Santa Fe Scottish Rite Temple: Freemasonry, Architecture and Theatre* (Museum of New Mexico Press, 2018). Previously, Waszut-Barrett has designed scenery for Haymarket's productions of *L'Amant Anonyme* and *L'incoronazione di Poppea*.



## STEPHANIE CLUGGISH | COSTUME DESIGNER

This piece was so exciting to approach from a costume perspective. We have so many magical beings to imagine in this world, from witches to nobles enchanted as plants to sea monsters. I had a rich history of dazzling ballet costumes to draw upon from this time period, with many examples of Neptune and other mythical creatures represented in extant renderings. Melissa, Alcina, and Ruggiero also have many historical examples to draw from. While Ruggiero's costume is staying true to his history as a Knight of the Crusades, we ultimately decided to give the witches and all our mystical creatures a more fantastical bent to their clothes, keeping the Baroque time period as an influence but ensuring they stood out in contrast to the chorus of human nobles, liberated at the end. The costume design was definitely a fun challenge for our chorus. We have eight amazing ensemble performers singing up to five parts each, so my design had to accommodate their quick changes as much as the characters they are portraying! We are able to create such lush visuals only with the assistance of many hands backstage, as well as the efforts of the performers onstage.



**Stephanie Cluggish** is a Chicago-based costume designer and clinical assistant professor of costumes at the University of Illinois Chicago. Her work at Haymarket includes costume designs for *Orlando*, *L'Amant Anonyme*, and *L'incoronazione di Poppea*. Recently she has designed costumes in Chicago for American Blues Theatre, A Red Orchid Theatre, Chicago Fringe Opera, The Gift, and Steppenwolf; regionally, with Theatreworks Colorado, Theatre Raleigh, Charlottesville Opera, and Wolf Trap Opera. She is an active member of USA829 and co-chair of the National Costume Department United Best Practices Committee.



Costume rendering of the shepherd



Costume rendering of the "coro di monstri"



Costume rendering of the siren

## Biographies continued

MEGAN E. PIRTLE | WIG & MAKEUP DESIGNER

*Four Turkish Girls* by Melchior Lorichs (1555-1559)

Inspired by the tales that influenced composer Francesca Caccini, we played with the opposition of hairstyles favored by European nobility versus those of the nomadic folk culture of Ottoman-ruled Anatolia. As the work premiered in 1625, society had just begun to transition into the centered bun and side curls, which would dominate the next forty years of European fashion. We pay homage to these styles through the enchantress, Melissa, as she leads the audience into the magical, remote island domain of Alcina. In contrast, the seductive enchantress at the heart of our story, Alcina, wears a long single braid reminiscent of the 16th-century style favored by Turkish women. The poet Karacaoğlan once wrote of the evocative nature of long hair, dreaming of a braid long enough to wrap around his lover's waist:

*"I will buy you a golden saçbağı\*  
Gather it up and wrap around your slender waist...."*

*\*Saçbağı— a jeweled tassel of gold or silver chains traditionally tied to the end of Turkish women's braids*



In the longevity of their imprisonment, Alcina's former lovers and damsels have hair that has grown long and wild, inspiring a mixture of styles drawn from Turkish and Renaissance influences with assortments of twists, braids, and flowing locks. This medley of hairstyles conjures a sense of timelessness, magic, and mystery evocative of the world of this epic tale.



**Megan E. Pirtle** is a Chicago-based theater artist specialized in wig and costume design. Chicago credits include TimeLine Theatre, Lookingglass Theatre, Northlight Theatre, Raven Theatre, Court Theatre, and Marriott Theatre. As a designer dedicated to the collaborative art of theater, she has studied many facets of theatrical production including costume construction, costume crafts, makeup, and prosthetics. She is also a licensed cosmetologist for the state of Illinois. And in 2023, she was the recipient of the Michael Merritt Emerging Technical Collaborator Award. Previously, Pirtle has designed wigs and makeup for Haymarket's productions of *Marc'Antonio e Cleopatra*, *L'Amant Anonyme*, and *L'incoronazione di Poppea*.

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## BRIAN SCHNEIDER | LIGHTING DESIGNER

As always, Haymarket's latest historically inspired production brings new challenges to me as a lighting designer. First performed in 1625, *La liberazione di Ruggiero dall'isola di Alcina* is the earliest opera I have ever worked on. As the first female opera composer, Francesca Caccini delved into themes and techniques way ahead of her time. Set on an enchanted island filled with magic and monsters, love and revenge, this piece is full of dramatic flair. Remember that there was no electricity in the seventeenth century, so performances essentially had two lighting options, daylight or candle flames. These early audiences were treated to a much more intimate experience, with softer and dimmer lighting, as well as a far more limited color palette than modern work. Since flames are far less powerful than our modern lights, they were placed as close as possible to the action on the stage. In addition to footlights, candles were incorporated into the sets, or hidden in the wings behind scenery. Today, I am able to sidestep the obvious safety hazards by recreating these lighting positions with current theatrical lights, while still keeping the feel of these historic productions. I am grateful to my scenic ancestors for their historic lighting techniques, and for leaving schematics for modern designers to study. Through the echoes of the past, I hope to add to the magic of this production.



A native of New York City, **Brian Schneider** lives in Lafayette, Louisiana, where as a lighting designer and licensed electrician he integrates Louisiana culture and point of view into his designs. In addition to his work with Haymarket, he collaborates with groups such as Opera Louisiane, Basin Dance Collective, and the Turner Fischer Center for Opera at LSU. When away from the theater, Schneider designs and builds custom lamps and lighting installations. His work has been shown at the Acadiana Center for the Arts, the Contemporary Art Center of New Orleans, and the Hilliard Museum of Art. Schneider uses light as his personal language, blurring the lines between a profession and a calling.

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## CHASE HOPKINS | CREATIVE PRODUCER



**Chase Hopkins** is the general director of Chicago's acclaimed Haymarket Opera Company and the artistic director of Opera Edwardsville. Hopkins was appointed as Haymarket's first general director in 2020. Recently, Hopkins made his directorial debut at Haymarket Opera Company with Hasse's *Marc'Antonio e Cleopatra*, receiving praise from Heidi Waleson in the *Wall Street Journal*, saying "Chase Hopkins, the director, wisely had the performers interact naturalistically, and the portrait of their relationship deepened through the evening." *Chicago Classical Review* praised Hopkins' staging as "skillful and alert to the intimate nature of the piece." Previously, Hopkins served as a creative producer for three innovative cinematic productions of Handel operas that received praise as "an inspiring and relevant modern production" (*Operawire*) and "a superb document of a Handel opera" (*Chicago Tribune*). Hopkins served as creative producer for the 2022 production of *L'Amant Anonyme* by Joseph Bologne, the Chevalier de Saint-Georges, which was praised by the *Chicago Tribune* for "making history." The world-premiere recording of this forgotten work was released in collaboration with Chicago's Grammy Award-winning label, Cedille Records, earning a 5-star review from the *BBC Music Magazine* and praise for "luxury casting" by *Gramophone*. Hopkins also served as creative producer for Haymarket's 2022 production of *L'incoronazione di Poppea*, which was included in the *Chicago Tribune's* "Top Performances of 2022." Hopkins is currently pursuing executive training at the Harvard Business School.



# Thank you!

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*We gratefully acknowledge members of the Haymarket family who have made gifts from January 2022 to May 2023. Thank you for your support!*

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