

MICHIGAN
OPERA
THEATRE

Gianni Schicchi

Giacomo Puccini, composer

-and-

Buoso's Ghost

Michael Ching, composer



Saturday, February 29 at 7:30 pm

Sunday, March 1 at 2:30 pm

at the Macomb Center for the Performing Arts

MacombCenter
for the Performing Arts

Message from Wayne S. Brown

We are delighted to return to the Macomb Center for the Performing Arts for our productions of *Gianni Schicchi* and *Buoso's Ghost*. This performance builds upon a six-year partnership, following productions of *Frida*, *The Tender Land*, *Little Women*, *27* and *Candide*.

Community is at the foundation of our goals at Michigan Opera Theatre. While we are proud of our elegant Detroit Opera House, it is also important for us to bring opera to venues outside of our theater and to reach audiences across the region. Opera is an incredible art form, and making it more easily accessible to those who wish to experience it is important to us.

This special double bill is representative of MOT's artistic goals: presenting beloved classics as well as exciting new works. Giacomo Puccini's *Gianni Schicchi*, written in 1918, is the composer's only comedy and is famous for its beautiful aria "O mio babbino caro." Michael Ching's *Buoso's Ghost*, written in 1996, is a sequel to the story, with beautiful odes to the original music as well as a continuation of the comedic twists so well-loved in the first performance. We are thrilled to have the composer join us this weekend to experience our production of his work.

This production features members of our MOT Studio Young Artist Program, representing some of the best up-and-coming talent in the industry. Our resident baritone Darren Drone and tenor Edward Graves lead as Gianni Schicchi and Rinuccio, respectively, with our resident soprano Avery Boettcher as Lauretta. We also welcome the return of former MOT Studio Artists Joseph Michael Brent as Gherardo and Harry Greenleaf as Marco.

The MOT Studio was launched in 2015 with a major grant from the William Davidson Foundation, which has been generous in its continued support for MOT. We are grateful for our long-term partnership with the Davidson Foundation as we continue to bring world-class opera and dance to the region.

We also thank Cadillac, our 2020 Spring Opera Sponsor, the Knight Foundation and the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation for sponsoring this production and for their ongoing support of MOT as well as the Community Foundation of Southeast Michigan for their generous support of MOT Community Programs.

Following *Gianni Schicchi* and *Buoso's Ghost*, our 2019-20 opera series continues with *Champion* (March 28 - April 5) and *Pagliacci* (May 9-17). We hope you will join us for future performances at our historic Detroit Opera House.



Wayne S. Brown
President and CEO of Michigan Opera Theatre



Message from William Wood

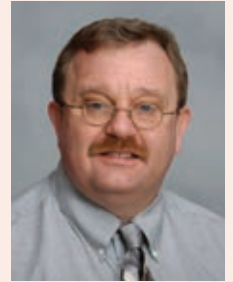
Being a leader in the arts for southeast Michigan, the Macomb Center for the Performing Arts is committed to providing meaningful arts experiences that entertain, educate, enrich our lives and enhance our community. Today we share our stage with Michigan Opera Theatre (MOT) because they share our commitment. We are proud to partner with one of the region's premier opera companies on these performances.

This year we are thrilled to present *Gianni Schicchi* and *Buoso's Ghost*. These fantastic works include "O mio babbino caro," one of Puccini's best known and one of opera's most beloved arias. These promise to be truly marvelous performances.

Our collaborations with community partners like MOT are vital to insuring a strong and dynamic cultural community in this region. They insure that Macomb Community College is able to offer cultural and artistic diversity that is crucial for a vibrant community. It also allows us to bring world class performers and performances to the people of Macomb County.

We appreciate you joining us for the production and for your support of the Macomb Center and Macomb Community College.

William R. Wood
Director of Cultural Affairs and Community Engagement
Macomb Community College



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for the Performing Arts

The Macomb Center for the Performing Arts (MacombCenter.com) is a community enrichment program of Macomb Community College dedicated to providing a diverse range of cultural enrichment experiences, and to inspire and encourage artistic expression through education, performance and volunteer opportunities. Hosting more than 100,000 visitors annually, the Macomb Center presents high-quality professional performances, offers educational outreach in the arts, provides a performance venue for community-based arts organizations, and, in partnership with the adjacent Lorenzo Cultural Center, creates unique opportunities for multifaceted cultural programming.

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2019-20 Michigan Opera Theatre Studio Artists

Darren Lekeith Drone - baritone
Edward Graves - tenor
Avery Boettcher - soprano
Katherine DeYoung - mezzo-soprano
Allen Michael Jones - bass

Michigan Opera Theatre Studio Overview

The five resident artists of the Michigan Opera Theatre Studio represent some of the most exciting emerging talent in opera today.

Coming to Detroit from all different areas of the country, these early career opera professionals gain valuable experience through myriad performance opportunities in main stage and community productions and hone their skills through master classes and training with world-class professionals, guest artists and coaches.

Throughout their residency, Studio Artists receive advanced individual training from MOT's Director of Resident Artist Programs, renowned American tenor Richard Leech, Principal Coach/Accompanist Michael Sherman and MOT's Assistant Music Director Suzanne Mallare Acton.

