



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Letter from the Director 1

Season Calendar 1

A New Voice for Knoxville 2

Artist Spotlight: Renée Tatum 6

A Day in the Life 10

CARMEN 12

Opera for Kids 16

Knoxville Arts Calendar 19

Team Spotlight: Don Townsend 20

il Barbiere di Siviglia 22

Opera Takes to the Streets 26

Camerata 29

The Making of an Opera 30

Travel for More Opera 31

Military Voices of East Tennessee 34

GIANNI SCHICCHI 35

The McNabb Legacy 38

Donor Spotlights 40

Donors 42

Sponsors 46

Dear Friends,

As we build on the momentum of recent seasons, I am filled with gratitude for how far we’ve come—and excitement for where we’re headed. With rising attendance, new voices on our stages, and deepening community ties, Knoxville Opera is thriving.

Recent highlights include the expansion of our beloved Rossini Festival, the stirring voices of our gospel choir, the debut of Military Voices of East Tennessee (MVET), and the joyful growth of our new children’s choir. These ensembles—drawn from across our region—are infusing Knoxville Opera with new energy and deepening our community roots.

This season promises something for everyone, reaffirming our commitment to sharing stories that connect and uplift us all.

True to our mission to entertain, provoke, and console, our stage will come alive with timeless works: the fiery passion of Bizet’s *Carmen*, the sparkling wit of Rossini’s *The Barber of Seville*, and the clever charm of Puccini’s *Gianni Schicchi*. Each production offers a rich operatic experience filled with beauty, humor, and heart.

Knoxville Opera’s impact extends beyond the theater. This season, we’ll bring performances to more places than ever before. Through the universal language of music and storytelling, we strive to build empathy, spark dialogue, and foster belonging – bringing people together across boundaries to celebrate our shared humanity.

We invite you to be a part of this journey. Your support makes this possible. Together, we can continue shaping Knoxville Opera as a vibrant cultural home—one that inspires generations, strengthens community bonds, and celebrates the power of storytelling through music.

Gratefully yours,

Jason Hardy  
General Director & CEO

SEASON CALENDAR

2025

SEPT 25  
MEMBERSHIP PARTY

OCT 24 & 26  
CARMEN

NOV 7  
COUTURE OPERA

NOV 16  
KNOXVILLE OPERA  
GOES TO CHURCH

DEC 4  
CAMERATA  
HOLIDAY DINNER

DEC 6  
HOLIDAY CONCERT

2026

FEB 20 & 22  
IL BARBIERE DI SIVIGLIA

FEB 28  
OPERA BALL

MAR 31  
MEMBERSHIP MADNESS

APR 18 & 19  
ROSSINI FESTIVAL

MAY 8 & 10  
GIANNI SCHICCHI

MAY 17  
CROQUET TOURNAMENT

# A New Voice for Knoxville

## THE OPERA COMPANY REIMAGINING ITSELF

Last spring, during a school outreach performance, the Sunnyview Elementary gym was quiet when Kate Smith, Director of Programs, greeted the students with a cheerful “Good morning.” The kids responded softly at first, a little unsure. So she tried again — “Good morning!” — and this time, they shouted back with full voices. She laughed and said, “There’s a bunch of opera singers in here!” The kids beamed, their faces lighting up with pride and delight.

It was a small moment, but one that captured something bigger: connection, joy, and the spark that happens when people feel invited to join in. A moment like that wouldn’t have been possible just a few seasons ago.

Three years ago, Knoxville Opera was in a very different place. The company was emerging from a leadership transition and the long shadow of the pandemic. Internally, systems were outdated, and morale was low. Externally, the organization lacked a clear artistic identity. The road ahead wasn’t guaranteed.

Today, Knoxville Opera is thriving — artistically, culturally, and as a community partner.

Under the leadership of General Director Jason Hardy, KO focused on building trust: with donors, audiences, community partners, and staff. A vibrant new brand emerged, paired with a company culture centered on joy, creativity, and accountability. A redefined mission — to create vocal and theatrical experiences that entertain, provoke, and console— began to shape everything KO does.

On stage, KO has reimagined what opera can be. With intentional casting, dynamic storytelling, and bold design choices, every production now carries a distinct voice. Recent seasons have included *La Traviata*, *Le Nozze di Figaro*, *La Bohème*, and the genre-bending *Stuck Elevator*. One audience member called the latter “genuine, authentic, and timely,” while another shared simply, “This was a beautiful production and so well-cast. We need more of this!”

You could feel the shift from the stage, as well as from the seats. More and more first-time attendees began to appear — sometimes a curious couple, other times an entire classroom of students seeing opera for the first time. One audience member wrote after *La Bohème*,

*“I laughed, I cried, and I didn't check my phone even once.”*

Offstage, that sense of connection has only deepened. A new Children’s Choir now fills the rehearsal room on Saturday mornings with laughter and song. The Military Chorus brings a different kind of strength and harmony to civic events. And the Rossini Festival? It’s become a full weekend of joy, with tens of thousands of people flooding the streets of downtown Knoxville to celebrate the arts together.

Inside the company, something quieter — and more complex — has taken root: a deep passion that drives everything forward. This is a team of high performers and big ideas, and like any ensemble



learning to play in tune, collaboration isn’t always easy. The team embraces a culture of creative friction as a productive force that enhances teamwork and the way they work together.

But what’s undeniable is the dedication. Everyone here cares — deeply — about the work, the mission, and the community. That shared passion has become Knoxville Opera’s secret strength. Despite a lean team and limited resources, KO continues to produce programs and performances that punch far above its weight. From schools to mainstage, this is a company that outperforms expectations not because it has to — but because it refuses not to.

And that impact isn’t confined to the theater. It reaches into school gyms and university halls, into community centers and public parks. It shows up in the eyes of a child hearing live opera for the first time, or in a grandparent who suddenly recalls a song they once sang to their children, or learned long ago, now brought back to life on stage. KO’s work has become a kind of connective tissue — linking neighborhoods, generations, and ideas. Opera

here isn’t a relic or a luxury; it’s a living art form with something to say, and someone to say it to.

When Knoxville Opera thrives, Knoxville itself grows stronger. A vibrant arts organization is more than a cultural luxury — it’s a civic engine. It brings people together across zip codes and backgrounds. It gives young artists something to reach for. It tells stories that reflect who we are and imagine who we might become.

In these last three years, Knoxville Opera hasn’t just changed how it makes opera — it’s changed what opera means in this city. And this is just the beginning.

The vision ahead is bold: more voices on stage, more stories in the spotlight, deeper partnerships across the region, and greater access for all. KO aims to be not only a leading arts organization in East Tennessee, but a model for what opera can be in the 21st century — curious, courageous, and connected.

Because in a city like Knoxville, art doesn’t just fill the calendar. It fuels the future. ●



**BOOK  
NOW**

**grow**  
a shane archer concept

**5344 Kingston Pike  
Knoxville, TN 37919**

[www.growknoxville.com](http://www.growknoxville.com)

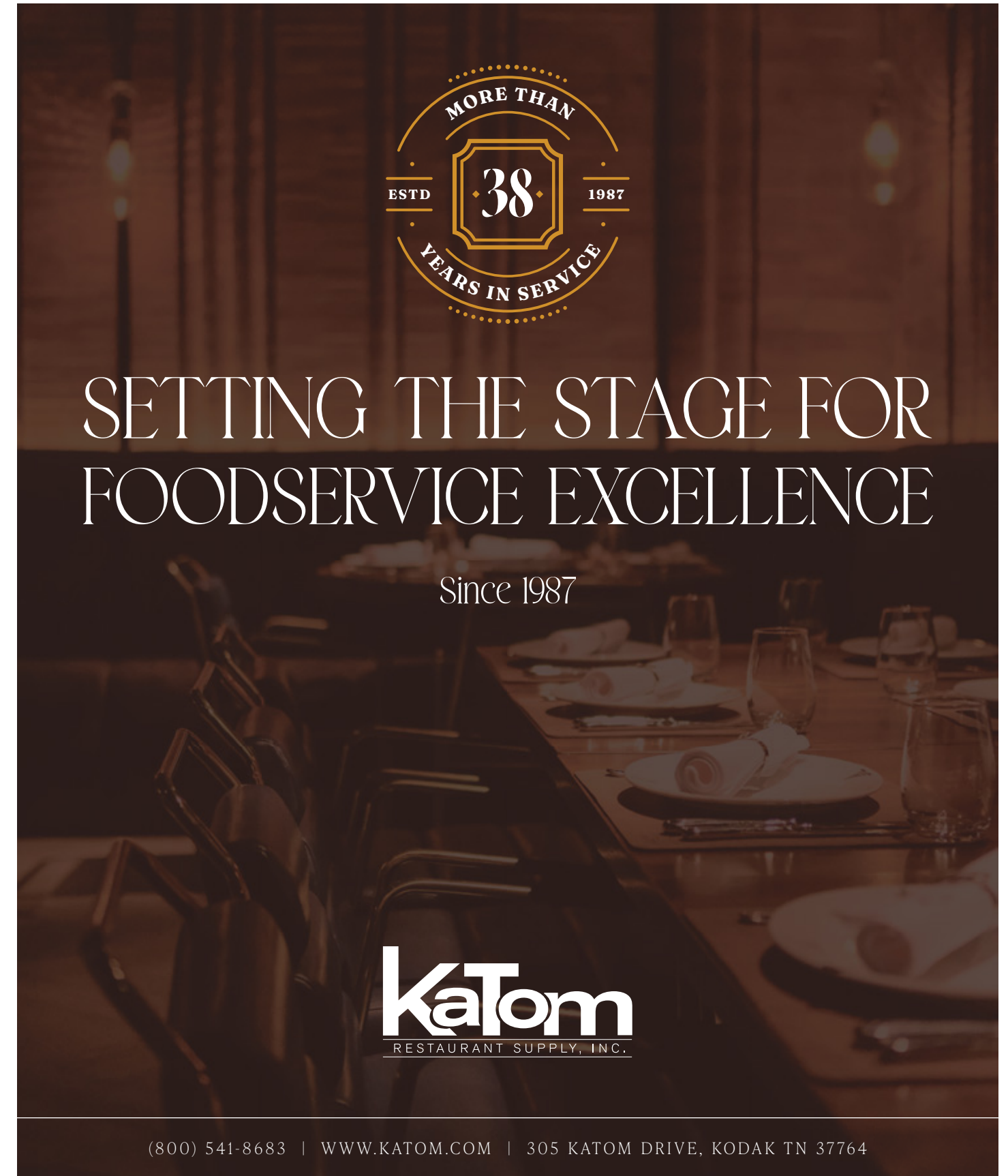


**Knoxville's Best Hair  
Salon for 8 Years in  
a Row!**

**Follow us!**

 [@growknoxville](https://www.instagram.com/growknoxville)

**Call for Appointment Availability** **Check Out Our Other Locations:**  
**865.450.5490**  
[@stubbleknoxville](https://www.instagram.com/stubbleknoxville)  
[@knoxgrowwellness](https://www.instagram.com/knoxgrowwellness)



**SETTING THE STAGE FOR  
FOODSERVICE EXCELLENCE**

Since 1987

**KaTom**  
RESTAURANT SUPPLY, INC.

(800) 541-8683 | [WWW.KATOM.COM](http://WWW.KATOM.COM) | 305 KATOM DRIVE, KODAK TN 37764

# UNAPOLOGETICALLY HERSELF

## *Stepping into Carmen*

Renée Tatum has sung at the Met. She's brought down the house in San Francisco, Chicago, and Buenos Aires. Her voice has soared through Wagner's epics, Verdi's dramas, and Mahler's symphonies. And yet, in a career defined by powerhouse roles and international stages, one iconic character remained just out of reach—until now.

This fall, Tatum debuts in the title role of Carmen. And she's doing it right here, in Knoxville.

"I've always dreamed of singing Carmen," she says. But for years, the opportunity never came. "I think people looked at me and didn't see the 'type.'" Her trademark blonde hair may not fit the usual casting shorthand, but Tatum has never been one to follow the expected script. With her recent turns in dramatic French repertoire and a home base now rooted in East Tennessee, the timing finally aligned. Knoxville Opera made the offer, and she said yes.

It's the kind of moment that feels both overdue and just right.

Tatum, now Associate Professor of Voice at the University of Tennessee, has made Knoxville home, both personally and professionally. And it's here, in a city that balances high-caliber performance with genuine artistic freedom, that she's found the right environment to take on a role this layered.

Carmen isn't just another addition to her repertoire. It's a turning point. Unlike her previous roles built on vocal power and heroic scale, this character demands something more interior: calculation,

restraint, precision. For Tatum, the challenge lies in making it real without leaning on cliché. Carmen's presence may be magnetic, but her control is the real force. "There's nothing random about her," Tatum notes. "She knows what she's doing. Always."

The famous Habanera—Carmen's first aria—is often played for seduction. But Tatum sees intent. "It's not about playing a mood. It's about speaking a truth that makes people uncomfortable."

This is where her work as a teacher and technician comes in. Tatum builds her characters from the text up—starting with language and rhythm before ever touching melody. That structure, she says, anchors everything. It's the same approach she teaches her students, and one that saves both voice and storytelling from unraveling.

It also makes space for risk. And Knoxville Opera, she says, is the rare place where that kind of risk is welcomed.

At the major houses, much of the production is locked in before rehearsals even begin. The room for interpretation is narrower, the stakes more rigid. In Knoxville, she's free to explore—to get it right by occasionally getting it wrong. "If you don't feel safe, you can't do your best work. And here, I feel safe enough to go all in."

Tatum has performed across continents, but she's chosen to make her home in Knoxville. With her husband Philip, son Parker, and their opera-named rescue dog Dalilah, she's found a rhythm.

*This fall, Renée Tatum debuts in the title role of Carmen. And she's doing it right here, in Knoxville.*



She teaches, she performs, and she advocates for the city's potential as a classical music destination. "Nashville may claim Music City. But there's no reason Knoxville can't be the capital of classical."

The community backs her up. From a nationally respected symphony to a university with a newly designated College of Music, Knoxville isn't just punching above its weight—it's growing into it. And with Knoxville Opera's long-standing partnership with UT through the Knoxville Opera Studio, the pathways between education and performance are already well-worn.

For Tatum, that connection matters. She knows what it means to be a young singer trying to figure out where they fit—and how easy it is to lose your voice, figuratively and literally, in the process. "The first thing people try to take from you is what makes

you different," she says. "That's what Carmen refuses to give up. And that's why this role is personal."

She isn't interested in softening Carmen's edges. The character lives on her own terms. She's unapologetic, unbothered, and clear about what she wants. That kind of self-possession, especially for women, still feels radical. And for Tatum, it's a thrill to embody someone who never asks for permission.

As the season opener, Carmen sets the tone for Knoxville Opera's year—and Tatum's presence in the title role sends a message. This isn't just another classic pulled off the shelf. It's a reimagining. A chance to see one of opera's most iconic characters made new by an artist with something to say.

Renée Tatum may have sung in the world's greatest houses. But her Carmen begins right here. ●



## INSPIRING THE ARTS. TOGETHER.

The Natalie L. Haslam College of Music at the University of Tennessee is proud to be part of East Tennessee's vibrant arts community.

