MUSIC
Kevin Puts

LIBRETTO
Mark Campbell

WORLD PREMIERE
November 12, 2011, Ordway Theatre - St. Paul, Minnesota

CONDUCTOR
David Charles Abell

STAGE DIRECTOR
Eric Simonson

CHORUS MASTER
Suzanne Mallare Acton

SCENIC DESIGN
Francis O’Connor

COSTUME DESIGN
Kärtin Kopischke

LIGHTING DESIGN
Marcus Dilliard

HAIR & MAKEUP DESIGN
Joanne Weaver

PROJECTIONS DESIGN
Andrzej Goulding

SOUND DESIGN
C. Andrew Mayer

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR
Andrew Nienaber

FIGHT DIRECTOR
Chris Barbeau

ORIGINAL FIGHT CHOREOGRAPHY
Doug Scholz-Carlson

STAGE MANAGER
Ken Saltzman

SUPERTITLES
Dee Dorsey

SCOTTISH DIALECT CONSULTANT
Michael J. Barnes

Silent Night, based on the screenplay by Christian Carion for the motion picture Joyeux Noël produced by Nord-Ouest Production

Commissioned by Minnesota Opera
A Minnesota Opera New Works Initiative Production by arrangement with Aperto Press, publisher Bill Holab Music: Sole Agent

Scenery, properties, costumes and media files for this production are owned by Minnesota Opera, Opera Philadelphia, Cincinnati Opera, and Fort Worth Opera and were constructed by the Minnesota Opera Shops.
Cast

In order of vocal appearance

Anna Sorensen (an opera singer & Nikolaus Sprink's lover) ............... Erin Wall
Nikolaus Sprink (an opera singer & German soldier) ..................... Chad Johnson
German General .......................... See Program Insert
Father Palmer .......................... Daniel Belcher
Jonathan Dale .......................... John Robert Lindsey
Madeleine Audebert (wife of Lt. Audebert) ............ Briana Elyse Hunter +
Lt. Audebert (a French officer) ........ Philip Addis
William Dale (brother of Jonathan Dale) ............ Jeff Byrnes +
Lt. Gordon (a Scottish officer) ........ Gabriel Preisser
French General .......................... Ricardo Lugo
Ponchel (aide-de-camp of Lt. Audebert) .................... Alexandre Sylvestre
Kronprinz (son of Kaiser Wilhelm II) ................. Joseph Michael Brent +
Lt. Horstmayer (a German officer) .................. Kristopher Irmiter
British Major .......................... Brent Michael Smith +

+ Michigan Opera Theatre Studio Artist
An opera in two acts
Sung in English, German, and French
with English supertitle translations.
Running time: 2 hours, 30 minutes
A Michigan Opera Theatre premiere

Synopsis

PROLOGUE
Late summer, 1914. War is declared. In Berlin, the announcement disrupts a performance by opera singers Anna Sorensen and Nikolaus Sprink. In a Scottish church, William convinces his younger brother Jonathan to enlist with him. In the Paris apartment of the Audeberts, Madeleine excoriates her husband for leaving while she is pregnant with their first child.

ACT ONE
A battlefield near the French border, just before Christmas. A battle is fought between the German, French, and Scottish troops. William is shot and Jonathan must leave him to die. Back at the Scottish bunker, Father Palmer offers Jonathan solace. In the French bunker, Lt. Audebert finds the French General in his office, who reprimands him. Audebert laments the loss of his wife’s photograph. He sings of needing sleep, soon echoed by the other soldiers. In the German bunker, Nikolaus reveals his despair.

Later, gifts arrive for the German soldiers, courtesy of the Kronprinz. Horstmayer receives word that Nikolaus has been ordered to sing with Anna at the Kronprinz’s nearby chalet. Ponchel brings coffee to Audebert, which reminds Ponchel of having coffee every morning with his mother; the alarm clock he carries rings each day to mark the ritual. Jonathan writes to his mother, not mentioning his brother’s death. Anna and Nikolaus perform for the Kronprinz. Anna has arranged for Nikolaus to spend the night with her, but he insists on returning to the battlefield. She vows to accompany him.

The French soldier Gueusselin volunteers to infiltrate the German bunker and heads into no man’s land. The Scottish soldiers drink whiskey and play the bagpipes, and Father Palmer sings a sentimental ballad, which the other soldiers overhear. Nikolaus returns, and the soldiers are stunned to see Anna. When the Scottish song ends, Nikolaus responds with a Christmas song, and a bagpipe joins in. Nikolaus ascends the bunker and slowly moves to the center of no man’s land. Gueusselin abandons his plan. The three lieutenants, each waving a white flag, agree to a cease-fire... but only for Christmas Eve. The soldiers cautiously move toward each other, eventually sharing provisions and trading names. Anna appears, inspiring awe among the men. Father Palmer celebrates mass, while Jonathan finds his brother’s body, vows revenge. Father Palmer urges them to “go in peace”.

ACT TWO
The next morning, Jonathan tries to bury his brother. Because the truce is officially over, two German sentries are prepared to shoot him, but Father Palmer and Lt. Gordon intervene. Horstmayer proposes that they bury the dead, and the three lieutenants decide to extend the truce. Father Palmer delivers last rites to the dead and the soldiers form a processional bearing the wagon of bodies away. Anna promises Nikolaus that he will not suffer the same fate. News of the cease-fire has reached headquarters, and the British Major, the Kronprinz, and the French General all react in anger. Horstmayer prepares to return to war, and Nikolaus berates him for his allegiance to the Fatherland. Horstmayer Arrests Nikolaus for insubordination, but Anna takes his hand and leads him across no man’s land to the French bunker, where he demands asylum.