Supported by a major grant from the William Davidson Foundation, the program serves as a central component of MOT's enhanced presence in the community through productions in the Detroit Opera House, community venues, recitals and special events. MOT's community initiative productions are now selected and mounted specifically for the Studio Program. In addition to this season's production of *Gianni Schicchi* and *Buoso's Ghost*, Studio Artists filled lead and featured roles in Leonard Bernstein's *Candide* last season, Ricky Ian Gordon's *27* in 2018, Mark Adamo's *Little Women* in 2017 and *The Tender Land* in 2016. Through these productions, MOT fulfills its community initiative to produce a full-scale opera annually in venues throughout Metro Detroit.

RICHARD LEECH

Director of Resident Artist Programs

American tenor Richard Leech is one of the most celebrated tenors of his generation. From the Met to Vienna, and Carnegie Hall to the Hollywood Bowl, for more than three decades he has made his home on the stages of the world's great opera houses and symphonies. In addition to singing, he is also a professor of voice and opera with Rutgers University. His leadership role with the MOT Studio allows Mr. Leech to utilize all aspects of his broad experience as he oversees the development of some of opera's most exciting emerging artists and brings their performances to our stage and into our community.



A Sequel 78 Years in the Making

A Q&A with *Buoso's Ghost* Composer Michael Ching

By Erica Hobbs

What drew you to the story of *Gianni Schicchi*?

There are a lot of operas that are called comic operas, but only a few of them are actually "LOL" funny, *Schicchi* is one of them. Things like greed and a father's love for his daughter are themes that have aged well.

What motivated you to create the sequel?

I ran Opera Memphis from 1992-2010. We wanted to do *Schicchi* but were concerned about the cost of doing



Schicchi with *Suor Angelica* or *Tabarro*, so we thought about doing a sequel. It takes place on one set, so that answer was pretty practical.

Another part of the answer is a bit more fun. I think those of us in opera always wonder what happens to some of our favorite characters afterwards. The Germont family in *La Traviata*, the young lovers in *Così fan tutte*, Cio-Cio-San's son in *Madame Butterfly*... the list is endless.

How do the two compare musically?

Schicchi is the more difficult and not just because of the Italian. The orchestration is much more challenging, and the string writing can be hard. *Buoso* uses anachronism a lot for comic effect, so there are a lot of musical quotations and not just Puccini, a gold star to the audience members who recognize "Suicidio" from *La Gioconda*. There are also lots of American music stylistic references: Gospel, the old west and Sondheim to name a few.

What challenges did you face in creating a sequel to a work written 100 years ago?

I had to do a certain amount of research on the governmental structure of the Italian medieval city state. Think of the Wild West, "Call the sheriff! Get the judge over here!"

What do you hope people will take away from *Buoso's Ghost*?

Contemporary opera can be fun and isn't just a ball of angst. We creative artists in opera sometimes take ourselves too seriously! *Buoso* is not *heilige kunst*, it's just fun. I mean, why let the musical theater folks have all the fun?

Are there other operas that you think lend themselves to a sequel?

I've always wondered how the Germont family sorts itself out after Violetta's death.

Do you plan to create additional opera sequels in the future?

As a matter of fact, I'm writing a sequel-like piece right now for the Savannah Voice Festival. We are doing a one-act version of Rossini's *La Cenerentola* followed by my opera. The plot is being co-written by some middle school students at a public school in Savannah. They want critters and for the sisters-- Angelina, Clorinda, and Tisbe--to make up to each other at the end.

Is there anything else you'd like to add?

I'm grateful to Michigan Opera Theatre for doing *Buoso*. I've written an opera called *Speed Dating Tonight!* (2013) that's gotten over 80 productions, but mostly at universities and smaller companies, so for MOT to be doing *Buoso* is a real treat for me.

February 28 & March 1, 2020



MICHIGAN OPERA THEATRE

Gianni Schicchi and Buoso's Ghost

Gianni Schicchi

A comic opera in one act

Music by Giacomo Puccini

Libretto by Giovacchino Forzano

Based on a story in Dante's Divine Comedy

Part of Puccini's *The Triptych*

Premiered 1918, New York

Buoso's Ghost

Comic opera in one act

Music and libretto by Michael Ching

A sequel to Puccini's *Gianni Schicchi*

Premiered 1996, Pittsburgh

These productions performed at the Macomb Center for the Performing Arts

Featuring the MOT Studio Artists

Gianni Schicchi sung in Italian with English titles, run time about an hour

Buoso's Ghost sung in English, run time about 40 minutes

MOT 2020 SPRING SEASON
IS SUPPORTED BY



This production is supported in part by awards from



Rugs for *Gianni Schicchi* on loan from
Hagopian World of Rugs, Birmingham, MI

CONDUCTOR

David Aronson

DIRECTOR

Richard Gammon

SET DESIGN
Laura Fine Hawkes

COSTUME DESIGN
Susan Memmott Allred

LIGHTING DESIGN
Reza Behjat

WIG AND MAKEUP DESIGN
Joanne Weaver

REPETITEUR
Michael Sherman

STAGE MANAGER
Ken Saltzman

CAST

(In order of vocal appearance)

Zita: Diane Schoff

Simone: Frank Pitts

Rinuccio: Edward Graves*

La Ciesca: Olivia Johnson

Marco: Harry Greenleaf

Nella: Nicole Joseph

Gherardo: Joseph Michael Brent

Betto: Jesús Vicente Murillo

Gherardino: Cooper Bush

Gianni Schicchi: Darren Drone*

Lauretta: Avery Boettcher*

Spinelloccio: Fred Buchalter

Amantio: David Moan

Pinellino, Friar: Adrian Leskiw

Guccio: Fred Buchalter

*Michigan Opera Theatre Studio Artist

Sets designed by Laura Fine Hawkes for Utah Opera Company

Scenery constructed in the Utah Opera Production Studios

Costumes designed for Utah Symphony and Opera by **Susan Memmott Allred**

SYNOPSIS

Florence, 1299 **Gianni Schicchi**

W ealthy Buoso Donati has just died, and his relatives are vying to express the most grief. The weeping and wailing soon give way to alarm, however, as poor relation Betto starts to spread the news that he has heard a rumor in town that Donati left his considerable wealth to a monastery. Everyone turns to old Simone, Donati's cousin, who thinks they might have some hope for inheritance if the will is still in that room.