From training the next generation of performers and scholars to seeing our own faculty, like mezzo-soprano **Renée Tatum**, take the stage as **Carmen**, we're committed to inspiring audiences and shaping the future of music - here at home and beyond.



Assistant Professor of Voice,  
University of Tennessee

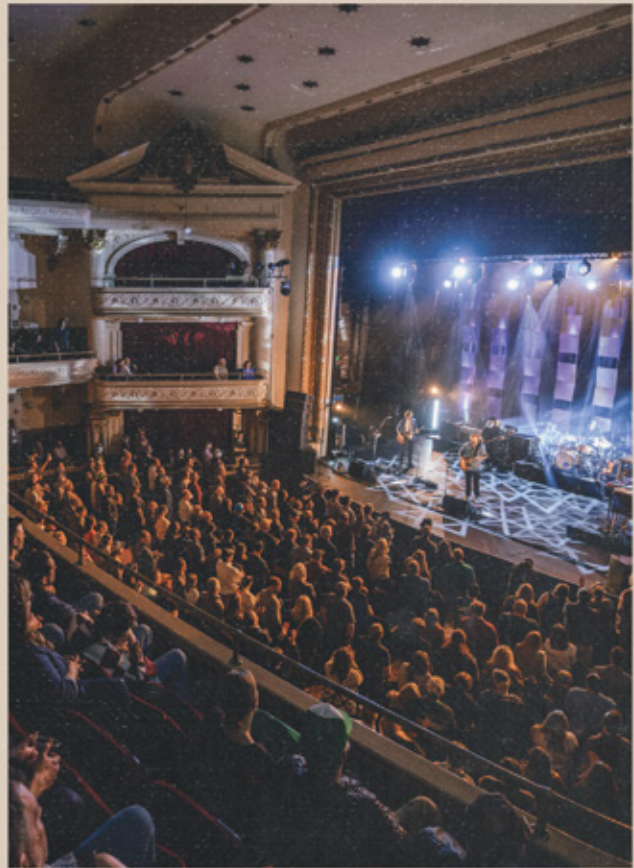


**Discover how we're building the next generation  
of artists and scholars at [music.utk.edu](https://music.utk.edu).**



# A HISTORIC STAGE FOR KNOXVILLE'S BRIGHT FUTURE

HERITAGE. CULTURE. ARTISTRY. COMMUNITY



# A PROUD HOST OF THE KNOXVILLE OPERA



AS A CORNERSTONE OF DOWNTOWN SINCE 1909, THE BIJOU THEATRE CELEBRATES KNOXVILLE'S RICH HERITAGE WHILE SHOWCASING THE ARTISTS AND VOICES SHAPING OUR REGION'S FUTURE. FROM LIVE MUSIC TO THEATRE AND CULTURAL EVENTS, WE'RE PROUD TO SERVE AS A HOME FOR EAST TENNESSEE'S PERFORMING ARTS COMMUNITY.

EXPLORE OUR CALENDAR AND WAYS TO SUPPORT AT [KNOXBIJOU.ORG](https://knoxbijou.org)

## KNOXVILLE ARTS CALENDAR

*Knoxville Opera is proud to bring world-class opera to our community — and we're equally proud to be part of a city brimming with artistic energy. From theatre to symphony, dance to visual art, Knoxville offers endless opportunities to engage with the arts all year long.*

### 2025

SENSE AND SENSIBILITY  
SEPT 17 - OCT 5  
CLARENCE BROWN THEATRE

CARMEN  
OCT 24 & 26  
KNOXVILLE OPERA  
TENNESSEE THEATRE

THE BODY IS A DRUM  
THE VOICE A SONG  
THE SOUL A FIRE  
NOV 7 - MAR 1  
KNOXVILLE MUSEUM OF ART

ITALIAN DOUBLE-BILL  
LA CAMBIALE DI MATRIMONIO  
& AMELIA AL BALLO  
NOV 14-16  
UT OPERA THEATRE  
BIJOU THEATRE

GERSHWIN'S RHAPSODY IN BLUE  
NOV 20 & 21  
KNOXVILLE SYMPHONY  
ORCHESTRA  
TENNESSEE THEATRE

A CHRISTMAS CAROL  
NOV 20 - DEC 20  
CLARENCE BROWN THEATRE

20TH ANNUAL EAST  
TENNESSEE REGIONAL  
STUDENT ART EXHIBITION  
NOV 28 - JAN 11  
KNOXVILLE MUSEUM OF ART

LITTLE WOMEN  
DEC 4-21  
BY KATE HAMILL  
RIVER & RAIL  
THEATRE COMPANY

### 2026

HAYDN'S "OXFORD" SYMPHONY  
JAN 25  
KNOXVILLE SYMPHONY  
ORCHESTRA  
BIJOU THEATRE

IL BARBIERE DI SIVIGLIA  
FEB 20 & 22  
KNOXVILLE OPERA  
TENNESSEE THEATRE

CABARET  
FEB 11 - MAR 1  
CLARENCE BROWN THEATRE  
JENNY BOYD THEATRE

THE OLD MAN AND  
THE OLD MOON  
FEB 12 - MAR 1  
RIVER & RAIL  
THEATRE COMPANY

A TWO WAY MIRROR... GLASS  
FEB 6 - MAY 3  
BY BLACK ARTISTS  
KNOXVILLE MUSEUM OF ART

THE BREATH OF THE WILD  
APR 8 & 9  
KNOXVILLE SYMPHONY  
ORCHESTRA  
KNOXVILLE MUSEUM OF ART

EURYDICE  
APR 16 - MAY 3  
BY SARAH RUHL  
RIVER & RAIL  
THEATRE COMPANY

THE CUNNING LITTLE VIXEN  
APR 24-26  
UT OPERA THEATRE  
BIJOU THEATRE

GIANNI SCHICCHI  
MAY 8 & 10  
KNOXVILLE OPERA  
BIJOU THEATRE

JOSEPHINE  
MAY 30  
BY TOM CIPULLO  
MARBLE CITY OPERA  
THE GROVE THEATRE

TRAGEDY OF CARMEN  
JUNE 18 & 20  
MARBLE CITY OPERA  
THE GROVE THEATRE

# BIZET'S CARMEN

CONDUCTOR: NOAM AVIEL

DIRECTOR: KETURAH STICKANN

CHORUS DIRECTOR & REHEARSAL PIANIST: EILEEN DOWNEY

CHILDREN'S CHORUS DIRECTOR: LILY WITEMEYER

THE KNOXVILLE SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

**ACT I** It's a blistering hot day in Seville, Spain. Hot and tired, a group of soldiers hang out watching people go by. The shy Micaëla comes looking for Corporal Don José, but he's not there. The soldiers try to get Micaëla to stay with unwanted flirtation, and she leaves. Soon after, Don José arrives as the guards change shifts. A bell from the cigarette factory chimes, and the women come out for their smoke break. The men flirt with the factory girls, too. Carmen comes in last, and all the men are drawn to her, except José. As Carmen sings, "Love is a rebellious bird that no one can tame," she notices him not looking up and throws a flower at him. Laughing, she and the other women return to the factory. He hides the flower in his uniform. Micaëla returns with a letter from José's mother, who begs him to marry Micaëla. As he reads the letter to himself Micaëla leaves. Suddenly, horrible screams come from the factory. Carmen has gotten into a fight with another girl and slashed her face with a knife. Lieutenant Zuniga questions Carmen, but her only reply is the mocking response. Don José is ordered to guard Carmen while Zuniga gets a warrant for her arrest. Alone with José, Carmen seduces him into making a plan that will let her escape. Zuniga returns with Carmen's formal arrest orders. As she's being led away to prison, Carmen pushes Don José and escapes.

*Step further into Bizet's world during our pre-show talk held just before each performance. Pre-show talks begin 1 hour before the show and run for 40 minutes. Learn more at [knoxvilleopera.org/carmen](https://knoxvilleopera.org/carmen)*

**ACT II** A month later, Carmen and her friends Frasquita and Mercédès have fun singing and dancing in the evening at Lillias Pastia's tavern. Carmen hears that Don José, who was sent to prison because he let her escape, was released. The famous bullfighter Escamillo arrives, and everyone is happy to see him back in the neighborhood. He sings about his adventures in the bullring and flirts with Carmen, and she flirts back weakly. The soldiers and Escamillo leave as Dancaïre and Remendado join Carmen, Frasquita and Mercédès. They need to deliver some smuggled goods and want the three women to join them. Carmen says she can't go because she's in love. Nobody believes her until Don José's voice is heard outside. The others leave Carmen and José alone. He tells her how much he loves her. A trumpet signals that the soldiers must report back to the barracks and José says he must leave, but Carmen mocks his loyalty to the military. José proves his love by pulling out the flower she threw at him at their first meeting. That's not enough for Carmen; she wants him to ditch the army and join her life of freedom. Don José tells her he could never leave the military. Zuniga shows up to see Carmen and orders Don José to leave. José refuses and begins to fight him. Before José kills Zuniga, men burst in and pull Zuniga into the back room. Don José has no choice but to flee with the Romani as they head into the mountains.

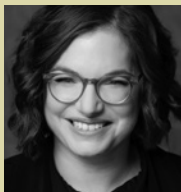
**ACT III** Several months later, late at night in a deserted ruin outside of Seville, the Romani group carry their goods through the mountains. Carmen's love for Don José is fading and the two bicker. She tells him to go home to his mother. Frasquita and Mercédès read their fortunes in cards, but when Carmen tries, she only sees her death and Don José's. The women join the men on a trip down the mountain to distract any customs agents. Don José stays behind to watch the camp. Micaëla has found her way to the site looking for José. She will take Don José away from Carmen. Afraid, she hides after seeing Don José shoot his gun. The bullet has barely missed Escamillo who is there to see Carmen. The Toreador claims the two of them are in love. José challenges him to a duel, but the fight is cut short when everyone returns. After Escamillo leaves, Remendado finds Micaëla hiding as José gets in a very public argument with Carmen. To get him to leave, Micaëla tells Don José that his mother is dying. He quickly rushes off with her.

**ACT IV** Outside the bullfighting ring in Seville, crowds have gathered for the bullfight. The crowd cheers Escamillo as he enters, and he and Carmen express their love for each other. As the throng enters the arena, Frasquita warns Carmen that Don José is somewhere in the crowd. Carmen says that she is not afraid and stays behind to confront him. Disheveled and crazed, he comes out of the shadows and begs Carmen to start a new life with him. Carmen says everything is over between them. Carmen tries to go into the arena and Don José blocks her way. Carmen says she's in love with Escamillo. Enraged, Don José lashes out at Carmen with a knife.

*Adapted from Opera Philadelphia's Synopsis*

# CARMEN

FULL CREDITS



## Conductor

**NOAM AVIEL, CONDUCTOR**

**HOMETOWN:** Tel Mond, Israel

**KNOXVILLE OPERA DEBUT**

**RECENT:** Conductor: *Hansel and Gretel*, Opera Tampa; *Le nozze di Figaro*, Mobile

Opera / **UPCOMING:** Conductor: *The Merry Widow*, Opera Orlando  
**NOAMAVIEL.COM** / **f** **NOAM.AVIEL** / **@ NOAMAVIEL**



## Stage Director

**KETURAH STICKANN,**

**STAGE DIRECTOR**

**HOMETOWN:** Columbia, MO

**KNOXVILLE OPERA:** Director, *Stuck Elevator*, 2025; *La traviata*, 2024; *Tosca*,

2016; *Il Trovatore*, 2015; *Tales of Hoffmann*, 2013; *La traviata*, 2011; *Manon*, 2011 / **RECENT:** Director, *La Bohème*, Chautauqua Opera and San Diego Opera; Director, *The Little Prince*, Resonance Works; Movement Director, *Moby-Dick*, Metropolitan Opera; Director, *Carmen*, IU Jacobs School of Music / **UPCOMING:** Director, *Everlasting Faint*, Madison Opera; Director, *Carmen*, San Diego Opera; Director, *Mosè in Egitto*, Opera Southwest  
**KETURAHSTICKANN.COM**



## Don José

**BEN GULLEY, TENOR**

**HOMETOWN:** Kalamazoo, MI

**KNOXVILLE OPERA:** Rodolfo, *La*

*bohème*, 2025 / **RECENT:** Tenor Soloist, *Verdi Requiem*, Modesto Symphony

Orchestra; Don José, *Carmen* (Highlights), Kalamazoo Symphony Orchestra; Tenor Soloist, *Verdi Requiem*, Flagstaff Symphony Orchestra; Canio, *Pagliacci*, Pensacola Opera / **UPCOMING:** Canio, *Pagliacci*, Opera San José; Radames, *Aida*, Anchorage Opera; Canio, *Pagliacci*, Opera Las Vegas / **BENGULLEY.COM**



## Morales

**MAURICE HENDRICKS,**

**BARITONE**

**HOMETOWN:** Knoxville, TN

**KNOXVILLE OPERA:** Capulet, *Roméo et Juliet*, 2020 / **RECENT:** Tonio (cov-

er), *Pagliacci*, Marble City Opera; Balthazar, *Amahl and the Night Visitors*, Opera Louisiane; Talpa, *Il Tabarro*, Marble City Opera; Geronimo, *Il matrimonio Segreto*, University of Tennessee Opera Theatre; Sciarrone, *Tosca*, Marble City Opera; Elder Ott, *Susannah*, Marble City Opera; The Father, *I can't Breathe*, Marble City Opera

**f** **MAURICE HENDRICKS, BARITONE**

**@** **J MILKCHOCOLATEONEGIN**



## Zuniga

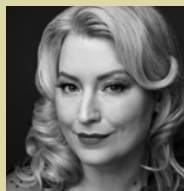
**JJ ROBINSON, BARITONE**

**HOMETOWN:** Landis, NC

**KNOXVILLE OPERA:** Zuniga, *Carmen*,

2025; Pistola, *Falstaff*, 2023; Pritschitsch, *The Merry Widow*, 2022

**RECENT:** Samuel, *Pirates of Penzance*, Charlottesville Opera; Escamillo, *Carmen*, Charlottesville Opera; Pirate King, *Pirates of Penzance*, Eklund Opera



## Carmen

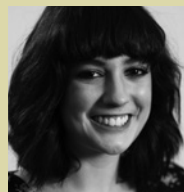
**RENÉE TATUM,**

**MEZZO SOPRANO**

**HOMETOWN:** Carlsbad, CA

**KNOXVILLE OPERA:** Dame Quickly, *Falstaff*, 2024 / **RECENT:** *Verdi*

*Requiem*, Austin Opera, Akron Symphony; Fricka, *Das Rheingold*, Pacific Symphony; Grimgerde, *Die Walküre* and Flosshilde, *Das Rheingold*, Dallas Symphony; Brangäne in *Tristan und Isolde*, Harvard-Radcliffe Orchestra; La Reine, *Hamlet*, Cincinatti Symphony Orchestra; Flosshilde, *Götterdämmerung*, Boston Symphony at Tanglewood; Suzuki, *Madama Butterfly*, Palm Beach Opera; Maddalena, *Rigoletto* and Fenena, *Nabucco*, 3rd Lady and 2nd Lady, *Die Zauberflöte*, Emilia, *Otello*, Inez, *Il Trovatore*, and Adonella, Francesca da Rimini, Metropolitan Opera / **UPCOMING:** Mahler's *Symphony No.8*, Dallas Symphony; Beethoven's *Symphony No. 9*, Knoxville Symphony / **RENEETATUM.COM**