The British Major admonishes the Scottish soldiers for participating in the truce. They are to be transferred to the front lines. When a German soldier is seen crossing the battlefield, the Major orders him killed, and Jonathan complies. Audebert returns to his office and discovers the French General, who delivers word of his punishment. Audebert informs the General – his father that he has a son. The Kronprinz banishes the German soldiers to Pomerania. As the soldiers are taken away, they hum the Scottish ballad from Christmas Eve. Over a now-empty battlefield, snow begins to fall.

Courtesy of Minnesota Opera
The Christmas Truce of 1914, as the events at the center of Silent Night are popularly known, was an outbreak of peace amid the devastation of war along the industrialized battlefields of the Western Front. It is one of the most documented and romanticized non-combat stories of the First World War—football matches, the exchange of cognacs, chocolates, and cigars, and of shared memorial services over the fresh graves in no man’s land. Silent Night is but one example that takes on the subject of the 1914 holiday cease-fire, from novels and histories to Paul McCartney’s 1983 music video for the anti-war song “Pipes of Peace.” Soldiers at the front that winter wrote diaries and letters home, and official records kept by the battalions and regiments establish the timeline of events that took place during that, as one young English private called it, “weird Christmas.” These are a few of those first-hand recollections, many of which have recently come to light in Terri Blom Crocker’s The Christmas Truce: Myth, Memory, and the First World War.

“No war today,” announced a December 25, 1914 diary entry for the 16th Queen’s Westminsters infantry regiment, commenting also on the amicable “conversation with enemy between the trenches” that took place. “No shot fired all day,” wrote another diarist for the 1st Royal Warwickshire regiment, while another called it a “curious state of affairs” that occasioned an informal exchange of courtesies between troops. War records and letters sent from both sides of the Western Front convey the sense of relief, even delight, experienced by soldiers during their unexpected holiday in the trenches near the small village of Ploegsteert, Belgium. Following the First Battle of the Marne in September that had dashed any hopes of a swift conquest, both sides attempted to outflank the other. Eventually the soldiers had to dig in, creating some 475 miles of trenches from the North Sea to Switzerland. Emerging for just a few hours from those foxholes and ditches was a welcomed change. The cease-fires that occurred were not prearranged or coordinated. Similar events were not uncommon during the conflict, but the spontaneity and quantity of those that happened outside Ploegsteert make the Christmas Truce an almost unbelievable story.

The idea of a truce on Christmas was first suggested by Pope Benedict XI early in December 1914. As it became obvious that the conflict would not come to a quick end, the pope pleaded with combatant countries to let their “guns fall silent at least upon the night the angels sang,” allowing time for negotiations to lead to an honorable peace. Military leadership on all sides ignored the appeal. Sir John French, commander in chief of the British Expeditionary Force, was the first to order “instant fire” on any German white flag raised on the Western Front. On December 22, Winston Churchill, First Lord of the Admiralty, sent a similar message to the Royal Navy: “Any white flag hoisted by a German ship is to be fired on as a matter of principle.” Yet while the pontiff’s request was officially rejected, news of it spread among the soldiers.

Roughly two-thirds of the troops along the front participated in some type of cease-fire on that day, with regiments stationed across more than fifteen miles of the twenty-mile front near Ploegsteert reporting no combat. In some cases, as Graham Williams of the Fifth London Rifle Brigade recalled, the armistice was foreshadowed the night before by carol singing: “First the Germans would sing one of their carols and then we would sing one of ours, until when we started up “O Come, All Ye Faithful” the Germans immediately joined in singing the same hymn to the Latin words Adeste Fideles. And I thought, well, this is really a most extraordinary thing—two nations both singing the same carol in the middle of a war.” Germans placed lit Christmas trees, which had been provided to every unit, along the parapets of their dugouts. Rifleman Ernest Morley of London described in a letter home how the truce began in his sector: “[A German] shouted ‘A Merry Christmas English. We’re not shooting tonight.’ We
yelled back a similar message....
As fighting ceased the two lines looked
like an illuminated fête... we had all the
candles & lights we could muster stuck
on our bayonets above the parapet.”

Lt. Michael Holroyd, a British
machine gun officer in the 1st
Battalion, Hampshire Regiment, noted
that “the carols of Christmas Eve
were followed by friendly exchange of
greetings on Christmas morning,” and
impromptu meetings were arranged
in no man’s land. And they did not
go empty handed. A young Private
Squire wrote home that the “Germans
came out of [their trench] and we met
halfway and talked and exchanged
souvenirs, our own bullets for theirs,
and they also gave some of our fellows
cigars of which they said they had
plenty and we gave them tins of bully
beef as they said they have very little
food.” Others reported exchanging
local liquors received from home
for the holiday, buttons from their
uniforms, and sharing photos of family.

Another element of the meetings were
makeshift football matches. A few
games were actually played with teams
being chosen and scores recorded,
though without a proper soccer ball
they were kicking about whatever they
could find, and the outcome always
 favored the regiment reporting the
game in their diary.

Not all of the interactions between
the troops were this lighthearted,
however. A number of battalions
used the cease-fire as an opportunity
to retrieve the bodies of their fallen
comrades. Sergeant Richard Lintott
recorded in his diary that he found in
no man’s land men from both sides
“burying some dead which had been
lying about since October 21st.”

Another English officer was present
when “they stuck a bit of wood over
the grave–no name on it only ‘Fur
Vaterland and Freiheit’ (For Fatherland
and Freedom):” The troops also shared
prayer services over the dead. These
burial services, as brief as they were
necessary, were a primary reason for
many of the troops to observe the
truce. “Our [chaplain] arranged the
prayers and Psalms etc., and then our
interpreter wrote them out in German.
Then the service was read first in
English by our own Padre and then in
German by a boy who was studying for
the ministry. It was an extraordinary
and most wonderful sight.”