A frantic search begins. At last young Rinuccio, Zita's nephew, triumphantly announces that he has found the will. He then bargains with his aunt Zita, Donati's cousin, to allow him to marry Lauretta, daughter of Gianni Schicchi. Zita says he may marry anybody he wishes, as long as the will leaves them all well off. Rinuccio sends little Gherardino to find Gianni Schicchi and Lauretta.

Zita solemnly opens the will, while Simone tenderly lights candles for the deceased. Together they silently read the will, and find to their dismay that the rumor is true: Donati has left everything to the monks of Santa Reparata.

Suddenly it occurs to the relatives that there may be a way to get around the will. Rinuccio suggests that Gianni Schicchi can help them. Zita will not hear of it, but Gherardino, who has returned, announces that Schicchi is on his way. At this point, Simone and Zita strongly object to a marriage between a Donati and the daughter of an upstart like Schicchi. But Rinuccio points out that clever men like Schicchi (and Arnolfo and Giotto

and the Medici), "new people" from the outskirts of the city, are and will continue to be the making of Florence ("Firenze è come un albero fiorito").

Schicchi arrives, Lauretta in tow. He cynically comments under his breath on how downcast the Donatis look as Lauretta and Rinuccio whisper together lovingly. Schicchi, in his best undertaker tone, expresses his sorrow for the family's great loss. Gherardo retorts that the loss is great indeed. Schicchi points out that they will have the comfort of the inheritance, prompting Zita to bitterly inform him that they have been disinherited. She asks him to take Lauretta and go, as she will not have her nephew marry a girl without a dowry. Lauretta and Rinuccio protest, but neither Schicchi nor Zita will bend until Lauretta pleads with her father and threatens to throw herself in the Arno if she cannot marry the man she loves ("O mio babbino caro").

The doting Schicchi cannot resist her. He studies the will and a solution dawns on him. He asks the relatives if anyone else knows that Donati is dead. When they tell him no one else knows, he orders Marco and Gherardo to remove Donati's body to another room and orders the women to remake the bed. As they comply, uncertain of Schicchi's intentions, there is a knock at the door. Maestro Spinelloccio, the doctor, has arrived. The relatives hastily inform him that Donati is better. They stop him from coming in, saying that Donati is resting. Suddenly a strange voice issues from the bed, asking the doctor to come back later. "I've risen from the dead," says the imposter, and the doctor goes away impressed with his

own doctoring skills.

Schicchi asks the relatives to summon the notary and to tell him that Donati is dying and wants to make his will. When the notary arrives, the room will be dark, and in the bed he will see the figure of "Donati," complete with cap and chin strap. With this clever plan under way, the relatives get down to the business of dividing up Donati's possessions. The cash will be split equally. Simone wants the farms at Fucecchio; Zita, those at Figline; Betto, those at Prato. Gherardo and his wife, Nella, want the lands at Empoli; Marco and his wife, La Ciesca, those at Quintole. Simone suggests that they leave the matter of Donati's most-valued possessions—the house, the mule, and the mills at Signa—to Schicchi's discretion.

As Schicchi is dressed for the role he is to play, he warns the relatives that the law in Florence is that whoever forges a will gets a hand cut off and is exiled ("Addio Firenze"). A knock announces the arrival of the notary and the witnesses. "Donati" greets them gratefully and explains that he would have written out the will himself, but he suffers from palsy. He then revokes all prior wills. The notary asks about funeral expenses; "Donati" wants them to spend no more than two florins. He revises his legacy to Santa Reparata, giving them only five lire and explaining that if he left too much to charity, people would say that it was dirty money.

"Donati" now keeps his promises as to the cash in hand and the various farms and lands. However, when it comes to the mule, the house, and the mills, he leaves them to his dear friend Gianni Schicchi. The horrified relatives, bearing in mind the penalty for forgery of a will, must stifle their outrage.

When the notary and witnesses have departed, the relatives turn on Schicchi in a rage and begin to loot the place before he chases them out. Meanwhile, Rinuccio and Lauretta enter and tenderly recall how they shared their first kiss. Schicchi returns, carrying some of the loot he managed to grab back from the Donatis. Moved at the sight of the happy lovers, he turns to the audience and asks, "Tell me, ladies and gentlemen, if Donati's money could end up better than this? For this bit of fun, they stuck me in hell...and so be it. But with the permission of the great father Dante, if this evening you've been amused, grant me extenuating circumstances."
-Linda Cantoni, *Encyclopedia Britannica*

Buoso's Ghost

A sequel to *Gianni Schicchi*, *Buoso's Ghost* begins with the final bars of *Gianni Schicchi*.