## Frasquita

**LAUREN BOOZER,**

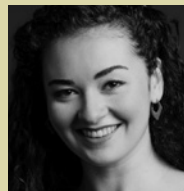
**SOPRANO**

**HOMETOWN:** Lookout Mountain, GA

**KNOXVILLE OPERA MAINSTAGE**

**DEBUT** / **RECENT:** Chorus, *La*

*bohème*, 2025; Chorus, *La traviata*, 2024; Chorus, *Falstaff*, 2023; Barbarina, *Le nozze di Figaro*, Festival of International Opera Italia, 2022 / **@** **LAURENBOOZER.SINGS**



## Mercédès

**HANNAH SHEA,**

**MEZZO SOPRANO**

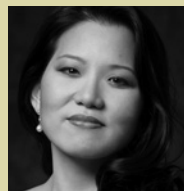
**HOMETOWN:** Harrisburg, PA

**KNOXVILLE OPERA:** Alto Soloist,

*Beethoven's Symphony No. 9*, 2025

**RECENT:** Jess, *Grounded* (workshop), The Metropolitan Opera; Jess, *Grounded*, Washington National Opera; Edith Thibault, *Bel Canto*, Aspen Music Festival; Marcellina, *Le nozze di Figaro*, Annapolis Opera; Dritte Magd, *Elektra*, Washington National Opera; Mercédès, *Carmen*, Washington National Opera; Dorabella (cover), *Così fan tutte*, Washington National Opera

**HANNAHSHEAMEZZO.COM** / **f** **@** **HANNAHSHEAMEZZO**



## Micaëla

**KAREN CHIA-LING HO,**

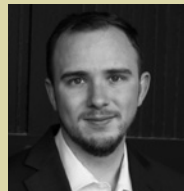
**SOPRANO**

**HOMETOWN:** Hainesville, IL

**KNOXVILLE OPERA DEBUT**

**RECENT:** Mimi, *La bohème*, San Fran-

cisco Opera; Cio-Cio San, *Madama Butterfly*, Vancouver Opera  
**UPCOMING:** Cio-Cio San, *Madama Butterfly*, Arizona Opera and Santa Fe Opera / **KARENCHIALINGHO.COM**



## Le Dancaire

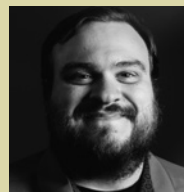
**JOEL BROWN, BARITONE**

**HOMETOWN:** Linclon, NE

**KNOXVILLE OPERA:** Commissario,

*La Traviata*, 2024 / **RECENT:** "Voices for Haiti", Cathedral of the Most Sacred

Heart of Jesus; "Baritones, Boots, and Bats", Marble City Opera; Butler, *The Infinite Energy of Ada Lovelace*, Marble City Opera; Eisenstein, *Die Fledermaus*, University of Tennessee Opera Theatre; Papageno, *Die Zauberflöte*, University of Tennessee Opera Theatre / **UPCOMING:** Ser Amantio di Nicolao/The Notary, *Gianni Schicchi*, Knoxville Opera / **JOELBROWNBARITONE.COM**



## Le Remendado

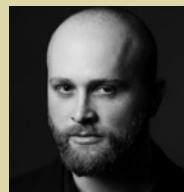
**JOHN OVERHOLT, TENOR**

**HOMETOWN:** Newport, TN

**KNOXVILLE OPERA:** Soloist, *Opera's*

*Greatest Hits: A Tribute to Robert Lyall*, 2024; Gastone, *La traviata*, 2024; Dr.

Caius, *Falstaff*, 2023 / **RECENT:** Soloist, Amadeus Concert Ensemble; Tenor Soloist, *Bob Chilcott Requiem*, The Civic Chorale; Broom, *The Doctor and The Devils*, Marble City Opera; Elder Gleaton, *Susannah*, Marble City Opera; First Prisoner, *Fidelio*, Cincinnati Opera; Justice Antonin Scalia, *Scalia/Ginsburg* World Premiere, Castleton Festival / **TENORJOHNOVERHOLT.COM**



## Escamillo

**JONATHAN PATTON,**

**BARITONE**

**HOMETOWN:** Durango, CO

**KNOXVILLE OPERA DEBUT**

**RECENT:** Don Giovanni, *Don Giovanni*,

Rapides Symphony; Soloist, *Faure Requiem*, MidAmerica Productions; Steve Jobs, *The (R)evolution of Steve Jobs*, Washington National Opera; Montano, *Otello*, National Symphony Orchestra; Pàris, *Roméo et Juliette*, Washington National Opera; Don Pedro, *Songbird*, Washington National Opera; Marcello, *La bohème*, Washington National Opera; Silvio, *Pagliacci*, The Glimmerglass Festival  
**UPCOMING:** Soloist, *Holiday Concert*, MidAtlantic Symphony; Melot (Cover), *Tristan und Isolde*, The Metropolitan Opera  
**JONATHAN-PATTON.COM**

### CHORUS

Staley Clark

Meghan Cluskey

Vallie Comstock

Falynn Davis

Madeline Depinet

Lindsay Dove

Liz Elliott

Elena Klein

Jordi Lawless

Ana Aguilar Piedra

Sarah Ray

Christina Villaverde

Emma Wilson

Esteban Caño

Nathaniel Christakis

Todd Cochran

Dylan Fink

Kyle Foster

Adam Funderburg

Daniel Howell

Tim Pope

Matthew Rajkowski

Evan Schettler

Tanner Smith

Deshawn Stevens

Sean Whitson

Daniel Willsey

### CHILDREN'S CHORUS

Isla Burdette

Bernadette Di Salvo-Tinley

Josie Durrett

Ella Goebel

Dorothy Hardy

Madison Holland-Davis

Eleanor Lawless

Eli Lawless

Jonah Lawless

Alexa Funes Minjares

Vera Nemykina

Emery Ray

Claire Rosenbaum

Aoife Ullman

# OPERA FOR KIDS

Through the Children's Choir, Young Audiences Tour, and Student Ticket programs, Knoxville Opera gives kids the chance to learn music and experience the magic of opera.



Bess



Gracie

## VOICES FROM THE CHILDREN'S CHOIR

"A big thank you to Knoxville Opera for investing in the lives of children introducing them to not only the Arts of Music but also the world of Opera."

*"I learned that I can be a confident singer."*

*"I loved the feeling of community that the opera brings. It's so lively and fun."*

"[My child] loved every minute. The challenge of learning the music boosted her self-confidence, the bond she formed with the cast was priceless, and the experience of being in a major production was a huge learning experience for her."

"I'm so appreciative of this program, and Knoxville Opera. There is no way that the occasional touring company would provide this level of community interaction, education, or engagement, and it's vital for kids in Knoxville to have these opportunities."

*"I love the costumes and singing!"*

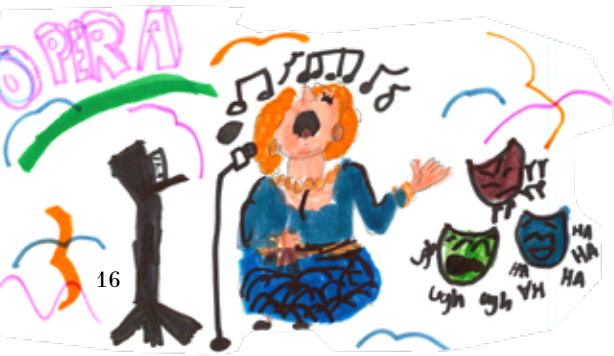
"We were blown away by Ms Amanda and her teaching team! They taught the kids complex songs and the joy of music."

"The way I've seen [my daughter] light up on stage and in practice is amazing."

*"I loved being on stage."*



Peyton



Ellie Kate

Learn more about KO's free youth programs and see more kid's artwork from the Young Audiences Tour at [knoxvilleopera.org/education-programs](https://knoxvilleopera.org/education-programs)

2025-2026 SEASON

Knoxville Opera's  
Childrens Choir  
performing in *La bohème*, 2025.



## CHILDREN'S CHOIR END-OF-SEMESTER SURVEY

100% HAD FUN AND IMPROVED THEIR SINGING

90% BOOSTED THEIR SINGING CONFIDENCE

100% OF PARENTS SAW BOTH MUSICAL AND SOCIAL BENEFITS

KNOXVILLE OPERA

# FROM STUDENT TO DAUGHTER OF A MODERN MAJOR-GENERAL

BY MEGHAN CLUSKEY

One of the most rewarding parts of being in the Knoxville Opera Studio is getting the opportunity to perform with your best friends. I have been fortunate enough to sing with my graduate cohort for two performances with Knoxville Opera. Gilbert and Sullivan's *Pirates of Penzance* holds a special place in my heart with the abundance of memories made. Whether we were dancing with parasols, drying glistening tears, or even singing about the many cheerful facts about the square of a hypotenuse, there was never a dull moment.



Meghan Cluskey (left) and Molly Garrett (right) smile backstage.

Waking up knowing that we were performing in the Tennessee Theatre was enough to get me springing out of bed and to school. Living a double life as a student and a performer is not always easy, but that day (opening night) felt secure.

First, I headed to the University of Tennessee's College of Music to vocalize, sing a bit of my role, Carolina with UT Opera Theatre's *Il Matrimonio*, and go to class. Taking it slow this day was very important, and luckily after class, I was able to have some time to rest and perfect my pin curls.

There is something magical about being in the dressing room with your cast, knowing in an hour you will be on stage getting to share a piece of your soul with the audience. And that is exactly what we did. Crowd members were cackling while we skipped, sang and screamed! (Healthy screams of course.)

The show could not have gone better. What made this opera even more incredible was getting to see my biggest supporters in the theatre. My parents have never missed a performance and their support is the reason I am where I am today.

After the opera, a few of us went out to one of our favorite spots, Clancy's, to debrief and enjoy our after-show adrenaline together.

I am extremely excited to be in Knoxville Opera's *Carmen* this fall and make even more silly memories with my family away from home. ●

UT Opera Theatre students performing alongside Knoxville Opera in *The Pirates of Penzance* (2024).



Townsend in Knoxville Opera's *H.M.S. Pinafore* (2004). Pictured alongside Ashton Luke, Rick Jones, and Michael Toth. Image credit Eric L. Smith



## Our Quiet Force Behind the Curtain

# DON TOWNSEND

"You gotta keep moving. If you slow down, that's it." A mantra Don Townsend's father lived by—and one Don never forgot. And, it's safe to say, he's taken it to heart. For over 40 years, Don has been the quiet engine behind Knoxville Opera, weaving his life into the company's fabric in ways most people will never see but many have felt.

Don's journey didn't begin in music. He arrived at Columbia University (the Columbia University) on a work-study scholarship in 1969 with plans to become a journalist, landing smack in the middle of student riots and big-city upheaval. But music, as it tends to do, kept pulling him in. He switched majors, studied under choral greats like Daniel Paget and Gregg Smith, sang in choirs, and played piano at jazz clubs to pay the bills. Filing Chinese character books in the East Asian Library by day and performing Gershwin by night, he learned to adapt, to listen, and to keep learning.

That mindset carried him from the boroughs of New York back to the hills of East Tennessee, where he taught music in schools and led church choirs before being recruited by Knoxville Opera in the early 1980s. He has played many roles in the opera, from his first role as Marquis d'Obigny in *La Traviata*, to his favorite as Papageno in *The Magic Flute*. But it was the chorus—his chorus—that became his life's joy. As director, Don shaped voices and, more importantly, built community.

Even now, he remains a constant presence: overseeing warehouse logistics, managing rentals, leading the daunting setup for Rossini Festival (often without sleep), and helping newcomers find their footing. "Opera has been the biggest part of my life," he says, not out of ego but out of gratitude.

He remembers the days before dressing rooms, when performances at the Bijou Theatre meant freezing backstage. He's worked under every leadership generation. He has seen the art form stretch and shrink, grow and fight to survive. And still, he shows up—humble, hands-on, and seemingly tireless.

Ask Don what matters most, and he won't talk about his own legacy. He'll tell you about the people—their quirks, their talents, the way it all comes together. "You get to see it built from the ground up," he says. "That's the magic of it."

And Don? He's been the harmony behind that magic all along. ●



# ROSSINI'S *il Barbiere di Siviglia*

CONDUCTOR: JOSEPH MECHAVICH  
STAGE DIRECTOR: DEAN ANTHONY  
CHORUS DIRECTOR & REHEARSAL PIANIST: CHRISTY LEE  
THE KNOXVILLE SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

**ACT I** Seville. Count Almaviva comes in disguise as a poor student named Lindoro to the house of Dr. Bartolo and serenades Rosina, whom Bartolo keeps confined to the house. Figaro the barber, who knows all the town's secrets and scandals, explains to Almaviva that Rosina is Bartolo's ward, not his daughter, and that the doctor intends to marry her. Figaro devises a plan: The Count will disguise himself as a drunken soldier with orders to be quartered at Bartolo's house, so that he may gain access to Rosina. Almaviva is excited, and Figaro looks forward to a nice cash pay-off.

Rosina reflects on the voice that has enchanted her and resolves to use her considerable wiles to meet the man to whom it belongs. Bartolo appears with Rosina's music master, Don Basilio. Basilio warns Bartolo that Count Almaviva, who has made known his admiration for Rosina, has been seen in Seville. Bartolo decides to marry Rosina immediately. Basilio suggests slander as the most effective means of getting rid of Almaviva. Figaro, who has overheard the plot, warns Rosina and promises to deliver a note from her to Lindoro. Bartolo suspects that Rosina has indeed written a letter, but she outwits him at every turn. Bartolo warns her not to trifle with him.

Almaviva arrives, creating a ruckus in his disguise as a drunken soldier, and secretly passes Rosina his own note. Bartolo is infuriated by the stranger's behavior and noisily claims that he has an official exemption from billeting soldiers. Figaro announces that a crowd has gathered in the street, curious about the argument they hear coming from inside the house. The civil guard bursts in to arrest Almaviva, but when he secretly reveals his identity to the Captain, he is instantly released. Everyone except Figaro is amazed by this turn of events.



