



The  
Florentine  
Opera

The 23/24 Season

WITH A TWIST

**HURRY!**  
SUBSCRIBE  
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BY AUGUST 1  
FOR BEST PRICES  
AND SEATS!

## WELCOME

**BIRTHDAYS ARE A TIME FOR REFLECTION AND CELEBRATION, AND OUR 90TH ANNIVERSARY IS CAUSE FOR BOTH! WITH NINE DECADES OF GREAT OPERA EXPERIENCES BEHIND US, WE'RE BUILDING ON THE PERFORMANCES THAT HAVE MOST THRILLED MILWAUKEE'S AUDIENCES.**



**90 years of opera, 90 years of talent, 90 years of Milwaukee opera lovers in our seats—how do we honor that?**

This anniversary year gives us a glorious opportunity to dive into favorites from Florentine history (*L'Elisir d'amore* and Milwaukee-based *Bronzeville Bohème*) as well as introduce new discoveries: *Songbird* is a New Orleans jazz confetti-fest from the composer of the Can-Can, and *María de Buenos Aires* lights up stages around the country with its tango music and gorgeous melodies. This 90 years young company revels in exploring the classics with a fresh twist, and we're doing that in exciting new ways through this season.

Look for returning favorites like internationally-acclaimed tenor Eric Ferring, Stage Director Jill Anna Ponasik (*Così fan tutte: REMIX*, *Little Mahagonny*), and a myriad of Milwaukee talent on our stage, especially in *Bronzeville Bohème*.

This year, we're introducing a chorus pipeline program, offering free training and a guaranteed place in our paid chorus to a select group of local performers new to our art form. Opera in Schools continues with *Child and the Enchantments* and the Schools on Stage returns for *Bronzeville Bohème* featuring St. Marcus Lutheran School. We are committed to continuing the vital education and training needed to ensure a next generation of performers.

*Songbird* will celebrate the Baumgartner Studio Artist program, featuring rising star Lindsay Metzger (14/15), hilarious tenor Tom Leighton (15/16, 16/17, & Summer 17), Milwaukee's own Colleen Brooks (08/09) and our current class of talent.

I am incredibly grateful for the invaluable contributions of Artist Advisor Francesco Milioto, now stepping into the role of Music Director. Francesco has informed our seasons and helped us fill them with stars on the cusp of international fame. As we strike out towards our centenary, we will continue to bring that caliber of talent to your doorstep with his help. Bravo Maestro! **And bravo to all of you.**

**Thanks for being a part of our season, and our successes.**

Best,  
**Maggey**

## SEASON AT A GLANCE

You bring out the best in us, and we want to bring the best opera to you. Join us and share in the magic of grand and intimate opera.

FlorentineOpera.org

June 16 & 17, 2023	Pasta & Puccini at Lueders Opera Center, Riverwest
July 27, 2023	Al Fresco with 2023 Summer Studio Ensemble at the home of Amalia and Luke Todryk, River Hills (rain date 7/28)
August 17, 2023	Al Fresco with Eric Ferring at the home of Donna and Donald Baumgartner, River Hills (rain date 8/18)
September 21, 2023	Spotlight on Marie-Eve Munger at The Atrium
October 13 & 15, 2023	<i>Elixir of Love</i> at Uihlein Hall, Marcus Performing Arts Center (MPAC)
November 10, 2023	Gala with a Twist at the Bradley Symphony Center
December 12, 2023	Caroling at the Fireplace at the Sharon Lynn Wilson Center
December 14, 2023	Carols & Classics at Saint Paul's Episcopal Church
February 16 & 18, 2024	<i>Songbird</i> at Wilson Theater at Vogel Hall, Marcus Performing Arts Center (MPAC)
March 21 & 22, 2024	Wanderlust at Lueders Opera Center, Riverwest
March 28, 2024	Spotlight on Chaz'men Williams-Ali at the Milwaukee County Historical Society
April 19 & 21, 2024	<i>Bronzeville Bohème</i> at Uihlein Hall, Marcus Performing Arts Center (MPAC)
May 17 & 19, 2024	<i>María de Buenos Aires</i> at Turner Hall