As the sequel begins, we see Lauretta and Rinuccio, arm in arm, planning their future. Feeling the proud father, Schicchi looks on. The couple go off to buy their wedding ring. Alone, Schicchi straightens up the house. He sees some food and wine that the relatives have brought and sits down for a snack. But he discovers that the food and drink have all been poisoned by the relations.

He is interrupted by a knock at the door. Two brothers have come to collect on Buoso Donati's will. Schicchi shows them the "revised" document and they leave in shock. Alone, Schicchi imagines the relatives making their plans to poison old Uncle Buoso.

We hear the relatives approaching. Quickly Schicchi scribbles a note and tucks it into Buoso's nightshirt. They have come screaming for blood. Just as they are about to beat Schicchi

senseless, a magistrate arrives to try the case.

The relatives immediately assume an air of mourning. Then they angrily accuse Schicchi of murdering Uncle Buoso. Schicchi beseeches them for mercy. He sneaks up to each one and tells them that he knows that they have poisoned Buoso's food and drink. They are stunned and worried. They quickly switch gears. Each group of relatives offers Schicchi a bribe if he will blame somebody else, but Schicchi makes no promises.

The magistrate brings everyone back to order. When Old Simone refuses to accuse Schicchi, then the magistrate does it himself. Schicchi defends himself, keeping the relatives on pins and needles. Finally, sobbing, he goes over to Uncle Buoso's body and falls on the corpse. He pulls out the note and reads it: Uncle

Buoso has committed suicide. All are shocked at this horrible sin. The magistrate is miffed that he can't condemn Schicchi and leaves.

Alone, the relatives realize that Schicchi has outwitted them again. Jokingly, Betto says that they will get the money back in the long run because Rinuccio and Lauretta are getting married. They realize they can just kill Schicchi now and inherit everything.

Overhearing this, Schicchi prepares. He hides behind the body and blows out the candles. He summons the ghost of Buoso Donati and scares the family from the house.

In an echo of the end of *Gianni Schicchi*, Schicchi comes downstage and asks the audience to forgive the upstart composer for writing the sequel.

—Michael Ching, *Buoso's Ghost*

1982 Aronson began a nine-year appointment as Kapellmeister of the Municipal Theater of Lucerne, where he conducted over 40 operas, operettas and ballets. He was a guest conductor of the Schönbrunner Schlossorchester in Vienna and made his conducting debut with the Vienna State Opera in November, 2000. As a member of that opera company's music staff since 1991, he has also performed at the keyboard both in Vienna and on tour in Tokyo, Jerusalem and Ravenna.

Aronson is also a sought-after opera coach and has worked with many of the world's leading singers, including Placido Domingo, Luciano Pavarotti and Renee Fleming. He is a faculty member at the Vienna Conservatory Private University and has given master classes for over 10 years at the University of Miami's summer music program in Salzburg.

Reza Behjat (Lighting Design)

Reza Behjat is a New York-based lighting designer who works in theater, dance, opera and installations. He began his career in Iran, where he worked with prominent directors. In 2014, he moved to New York City to pursue his Master of Fine Arts degree at the New York University – Tisch School of the Arts.

He has designed more than 30 productions in Iran. His works have also been shown on Off-Broadway stages and regional theaters across the United States, including The Public Theater, A.R.T./New

York Theaters, Actors Theatre of Louisville, the Alabama Shakespeare Festiva, Long Wharf Theater, Geva Theatre Center, PlayMakers Repertory Company, the Guthrie Theater and Baltimore Center Stage.

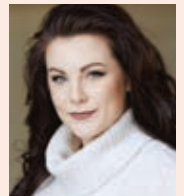
He is the recipient of the prestigious award of Knight of Illumination for *Nina Simone: Four Women* in 2019. He was also nominated for the Henry Hewes Design Award for *Henry VI* (NAATCO) in 2018 and *Hamlet* (WATERWELL) in 2017.

Avery Boettcher* (Lauretta)

Avery Boettcher is the resident soprano of the Michigan Opera Theatre Studio. She

has performed a wide array of roles both in the United States and abroad, ranging from Susanna in *The*

Marriage of Figaro with La Musica Lirica in Italy to the lighter operetta and musical theater roles of Yum-Yum in *The Mikado* with Viterbo University. She recently performed Zerlina in MOT's *Don Giovanni*. Previous roles also include the Countess in *The Marriage of Figaro* at the Aspen Music Festival, Donna Elvira in *Don Giovanni* at Indiana University Opera Theater and Zweite Dame in *The Magic Flute* with the Indianapolis City Orchestra. Prior to MOT, Boettcher was an opera fellow in the Aspen Music Festival where she performed John Harbison's "Mirabai Songs" with the Aspen Contemporary Ensemble, as well as Mahler's "Symphony No. 4" with the Aspen Conductors Orchestra.



ARTIST PROFILES

Susan Memmott Allred (Costume Design)

Susan Memmott Allred is a Utah-based costume designer. Recent credits include creating the costumes for *Rigoletto* with Austin Opera, *La Traviata* with Utah Opera and *The Merry Widow* with Vancouver Opera. In the 2020-21 season she will design the costumes for Utah Opera's productions of *The Flying Dutchman* and *Tosca*.