*Step further into Rossini's world during our pre-show talk held just before each performance. Pre-show talks begin 1 hour before the show and run for 40 minutes. Learn more at [knoxvilleopera.org/barbiere-di-siviglia](http://knoxvilleopera.org/barbiere-di-siviglia)*

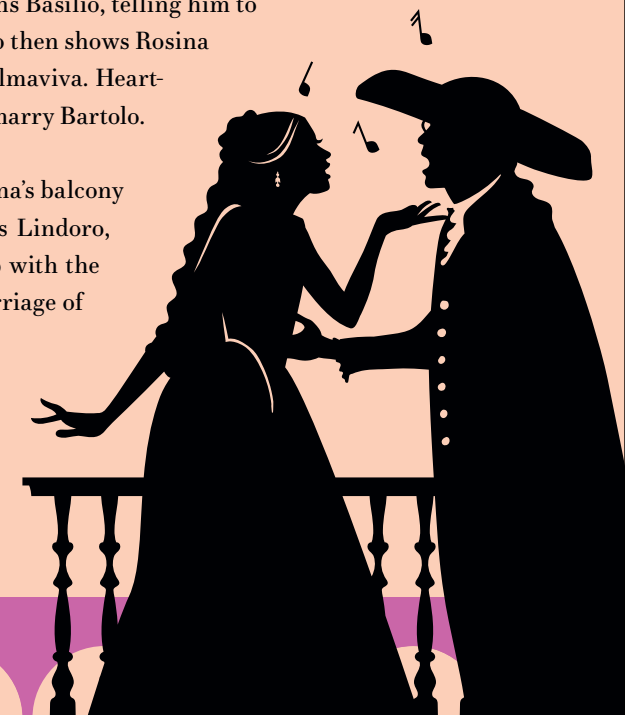
**ACT II** Bartolo suspects that the "soldier" was a spy planted by Almaviva. The Count returns, this time disguised as Don Alonso, a music teacher and student of Don Basilio, to give Rosina her singing lesson in place of Basilio, who, he says, is ill at home. "Don Alonso" then tells Bartolo that when visiting Almaviva at his inn, he found a letter from Rosina. He offers to tell her that it was given to him by another woman, seemingly to prove that Lindoro is toying with Rosina on Almaviva's behalf. This convinces Bartolo that "Don Alonso" is indeed a student of the scheming Basilio, and he allows him to give Rosina her lesson. With Bartolo dozing off, Almaviva and Rosina declare their love.

Figaro arrives to give Bartolo his shave and manages to snatch the key that opens the doors to Rosina's balcony. Suddenly, Basilio shows up looking perfectly healthy. Almaviva, Rosina, and Figaro convince him with a quick bribe that he is in fact ill and must go home at once. While Bartolo gets his shave, Almaviva plots with Rosina to meet at her balcony that night so that they can elope. But Bartolo overhears them and, realizing he has been tricked again, flies into a rage. Everyone disperses.

The maid Berta comments on the crazy household. Bartolo summons Basilio, telling him to bring a notary, so Bartolo can marry Rosina that very night. Bartolo then shows Rosina her letter to Lindoro, as proof that her student is in league with Almaviva. Heartbroken and convinced that she has been deceived, Rosina agrees to marry Bartolo.

A thunderstorm passes. Figaro and the count climb a ladder to Rosina's balcony and let themselves in with the key. Rosina appears and confronts Lindoro, who finally reveals his true identity as Almaviva. Basilio shows up with the notary. Bribed and threatened, he agrees to be a witness to the marriage of Rosina and Almaviva. Bartolo arrives with soldiers, but it is too late. He accepts that he has been beaten, and Figaro, Rosina, and the Count celebrate their good fortune.

*Adapted from the Metropolitan Opera*





### Conductor

**JOSEPH MECHAVICH**

**HOMETOWN:** Long Lake, MN  
**KNOXVILLE OPERA:** Conductor, *The Pirates of Penzance*, 2024; *La traviata*, 2024 / **RECENT:** *Florencia en el*

*Amazonas*, North Carolina Opera; *La bohème*, Florida Grand Opera; *Lucia di Lammermoor*, New Orleans Opera; *La traviata*, North Carolina Opera; *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, Washington National Opera; *Werther*, Florida Grand Opera; *Dead Man Walking*, The Atlanta Opera / **UPCOMING:** *Of Mice and Men*, Lyric Opera of Kansas City  
[FLETCHERARTISTS.COM/JOSEPH-MECHAVICH](https://fletcherartists.com/joseph-mechavich)



### Stage Director

**DEAN ANTHONY**

**HOMETOWN:** St. Louis, MO  
**KNOXVILLE OPERA:** Stage Director, *La bohème*, 2025; *The Pirates of Penzance*, 2024; *Cendrillon*, 2024; *Falstaff*, 2023;

*The Merry Widow*, 2022; *Glory Denied*, 2022; *Cavalleria Rusticana*, 2019; *Aida*, 2018 / **RECENT:** Stage Director: *Die Fledermaus*, Cedar Rapids Opera; *Glory Denied*, Greensboro Opera; *The Magic Flute*, *Elixir of Love*, and *Cendrillon*, Janiec Opera Company of the Brevard Music Center / **UPCOMING:** Stage Director: *Carmen*, Piedmont Opera / [DEANANTHONY.NET](https://deananthony.net)



### Chorus Director

**CHRISTY LEE**

**HOMETOWN:** Starkville, MS  
**KNOXVILLE OPERA:** Chorus Director: *La bohème*, 2025, *The Pirates of Penzance*, 2024, *La traviata*, 2024,

*Falstaff*, 2023 / **RECENT:** Director of Music and Liturgy, Our Lady of Fatima Catholic Church (Alcoa, TN)



### Count Almaviva

**ANDREW MORSTEIN, TENOR**

**HOMETOWN:**  
**KNOXVILLE OPERA DEBUT**  
**RECENT:** *Almaviva*, *Il barbiere di Siviglia*,

*Central City Opera & Opera Theatre of Saint Louis & Opera Neo; Florindo*, *Le maschere*, Wexford Opera Festival; *Lindoro*, *L'italiana in Algeri*, Opera in the Heights & Anchorage Opera & St. Pete Opera; Tenor Soloist, *Mozart Requiem*, Boise Philharmonic; *Serge*, *L'Aube rouge*, Wexford Opera Festival; *Edgardo*, *Lucia di Lammermoor*, Pensacola Opera; *Pyotr Fyodorovich/7th Man/7th Student*, *The Nose*, Chicago Opera Theater; Tenor Soloist, *Carmina Burana*, New Jersey Symphony Orchestra & Amarillo Symphony; *Don Curzio*, *Le nozze di Figaro*, Salzburg Festival; *Leonard Lev*, *Awakenings*, Boston Modern Opera Project & Odyssey Opera / **UPCOMING:** *Don Ottavio*, *Don Giovanni*, Florentine Opera; *Master Ford*, *Falstaff (Salieri)*, Chicago Opera Theater; *Alfredo Germont*, *La Traviata*, Pensacola Opera / [IMGARTISTS.COM/ROSTER/ANDREW-MORSTEIN](https://imgartists.com/roster/andrew-morstein)



### Bartolo

**STEVEN CONDY, BARITONE**

**HOMETOWN:** Levittown, PA  
**KNOXVILLE OPERA:** *Falstaff*, *Falstaff*, 2023; *Sir Joseph Porter*, *H.M.S. Pinafore*, 2014; *Don Magnifico*, *La cenerentola*,

2002 / **RECENT:** *Scarpia*, *Tosca*, Opera Delaware/Opera Baltimore; *Benoit/Alcindoro*, *La bohème*, Opera Delaware/Opera Baltimore / [STEVENCONDY.COM](https://stevencondy.com) / [@SCONDYBARITONE](https://twitter.com/SCONDYBARITONE)

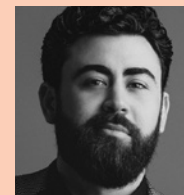


### Rosina

**SARAH COIT, MEZZO SOPRANO**

**HOMETOWN:** Spring Hill, FL  
**KNOXVILLE OPERA DEBUT**  
**RECENT:** *Cendrillon*, *Cendrillon*, Vashon

Opera; *Rinaldo*, *Rinaldo*, Pacific Northwest Opera; *Miss Jessel*, *The Turn of the Screw*, Opera Tampa  
[SARAHCOIT.COM](https://sarahcoit.com) / [@SROSECOIT](https://twitter.com/SROSECOIT)

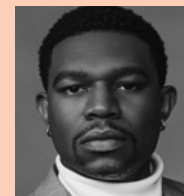


### Figaro

**ELEOMAR CUELLO, BARITONE**

**HOMETOWN:** Havana, Cuba  
**KNOXVILLE OPERA DEBUT**  
**RECENT:** *Le Dancaïre*, *Carmen*,

*Metropolitan Opera*; *Sharpless*, *Madama Butterfly*, Teatro Municipal de Santiago; *Morales*, *Carmen*, The Dallas Opera / **UPCOMING:** *Mercutio*, *Romeo et Juliette*, Opera Theatre Saint Louis  
[ELEOMARCUELLO.COM](https://eleomarcuello.com)



### Basilio

**EDWIN JHAMAAL DAVIS, BASS BARITONE**

**HOMETOWN:** Utica, MS  
**KNOXVILLE OPERA DEBUT**  
**RECENT:** *Garvey Preacher*, *X: The Life*

*& Times of Malcolm X*, The Metropolitan Opera; *Bass 2*, *X: The Life & Times of Malcolm X*, Seattle Opera/Opera Omaha/Detroit Opera; *Second Armored Man*, *The Magic Flute*, Seattle Opera; *Dr. Grenville (Cover)*, *La traviata*, Detroit Opera; *Angelotti*, *Tosca*, New Orleans Opera; *Commander*, *Don Giovanni: A Rock Opera*, Off-Broadway; *Colline*, *La bohème*, First Coast Opera/Amelia Island Opera/Opera Montana/Opera Memphis; *King*, *Aida*, Opera Grand Rapids  
[EJDBASS.UNIVER.SE](https://ejdbass.univer.se)

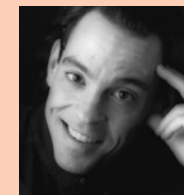


### fiorello

**DESHAWN STEVENS, BASS BARITONE**

**HOMETOWN:** Augusta, GA  
**KNOXVILLE OPERA:** *Custom House Sergeant*, *La bohème*, 2025

**RECENT:** *Geronimo*, *Il Matrimonio Segreto*, UT Opera Theatre  
**UPCOMING:** *Le Marquis de la Force*, *Dialogues des Carmélites*, UT Opera Theatre / [@DESHAWNSTEVENS](https://twitter.com/DESHAWNSTEVENS)

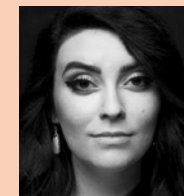


### Ambrogio

**DINO ANTONIO, TENOR**

**HOMETOWN:** The Road  
**KNOXVILLE OPERA:** *Benoit*, *La bohème*, 2025; *Alfred*, *Die Fledermaus*, 1993 / **RECENT:** *Maestro Spinelloccio*,

*Gianni Schicchi*, Opera Roanoke & Opera Tampa; *Benoit*, *La bohème*, Pensacola Opera, *Ambrosio*, *The Barber of Seville*, Opera on the James, Brevard Music Center, Amarillo Opera / **UPCOMING:** *Maestro Spinelloccio*, *Gianni Schicchi*, Knoxville Opera



### Berta

**TORI FRANKLIN, SOPRANO**

**HOMETOWN:** Knoxville, TN  
**KNOXVILLE OPERA:** *Soloist*, *Opera's Greatest Hits: A Tribute to Robert Lyall*, 2024; *Alice Ford*, *Falstaff*, 2023; *Alisa*,

*Lucia di Lammermoor*, 2019 / **RECENT:** *Nella*, *Gianni Schicchi*, Opera Roanoke; *Second Fairy*, *Midsummer Night's Dream*, Knoxville Symphony Orchestra; *Mrs. Hayes/Susannah (cover)*, *Susannah*, Marble City Opera; *Mutter*, *Hänsel und Gretel*, UT Opera Theatre; *La Duchesse du Krackentorpe*, *Le fille du regiment*, Sarasota Opera  
**UPCOMING:** *Nella*, *Gianni Schicchi*, Knoxville Opera  
[TORIFRANKLINSOPRANO.COM](https://torifranklinsoprano.com)

WITH THE KNOXVILLE OPERA CHORUS

# OPERA TAKES TO THE STREETS

*A Knoxville Spring Tradition*

BY DON TOWNSEND

It was the spring of 2001, and Knoxville Opera had begun planning repertoire for the upcoming 2001–2002 season. General Director Frank Graffeo sat in his office, thoughtfully musing over the spring schedule. He noted he’d be conducting Knoxville Opera’s production on Friday evening at the Tennessee Theatre, then UT Opera Theatre’s shows on Saturday afternoon and evening at the Bijou, returning to the Tennessee for KO’s Sunday matinee, and heading back to the Bijou for two more UT performances on Sunday and Monday evenings.

“Certainly a busy opera-filled weekend,” he remarked. “You know, what we need is an opera festival format to tie everything together for our patrons—with things to do all weekend.”

Having just returned from the annual Rossini Festival in Pesaro, Italy—where he had assisted the renowned conductor and musicologist Alberto Zedda in performances of Rossini’s works—Frank had an inspired thought: What if we created an American version of the Rossini Festival here in Knoxville? What if we presented multiple Rossini operas as part of a full spring opera weekend?



*Natalee McRenoylds performs at the Rossini Festival 2025.*

From that single question, ideas began to pour out and take shape. Knoxville Opera could present Rossini’s delightful comic portrayal of the Cinderella story, *La Cenerentola*, Frank suggested, while UT Opera might stage the one-act farce *Il Signor Bruschino*, and pair it with Puccini’s beloved *Suor Angelica* to feature the strong female voices in UT’s program. To proceed, Frank knew he’d need to persuade UT Opera Director Carroll Freeman to collaborate.

But Frank’s vision extended beyond the opera houses. “It would be spectacular,” he said, “if we could add other forms of art downtown to keep folks interested enough to hang around—or even come from out of

*Inspired by Pesaro’s Rossini Festival, Frank Graffeo dreamed of creating an American counterpart—uniting opera, food, and community in downtown Knoxville.*



*Gay Street was transformed with tents of Italian food, artisan booths, flags, streamers, and balloon arches—creating a downtown celebration unlike anything the city had seen.*

town for a big opera weekend.” He envisioned involving local churches in a Rossini-themed choral program, and perhaps inviting the Dogwood Arts Festival to co-sponsor a weekend street fair. “Maybe an Italian Street Fair,” he mused, “just like in Pesaro.”

Momentum quickly built. UT Opera agreed to the partnership. The Rossini repertoire was finalized. The idea of a new spring opera festival was officially in motion.

Frank reached out to First Presbyterian Church, inviting organist-choirmaster Ashley Burell to present a Rossini work with his chancel choir. Blake Robison, director of the Clarence Brown Theatre, enthusiastically offered his support as well—proposing Rossini Festival discounts for CBT’s spring show. Frank also envisioned pre-opera lectures to give audiences more context about Rossini’s life and work.

To pursue the street fair concept, KO staff met with Dogwood Arts Director Ed Paisley. The Dogwood team was incredibly supportive of the idea and generously shared their insight and advice. With their own annual festival already in full swing, they weren’t able to take on a co-producing role, but their early encouragement helped lay a strong foundation for the new event.

Undeterred, KO resolved to move forward on its own. The first major hurdle was city approval. KO approached Knoxville Special Events Director Mickey Mallonee, who was immediately supportive of the idea—both for its cultural promise and its contribution to downtown revitalization. She agreed to come aboard as a co-producer, securing street closure permits for Gay Street (from Main Avenue near the Bijou to Church Street near the Tennessee Theatre), and providing city support for sanitation, public safety, and even free access to electricity.

Next, the team began recruiting street vendors. Italian restaurants from across the Knoxville area were invited to bring their food to Gay Street, where they could cook and serve traditional dishes in the open air. Local artists, crafters, and exhibitors were also contacted to showcase and sell their creations. Vendors were arranged back-to-back in tents along the center of the street.