While the Christmas Truce reflected
our better instincts and empathy as
humans, it lasted but a few days at
most and was not to be repeated the
next year. In the end, the desire for
peace would not be confused with the
need for victory. Bruce Bairnsfather,
a British officer and cartoonist
whose personal account of wartime
in the trenches, Bullets and Billets,
became a bestseller in Britain, spoke
for many comrades when he wrote,
“There was not an atom of hate on
either side that day; and yet, on our
side, not for a moment was the will
to beat them relaxed. It was just like
the interval between the rounds in a
friendly boxing match.” But the end
of the Great War was nowhere near
its last round. Bairnsfather’s report of
the day ends with him heading back
over the parapet, looking back to see
a man in his battalion “who was a bit
of an amateur hair dresser in civil life,
cutting the unnaturally long hair of a
docile Boche [German soldier],” and
reminding us that our enemy can also
be a friend.

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MICHIGAN OPERA THEATRE CHORUS — SILENT NIGHT

TENOR
Gregory Ashe
French Soldier #3
Errin Brooks
Scottish Soldier #2
Mark Craig
Darren DeWitt
Bagpipe
Michael Fowler
Mark Istratie
Richard Jackson, Jr.
Daniel Kitzman
Adrian Leskiw
Brad Lieto
Bradley Miller
Sasha Noori
French Soldier #2
Carrick Secorski
Jason Thomas
German Sentry/Soldier #2
Brett Thompson
Jeff Wilkinson

BASS
Kurt Frank
Joseph Edmonds
Marko Farion
Matthew Fleisher
Brandon Hood
German Soldier #1
Matthew Konopacki
Scottish Soldier #1
Miroslav Manovski
Blair Mellow
German Soldier #3
David Moan
Scottish Soldier #3
Pette Moore
Constantine Novotny
Gueselin
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A Special Thank You to Our Chairman

R. Jamison “Rick” Williams has been a member of the MOT Board of Directors and a Trustee since 2000 and its board chair since 2003. As Trustees, Rick and his wife Karen have supported our company with their leadership, generosity, and vision, aiming to make a lasting impact. As leadership volunteers, they have played a central role guiding the company through significant challenges. Together, they have championed David DiChiera’s vision to produce and present productions that connect directly and emotionally with diverse audiences, playing a significant role in many of the company’s successes including Cyrano, Frida, The Passenger, and The Tender Land.

The Williams are central figures in the great story of this institution. Their influence, expertise, and support has been essential to MOT’s success, survival, and stability.

Rick and Karen Williams
DAVID CHARLES ABELL
Conductor, Silent Night
For conductor Mr. Abell, classical music, opera, film, music, and musical theater all contribute to a diverse career, unified by a serious, yet theatrical approach. David has conducted many of the top British orchestras including the London Symphony, London Philharmonic, Royal Philharmonic, and the Bournemouth Symphony. Stateside, he has appeared with the Atlanta, Cincinnati, Boston Pops, and Philly Pops Orchestras.

David's many television and radio appearances encompass a wide repertoire, as do his catalog of recordings. In 2015, he made his English National Opera debut, conducting Sweeney Todd, starring Emma Thompson and Bryn Terfel.

SUZANNE MALLARE ACTON
Chorus Master, Carmen, Silent Night
Suzanne Acton has received wide acclaim for her choral direction involving more than 125 productions in seven languages. Conducting credits include West Side Story, Music Man, Pirates of Penzance, The Mikado, Daughter of the Regiment, Carmen, La Traviata and Carmina Burana with The Medium for MOT; My Fair Lady and La Traviata for Dayton Opera; Merry Widow and Madame Butterfly for Artpark; and Tosca for Augusta Opera. As founding Director of the MOT Children’s Chorus, Ms. Acton was instrumental in developing the inaugural 2007-2008 season. She is also the Artistic and Music Director of metro Detroit’s Rackham Choir.

PHILIP ADDIS
Lieutenant Audebert, Silent Night
Canadian baritone Philip Addis is praised for his creamy, bright, smooth voice as much as for his spell-binding, daring, yet sensitive interpretations. A rising star on the international stage, Addis has performed in opera, concerts and recitals throughout Canada, the United States, Europe, and Japan.

CHRISTOPHER BARBEAU
Fight Director, Silent Night
Currently the fight director and stunt coordinator for Michigan Opera Theatre, Village Shakespeare Festival, and the Michigan Classical Repertory Theater, Mr. Barbeau has been involved in stunt work for 42 years with 28 feature films, over 600 stage credits and many appearances as a stunt performer. Formerly the fight master for the Michigan Renaissance Festival, he holds a 3rd degree black belt in Aikido, a 2nd degree black belt in Jiu Jitsu, and was the 1975 National Junior épée champion. Mr. Barbeau holds a BA from the University of Michigan in English literature, History, Philosophy and Physics. Twenty-six years ago he created and currently directs the Ring of Steel Action Theatre, with which he teaches a variety of classes at all levels for schools across the nation, and provides instruction in theatrical combat and stunts. He has worked with opera singers for the past 16 years and serves as a regular guest artist at Cornell and for both the National Educational Theater Association’s Michigan and International Thespian Festivals.

DANIEL BELCHER
Father Palmer, Silent Night
Grammy Award winning baritone Daniel Belcher has performed in many of the world’s music capitals, including Paris, London, New York, San Francisco, Berlin, Stuttgart, Amsterdam, Geneva, Toronto, Tokyo, Seoul, and Houston. With a repertoire of more than 60 roles, Belcher has championed roles from the Baroque and those composed expressly for him. He came to international attention in 2004, creating the role of Prior Walter in Peter Eötvös’ Angels in America for the Theatre du Chatelet in Paris for which he was hailed by London’s The Guardian as “possessing the kind of powerhouse stuff that indicates a star in the making.”