### FRANCESCO MILIOTO MUSIC DIRECTOR

#### FRANCESCO'S DEBUT MUSIC DIRECTOR SEASON SPONSORED BY KATHLEEN AND DONALD WILSON

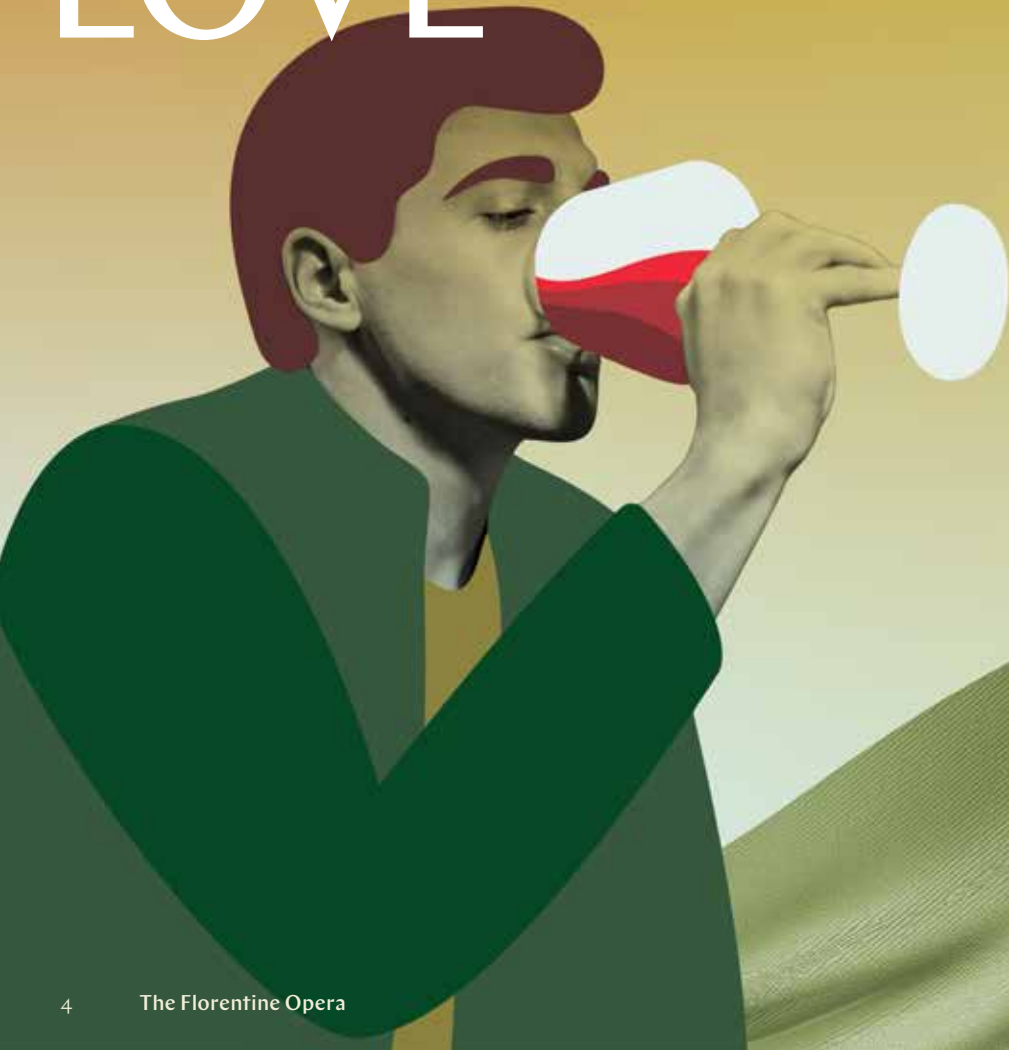
The Florentine Opera is honored to announce the appointment of Maestro Francesco Milioto as its new Music Director. Milioto has been instrumental in bringing grand opera to vibrant new heights on Milwaukee's stage. Milioto will assume the position of Music Director in July 2023.

Maestro Milioto shared, "I am so excited to expand my role with the Florentine Opera to Music Director! It has felt like family since the first day and I am honored to continue serving this great city and its vibrant artistic community. Viva la Florentine!!"

Maggey Oplinger, General Director and CEO of the Florentine Opera, lauded the conductor's impact on the Florentine during his three seasons as Artistic Advisor: "Francesco has brought us talent on the brink of stardom again and again. We look forward to discovering so many great voices on our stage with his deeper involvement. More importantly, the Florentine is committed to aspirational growth and collaboration. Francesco supports and inspires his teammates, and goes above and beyond as a member of the Florentine. As a powerful conductor appreciated by orchestra, singers, and audience alike, his dedication to opera classics and great music making marks a joyous entrance into our 90th season."