Performers of all ages and artistic disciplines—actors, dancers, jugglers, musicians, choirs, reenactors, and more—were invited to fill the blocks with entertainment. A central stage was constructed in the street,

but performers also popped up on corners, in intersections, and even in parking lots.

The traveling History Channel Trailer was invited and agreed to park at Church Avenue, creating a natural end point to the fair. KO staff and volunteers festooned Gay Street in bold red, white, and green—flags, banners, streamers, and balloon arches marked the celebration. None of us had ever attempted anything so ambitious before, but we were committed to making Frank’s vision a reality.

After months of preparation, opening night arrived. Knoxville Opera launched the inaugural Rossini Festival with a splendid performance of La Cenerentola at the Tennessee Theatre. I was onstage as a member of the men’s chorus, thrilled to share the stage with Diedre Palmour as Cinderella, Brian Downen as the Prince, Steve Condry as the Baron, and Andy Wentzel as Alidoro, with Frank conducting.

Later that night—around 3 a.m.—our technical director Bill Cheverton and the opera crew assembled on Gay Street to begin setup for the street fair. Saturday dawned clear and beautiful. By 9 a.m., tents were in place, booths were ready, the History Channel exhibit was open, and entertainers were already performing.

At noon, I had to step away to manage the UT performance, handling the supertitle projections for Il Signor Bruschino and Suor Angelica. When I emerged onto Gay Street after the show had started, I was stunned to find the blocks packed with people. Someone greeted me and said, “Wow, this is fantastic. I know you must be thrilled.” I hadn’t yet seen the crowd, but as I walked through the fair, I saw artisans smiling, performers energized, and attendees everywhere. Police later estimated attendance at over 6,000 people. It felt like we had created something truly special.

The question I heard most often that day was: “Are you going to do this again?”

We weren’t sure yet, but the next year, the street fair expanded to three blocks, and attendance more than doubled to 13,000. It became clear that Frank’s vision had struck a chord in East Tennessee.

In the years that followed, the Rossini Festival Street Fair grew into a destination in its own right. By 2006, it stretched from Main Avenue to Summit Hill Drive and included Market Square, Krutch Park, and Krutch Park Extension. At its peak, the festival annually welcomes more than 50,000 visitors to sample the Artisan Marketplace, the food courts, and 5–7 stages of continuous entertainment. Frank’s idea had become a free, community-wide celebration of the visual, culinary, and performing arts.

As leadership evolved and artistic priorities broadened, the spring opera weekend format naturally gave way to new possibilities, and the partnership with UT Opera Theatre concluded. In place of the traditional Rossini operas that once defined the festival, fresh and diverse productions began to take center stage. Though the original concept transformed over time, the spirit of the festival remained vibrant—adapting, growing, and continuing to bring opera to the heart of the community.

Today, more than twenty years later, the Knoxville Opera Rossini Festival International Street Fair is still going strong. Now centered in the Market Street corridor and Market Square, it has expanded to a two-day celebration. It continues to draw thousands each year to enjoy performances by opera singers, choirs, dance companies, rock bands, and more. The Artisan and Food Marketplace remains a centerpiece.

Though KO was never able to fully realize Frank’s artistic vision in its entirety, the Rossini Festival has become a fitting legacy for Maestro Graffeo—an annual spring tradition in Knoxville that has brought joy, community, and culture to generations. ●

ROSSINI FESTIVAL  
APRIL 18-19, 2026  
MARKET SQUARE &  
MARKET STREET  
FREE ADMISSION

# Join the Camerata

The Knoxville Opera Camerata is a community of passionate music lovers dedicated to celebrating and enriching Knoxville’s cultural landscape. Members experience the joy and power of opera, fostering a love for the arts with every performance and social event.

Your participation directly impacts the local arts scene, supporting the high-quality performances and development of young talent. With tax-deductible benefits, joining the Camerata positions you as a vital supporter of Knoxville’s cultural vitality.

## SECURE THE BEST SEATS

BEFORE THE PUBLIC WITH EARLY  
ACCESS TO ALL OUR EVENTS

## GET EXCLUSIVE INVITATIONS

TO VIP RECEPTIONS, ARTIST MEET-AND-  
GREETs, AND PRIVATE GATHERINGS

BECOME A MEMBER    INDIVIDUAL MEMBERSHIP \$65, HOUSEHOLDS \$120 [knoxvilleopera.org/join](http://knoxvilleopera.org/join)

The **HAPPY BOOKER AWARD** goes to members who exhibited extraordinary service to further the goals of the Camerata and arts in Knoxville.

|                        |                        |                             |                           |                         |
|------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------|
| Mark Hill · 1998       | Susana Esrequis · 2004 | Phyllis Driver · 2010       | G. Mark Cramolini · 2016  | Braunstein · 2021       |
| Jacqueline Ball · 1999 | Audrey Duncan · 2005   | Kathy Krohmer · 2011        | Evelyn Hopp · 2017        | Natalie Dowling · 2022  |
| Joanne Mounger · 2000  | Robert Gibson · 2006   | Audrey Duncan · 2012        | Robin Gold · 2018         | Julia Mullaney · 2023   |
| Ann Exum · 2001        | Jim Stiegler · 2007    | Susana Esrequis · 2013      | Eden McNabb Bishop · 2019 | Francine Marasco · 2024 |
| Theresa Stone · 2002   | Margaret Bull · 2008   | Kimberly Henry · 2014       | Trey Coleman · 2020       | Gibson Smith · 2025     |
| Frankie Hulett · 2003  | John Butler · 2009     | L. Caesar Stair, III · 2015 | Dr. Catherine Elise       |                         |



# Small Company, Big Vision

## *Building Opera Sets from the Ground Up*

Imagine an empty stage, its vastness lit only by work lights. In just four days, it must become another world—one so vivid the audience can lose themselves in it. This is the challenge Producing Director Dean Anthony takes on with every Knoxville Opera production, and it's one the company approaches differently than most. While many regional opera companies rely on rented sets, Knoxville Opera often builds its own, tailored to the story, the performers, and the stage on which it will be performed.

"Every production has to surprise our audience," Anthony says. "It should feel like stepping into a completely different world each time." That's a notable difference from what's typical for similar-sized companies, and even from Knoxville Opera's earlier

days, when one unit structure might support multiple operas across a season. Now, each show is tailored to the character of the venue and the experience Knoxville Opera wants to create.

That creative shift has led to moments audiences still talk about—and caught the attention of other opera companies. The 2024 production of Cendrillon, for example, transformed the Bijou Theatre into a vibrant storybook with digital screens and a costumed orchestra seated in the theatre's side boxes, making them part of the action. The design embraced the theatre's scale and configuration, proving that a venue's character can be an inspiration, not a limitation.



*With Carmen, Anthony has designed a single unit structure that can transform for each act.*



*Set in 1949, Dean Anthony's production of Gianni Schicchi reimagines Buoso Donati as an eccentric hoarder.*

Working in Knoxville's two main theatres requires a nimble approach. The Tennessee Theatre offers grand scale but demands quick turnarounds, while the Bijou inspires experimentation within its distinctive footprint. Anthony sees these as creative prompts, shaping designs that can be assembled quickly yet feel fully realized. In both spaces, the goal is the same: create a setting that supports the music, the performers, and the story while leaving room for the audience's imagination to take hold.

The upcoming Carmen captures this philosophy. Traditionally staged with four distinct unit structures for its four acts, Knoxville Opera's version uses a single, striking framework that transforms for each act through the use of costumes, props, and lighting. "It's an atmosphere," Anthony explains. "One that invites the audience to engage their imagination alongside ours."

The solutions aren't always about scaling back—they're about rethinking. For Gianni Schicchi, Anthony has shifted the setting to 1949, replacing a plot-driving mule with a coveted Vespa and turning the eccentric uncle's home into a hoarder's treasure trove. The orchestra will be staged on set, blurring the line between musicians and characters. Audiences arriving early might even catch a few surprises before the curtain rises.

Technology has a place in Anthony's toolkit, but it's always used with intention. "In a world where technology can be an easy plug, it has to be

helpful, not carry the whole story," he says. Screens and projections appear only when they deepen the live, in-the-moment experience, as in the company's Cendrillon.

Knoxville Opera also designs with an eye beyond its own stage. From the earliest sketches, Anthony considers how a set could travel, adapt, and work for other companies. Renting these productions generates added revenue and builds relationships with opera companies nationwide—an uncommon level of collaboration for a regional company. It's a strategic layer to the artistry, ensuring the work has a life, long after its Knoxville run, while fostering connections that strengthen the company's place in the larger opera community.

When a Knoxville Opera set moves on to another company—as The Marriage of Figaro did with Opera Delaware—or is stored for future use, as Carmen will be at Piedmont Opera, it carries with it the imagination and craftsmanship born here in Knoxville. That forward thinking is part of the plan, giving each design the potential for a longer life while building lasting connections across the opera world. For Anthony, it's never about placing his stamp on a classic, but about creating the best possible experience in the world he's working in. That mindset allows Knoxville Opera to deliver productions that resonate far beyond their final curtain and to keep building worlds that transport audiences again and again. ●

## Take Off for More Opera

*Knoxville offers an extraordinary operatic experience right here at home—but for those who dream of seeing even more, McGhee Tyson Airport makes it easy to explore the nation's top opera houses, all in a weekend with nonstop flights to celebrated cultural cities.*

### THE METROPOLITAN OPERA

Nonstop: American Airlines & Delta Airlines to LaGuardia / Allegiant to Newark  
No opera house is more legendary than the Met. You can arrive in New York by midday and be swept away by a performance at Lincoln Center that evening.

### LYRIC OPERA OF CHICAGO

Nonstop: United Airlines & American Airlines to O'Hare / Allegiant to Midway  
In the majestic Civic Opera House, Lyric offers world-class voices and stunning productions in one of America's most iconic venues.

### THE DALLAS OPERA

Nonstop: American Airlines  
The Dallas Opera is known for daring repertoire and striking productions. A direct flight makes for a seamless weekend of culture, cuisine, and music.

### THE ATLANTA OPERA

Nonstop: Delta Airlines  
With multiple weekend performances, The Atlanta Opera is an ideal escape just one hour from home.

### WASHINGTON NATIONAL OPERA

Nonstop: American Airlines to Reagan National / Allegiant & United Airlines to Dulles  
To the Kennedy Center in just hours, Washington National Opera delivers elegance and artistry—perfect for a weekend of music and museums.

*Plus, KO subscribers get discounts at leading companies across the country with Opera Passport through Opera America. With McGhee Tyson Airport, your next operatic adventure is already boarding.*

# NONSTOP KNOXVILLE

With over 100 flights each day to more than 30 nonstop destinations, including Chicago, New York, Dallas, and Washington, D.C. - McGhee Tyson Airport connects millions of people to the natural beauty, rich culture, and southern hospitality of Knoxville.



McGHEE TYSON AIRPORT  
KNOXVILLE



KNOXVILLE OPERA



## ALL BRANCHES. ONE VOICE. READY TO SERVE.

When Knoxville Opera presented *Glory Denied* with the Medal of Honor Convention in 2022, a spark was lit. It was the first performance under new General Director Jason Hardy and the start of his vision: a military chorus honoring those who have served. The idea began during Hardy's time at Opera Memphis, when veterans joined the final chorus of *The Falling and the Rising*, an opera inspired by soldiers' recovery stories. That experience affirmed that music can build community, restore purpose, and amplify often-unheard voices.

In May 2025, Military Voices of East Tennessee (MVET) debuted. This all-volunteer ensemble unites veterans and active-duty members from every branch and offers a space for healing, camaraderie, and expression. MVET members chose the name and shaped the vision. Rehearsals are filled with laughter and stories, and the group has quickly become a family. Joining Knoxville Opera's Gospel and Children's Choirs, MVET is growing as a visible presence in the region—partnering with over 75 military units and veteran organizations.



### KIRSTEN YOUNG

U.S. AIR FORCE

Air National Guard Master Sergeant Kirsten Young has served 17 years and now teaches leadership to

enlisted members of the Air Force and Coast Guard. Though she hadn't sung with a group since high school—aside from solos in her truck—MVET reconnected her with music. She now sings the national anthem at events.



### KENT KOEBKE

U.S. MARINE CORPS (RETIRED)

Kent spent nearly three decades in the Marine Corps, serving around the world in combat and intelligence

roles. He now channels his love of music into MVET, singing with his wife, Dianna, also a veteran. For him, the chorus is a way to stay connected to music, service, and shared purpose.



### LAUREN JOY STONE

TN NATIONAL GUARD

As a former military musician, Lauren has been with MVET since the beginning. With a background in

voice and French horn, she understands the power of music to build connection and restore meaning. Her roots with Knoxville Opera run deep, having performed in the company's 1999 production of *Aida*.



### PAUL KEDROW

U.S. ARMY (RETIRED)

A West Point graduate and previous KO Board Member, Paul discovered MVET through a Knoxville Opera

email and never looked back. He loves the camaraderie and shared enthusiasm of the group. "It's a welcome addition to the opera community," he says. "And a powerful way for veterans to connect." ●



*Puccini's*

# GIANNI SCHICCHI

CONDUCTOR: BENJAMIN MAKINO

DIRECTOR: DEAN ANTHONY

REHEARSAL PIANIST: EILEEN DOWNEY

THE KNOXVILLE SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

The greedy relatives of the wealthy Buoso Donati discover that the deceased has left his fortune to the church. The young Rinuccio suggests that Gianni Schicchi, a shrewd, self-made man and the father of his girlfriend, Lauretta, can help them. Schicchi appears with his daughter. Disgusted by the hypocrisy and avarice of the aristocratic family, he is about to leave but is persuaded to stay by Lauretta, who proclaims her intention to marry Rinuccio ("O mio babbino caro"). Reading the will, Schicchi devises a plan to impersonate the dead man. The relatives send for the notary and Schicchi, wearing Buoso's nightshirt and cap, from his sickbed dictates a new will, in which he leaves the greater part of the estate, including the house they are in, to his "dear friend Gianni Schicchi." The relatives are furious, and steal what they can from the house, chased out by Schicchi, who remains behind with Lauretta and Rinuccio. Turning to the audience, he points out how happy his fraud has made the young lovers and pleads that he not be judged too harshly.