David Aronson (Conductor)

Conductor and pianist David Aronson began his career as a freelance vocal coach and accompanist in New York City, followed by engagements as assistant conductor with the opera companies of Kansas City, Lake George and Miami. He moved to Zurich in 1978, where he rapidly rose from coach at the International Opera Studio to assistant chorus-master and conductor at the Zurich Opera House. In



Joseph Michael Brent (Gherardo)

Joseph Michael Brent began his operatic career as a doctoral student at the University of Georgia, Athens. Recently, he was seen as Nicias in *Thais*, Il Tinca in *Il Tabarro* and Nick in *The Girl*



of the Golden West with Maryland Lyric Opera; as Alfred in *Die Fledermaus* with Lyric Opera Studio Weimar; D'Artagnan in *Les Trois Mousquetaires* at the Phoenicia International Festival of the Voice; and as a tenor soloist in Beethoven's 9th Symphony with the Montgomery Philharmonic. Brent is proud to have been a member of the inaugural quintet of resident artists at the Michigan Opera Theatre Studio, where he was heard as Martin in *The Tenderland*, Laurie in *Little Women*, Malcom in *Macbeth*, El Remendado in *Carmen* and Kron Prinz in *Silent Night*. His repertoire includes E.T.A. Hoffmann in *Les Contes d'Hoffmann*, Don Jose in *Carmen*, Pinkerton in *Madame Butterfly*, and Tamino in *The Magic Flute*. He made his Carnegie Hall debut singing Wagner and Nereo in *Mefistofele* and has sung at other such notable venues as David Geffen Hall, Sala Pedrotti (Pesaro, Italy), Stefaniensaal (Graz, Austria) and the White House.

Fred Buchalter (Guccio, Spinelloccio, Friar)

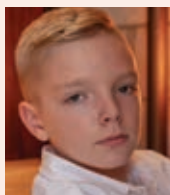
As a longtime member of the Michigan Opera Theatre Chorus, Fred Buchalter has performed in



over 80 productions, including the role of Cacambo in last season's production of *Candide*. Previous MOT roles also include the Coroner in *Porgy & Bess*, the Emperor Altoun in *Turandot* and Ambrogio in *The Barber of Seville*. Buchalter is also active in the local theatre community having performed at Greenfield Village, Jewish Ensemble Theatre, Williamston Theatre, Meadowbrook Theatre and others.

Cooper Bush (Gherardino)

Cooper Bush is excited to perform again with Michigan Opera Theatre following his professional MOT debut as Winfield Joad in last season's *The Grapes of Wrath*. Past credits include Winthrop Paroo in *The Music Man* and Young Shrek in *Shrek the Musical*, both with the Saline High School Drama Club. He was also an ensemble member in the Michigan Opera Theater Children's Chorus production of *The Secret World of Og*.



Michael Ching (Composer)

Michael Ching became a full time composer in 2010 after a 30+ year career as coach, conductor and arts administrator. He was the Artistic Director of Opera Memphis from 1992 to 2010. His 2013 opera, *Speed Dating Tonight!*, was premiered by the Janiec Opera of the Brevard Music Center. With over 80 productions to date, it is one of the most popular American operas



written in this century. Ching's 2011 opera, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* opera a cappella, is available on Albany Records. Michigan Opera Theatre's production of *Buoso's Ghost* coincides with the world premiere of Ching's new one-act opera *Remove Shoes Before Entering* at the University of Alabama. Last season's new projects included *Thrivers* for the Palm Springs Opera Guild, *Eight Woods and a Van* for the Cedar Rapids Opera Guild and a mini opera, *Completing the Picture*, for Utah Opera. As composer-in-residence at Savannah Voice Festival, Ching has written three operas, *Anna Hunter*, *Alice Ryley* and *Birthday Clown*. This season, they will premiere his new opera, *A Royal Feast*, a kind of sequel to Rossini's *La Cenerentola*. *Buoso's Ghost* was premiered by the Pittsburgh Opera Center at Duquesne in 1996 and Opera Memphis in 1997.

Darren Drone* (Gianni Schicchi)

Darren Drone is the Michigan Opera Theatre Studio's resident baritone. With a repertoire in both opera and musical theater, his performance credits include roles in *The Daughter of the Regiment*, *La Cambiale di Matrimonio* and *Lohengrin* as well as performances in *Newsies*, *Dreamgirls* and *Les Miserables*. Drone has been an apprentice with Tulsa Opera, Des Moines Metro Opera, Utah Festival Opera, Opera Southwest, Opera in the Ozarks and Opera Neo and has also performed with Heartland Opera Theatre, Lyric Theatre of



Oklahoma, Arkansas Repertory Theatre and the Arkansas Symphony Orchestra. His awards include first prize in the Benton-Schmidt Competition, a two-time finalist in Trinity Showcase Presents and a winner and finalist for numerous National Association of Teachers of Singing musical theatre and classical competitions. He holds a bachelor's degree from Arkansas Tech University and has continued additional post-graduate studies at the University of Oklahoma.

Richard Gammon (Director)

Richard Gammon recently directed *Der Kaiser von Atlantis* and *L'île de Merlin* (Wolf Trap Opera); *Madama Butterfly* and *An American Dream* (Virginia Opera); the American premiere of Scarlatti's *Erminia* at The Kennedy Center (Opera Lafayette); *Susannah* (Charlottesville Opera); the world premiere of Jorge Sosa's *The Lake* (ArtSounds); the workshop of J Ashley Miller's *Echosis* (Atemporchestra); *CARE Monologue Film Project* (Cleveland Play House); and *The Life and Times of Joe Jefferson Benjamin Blow* (National Asian Artist Project). Gammons is the Director of Opera Maine's Studio Artist Program (*Three Decembers*, *Sumeida's Song*), Co-founder and Director of *Art with Arias* (a recital collaboration with the Portland Museum of Art) and was Creative Associate for Seán Curran Company's world premiere of *Dream'd in a Dream* (BAM Next Wave Festival).