RON DANIELS
Director, Carmen
A native of Brazil, Mr. Daniels is a founding member of the renowned Teatro Oficina, in São Paulo. He is also a former Artistic Director of The Other Place Theatre, the Royal Shakespeare Company’s experimental theater in England. In the 1990s, Mr. Daniels served as Associate Artistic Director of the American Repertory Theatre in Cambridge, MA.

Mr. Daniels presently lives in NYC and works as a freelance director. Besides directing at many of the major regional theatres in the U.S., his work in opera has included a number of new productions for Boston Lyric (Re Pastore), Houston Grand Opera (Carmen), Colorado Opera (Tosca), and LA Opera (Madame Butterfly).

MARCUS DILLIARD
Lighting Designer, Silent Night
Marcus has designed for opera and theater across North America, including numerous productions for Minnesota Opera, Lyric Opera of Kansas City, Madison Opera, and Portland Opera. Previous designs include Don Giovanni for Lyric Opera of Kansas City, The Barber of Seville for Madison Opera, Gypsy and All is Calm for Theatre Latta Da, To Kill a Mockingbird for the Guthrie Theater, Carmina Burana for Minnesota Dance Theater, and Silent Night for L’Opera de Montreal. Recent projects include Tales of Hoffman and Romeo et Juliette for Madison Opera and Dead Man Walking for Lyric Opera of Kansas City.
SANDRA PIQUES EDDY

Carmen, Carmen (October 23)

Last season, mezzo soprano Sandra Piques Eddy made her role debut as Charlotte in Werther with Boston Lyric Opera before returning to the Metropolitan Opera roster to cover Maddalena in Rigoletto.

Career highlights include numerous appearances to great acclaim as the title role in Carmen, at Portland Opera, Opera Colorado, Opera North (UK), Lyric Opera of Kansas City, Opera Coeur d’Alene and Chicago Opera Theater. Other signature roles include: Dorabella in Così fan tutte with Hyogo Performing Arts Center - Japan, Boston Lyric Opera, Glimmerglass Opera, New York City Opera, Pittsburgh Opera, Rosina with Vancouver Opera, Opera Omaha, Austin Lyric Opera, Jacksonville Symphony, Lyric Opera of Kansas City and Crested Butte Music Festival.

VALERIO GALLI

Conductor, Carmen

A Viareggio native, Maestro Galli was born into the cradle of where some of the greatest versismo operas were written, and he is emerging as one of the foremost authoritarians on Puccini and his fellow composers of the era. Mr. Galli launched his career in 2007 at the age of 27 with Tosca, for the 53rd Puccini Festival in Torre del Lago. His opera conducting debut occurred in 2004 with Madama Butterfly.

Past conducting engagements include: Rigoletto, Pagliacci, Carmen, Cavalleria Rusticana, La Traviata, and The Masked Ball.

Maestro Galli made his MOT debut with Turandot, in 2014.

HARRY GREENLEAF

Morales, Carmen

Baritone Harry Greenleaf is a native of Wixom, Michigan and an alumnum of Michigan State University College of Music. He is pursuing a Master’s of Music at the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music. Recent roles include Top in MOT’s 2016 production of The Tender Land, Anthony Hope in Sweeney Todd for Glimmerglass Opera, Sonora in La fanciulla del West for Des Moines Metro Opera, Danilo in CCM Opera’s The Merry Widow and as The Forester in CCM’s The Cunning Little Vixen. In 2013 and 2014 he was a Studio Artist with the Wolf Trap Opera Company.

KRISTOPHER IRMITER

Lieutenant Horstmayer, Silent Night

A Grammy nominated artist who has performed in all 50 states and throughout Canada, bass-baritone Kristopher Irmiter is one of the most sought after low voices in the U.S. He has appeared with San Francisco Opera, Opera de Montreal, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Houston Grand Opera, Baltimore Opera, Atlanta Opera, Pittsburgh Opera, Utah Opera, Austin Lyric Opera, Opera Lyra Ottawa, Arizona Opera, and Florida Grand Opera among many others. In addition to his accomplished performing credits, Mr. Irmiter has a strong and growing reputation as a teacher and mentor to young singers.

GINGER COSTA-JACKSON

Carmen, Carmen

Mezzo soprano Ginger Costa-Jackson is a graduate of the Metropolitan Opera’s Lindemann Young Artist Development Program, and a Samling Scholar. Last season she performed the role of Rosina in Il Barbiere di Siviglia with the Metropolitan Opera, and the title role in Bizet's Carmen with the San Francisco Opera. This season, after her engagement with MOT, Ms. Jackson will make her debut at Opera de Paris as Despina in a new production of Così fan tutte conducted by Philippe Jordan, Dorabella in Così fan tutte with the Seattle Opera, and the role of Rosina with the Santa Cruz Symphony.

CHAD JOHNSON

Nikolaus Sprink, Silent Night

Noted as a “blond hunk with a bright tenor sound”, Chad Johnson has impressed audiences and critics throughout his career. This season’s engagements include Lenski in Eugene Onegin with Florida Grand Opera. Mr. Johnson’s recent tenor roles include Nikolaus Sprink in Silent Night with Fort Worth Opera and in his debut with The Wexford Festival; Tonio in La fille du régiment with Mill City Summer Opera; Gerald in Lakmé with Minnesota Opera and Florida Grand Opera; Peregrino in Via Lactea with Opera Bend; Nadir in Les pecheurs de perles with Virginia Opera and Opera Carolina; Ruggero in La Rondine with Fresno Grand Opera; Lysander in Britten’s A Midsummer Night’s Dream with Boston Lyric Opera; Jacquino in Fidelio with Opera Omaha; Emilio il sogno di scipione with Gotham Chamber Opera; and Lance in the rarely performed Gluck opera, L’arbre enchanté with Fire Island Opera for their inaugural season.