*Courtesy of the Metropolitan Opera*



*Step further into Puccini's world during our pre-show talk held just before each performance. Pre-show talks begin 1 hour before the show and run for 40 minutes. Learn more at [knoxvilleopera.org/gianni-schicchi](https://knoxvilleopera.org/gianni-schicchi)*



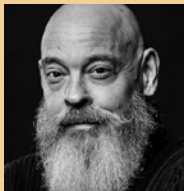
Conductor

**BENJAMIN MAKINO**

**HOMETOWN:** Porterville, CA

**KNOXVILLE OPERA DEBUT**

**RECENT:** *Fearless*, Opera Delaware; *Carmen*, Hawai'i Opera Theatre; *Rusalka*, Miami Music Festival / **BENJAMINMAKINO.COM**



Stage Director

**DEAN ANTHONY**

**HOMETOWN:** St. Louis, MO

**KNOXVILLE OPERA:** Stage Director, *La bohème*, 2025; *The Pirates of Penzance*, 2024; *Cendrillon*, 2024; *Falstaff*, 2023;

*The Merry Widow*, 2022; *Glory Denied*, 2022; *Cavalleria Rusticana*, 2019; *Aida*, 2018 / **RECENT:** Stage Director: *Die Fledermaus*, Cedar Rapids Opera; *Glory Denied*, Greensboro Opera; *The Magic Flute*, *Elixir of Love*, and *Cendrillon*, Janiec Opera Company of the Brevard Music Center / **UPCOMING:** Stage Director: *Carmen*, Piedmont Opera / **DEANANTHONY.NET**



Gianni Schicchi

**TIMOTHY MIX, BARITONE**

**HOMETOWN:** Baltimore, MD

**KNOXVILLE OPERA DEBUT**

**RECENT:** Farmer Bean, *Fantastic Mr. Fox*, Opera Omaha; Enrico, *Lucia di Lam-*

*mermoor*, Nashville Opera; Marcello, *La bohème*, Opera Colorado; Sam, *Trouble in Tahiti*, Annapolis Opera / **UPCOMING:** Father, *Hansel und Gretel*, Annapolis Opera

**ARBOURARTISTS.COM/ROSTER/TIMOTHY-MIX**



Lauretta

**HELEN ZHIBING HUANG, SOPRANO**

**HOMETOWN:** Beijing, China

**KNOXVILLE OPERA:** Ming, *Stuck Ele-*

*et Juliette*, El Paso Opera; Ming, *Stuck Elevator*, Opera Grand Rapids; Josephine, *H.M.S Pinafore*, Opera Grand Rapids; Ming, *Stuck Elevator*, Hawaii Opera Theatre / **UPCOMING:** Juliette, *Romeo et Juliette*, Resonance Works / **@SINGINGCHIRPY**

**ATHLONEARTISTS.COM/ARTISTS/HELEN-ZHIBING-HUANG**



Zita

**KAREN NICKELL, MEZZO SOPRANO**

**HOMETOWN:** Salina, KS

**KNOXVILLE OPERA:** *Carmen*, *Carmen*, 2007; Third Lady, *The Magic Flute*, 2004;

Prince Orlofsky, *Die Fledermaus*, 2004; Zita, *Gianni Schicchi*, 2001; Mary, *The Flying Dutchman*, 2000 / **RECENT:** Lizzie Crozier French, *The Burn Vote*, River & Rail Theatre



Rinuccio

**AARON CROUCH, TENOR**

**HOMETOWN:** Bowie, MD

**KNOXVILLE OPERA DEBUT**

**RECENT:** Kyle Harris, Mazzoli/Vavrek's *The Listeners*, Opera Philadelphia; Count

Almaviva, *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, Virginia Opera; Roderigo, *Otello*, National Symphony Orchestra / **UPCOMING:** Mosquito (Lindoro), *Riot Grrrl on Mars (l'Italiana in Algeria)*, Hawaii Opera Theatre

**AARONCROUCHMUSIC.COM**



Gherardo

**CODY BOLING, TENOR**

**HOMETOWN:** Seymour, TN

**KNOXVILLE OPERA DEBUT**

**RECENT:** Beppe, *Pagliacci*, Marble City Opera; Monostatos, *Die Zauberflöte*, Opera Mississippi



Nella

**TORI FRANKLIN, SOPRANO**

**HOMETOWN:** Knoxville, TN

**KNOXVILLE OPERA:** Soloist, *Opera's Greatest Hits: A Tribute to Robert Lyall*, 2024; Alice Ford, *Falstaff*, 2023; Alisa,

*Lucia di Lammermoor*, 2019 / **RECENT:** Nella, *Gianni Schicchi*, Opera Roanoke; Second Fairy, *Midsummer Night's Dream*, Knoxville Symphony Orchestra; Mrs. Hayes/Susannah (cover), *Susannah*, Marble City Opera; Mutter, *Hänsel und Gretel*, UT Opera Theatre; La Duchesse du Krackentorpe, *Le fille du regiment*, Sarasota Opera

**TORIFRANKLINSOPRANO.COM**



Betto

**DANIEL C. WEBB, BASS BARITONE**

**HOMETOWN:** Moore, OK

**KNOXVILLE OPERA:** Dottore, *La Travi-*

*ata*, 2024; Tony, *Most Happy Fella*, 2007 / **RECENT:** Fallon, *Doctor & the Devils*, Marble City Opera



Simone

**ANDREW WENTZEL, BASS**

**HOMETOWN:** Rockville, MD

**KNOXVILLE OPERA:** Frère Laurent, *Roméo et Juliet*, 2020 and 2012; Simone, *Gianni Schicchi*, 2018; Sergeant of Police,

*Pirates of Penzance*, 2016; Dick Deadeye, *HMS Pinafore*, 2014; Le Comtes des Grieux, *Manon*, 2011; Raimondo, *Lucia di Lammermoor*, 2010; Guardiano, *La Forza del Destino*, 2008; Colline, *La bohème*, 2007; Alidoro, *Cenerentola*, 2002; Don Giovanni, *Don Giovanni*, 1999\* premier / **RECENT:** 10 seasons at the Metropolitan Opera



Marco

**JJ ROBINSON, BARITONE**

**HOMETOWN:** Landis, NC

**KNOXVILLE OPERA:** Zuniga, *Carmen*, 2025; Pistola, *Falstaff*, 2023; Pritsch-itsch, *The Merry Widow*, 2022

**RECENT:** Samuel, *Pirates of Penzance*, Charlottesville Opera; Escamillo, *Carmen*, Charlottesville Opera; Pirate King, *Pirates of Penzance*, Eklund Opera



La Ciesca

**HANNAH SHEA, MEZZO SOPRANO**

**HOMETOWN:** Harrisburg, PA

**KNOXVILLE OPERA:** Alto Soloist, *Beethoven's Symphony No. 9*, 2025

**RECENT:** Jess, *Grounded* (workshop), The Metropolitan Opera; Jess, *Grounded*, Washington National Opera; Edith Thibault, *Bel Canto*, Aspen Music Festival; Marcellina, *Le nozze di Figaro*, Annapolis Opera; Dritte Magd, *Elektra*, Washington National Opera; Mercédès, *Carmen*, Washington National Opera; Dorabella (cover), *Così fan tutte*, Washington National Opera

**HANNAHSHEAMEZZO.COM / f @ @HANNAHSHEAMEZZO**



Maestro Spinelloccio

**DINO ANTONIO, TENOR**

**HOMETOWN:** The Road

**KNOXVILLE OPERA:** Benoit, *La bohème*, 2025; Alfred, *Die Fledermaus*, 1993 / **RECENT:** Maestro Spinelloccio,

*Gianni Schicchi*, Opera Roanoke & Opera Tampa; Benoit, *La bohème*, Pensacola Opera; Ambrosio, *The Barber of Seville*, Opera on the James, Brevard Music Center, Amarillo Opera



Ser Amantio di Nicolao/ The Notary

**JOEL BROWN, BARITONE**

**HOMETOWN:** Linclon, NE

**KNOXVILLE OPERA:** Commissario, *La Traviata*, 2024 / **RECENT:** "Voices for

Haiti", Cathedral of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus; "Baritones, Boots, and Bats", Marble City Opera; Butler, *The Infinite Energy of Ada Lovelace*, Marble City Opera; Eisenstein, *Die Fledermaus*, University of Tennessee Opera Theatre; Papageno, *Die Zauberflöte*, University of Tennessee Opera Theatre

**JOELBROWNBARITONE.COM**

# Rooted in Beauty, Built to Last

## The McNabb Legacy

Some lives ripple outward, quietly transforming a city. William Ross “Sandy” McNabb and Helen Powell McNabb lived such lives—rooted in creativity, community, and a deep belief in the lasting power of the arts.

“My parents shared a deep love of the arts,” says their daughter, Eden McNabb Bishop.

*“My mother was an artist who danced ballet, painted, sewed curtains and costumes and loved opera with a passion.”*

Raised in Memphis, Helen grew up in a home filled with music. “She spoke fondly of old ‘78’ recordings constantly being played on their record player.” Her father, the architect and painter William Nowland Van Powell, filled the house with images of ancient Greece, Rome, composers, and opera scenes.

Eden remembers music as the heartbeat of her childhood. “Music was constantly being played in the house, either on WUOT on the radio, or on the record player. When I was a child, you could literally stack the records... side one and side two were on different records so that one would drop after the other until the whole stack had to be turned over to finish the piece.”

Her father, Sandy, was just as inspired. “Dad’s interest in art and music was encouraged by his grandmother. As a child he made detailed drawings of cars and houses... he discovered that his primary interest was architecture and gardens and pursued art history at UT and Vanderbilt.”

Sandy became the director of the Dulin Gallery of Art and was a founding officer of Knox Heritage. Helen helped start the city’s first ballet company and designed backdrops for productions. They attended Knoxville Opera’s first production in 1978 at the Bijou Theatre—and never stopped supporting it.

“I think I was raised to understand that art doesn’t just happen, that it is a lot of work and that it is also someone’s job,” Eden says. “If you want to enjoy [the arts] in your own city they must be supported, and that takes the entire community to step up so that they can literally exist.”

Even in their passing, Sandy and Helen’s legacy continues to support the arts they cherished. “The idea that my family can make a lasting legacy to Knoxville Opera makes me almost giddy,” Eden shares. “That is community impact. That is what makes Knoxville a great place to live.” ●

Ignite Knoxville’s vibrant cultural scene by supporting Knoxville Opera. Your tax-deductible donation fuels education programs and extraordinary performances that foster a lasting legacy of artistic excellence and community connection for generations.



A mother-daughter set models for the “La Traviata” matinee audience — Mrs. W. R. McNabb and daughter, Eden. Eden wears lace-trimmed white blouse with flounced skirt in green, blue and red plaid. Mrs. McNabb, past president of the Knoxville Ballet Company, wears Blassport suit in green tweed with brief jacket, fringed skirt, from Lillie Rubin.



Miss Sarah Vestal, Mr. Edgemon Marry



Marion McCall Painting Wins Best of Show

A painting titled “Hardin Valley Farm” by Marion McCall, 2287 Cherokee Blvd., was judged best of show at the 21st annual Dulin Gallery Sidewalk Art Show at West Town Mall. The top prize was \$250.

Artists from throughout East Tennessee are displaying works at the show being held until 9:30 p.m. today, from 10 a.m. to 9:30 p.m. tomorrow and 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Saturday. The winning works will also be on display at Lawson-McGhee Library during November.

Other award winners are:

Oil or Acrylic: Linda Lovell, \$125; Watercolor: Charles Pitts, \$125; Harriet Mathews, \$125.

Any Media: Anne S. Powers, \$100; Herb Boston, \$75; Cindy Hensley Lowe, \$75; Anne Eyles, \$75; Richard Kelly, \$25 gift; Sandra Ross, Betty Warden, Bobbi Waggoner and Wayne Blankenship, \$25 frame.

Committee To Push for Ch

A 10-member advisory committee to press for revision of the city charter, a matter before the voters in Tuesday’s election, has been formed and the group plans a grass-roots campaign to inform voters about the issues.

The group includes lawyer Robert Watson; Rev. Charles Plumlee, pastor of

They Like It

Sandy McNabb, left, director of Dulin Gallery, and Cleve Scarbrough, Chattanooga, show judge, admire the painting by Marion McCall which was judged best of show in Dulin’s sidewalk art show at West Town Mall.

## Join the Legacy Circle

MAKE AN IMPACT AND CREATE A LASTING LEGACY

ENSURE WORLD-CLASS PERFORMANCES AND VITAL COMMUNITY PROGRAMS CONTINUE TO ENRICH EAST TENNESSEE FOR GENERATIONS

The Legacy Circle recognizes individuals who have made a planned gift by naming Knoxville Opera in their will or estate plan. By joining the Legacy Circle, you’re investing in the future of our community’s cultural landscape. Planned gifts offer tax benefits, making them accessible to donors at all income levels.

We would love to help you through the process. Contact Katie Spencer for personalized guidance: [kspencer@knoxvilleopera.org](mailto:kspencer@knoxvilleopera.org) or call (865) 524-0795. *Learn more at [knoxvilleopera.org/legacy](http://knoxvilleopera.org/legacy)*

FRANCINE MARASCO

CAMERATA MEMBER & PATRON



As a child of Italian parents, listening to *Pagliacci* by Enrico Caruso was a special part of our home life. As a young woman in Mexico City, we had season tickets at the Palacio de Bellas Artes. After I retired, I had the opportunity to be a founding member of the Opera Guild at The University of Alabama. When I moved to Knoxville, Eden McNabb Bishop called and invited me to join the Knoxville Opera Camerata. Now I have new friends among staff, members, and artists.

Knoxville Opera is made up of people who truly love what they do, as well as Camerata members who are devotees of opera. In addition, the artist performers whom I have hosted have enriched my life. Being involved with Knoxville Opera provides an experience in lifelong learning. Every performance is memorable—either for being a classic or for being on the cutting edge.

It's no wonder—opera has it all: a story line, singing that gives chills, musical selections, costumes, staging. The most complete form of art there is. Knoxville is a vibrant city that deserves an array of art forms. We complement the Knoxville Symphony, the Clarence Brown Theater, and the Knoxville Museum of Art. Together, we impact the city of Knoxville—moving it from an ordinary city to an extraordinary metropolis.



ASHLEY VICTORIA JONES

ARTIST, VOLUNTEER, & ADVOCATE

What stands out most about Knoxville Opera is its legacy and connection to Robert Lyall—a man who started this organization to bring classical music to Knoxville, while also creating a space that nurtures and showcases young artists in many ways and at various levels. What surprises me is the continued commitment to maintain this legacy. Knoxville Opera has held to that mission to provide young artists like me with opportunities on world-class stages. Knoxville Opera is truly a gem.

When I started grad school at 31, I had no expectations other than to grow vocally and artistically. Knoxville Opera, with the support of my teacher Dr. Kimberly Roberts, gave me opportunities that forced me to realize my artistry isn't rooted in perfectionism, but in my willingness to keep learning. My first named role was with KO as "Edith" in *The Pirates of Penzance*. I always played it safe, but with this responsibility, safe wasn't enough. No one held my hand or let me make excuses. Instead, they reminded me this is what I do—not who I am. Even in times of doubt, KO reminded me I am capable, worthy, and have much to offer this art form.

I take pride in giving back and volunteering with arts organizations. It's one way we build a bridge between artists and community. A difference of opinion can be a catalyst for change—but if you don't get in there, all you're doing is complaining. Real change happens when you support the organizations you perform with or hope to perform with. As the industry evolves, KO is doubling down, even in the face of funding challenges.

MARK HILL

LONGTIME VOLUNTEER & SUPPORTER



In 1994, we moved to Knoxville from Los Angeles, seeking a calmer place to raise our family. Many things attracted us, but without an opera company, we would not have considered settling here. To us, a local opera company was a baseline indicator of a city's cultural and financial health, its belief in the future, and its value for the arts. Soon after our arrival, I showed up at the KO office, asking how I could get involved. The involvement never stopped.

Through the years, Knoxville Opera has given me many friends and endless great experiences. Productions have always been excellent—hitting above our weight. Robert Lyall, Frank Graffeo, Brian Salesky and now Jason Hardy have all provided enormously gratifying performances. As Jason brings us into contemporary repertoire, it is becoming ever more exciting.