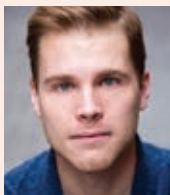
Edward Graves* (Rinuccio)

Maryland native Edward Graves is the resident tenor of the Michigan Opera Theatre Studio. Recent performances include Robbins in *Porgy and Bess* with the South Florida Symphony Orchestra and Seattle Opera, as well as the world premiere of *Blue* last summer at The Glimmerglass Festival. He was also a soloist with the NSO Pops with the Heritage Signature Chorale at the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts and performed at President H.W. Bush's funeral with the Cathedral Choir at the Washington National Cathedral. Prior to MOT, he was a 2017-18 Baumgartner Studio Artist at Florentine Opera in Milwaukee, where he performed in *The Merry Widow*, *Venus and Adonis*, *Dido and Aeneas* and *The Magic Flute*. He received his Performer Diploma and Master of Music degree in Voice Performance from Indiana University's Jacobs School of Music and holds a Bachelor of Music degree in Voice Performance from Towson University.



Harry Greenleaf (Marco)

Wixom, Michigan native Harry Greenleaf is a frequent performer with Michigan Opera Theatre and a former MOT Studio Artist. Last season, he performed as Connie Rivers in *The Grapes of Wrath*, Dr. Pangloss in *Candide*, Fiorello and Sergeant



in *The Barber of Seville* and the captain in *Eugene Onegin* with MOT. Previous MOT credits include Leo Stein and Man Ray in *27*, Sciarrone in *Tosca*, Marullo in *Rigoletto*, Le Bret in *Cyrano*, Jake Wallace in *The Girl of the Golden West*, Moralès in *Carmen* and Top in *The Tender Land*, a role he also reprised with Des Moines Metro Opera. He has been a Studio Artist with the Wolf Trap Opera Company, an Apprentice Artist with Des Moines Metro Opera and a Young Artist with the Glimmerglass Festival. He holds a Master of Music degree from the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music and is an alumnus of the Michigan State University College of Music.

Laura Fine Hawkes (Set Design)

Laura Fine Hawkes' work broadly encompasses scenic design for theatre, opera and musical theatre, as well as art direction for live shows, themed visitor experiences, museum exhibits, events and television programming. Theatrical engagements include design for Utah Opera, Stages Repertory Theatre, Center Theatre Group at The Mark Taper Forum, Houston Grand Opera, Arizona Opera, Ensemble Studio Theatre Los Angeles and The Road Theatre. Hawkes currently serves as Head of Design for the Theatre Department at Binghamton University (SUNY.) She is a former Chair of the Performing Arts Department at Santa Fe University



of Art and Design in Santa Fe, New Mexico and a recipient of the Laureate Education 2016 GPS Award Winner for Leadership. As a guest designer and guest faculty in scenic design, Hawkes frequently works with academic institutions and young artist training programs. Highlights include Rice University Shepherd School of Music, The Opera Institute at Cal-State University Long Beach, San Francisco Opera Merola Program, UCLA Opera and Cal-State Los Angeles.

Olivia Johnson (La Ciesca)

North Carolina native Olivia Johnson is a frequent performer with Michigan Opera Theatre. In May 2018 she played the comprimario role of the Girlfriend for MOT's production of *The Summer King*. She is also a member of the MOT Touring Ensemble and performs regularly at community events. Previous roles include Gertrude in *Romeo and Juliet* and Dorbella in *Così fan tutte* at the University of Michigan, Marte in *La púrpura de la rosa* for the summer program Le Château de la Voix and Maurya in *Riders to the Sea* with East Carolina Opera Theater. She has also been a soloist with the Detroit Symphony Orchestra and Rackham Choir. She graduated from East Carolina University in 2014 earning a Bachelor of Arts degree in Music Performance with a concentration in Voice.



Nicole Joseph (Nella)

Soprano Nicole Joseph, equally at home on both the operatic and concert stage, returns to Michigan Opera Theatre following her debut as Hattie in *The Summer King*. After completing her master's and specialist degrees at the University of Michigan, she made her professional debut as Beatrice in Jake Heggie's *Three Decembers* with Kentucky Opera. Recent performances include *The Governess* in *Turn of the Screw*, Micaëla in *Carmen* and Donna Anna in *Don Giovanni* with Detroit's Opera Modo. In addition to performing in MOT's main stage operas, she is also a part of the MOT Touring Ensemble as the Miller's Daughter in *Rumpelstiltskin* and Voluptua in *La Pizza con Funghi*. Joseph is also the winner of numerous awards and competitions, including the Metropolitan Opera Auditions (MI), James Toland Vocal Arts Competition, Nicholas Loren Vocal Competition, Harold Haugh Light Opera Competition, American Traditions Competition and the Career Bridges Foundation award. Originally from Portland, OR, Joseph now resides in Berkley, Michigan.



Adrian Leskiw (Pinellino, Friar)

Tenor Adrian Leskiw, a native of Wyandotte, made his comprimario debut with Michigan Opera Theatre as the 2nd Immigration Officer in *A View from the Bridge* and was recently featured in *Sweeney Todd*. He has also appeared as a chorister in over 20 MOT productions. Recent performances include Nika Magadoff in *The Consul*, Don Ottavio in *Don Giovanni*, Fenton in *Falstaff* (Opera MODO) and King Kaspar in *Amahl and the Night Visitors* (Arbor Opera Theater). He has also performed as a soloist with the Detroit Symphony Orchestra and Detroit Chamber Winds & Strings.