ALOK KUMAR

Don José, Carmen (October 23)

Most recently, Mr. Kumar performed Don José in Bizet’s Carmen in New York, with stage director Bernard Uzan. He returned to Connecticut as the tenor soloist in Dvorak’s Stabat Mater with the Fairfield County Chorale, under the baton of Emmanuel Plasson. Mr. Kumar has appeared with the Santa Fe Opera, Austin Lyric Opera, Asheville Lyric Opera, Opera Delaware, Cedar Rapids Opera Theatre, and Portland Repertory Theatre amongst others and has most frequently portrayed leading roles in the opera’s of Bizet, Puccini, and Verdi.

As a solo artist, he has appeared with symphonies and orchestras in Spain, California, Connecticut, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, Rhode Island, Texas, and Massachusetts.
In recent seasons, Mr. Lugo has joined Salome and Macbeth, The Gambler, fanciulla del West, Adriana Lecouvreur, Naxos, Khovanshchina, Billy Budd, La fanciulla del West, Adriana Lecouvreur, Macbeth, The Gambler, and Salome. In recent seasons, Mr. Lugo has joined MOT as Timur in Turandot, Alfieri in Bolcom’s A View from the Bridge, and Don Fernando in Fidelio, and has sung Dulcamara in L’elisir d’amore with Opera Memphis, Mr. Page in The Merry Wives of Windsor with Boston Midsummer Opera, the Sacristan in Tosca and Bartolo in Le nozze di Figaro with Sarasota Opera and with the Princeton Festival.

ROSA MERCEDES
Choreographer, Carmen
Born in Barcelona, Ms. Mercedes is an internationally acclaimed dancer and choreographer. Featured by dance companies, dance festivals, and symphonies throughout the U.S. and Europe, her extensive work in opera has been seen on the stages of The Met, Teatro dell’Opera di Roma, Seattle Opera, Atlanta Opera, Baltimore Opera, Cincinnati Opera, Florentine Opera, Austin Lyric, Dallas Opera, Florida Grand Opera, and Palm Beach Opera. Ms. Mercedes teaches master classes and workshops in movement for singers, including the Young Artist programs at many of today’s leading opera companies.

LUIS ALEJANDRO OROZCO
Escamillo, Carmen
This season’s engagements for baritone Luis Alejandro Orozco include the title role in Don Giovanni at Bar Harbor Music Festival, his MOT debut as Escamillo in Carmen, Figaro in Il barbiere di Siviglia in his house debut with Florentine Opera, and a reprisal of his signature role, El Payador, in Maria de Buenos Aires with The Atlanta Opera.

GABRIEL PREISSER
Lieutenant Gordon, Silent Night
Praised for his “matinee idol and charisma”, “a beautiful, luscious baritone”, and “a compelling, commanding stage presence” by publications such as Opera News, the Star Tribune, and the Houston Chronicle, Gabriel Preiesser received rave reviews once again for his performance of Lieutenant Gordon in the world premiere of Kevin Puts’ Pulitzer Prize-winning Silent Night with Minnesota Opera. He then reprised this role at Opera Philadelphia, Cincinnati Opera, and here in Detroit with his debut at MOT.

CECILIA VIOLETTA LOPEZ
Soprano, Carmen
Soprano Cecilia Violetta Lopez has been named one of opera’s “25 Rising Stars” by Opera News. Her recent New York City debut in La Traviata was declared by The New York Observer as “a performance of the leading role of Violetta that is among the loveliest I have witnessed on any stage”. During the 2015 -2016 season, Ms. Lopez returned to Opera Idaho for Violetta, and made a company and role debut with Opera Tampa in three roles: Fiordiligi (Cosi fan tutte), Zerlina (Cosi fan tutte), and Violetta (La Traviata).

ERIC SIMONSON
Director, Silent Night
Mr. Simonson’s directorial credits include The Dream of Valentino, Wuthering Heights, Rusalka, and The Handmaid’s Tale, all for Minnesota Opera, as well as its world premiere engagements of Silent Night, The Grapes of Wrath, and The Shining. Additional credits include productions at Lyric Opera of Kansas City, Opera Colorado, Boston Lyric, Steppenwolf Theatre, The Huntington Theatre, Milwaukee Rep, NYC’s Primary Stages, LA Theatre Works, The Kennedy Center, Pittsburgh’s City Theatre, Seattle Rep, and San Jose Rep.

RICHARD LUGO
French General, Silent Night
Puerto Rican bass, Ricardo Lugo, is a versatile international artist in demand on the operatic and concert scene. Having made his Metropolitan Opera debut as Un Barnabotto in La Gioconda, Ricardo has since been involved in multiple productions with the company including Shostakovich’s The Nose, Ariadne auf Naxos, Khovanschina, Billy Budd, La fanciulla del West, Adriana Lecouvreur, Macbeth, The Gambler, and Salome. In recent seasons, Mr. Lugo has joined MOT as Timur in Turandot, Alfieri in Bolcom’s A View from the Bridge, and Don Fernando in Fidelio, and has sung Dulcamara in L’elisir d’amore with Opera Memphis, Mr. Page in The Merry Wives of Windsor with Boston Midsummer Opera, the Sacristan in Tosca and Bartolo in Le nozze di Figaro with Sarasota Opera and with the Princeton Festival.