If I had to choose my most memorable experience, it would be Salesky's multi-location *Tosca*. The final act was performed outdoors in the Tennessee Amphitheater. One of the most dramatic scenes in all opera was matched by an equally dramatic thunderstorm. When the act closed, the audience erupted in excitement and appreciation. They were truly overwhelmed—as was I!

Today more than ever, cities serious about attracting new enterprises and creative people understand they need a thriving arts community. The presence of an opera company reflects the depth of a city's commitment to the arts—and therefore its economic health and quality of life. For those reasons, and because I love the art form, I will continue to support Knoxville Opera.

THANK YOU TO OUR DONORS

AS OF SEPTEMBER 15, 2025

LEADER \$25K+

Arts & Culture Alliance  
Bailey Family Foundation  
Eden McNabb & Chris Bishop  
City of Knoxville  
Knox County  
Knoxville Opera Camerata  
Lawson Family Foundation  
Tennessee Arts Commission

Carol & Dr. Myrwood C. Besozzi  
Sharon Boyce & Jack Woodall  
Holden Caperton  
The Catani Family  
Creeside Capital, Inc.  
Phyllis Driver  
Faith Ferguson & Donald Stoner  
Jason & Carrie Hardy  
Lane Hays  
Sara Pinnell - Hedstrom

Landscape Architecture  
Joseph & Laura Lenn  
Sheryl Linck & Garry Conklin  
Massey Electric  
Sheena McCall  
Brent Midyett & Melissa Gabor  
Midyett  
Cathleen Dodge Miller &  
Clark Miller  
Susana Navarro  
Fred & Karen Nidiffer  
Publix  
Margaret & James Samples  
Zane & Teresa Scarlett  
Jan & Don Simpson  
John & Delores Sorey  
Alwyn & Sara Staley  
Theresa Stone  
Marvin Thomas  
University of Tennessee Natalie  
L. Haslam College of Music  
Mr. & Mrs. Joseph Wilson

SUPPORTER \$1,000-2,499

Axle Logistics, LLC  
Bank of America  
Kurt Brandt & Dawn Huff  
Lisa Breazeale  
Michelle & Nick Bunstine  
Patsy Burdette  
Charles & Marion Burger  
R. Ted Smith & David Butler  
Peter & Sandra Campbell  
Erika Vantyghe & Pete J.  
Colombo  
Mr. Robert Croley  
Angela & Greg Ellenburg -  
Ellenburg Landscaping  
Karen B. Everett  
R. Mardel Fehrenbach  
Kathryn Kinnard Freeman  
Charles Goan  
Dr. James Gorney & Dr. Beverly  
Gibbons  
Barbara Grove

PROMOTER \$2,500-4,999

Anonymous  
Emily Anderson & Barry Spann  
Steve Backiel  
Jerry & Susan Becker

Hickory Construction  
Cathy Hill  
Dr. & Mrs. Parks Hitch  
Felicia Harris Hoehne  
Amy & Nathan Honeycutt  
Susan & John Hubbard  
Sally & William Johnson  
Rick & Carol Jones  
Michael Kull, Eagle Strategies,  
LLC  
Dr. James E. Lawler  
Dr. Paula MacMorran  
Robert Marquis & Townes  
Osborn  
Brenda Ashe Maupin  
Marga and Jay McBride  
Steve and Sue Mirshak  
Michael Newbury & Caroline  
Morrison  
OPERA America  
Margie Parrott  
Lezah & Burke Pinnell  
Katie Powell & Johnathan  
Borsodi  
Mary B. Rayson  
The Peter & Briana Rosenbaum  
Family Fund  
Becky Fuller & Jack Singleton  
Drs. Malcolm & Elizabeth Spica  
Bill & Mary Kay Sullivan  
Kim Trent  
University of the Cumberland  
Friends of Music  
Bill & Mary Walker  
Wortham Family  
Dr. & Mrs. James Yates

CONTRIBUTOR \$500-999

Akima Club  
Lisa & Dave Bogaty  
Dr. Michelle Brewer  
C. Gayle Burnett  
Ellen Capito & Arthur Coston  
Jim & Nancy Carmon  
Mark & Eva Champion  
Trey & Christy Coleman  
Douglas & Maria Teresa Cox  
Gary & Michele Cox  
Drs. Reid & Olga Crumpton -  
Crumpton Family Dentistry  
Mary Lou Daugherty  
Blanche & Larry Dresner  
ETSU Department of Music  
East Tennessee Foundation  
Mark & Patricia Eklund

Susana Esrequis & Ramon Leon  
Patricia Maffeo & Thomas Fine  
Ralph Cianelli & Rick Fox  
Friends of Knox County Public  
Library  
Michael & Suzanne Fuller  
Jay Gingrich  
Robin Gold  
Kimberly Kleveland Grande  
Kim & Jim Hays  
Chris & Sheila Hill  
Leslie Hull  
Tommie Rush & Richard Jolley  
Paul & Donna Kedrow  
Nieves & Robert Killefer  
Mary Knepper  
Elizabeth & Alan Lee  
Jeff & Meghan Markman  
Dr. Angela Masini & Mr. Terry  
Grove  
Anne May  
Joy McKenzie-Smith & Brian  
Russell  
Cheryl & Tom Midyett  
Dr. & Mrs. E. Jay Mounger  
Opera Volunteers International  
Lester & Pat Petrie  
Ken McFarland & Linda Phillips  
Dr. & Mrs. Ronald Rimer  
Eddie & Julia Rivera  
Diana Samples  
Gibson Smith  
Cynthia & Peter Sowa III  
Wanda Taylor  
Nancy Van Hook  
Rochelle Veum  
Dr. & Mrs. Don Wheeler  
Karen & Harvey White  
Nathan & Sylvia Zingg

SUSTAINER \$250-499

Anonymous (2)  
Ana & Jeffrey Barker  
Ron & Linda Battle  
Carol Mitchell & Eric Belcher  
Benevity - AOL Giving  
Randi & Dave Boeje  
Susan Branch  
Dorothy Bryson & Daniel Mack  
Virginia & Fred Buffum  
Dr. Kenneth B. Carpenter  
Mark Chait  
Ellen Copper  
Janan Dakak

Debbie Dalton, Joshua Dalton, &  
Joyce Dalton  
Robert & Lana Daverman  
Donna Davis & Ivan Beltz  
Michael & Deborah Emery  
Kenneth & Susan Fittro  
Bonne & Jonathan Foulds  
Robert E. Freeman  
Joseph Guidetti  
Mary Kay Henry  
Kimberly & Tildon Hood  
Shane & Amy Jackson  
Peggy & Doug Kahr  
Susan & Brian Kemp  
Mark & Peggy Littmann  
Aaron & Ayonna Love  
William MacGillivray  
Kathleen Mahan  
Donna Brehm Matlock  
Martin McBrearty & Rita  
Cochran  
Dr. & Mrs. J. Michael McCoy  
Dr. Brian Murphy and Dr. Caryn  
Wunderlich  
Drs. Josh & Lacey Phelps  
Piedmont Opera  
Chris Poteet  
Anne & Roger Riley  
Lindy Riley  
Dan & Eva Robbins  
John & Kay Rodgers  
Alan & Patricia Rutenberg  
Mr. Robert & Dr. Suzanne  
Rybczynski  
Gregory Samples  
Thomas Shishkowsky & Maria  
Simeone  
Larry Stanifer & Kay McKinnon  
Ross & Rebecca Sullivan  
Mr. & Mrs. James V. Tarlton  
Renee Tatum & Philip Schneider  
Donna J. Terzak  
Marilyn Avery Turner  
US Bank  
Alcira Villegas  
Paul Wozniak  
Ross Young

PATRON \$125-249

Mary Alford  
Rebecca Barton  
George & Lisa Bitzas  
Bedros & Dara Bozdogan  
Lewis Brewer  
Evie & Jim Brown

Rick & Bobbi Carlin  
John & DonnaRose Christakis  
Dr. & Mrs. Daniel E. Conrad  
Cristian & Adriana Contescu  
Maurizio Conti & Pamela  
Schoenewaldt  
Eleanor & Mel Cooper  
Jeff & Kelly Cooper  
Randall DeFord & Wesley  
Goddard  
Mary Lynne & Don Derrington  
Ellen Dodd  
Allison Easterday & PeeJay  
Alexander  
Sally & George Farmer  
Scott & Lisa Farmer  
Susan & Kent Farris  
Elena, Ovi, Lara, & Tessa Garlea  
Nan & Mark Gaylord  
Nancy M. Goslee  
Holly Hambright  
Gail Stone Jarvis & John R. Cate  
Daniel Johnson-Webb  
Joy of Music School  
Craig & Pamela Kallio  
Ellie Kassem  
John Kelley  
Rachel Kirsch  
Pamela Kite  
Jerry & Emily Lenn  
Anthonie & Beverley Lombard  
Law Loving  
Teresa & George Lucke  
Gay & Bill Lyons  
Marina Maccari-Clayton  
Susan McGuire  
William Moland  
Jeannette Morgenstern  
Rebecca Moses  
Cecily Nall  
Susan Napier-Sewell  
Robert & Karen Nies  
Kathleen Norris  
Katherin Norton  
Jeffrey & Joni Pappas  
Susan Sgarlat & Charles Fels  
Betty Sue Sparks  
Cheri & Michael Torano  
Susan & AV Verekar  
Carol & Dennis Waxman  
Andrea Wright  
Lynne Wright

MEMBER \$50-124

Anonymous  
Dr. Carol Akerman  
Marguerite Albro  
Moody Altamimi  
Dr. Shirley Avery  
Robert & Patty Baird  
Cheryl Barksdale  
Paul Barrette & Susan Martin  
Elaine & Doug Batchelor  
Jeff Bell  
Bruce Beverly, Elise Beverly,  
Miranda Beverly  
John Blair  
Melissa & Ben Blalock  
Kathleen Borders  
Rhonda & Kent Bostick  
Cynthia & Jeff Boyatt  
Tamara Boyer  
Sherry & Thomas Boynton  
Ruth Ann Brandon  
Martha W. Breazeale  
Cathy Briscoe-Graves  
Gwen Brown  
Elsa Bryan  
Frances Butler  
Anne & Frank Callaway  
Nancy Campbell  
Suzanne Cardiff  
Andrew & Ulla Carr  
Anne Cobble-Saravo  
Jerry & Charlotte Cochran  
Mike & Roxanne Coffey  
Graham Cole  
Mary Cole  
F. Michael Combs  
Jessica Copeland  
Mindy Coykendall  
Christopher Craig & Ann  
Robinson-Craig  
Kim Cunningham  
Tara Dalton, Dana Dalton,  
Eleanor Dildine  
Robert Darby  
Sarah M Davis  
Harrison Dean  
Tony & Suzy Deaton  
Francois De Buck  
Mark & Helen Dickey  
Kevin Diffley  
Alberto U.J. Gonzalez Morales &  
Pamela A. Dossey  
Steve & Marylaine Driese  
Dr. Melissa & Edward Dumas  
Christopher Durman

MEMBER \$50-124

Anonymous  
Dr. Carol Akerman  
Marguerite Albro  
Moody Altamimi  
Dr. Shirley Avery  
Robert & Patty Baird  
Cheryl Barksdale  
Paul Barrette & Susan Martin  
Elaine & Doug Batchelor  
Jeff Bell  
Bruce Beverly, Elise Beverly,  
Miranda Beverly  
John Blair  
Melissa & Ben Blalock  
Kathleen Borders  
Rhonda & Kent Bostick  
Cynthia & Jeff Boyatt  
Tamara Boyer  
Sherry & Thomas Boynton  
Ruth Ann Brandon  
Martha W. Breazeale  
Cathy Briscoe-Graves  
Gwen Brown  
Elsa Bryan  
Frances Butler  
Anne & Frank Callaway  
Nancy Campbell  
Suzanne Cardiff  
Andrew & Ulla Carr  
Anne Cobble-Saravo  
Jerry & Charlotte Cochran  
Mike & Roxanne Coffey  
Graham Cole  
Mary Cole  
F. Michael Combs  
Jessica Copeland  
Mindy Coykendall  
Christopher Craig & Ann  
Robinson-Craig  
Kim Cunningham  
Tara Dalton, Dana Dalton,  
Eleanor Dildine  
Robert Darby  
Sarah M Davis  
Harrison Dean  
Tony & Suzy Deaton  
Francois De Buck  
Mark & Helen Dickey  
Kevin Diffley  
Alberto U.J. Gonzalez Morales &  
Pamela A. Dossey  
Steve & Marylaine Driese  
Dr. Melissa & Edward Dumas  
Christopher Durman

Mary & Marc Duvivier  
Tom & Jennifer Eberts  
Jessica Emert  
Lori Anne Emery  
Barbara A Eubank  
Brooke Everett & Matt Foster  
Joyce Feld & Charles Glisson  
Loreto Ferrada-Nichols  
Gwen Fitzgerald  
Elizabeth Ford  
Ylliana Franco  
Rio & Marc Frost  
Mr. James G. Garvey  
Kristina Gaus  
GE Aerospace Foundation  
Jane George  
Karen & Christopher George  
Rosemary Gilliam  
Dr. Shelley Griffith  
Kevin Gunderson  
Dr. John & Susan Gunning  
Richard & Beverley Hammond  
Rick Kennedy & Jim Harness  
Jacque & Cliff Hawks  
David & Joy Headrick  
Lucia Andronescu & Vernon  
Henry  
Barbara F. Hillard  
Harriet Hodge  
Julie Hodges  
Mary C. Holland  
Stephanie Holyfield  
Alicia Randisi-Hooker &  
Dr. Henry Hooker  
Ernie W. Hoskins  
James & Kara Hudgens  
Megan Hutchens  
Ron & Connie Hutchins  
Lori Ingle  
Rosanna Iosso  
Tyler Janow  
Sri & Ryland Jones  
Judy Jorden  
Katherine Kerchner  
A. B. Kliefoth III, MD  
Jeffrey Koehler  
Vicki & Doug Kunkle  
Anne Lantry  
Sally Leonhard & Ben La Pointe  
Terry Lundberg  
Liz Mabey  
Katie & Greg Mackay  
Laurie & Mal Macnair  
Reinhold & Karen Mann  
Irina Martovetsky & Nicolai

MEMBER \$50-124

Anonymous  
Dr. Carol Akerman  
Marguerite Albro  
Moody Altamimi  
Dr. Shirley Avery  
Robert & Patty Baird  
Cheryl Barksdale  
Paul Barrette & Susan Martin  
Elaine & Doug Batchelor  
Jeff Bell  
Bruce Beverly, Elise Beverly,  
Miranda Beverly  
John Blair  
Melissa & Ben Blalock  
Kathleen Borders  
Rhonda & Kent Bostick  
Cynthia & Jeff Boyatt  
Tamara Boyer  
Sherry & Thomas Boynton  
Ruth Ann Brandon  
Martha W. Breazeale  
Cathy Briscoe-Graves  
Gwen Brown  
Elsa Bryan  
Frances Butler  
Anne & Frank Callaway  
Nancy Campbell  
Suzanne Cardiff  
Andrew & Ulla Carr  
Anne Cobble-Saravo  
Jerry & Charlotte Cochran  
Mike & Roxanne Coffey  
Graham Cole  
Mary Cole  
F. Michael Combs  
Jessica Copeland  
Mindy Coykendall  
Christopher Craig & Ann  
Robinson-Craig  
Kim Cunningham  
Tara Dalton, Dana Dalton,  
Eleanor Dildine  
Robert Darby  
Sarah M Davis  
Harrison Dean  
Tony & Suzy Deaton  
Francois De Buck  
Mark & Helen Dickey  
Kevin Diffley  
Alberto U.J. Gonzalez Morales &  
Pamela A. Dossey  
Steve & Marylaine Driese  
Dr. Melissa & Edward Dumas  
Christopher Durman