**David Moan (Amantio, Magistrate)**

David Moan returns to Michigan Opera Theatre following his performance as Jonas Fogg and the Beekeeper in *Sweeney Todd* last fall and Martin in *Candide* last spring. Originally from Pittsburgh, Moan received a bachelor's degree in Vocal Performance from Manchester University where he currently serves as Instructor of Diction. Previously, Moan has performed with MOT as Edward G. Robinson and a Calveras in *Frida*, Mike in *A View from the Bridge* and St. Brioche in *The Merry Widow*. He also performed the title role in the MOT Touring Company's production of *Jack and the Beanstalk*, and he is a frequent performer with



the MOT Chorus. Other notable local credits include John Wilkes Booth in *Assassins* (Wilde Award Winner) and Sweeney Todd in *Sweeney Todd* (Wilde Award Nominated) at the Encore Musical Theatre Company, Cinderella's Prince/Wolf in *Into The Woods* at The Ringwald Theatre and God/Himself in an *Act of God* at The Dio Theatre.

Jesús Vicente Murillo (Betto)

Described by *Opera News* as "a potent baritone", Detroit native Jesús Vicente Murillo has performed opera, musical theater and concert works across North America since his debut with Michigan Opera Theatre at age 18. His performances for MOT include José Castro in *The Girl of the Golden West* and L'Inconnu in *Cyrano*, composed by MOT's late founder David DiChiera. Recent operatic engagements have included a recital series with the Deer Valley Music Festival, Ser Amantio di Nicolao in *Gianni Schicchi* and Captain Gardiner in a new production of *Moby Dick* with Utah Opera, his first bass soloist in Handel's *Messiah* with Utah Symphony Orchestra, the Voice of Christ in *St. Matthew Passion* with Salt Lake Choral Artists and Bob Noxious in the Midwest premier of *The Final Battle for Love* with Thompson Street Opera. He holds a Master of Music degree from McGill University and a Bachelor of Music degree from the University of Michigan.

**Frank Pitts (Simone)**

Frank Pitts is an American bass known for his distinctive, booming voice and consummate musicianship. Recent performances include the Commendatore in *Don Giovanni* and Reverend Hale in *The Crucible* with the Berlin Opera Academy in Germany and the Peach Checker in *The Grapes of Wrath* with Michigan Opera Theatre. His performance credits also include both opera and musical theater roles ranging from Don Bartolo in *The Barber of Seville* and Pooh-Bah in *The Mikado* to Pulitzer in *Newsies* and Edna Turnblad in *Hairspray*. His oratorio credits include Rossini's *Stabat Mater*, Verdi's *Requiem*, Hayden's *Creation* and Handel's *Messiah*. Also in demand for voice-over work, Pitts has played God in Monty Python's *Spamalot*, The Grinch in *The Grinch Who Stole Christmas*, Audrey in *Little Shop of Horrors* and other deep bass-speaking roles. Pitts is also in-demand as a pianist and conductor.

**Diane Schoff (Zita)**

Diane Schoff is a regular character on stage and off and has a look that "would drop a horse at 50 feet" (*Toledo Blade*). Schoff performs regularly with Michigan Opera Theatre and is thrilled to make her role debut as Zita in *Gianni Schicchi*. Other highlights of this season include singing Katisha with Opera Grand Rapids in their fall production of *The Mikado* and singing duet recitals with soprano Angela Theis at venues around the greater metro Detroit area. Schoff made her debut with both Opera Grand Rapids and Opera Carolina as Marcelina in their joint production of Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro*. She continued her work with Opera Carolina last season as Madam Larina in *Eugene Onegin*. Recent roles include Ruth in *The Pirates of Penzance*, The Old Baroness in *Vanessa*, Aunt Cecilia in *Little Women*, the 2nd lady and 3rd lady in Mozart's *The Magic Flute*, the 2nd Maid in *Elektra*, and the Duchess of Crackenthorpe in *The Daughter of the Regiment*. Schoff is a mom of two and lives with her husband and children in Grosse Pointe Woods.



Michigan Opera Theatre Orchestra – *Gianni Schicchi and Buoso's Ghost*

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Eliot Heaton
Concertmaster+
Molly Hughes+
Kevin Fflewyach+
Daniel Stachyra+
Mallory Tabb
Jenny Wan+

VIOLIN II

Victoria Haltom
Principal +
Anna Bittar-Weller+
Beth Kirton+
Yuri Popowycz

VIOLA

John Madison
Principal +
Jacqueline Hanson+
Scott Stefanko+
Leah Celebi

CELLO

Jonathan Tortolano
Principal +
Igor Cetkovic
David Huckaby
Irina Tikhonova

BASS

Derek Weller
Principal +

HARP

Patricia Terry-Ross
Principal+

FLUTE

Seo Hee Choi
Principal +
Laura Larson

OBOE

Stephanie Shapiro
Acting Principal

CLARINET

Brian Bowman
Principal +
J. William King+

BASSOON

Francisco Delgado
Principal +

HORN

Carrie Banfield-Taplin+
Acting Principal
Clinton Webb

TRUMPET

Derek Lockhart
Acting Principal
Gordon Simmons+

TROMBONE

David Jackson
Acting Principal

TIMPANI

Keith Claeys
Acting Principal

PERCUSSION

John Dorsey
Principal +
David Taylor

CELESTE/KEYBOARD

Michael Sherman

+ Michigan Opera Theatre Core
Orchestra

Detroit Federation of Musicians
Local #5 American Federation
of Musicians

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TOURING ENSEMBLE

Taking opera to the community, last season the Michigan Opera Theatre Touring Ensemble presented more than 70 performances to students, seniors and adults throughout the state of Michigan, bringing opera to over 17,000 individuals. Performances are 30-60 minutes in length and include a Q&A session with the cast immediately following the production. Our 2018-19 touring season includes a variety of performances; call today to bring opera to your community!