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Puerto Rican bass, Ricardo Lugo, is a versatile international artist in demand on the operatic and concert scene. Having made his Metropolitan Opera debut as Un Barnabotto in La Gioconda, Ricardo has since been involved in multiple productions with the company including Shostakovich’s The Nose, Ariadne auf Naxos, Khovanschina, Billy Budd, La fanciulla del West, Adriana Lecouvreur, Macbeth, The Gambler, and Salome. In recent seasons, Mr. Lugo has joined MOT as Timur in Turandot, Alfieri in Bolcom’s A View from the Bridge, and Don Fernando in Fidelio, and has sung Dulcamara in L’elisir d’amore with Opera Memphis, Mr. Page in The Merry Wives of Windsor with Boston Midsummer Opera, the Sacristan in Tosca and Bartolo in Le nozze di Figaro with Sarasota Opera and with the Princeton Festival.

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respected companies, theaters, and festivals including Florida Grand Opera, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Royal New Zealand Ballet, Minnesota Opera, and Walnut Street Theatre.

ALEXANDRE SYLVESTRE

Ponchel, Silent Night
A native of Québec, Alexandre Sylvestre studied at the Conservatoire de musique de Montréal where he successfully obtained the “Premier Prix avec Grande Distinction”. Recent and upcoming engagements include Colline in La Bohème and the premiere of Les Feluettes for Opera de Montreal, Bartolo in The Barber of Seville for Saskatoon Opera, Timur in Turandot for Calgary Opera and Mozart's Requiem for Orchestre Symphonique de Québec. Of special interest is Opera Lafayette’s Leonore project, performances of Beethoven’s original version of Fidelio and the version by Gaveaux on the same subject, in Washington and New York.

ERIN WALL

Anna Sorensen, Silent Night
Soprano Erin Wall is acclaimed for her musicality and versatility, with an extensive opera and concert repertoire that spans three centuries from Mozart and Beethoven to Britten and Strauss. She has sung leading roles in the world’s great opera houses, including the Metropolitan Opera, La Scala, the Vienna Staatsoper, Opera National de Paris, and Lyric Opera of Chicago, and appears in concert with leading symphony orchestras and conductors worldwide. Recent career highlights include the title role in Strauss' Arabella and Helena in Britten’s A Midsummer Night’s Dream with the Metropolitan Opera; a highly acclaimed debut as Clemente in L’amour de loin with the Canadian Opera Company in 2012; the title role of Thais at the Edinburgh Festival; and the 50th Anniversary performance of Britten’s War Requiem with the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra led by Andris Nelsons at Coventry Cathedral. Ms. Wall’s discography includes Strauss’ Vier Letzte Lieder with the Melbourne Symphony, conducted by Sir Andrew Davis, Mahler’s 8th Symphony with the Berlin Staatskapelle conducted by Boulez and the Grammy winning recording of the same work with the San Francisco Symphony and Michael Tilson Thomas.

JOANNE MIDDLETON WEAVER

Wig and Makeup Designer, Carmen, Silent Night
Born in England, Joanne Weaver came to the U.S. in the late 1980s. She began apprenticing with what was then Washington Opera, now Washington National Opera. Ms. Weaver has since designed at many opera companies throughout the U.S., including Glimmerglass Opera, Central City Opera, Sarasota Opera, Lyric Opera of Kansas City and Des Moines Metro Opera. Her notable MOT credits include The Magic Flute, Macbeth, The Passenger, Frida, The Merry Widow, Faust, Margaret Garner, Cyrano and The Pearl Fishers.

Michigan Opera Theatre Studio Artists

JOSEPH MICHAEL BRENT

Remendado, Carmen, Kronprinz, Silent Night
Joseph Michael Brent is a returning artist in Michigan Opera Theatre Studio program. Recent roles at MOT include 3rd SS Officer in Mieczyslaw Weinberg's The Passenger, Malcolm in Verdi’s Macbeth, and first armored man in Mozart’s The Magic Flute. In 2015, Mr. Brent made both role and company debuts as Mayor Upfold in the Bronx Opera’s production of Albert Herring and Edgardo in the New York Opera Exchange production of Lucia di Lamermoor. He earned his Doctor of Musical Arts degree from the University of Georgia in 2014 with a dissertation on selected vocal works of Giovanni Paolo Bottesini. He is a native New Yorker, a proud graduate of the Frank Sinatra School of the Arts, and holds an undergraduate degree from the conservatory of music at Purchase College S.U.N.Y. in double bass performance. He was a student of Metropolitan Opera veteran, baritone, Frederick Burchinal.

JEFF BYRNE

Dancairo, Carmen
William Dale, Silent Night
Baritone Jeff Byrnes is excited to return to Michigan Opera Theatre this season as a Studio Artist. Most recently at MOT, Mr. Byrnes performed the roles of Schanuard in La Bohème, 1st SS Officer in The Passenger, Old Servant in Elektra and The Bonze in Madame Butterfly. Prior to joining MOT, he performed the role of Owen Hart in Dead Man Walking with Dayton Opera, and he covered Germont in La Traviata and Balstrode in Peter Grimes with Des Moines Metro Opera. Other operatic highlights include Leporello in Don Giovanni and the title role in The Mikado with the Natchez Opera Festival, and Figaro in Le Nozze di Figaro, Sprecher in Die Zauberflöte, and Pilate in St. John Passion with CCM Opera. He was a regional finalist in the Rocky Mountain Region of the Metropolitan Opera National Council auditions in 2014 and received the Encouragement Award in the New Orleans district in 2010. Jeff has also participated in the young artist programs at Dayton Opera, Des Moines Metro Opera, and the Seagle Music Colony. He is a graduate of the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music and Louisiana State University.

BRIANA ELYSE HUNTER

Mercedes, Carmen
Madeleine Audebert, Silent Night
Briana hails from Malvern, Pennsylvania, where she was a student in the Great Valley Schools, a district recognized for their strong music and theatre programs.