Martovetsky  
Damon Beard & Mary McGavock  
Nancy T. McGlasson  
Randy & Janice McNally  
Donald Merical  
Laura Metcalf & Corey Miller  
Sylvia Milanez  
George Dodds & Federica  
Morandi  
Lee & Sabrina Moreland  
Linda & Joel Morris  
Rose Moseley  
Bridget & Stephen Mounger  
Joan & Gary Mulliner  
Carolyn K. Norris  
Mary E. Oakes  
Tabatha Ogle  
John D. Parker  
Katherine & Charles Parr  
Edward & Corinne Patrick  
Sara A. Phillips  
Catie Phipps  
Christine Pienkowski  
Elicia Pietras  
Ben & Sara Pinnell  
Ronald Plybon  
Lydia Pope  
Vladimir Protopopescu  
Carmanette Rawls  
Felicia Reeves  
Dr. & Mrs. Rolland F. Regester  
Robert P. Rentenbach  
Joseph Rizzo  
Sandy Roberson  
John R. Rosson, Jr.  
Pete Rowlett  
Michelle Samples  
Steedman & Catherine Sarbah  
Keith J Sauter  
Carol C. Schmid  
Susane Schneider  
Robert Schultz  
Paige Severance  
Susan Seymour  
Laura Shannon  
Virginia Sloan  
Sherri & Mark Smith  
Mary Smith  
Leslie & Wayne Smith  
Samuel Steele  
Fred Stephens  
Sandi Swilley  
Gregg Taylor  
Sandra Thomas  
Victoria Thomas

FRIEND \$1-49

Anonymous (2)  
John Acker  
Patricia Alcamo  
Tannaz Azadi  
Randall Beckner  
Tina Benstrup  
Elizabeth C. Berg  
Christie Bertram  
Sue Birdwell  
Valarie Blake  
Liesl Bold  
Dmitry Bolmatov  
Michelle Brock  
Von Bruce  
Doris Bryan  
Crystal Butcher  
Tracy Cagle  
Amanda Campfield  
Shawna Carey-Parker  
Viridiana Carreon  
Melissa & Christopher Cave  
Jana Caywood  
Carolyn Chase  
Joan Chodak  
Margaret Cody  
Harry Collis  
Jennifer Corum  
Mary Cote  
Tina Crane  
James & Carigiouse Crippen  
Ann Cunningham  
Marianne Custer  
Gina Di Salvo  
Kathy Donaldson  
Therese Doucet  
Tom Dukowitz

Patricia Thompson  
Blake & Courtney Valentine  
Georgiana Vines  
Jan Buxton Wade  
David & Becky Walker  
M'Elena Walker  
Lisa & Will Wallace  
John & Janie Wendelken  
Andrew Wentzel & Karen Nickell  
Timothy Wheeler  
Byron Wiggins  
Jim & Debby Williams  
Yuka Williams  
Amanda Jean Wilson  
Michael Wilson  
Todd Young  
Diana Zeltner

FRIEND \$1-49

Anonymous (2)  
John Acker  
Patricia Alcamo  
Tannaz Azadi  
Randall Beckner  
Tina Benstrup  
Elizabeth C. Berg  
Christie Bertram  
Sue Birdwell  
Valarie Blake  
Liesl Bold  
Dmitry Bolmatov  
Michelle Brock  
Von Bruce  
Doris Bryan  
Crystal Butcher  
Tracy Cagle  
Amanda Campfield  
Shawna Carey-Parker  
Viridiana Carreon  
Melissa & Christopher Cave  
Jana Caywood  
Carolyn Chase  
Joan Chodak  
Margaret Cody  
Harry Collis  
Jennifer Corum  
Mary Cote  
Tina Crane  
James & Carigiouse Crippen  
Ann Cunningham  
Marianne Custer  
Gina Di Salvo  
Kathy Donaldson  
Therese Doucet  
Tom Dukowitz

|                   |                           |                              |
|-------------------|---------------------------|------------------------------|
| Alison Dusch      | Desislava Henrikson       | Jackie Livesey               |
| Stephen Farrell   | Dr. & Mrs. Bruce Henschen | Shannon Martin               |
| Friedrich Fiebig  | Erick Hoegberg            | Debbie Mashburn              |
| Hope Foulds       | Deborah Hogan             | Andrea McBath                |
| Vivian Franklin   | Emily Hudson              | Drs. Wayne & Sylvia McLaurin |
| Kathy Franzel     | Isabella Hurst            | Virginia McLaurin            |
| Jamell Fulcher    | Matthew Hyde              | Dianne McManus-Atkin         |
| Tomika Fulcher    | Lauren Jean               | Danielle Meyers              |
| Rachelle Gianaris | Charles Jefferson         | Dan Michaelides              |
| John Gill         | Jennifer Kemp             | Stephanie & Chris Miles      |
| David Goslee      | Nan Klee                  | Melanie Miller               |
| Teresa Greer      | Kroger                    | Janice Mitchell              |
| Lucille Griffo    | Carolyn Lambert           | Michelle Mitchell            |
| Phillip Grissom   | Susan Lancaster           | Renee Mollenhour             |
| Jimmy Groton      | Josephine Landback        | Steven & Nancy Moulton       |
| Thomas Hancock    | Heather Larson            | Mark Neuffer                 |
| Kenneth Hanna     | Celia Lawren              | Kelli Newsome                |
| Patricia Haun     | Stephanie Lawton          | Wayne & Diane O'Donnell      |
| Julie Hays        | Rebecca Lemburg-Rive      | Ellen O'Shea                 |
| Randolph Henke    | Katherine & Ted Lewis     | Marlee Parnell               |

MEMORIALS

Dr. Shirley Avery in memory of Dr. Bruce Avery  
Frances Butler in memory of George S. Butler, Jr.  
David Cihak in memory of Bebes Claiborne  
Jeannie DeMeyere in memory of Rhys Claiborne  
Brooke Everett & Matt Foster in memory of Rhys Graves Claiborne  
Friends of the Knox County Public Library in memory of Rhys Graves Claiborne  
Linda Lussier in memory of Rhys (Bebes) Graves Claiborne  
Jennifer Murchison & Melissa Butler in memory of Rhys (Bebes) Claiborne  
Laurel Blackett & Steven Robert Miranda in memory of Rhys "Bebes" Claiborne  
Tousey Porter in memory of Rhys Graves Claiborne  
Carol C. Schmid in memory of Rhys (Bebes) Claiborne  
UALR Wellness & Inclusion in memory of Rhys Graves Claiborne  
Louise Whipple in memory of Rhys "Bebes" Claiborne  
Marilyn Avery Turner in memory of Margaret de Taussig  
Jan Buxton Wade in memory of Dr. Armando DeVega  
Wortham Family in memory of Jenny Glover & Fuad Mishu  
Andrea McBath in memory of Mr. & Mrs. Benjamin Johnson  
Scott Milner in memory of Joan Milner Johnson  
Anne & Frank Callaway in memory of William "Sandy" McNabb  
Audrey A. Duncan in memory of Willam "Sandy" McNabb  
Barbara F. Hillard in memory of William "Sandy" McNabb  
Ellie Kassem in memory of William "Sandy" McNabb  
Anne May in memory of W R "Sandy" & Helen McNabb  
Nancy T. McGlasson in memory of William "Sandy" McNabb  
Susan McGuire in memory of William "Sandy" McNabb  
Novinger, Ball & Zivi, P.C. in memory of William "Sandy" McNabb  
Dr. Matthew & Amy Richardson in memory of Sandy McNabb  
Tommie Rush & Richard Jolley in memory of Sandy McNabb  
Susan Seymour in memory of William "Sandy" McNabb  
R. Ted Smith & David Butler in memory of Sandy McNabb  
Bill & Mary Kay Sullivan in memory of William "Sandy" McNabb  
Mr. & Mrs. George E. Wilson III in memory of William "Sandy" McNabb  
Mergie Parrott in memory of Robert C. Parrott  
Ross & Rebecca Sullivan in memory of Mary Sullivan  
Marvin Thomas in memory of Flora & Leon Thomas

|                                 |                           |
|---------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Sarah Parsly                    | Marjorie Bennett Stephens |
| Cameron Pate                    | AnneMarie Strickland      |
| Peter Pham                      | Garrett & Silessa Stroud  |
| Constance Powell                | Eric Sundstrom            |
| Thomas Proffen                  | Drs. Jack & Beth Talmadge |
| Dr. Yulan Qing & Timothy Bodiya | Andre Terry               |
| Joel Reeve                      | Lisa Thomas               |
| Cheri Reznicek                  | Hope Turner               |
| Darrie Robinson                 | Johnny Urban              |
| Stephanie Robinson              | Cheri VanBynen            |
| India Sachitano                 | Krish Venkatachalam       |
| Ben Savage                      | Endia Wade                |
| Lori Schmied                    | Sara Watkins              |
| Gail Anne Shelton               | Rebecca Whitehead         |
| Dean Shiflett                   | Eric Williams             |
| John W. Sinkankas               | Emily Worsham             |
| Artece Slay                     | Rose Maria Yancy          |
| Ariel Smith                     | Jodi Yau                  |
| David Smith                     | Kris Zanoni               |
| Philip Spampinato               |                           |

HONORARIUMS

Piedmont Opera in honor of Dean Anthony  
Martin McBrearty & Rita Cochran in honor of Eden & Chris Bishop  
Drs. Josh & Lacey Phelps in honor of George Bitzas  
Dr. & Mrs. Parks Hitch in honor of Francis Graffeo  
Genevieve Stubbs in honor of Frank Graffeo & all the Graffeo siblings  
Deborah Hauser in honor of Josie Durrett  
Kathleen Borders in honor of Joe Guidetti  
Joseph Guidetti in honor of Knoxville Opera Staff  
The Peter & Briana Rosenbaum Family Fund in honor of Knoxville Opera Children's Choir  
Jeff & Kelly Cooper in honor of Knoxville Opera Children's Choir Staff  
The Peter & Briana Rosenbaum Family Fund in honor of Knoxville Opera Gospel Choir  
Rick & Carol Jones in honor of KO Chorus, Then & Now  
Sandy McNabb in honor of Helen McNabb  
James & Kara Hudgens in honor of Jennie Sullivan  
Cathleen Dodge Miller & Clark Miller in honor of Karen Nickell & Andrew Wentzel

Ignite Knoxville's vibrant cultural scene by supporting Knoxville Opera. Your tax-deductible donation fuels education programs and extraordinary performances that foster a lasting legacy of artistic excellence and community connection for generations.





CUMULUS  
MEDIA



WIVK  
FM 107.7

99.1  
THE SPORTS  
ANIMAL



NewsTALK  
www.newstalk987.com  
98.7

OFFICIAL RADIO PARTNERS OF  
KNOXVILLE OPERA

SUPPORT THE ARTS WITH YOUR LICENSE PLATE!

\$35 A YEAR GOES TO THE TENNESSEE ARTS COMMISSION  
4 PLATES TO CHOOSE FROM, VISIT [TNSPECIALTYPLATES.ORG](https://tnspecialtyplates.org)

THANK YOU TO OUR PARTNERS



|                                                                                                                 |                                                                                                |                                                                          |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>EDITORS</b><br>Katie Spencer<br>Erin Webb                                                                    | <b>PHOTOGRAPHY</b><br>Taryn Ferro<br>Eli Johnson<br>Carole Metz<br>Ryan Reade<br>Eric L. Smith | <b>DESIGN</b><br>Robin Easter Design<br>Whitney Sanders<br>Lauren Favier |
| <b>CONTRIBUTORS</b><br>Meghan Cluskey<br>Mark Hill<br>Ashley Victoria Jones<br>Francine Marasco<br>Don Townsend |                                                                                                | <b>PRINTING</b><br>Russell Printing<br>Knoxville, Tennessee              |
| ©2025 Knoxville Opera                                                                                           |                                                                                                |                                                                          |

KNOXVILLE OPERA BOARD

|                                                                                      |                                                                    |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Holden Caperton,<br><i>Board Chair</i>                                               | Faith Ferguson<br>Kimberly Kleveland Grande                        |
| Julia Mullaney,<br><i>Vice Board Chair</i>                                           | Mark Hill<br>Michael Kull                                          |
| Charles James, <i>Treasurer</i>                                                      | Jeff Markman                                                       |
| Melissa Gabor Midyett,<br><i>Secretary</i>                                           | Sheena McCall<br>Jeanie Melton                                     |
| Emily Anderson<br>Shane Archer<br>Jerrold Becker<br>Eden McNabb Bishop<br>Orel Brodt | Cathy Dodge Miller<br>Margaret Samples<br>Kim Trent<br>Mary Walker |

CAMERATA BOARD

|                                                                                                                                     |                                                                    |                                                                                 |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Eden McNabb Bishop,<br><i>Camerata President</i>                                                                                    | Phyllis Driver<br>Audrey Duncan<br>Susana Esrequis<br>Sally Farmer | Marta Nagy<br>Susana Navarro-Valenti<br>Katherin Norton<br>Christine Pienkowski |
| Jan Simpson,<br><i>Immediate Past President</i>                                                                                     | Mardel Fehrenbach<br>Judy Henry<br>Mary Kay Henry                  | Margaret Ritchie<br>Gibson Smith<br>Robin Smith                                 |
| Theresa Stone, <i>Treasurer</i>                                                                                                     | Nieves Killefer<br>Michael Kull                                    | Delores Sorey<br>Jennie Sullivan                                                |
| Robin Gold, <i>Secretary</i>                                                                                                        | Paula MacMorran<br>Kathy Mahan                                     | Wanda Taylor<br>Donna Wertz                                                     |
| Moody Altamimi<br>Stephen Backiel<br>Jeff Bell<br>Randi Boeje<br>Rhonda Bostick<br>Mark Champion<br>Jessica Copeland<br>Janan Dakak | Francine Marasco<br>Angela Masini<br>Anne May<br>Julia Mullaney    | Yuka Williams<br>Andrea Wright<br>Lynne Wright                                  |

KNOXVILLE OPERA STAFF

|                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Jason Hardy, <i>General Director &amp; CEO</i><br>Dean Anthony, <i>Producing Director</i><br>Caitlin Bolden, <i>Director of Artistic Operations</i><br>N. Marie Butler, <i>Finance &amp; Ticketing Manager</i><br>Amanda Fintak, <i>Children's Choir Director</i><br>Katie Lin, <i>Executive Assistant</i> | Jeanie Turner Melton, <i>Gospel Choir Director</i><br>Kate Smith, <i>Director of Programs</i><br>Katie Spencer, <i>Director of Advancement</i><br>Keturah Stickann, <i>Artistic Advisor</i><br>Don Townsend, <i>Production Manager</i><br>Erin Webb, <i>Marketing Associate</i> |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|



KNOXVILLE  
OPERA