I, Too, Sing America

By Chris Jakob with poetry by Jessica Care Moore
(Grades 6-12)

This new multi-media performance incorporates video, live song, narrative and poetry to highlight the stories and achievements of African American artists and athletes who defied limitations and paved the way for integration in their fields. (Subjects: American History, Humanities, English Language Arts, Arts Education- Music and Theatre)



Jack and the Beanstalk

Arranged by John Davies with compositions by Sir Arthur Sullivan (Grades K-6)

When Jack sells the family cow to a mysterious man for a handful of beans, he has no idea what kind of adventure awaits him! When the beans take root, and a magical stalk grows to the sky, Jack will discover a land of giants, a golden hen... and an important lesson about treating other people with kindness. MOT's new production sets the story in the ancient West African Mali Empire and tells the tale through music from the operettas of Sir Arthur Sullivan. This new twist on an old favorite is a must-see for children of all ages! (Subjects: English Language Arts, Social Studies, early Math, Arts Education – Visual Arts, Music, and Theater)

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OPERETTA REMIX

July 6-24, 2020, 10 a.m.-4 p.m.

Operetta Remix is perfect for young people ages 13-18 who are looking to grow their skills and experience in singing, acting, stage movement, healthy vocal technique and auditioning.

CREATE & PERFORM

July 27 - Aug. 7, 2020, 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.

A two-week program in which young people ages 8-12 create their own stories, music compositions and dances, culminating in a final performance at the Detroit Opera House.

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Tenor: David Moan

Baritones: Branden C.S. Hood, DeVonte King

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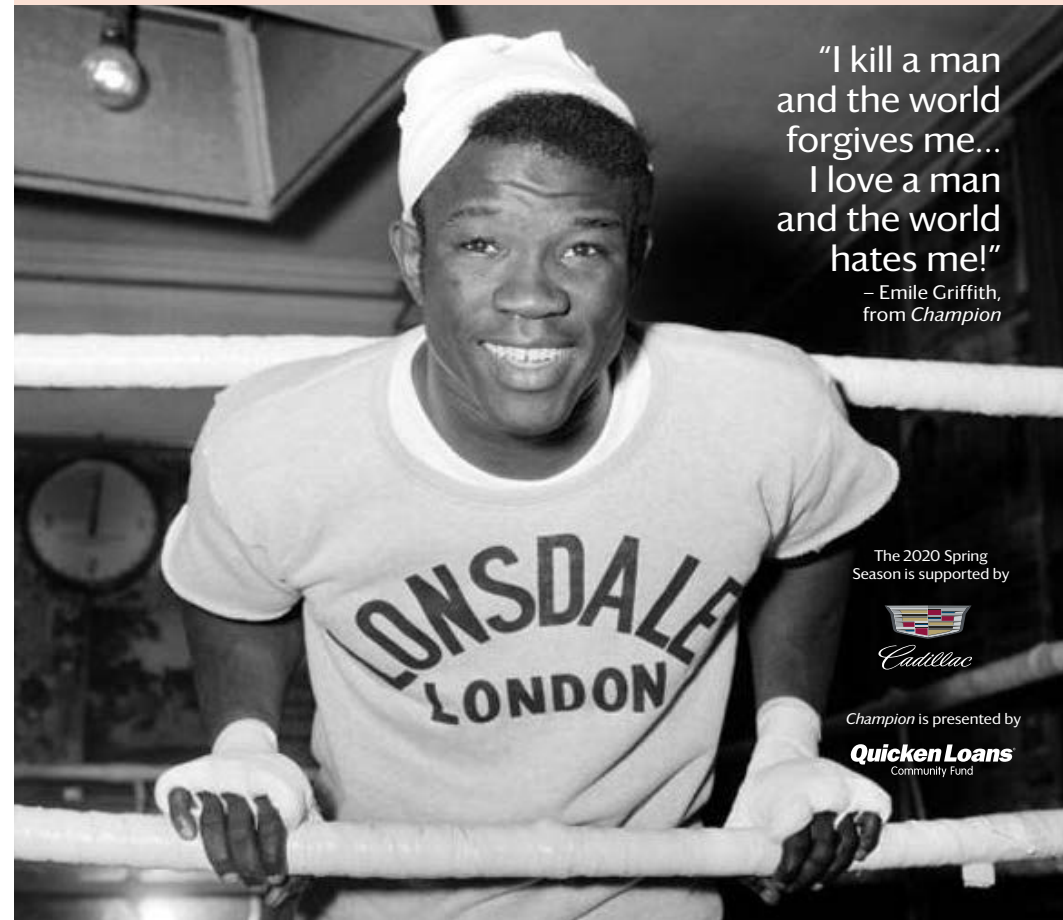
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