Ms. Hunter attended Davidson College in North Carolina, and found herself on stage again under the direction of the Royal Shakespeare Company, as well as in myriad other productions. She then went on to attend the prestigious Manhattan School of Music for
Classical Voice, where she performed in main stage productions with the opera department.

Since graduating from the MSM, Ms. Hunter has been on the rosters of many notable programs and companies from the U.S. to China, and France, including Sarasota Opera and Santa Fe Opera, where she has been an Apprentice Artist.

BRENT MICHAEL SMITH
Joyce Cohn Young Artist
Zuniga, Carmen
British Major, Silent Night

As a Studio Artist with Michigan Opera Theatre, Brent’s recent roles include Colline in La Bohème, Second S.S. Officer in The Passenger, the Doctor in Macbeth and the Speaker in The Magic Flute.

He was an Apprentice Artist with Des Moines Metro Opera, where his performance as Billy Jackrabbit in La fanciulla del West received critical acclaim by Opera News as a “standout.”

Mr. Smith sang Harry Hopkins in the world premiere of Daron Hagen’s A Woman in Morocco, as a part of Kentucky Opera’s American Opera Initiative, and was an Apprentice Artist with Sarasota Opera where he covered Charles V/The Monk in Don Carlos as well as sang in scenes from Fidelio, L’italia in Algeri and I Lombardi.

He received his Master of Music degree under the tutelage of John Hines. He received his Bachelor’s in music in piano performance from Hope College (Holland, MI). Mr. Smith is a first-place winner in the Grand Rapids Opera Competition (2012).

ANNE THEIS
Frasquita, Carmen
Soprano Angela Theis has performed several roles this year at Michigan Opera Theatre through her engagement as a Studio Artist, including Laurie in The Tender Land, 2nd Appearance in Macbeth, and Papagena in The Magic Flute.

Previously, she has appeared with the company as Marzelline in Fidelio, Barbarina in The Marriage of Figaro, and the High Priestess in Aida. A highlight of her career was when Dr. David DiChiera chose her to sing his compositions at his 2013 Kresge Eminent Artist award presentation and his 2015 tribute concert at the Detroit Opera House. The Boston Globe praised her for “a bright, bold, and beguilingly sung Zerlina” in Mozart’s Don Giovanni. In 2013, Ms. Theis won the Audience Choice Award at the 2013 Meistersinger Competition in Austria. Ms. Theis completed a postgraduate fellowship in Salzburg, Austria, and holds degrees from New England Conservatory and University of Notre Dame.
MICHIGAN OPERA THEATRE ORCHESTRA – CARMEN

VIOLIN I
Eliot Heaton, Concertmaster +
Laura Roelofs, Assistant Concertmaster +
Molly Hughes +
Bryan Johnston +
Velda Kelly +
Beth Kirton +
Charlotte Merkerson,
Concertmaster Emeritus +
Ran Cheng
Yuri Popowcyz
Jenny Wan

VIOLIN II
Victoria Haltom, Principal +
Kevin Filewych +
Henrik Karapetyan +
Anna Bittar-Weller +
Daniel Stachyra +
Sheri Marttila
Jacqueline Nutting
Judith Teasdle

VIOLA
John Madison, Principal +
Scott Stefanko +
Barbara Zmich-McClellan +
Catherine Franklin
James Greer
Julianne Zinn

CELLO
Nadine Deleury, Principal +
Miriam Eckelhoefer +
Daniel Thomas +
Andrea Yun +
Katri Ervamaa
Stefan Koch

BASS
Derek Weller, Principal +
Clark Suttle +
Greg Sheldon
Robert Stiles

FLUTE/PICCOLO
Laura Larson, Acting Principal +
Jung-Wan Kang

OBOE
Nermis Mieses, Principal +
Sally Heffelfinger–Pituch +

CLARINET
Brian Bowman, Principal +
J. William King +

BASSOON
Gregory Quick, Acting Principal +
Marat Rakhmatullaev

HORN
Andrew Pelletier, Principal +
Carrie Banfield +
David Denniston
Tamara Kosinski

TRUMPET
David Ammer, Principal +
Gordon Simmons +

TROMBONE
David Jackson, Acting Principal +
Greg Near +
Bryan Pokorney

TIMPANI
Alison Chang, Principal +

PERCUSSION
John Dorsey, Principal +
David Taylor

HARP
Patricia Terry-Ross, Principal +

+Michigan Opera Theatre Core Orchestra • Detroit Federation of Musicians Local #5 American Federation of Musicians

MICHIGAN OPERA THEATRE ORCHESTRA – SILENT NIGHT

VIOLIN I
Eliot Heaton, Concertmaster +
Laura Roelofs, Assistant Concertmaster +
Molly Hughes +
Bryan Johnston +
Velda Kelly +
Beth Kirton +
Ran Cheng
Yuri Popowcyz
Jenny Wan

VIOLIN II
Victoria Haltom, Principal +
Anna Bittar-Weller +
Kevin Filewych +
Henrik Karapetyan +
Daniel Stachyra +
Sheri Marttila
Jacqueline Nutting
Judith Teasdle

VIOLA
John Madison, Principal +
Scott Stefanko +
Leslie DeShazor-Adams

Catherine Franklin
James Greer
Julianne Zinn

CELLO
Nadine Deleury, Principal +
Miriam Eckelhoefer +
Daniel Thomas +
Andrea Yun +
Katri Ervamaa
Stefan Koch

BASS
Derek Weller, Principal +
Clark Suttle +
Greg Sheldon
Robert Stiles

FLUTE/PICCOLO
Laura Larson, Acting Principal +
Jung-Wan Kang
Brandon LePage

OBOE
Nermis Mieses, Principal +
Sally Heffelfinger–Pituch +
Stephanie Shapiro

ENGLISH HORN
Sally Heffelfinger–Pituch +

CLARINET
Brian Bowman, Principal +
Jocelyn Langworthy
Elliott Ross

BASSOON
Spencer Phillips, Acting Principal +
Roger Maki-Schramm
Susan Nelson

HORN
Andrew Pelletier, Principal +
David Denniston
Tamara Kosinski
Susan Mutter

TRUMPET
Derek Lockhart, Acting Principal +

TROMBONE
David Jackson, Acting Principal +
Bryan Pokorney

TIMPANI
Alison Chang, Principal +

PERCUSSION
John Dorsey, Principal +
Keith Claey's
David Taylor

BAGPIPE
Timothy Michling

HARMONICA
Andrew Wilson

PIANO / CELESTE
Jean Schneider

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BRAVO • Fall 2016 23
**General Information**

**PHOTOGRAPHY, RECORDING & COMMUNICATIONS DEVICES**
Photography or recording during any performance is strictly prohibited. You are welcome to take photographs in the lobby before or after a performance and during intermission. As a courtesy to our guests, please switch all electronic devices to silent mode and refrain from using them during the performance.

**IN CASE OF EMERGENCY**
Doctors and parents are advised to leave their seat location (located on ticket) and our emergency number, (313) 237-3257, with their service or sitter in case of an emergency. Please observe the lighted exit signs located throughout the theater. In the event of an emergency, please remain calm and walk – do not run – to the nearest exit. Our ushers are trained to lead you out of the building safely. A trained Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) is onsite during most events. Please see an usher or staff member to contact the EMT.

**RESTROOMS**
Ladies' restrooms are located off the Ford Lobby (Broadway Street entrance), down the stairs; and on the third floor (Madison Street entrance) – press “3R” on the elevator to reach this facility. Gentlemen's restrooms are located under the Grand Staircase and also on the third floor (Broadway Street side) – press “3” on the elevator to reach this facility. All third floor restrooms are wheelchair accessible. A unisex, wheelchair accessible restroom is located in the Cadillac Opera Café.

**NO SMOKING**
The Detroit Opera House is a smoke-free facility.

**USHERS**
Ushers are stationed at the top of each aisle. If you have a question or concern, please inform an usher, who will contact management. If you are interested in becoming a volunteer usher, please call the house manager at (313) 237-3252.

**LATE SEATING**
Latecomers may be seated only during an appropriate pause in the program. Late seating policies are at the discretion of the production, not Opera House management.

**LOST & FOUND**
Lost and Found is located in the Safety and Security Department. Please see an usher if you have misplaced an article, or call (313) 961-3500 if you have already left the theater. Items will be held in Lost and Found for 30 days.

**PARKING**
We encourage all our guests to take advantage of the Detroit Opera House Parking Center, located next to the Detroit Opera House. Pre-paid parking is available for all guests and can be purchased with tickets online or through the Detroit Opera House ticket office. Pre-paid parking must be purchased 72 hours prior to performance date. This facility is reserved specifically for Detroit Opera House patrons during regularly scheduled performances. Entrances and exits are located on both John R. Street and Grand River Ave. Call (313) 237-7464 for more information.

**ACCESSIBILITY**
Accessible seating locations for patrons in wheelchairs are located in all price ranges on the orchestra level. When purchasing tickets, please ask about these locations if you require special accommodations.

Assisted Listening Devices are available on a first-come, first-served basis. Please see an usher to request this service, or visit the Guest Services desk located in the Vincent Lobby (Madison Street entrance). Although this is a complimentary service, we will hold a piece of personal identification while you are using the device. Please contact the ticket office at (313) 237-7464 should you desire special consideration.

**CHILDREN**
Children are welcome; however, all guests are required to hold a ticket, regardless of age. In all cases, babes in arms are not permitted.

**SERVICES**
Concessions stands are located on all levels. Please note that food and drinks are not permitted in the auditorium at any time. Coat Check is located at the Guest Services desk in the Vincent Lobby (Madison Street side). Please note that the Detroit Opera House does not accept responsibility for any personal articles that are not checked at the coat check.

**CONCEALED WEAPONS**
Be advised that, for purposes of Michigan Compiled Laws, Section 28.425o(1)(f), this is an entertainment facility which has a seating capacity of more than 2,500 individuals. It is therefore against the law to carry a concealed pistol on the premises.

**RENTAL INFORMATION**
The Detroit Opera House is available for rent by your organization. Please call (313) 961-3500, and ask to speak with the Director of Booking & Events Management.

**TICKET INFORMATION**
The Detroit Opera House ticket office hours are Monday-Friday, 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. On performance days, hours are 10 a.m. through the first intermission of the performance, except weekends, when the ticket office will open two hours prior to curtain time. Tickets are available online at www.MichiganOpera.org. Tickets for all public events at the Detroit Opera House are also available through TicketMaster, by phone at (800) 745-3000, or at www.TicketMaster.com.

**DETOIT OPERA HOUSE TOURS**
Come join the Opera House Ambassadors for a backstage tour of the Detroit Opera House! Learn about the history of the Opera House and its restoration, meet the people behind the scenes, tour the stage and see how it operates. Tours are $10 per person, for groups of 20 or more. For more information, please call (313) 237-3279, or visit www.MichiganOpera.org.

**IMPORTANT CONTACT INFORMATION**
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Ticket Office: (313) 237-7464
Theater Rental Information: (313) 961-3500
Detroit Opera House Fax: (313) 237-3412
Press and Public Relations: (313) 237-3403
Detroit Opera House Parking Center: (313) 965-4052