The Florentine extends its enthusiastic congratulations to Maestro Milioto on this appointment and we invite you to witness his remarkable talent for yourself as he conducts this season's highly anticipated *Bronzeville Bohème*.

# ELIXIR OF LOVE



**October 13, 2023**  
at 7:30pm

**October 15, 2023**  
at 2:30pm

**LOCATION**  
Uihlein Hall,  
Marcus Performing  
Arts Center

**RUN TIME**  
2h 35m, with one intermission

**PERFORMED IN ITALIAN**  
WITH ENGLISH SUBTITLES

**RATED PG**

Set in Sonoma's wine country, Donizetti's *L'elisir d'amore* takes audiences on a romantic and comedic journey with gorgeous melodies, featuring soprano Marie-Eve Munger from Lyric Opera of Chicago. A classic rom-com: Nemorino is desperately in love with Adina. Adina could not be less interested. After a second glass of wine (and small inherited fortune he's unaware of, but the women in town found out about), now that sweet guy seems a little more interesting. This opera will sweep you off your feet, and leave you wondering about the power of wine!



**Domenico Boyagian**  
CONDUCTOR



**Brenna Corner**  
STAGE DIRECTOR



**Marie-Eve Munger**  
ADINA



**Andrew Stenson**  
NEMORINO

## SHOW EVENTS

### Versed

Week of September 25th |  
Week of October 2nd  
At 5:30pm

### Opening Night Dinner

October 13 at 5:30pm  
Bradley Pavilion (MPAC)

### Pre-Opera Talk

October 13 at 6:30pm and  
October 15 at 1:30pm  
Anello Atrium (MPAC)

### Opening Night Post-Show Party

October 13 after the show  
Saint Kate Hotel  
Cash bar

## CREDITS

By  
**Gaetano Donizetti**

With the **Milwaukee  
Symphony Orchestra**  
and the **Florentine  
Opera Chorus**

**Dr. Benjamin Rivera,**  
Chorus Master

Lead Roles  
Sponsored by  
**Mary and Ross Read**

Opening Night  
Sponsored by  
**Mary Ann and Charles  
LaBahn**

PRESENTED BY  
Claire and Glen Hackmann

# SONGBIRD

February 16, 2024  
at 7:30pm

February 18, 2024  
at 2:30pm

LOCATION  
Wilson Theater at Vogel Hall,  
Marcus Performing Arts Center

RUN TIME  
1h 30m, no intermission

PERFORMED IN FRENCH  
AND ENGLISH  
WITH ENGLISH SUBTITLES

RATED PG

Offenbach's *Songbird* is a reduced version of French operetta *La Périchole*. The scene is 1920's New Orleans, and musicians Songbird and Piquillo have fallen on hard times and are desperate for a better life. A tale of true love, capers, villains and confusion. Despite a series of dizzying events, they prove love conquers all. Don't bet against Songbird!



Jill Anna Ponasik  
STAGE DIRECTOR



Lindsay Metzger  
SONGBIRD



Aaron Short  
PIQUILLO



Zachary Crowle  
DON ANDRÉS

## SHOW EVENTS

**Versed**  
Week of January 29th |  
Week of February 5th  
At 5:30pm

**Opening Night Dinner**  
February 16 at 5:30pm  
Bradley Pavilion (MPAC)

**Pre-Opera Talk**  
February 16 at 6:30pm and  
February 18 at 1:30pm  
Wilson Theater at Vogel Hall  
(MPAC)

**Opening Night Post-Show Party**  
February 16 after the show  
Saint Kate Hotel  
Cash bar

## CREDITS

Based on *La Périchole* by  
**Jacques Offenbach**

Arranged and orchestrated by  
**James Lowe**

Book and Lyrics by  
**Kelley Rourke**

Featuring **Past and Present**  
**Baumgartner Studio Artists**

With Musicians from the  
**Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra**

PRESENTED BY  
Donald and Donna Baumgartner

# BRONZEVILLE BOHÈME

April 19, 2024  
at 7:30pm

April 21, 2024  
at 2:30pm

LOCATION  
Uihlein Hall, Marcus Performing  
Arts Center

RUN TIME  
2h 35m, with one intermission

PERFORMED IN ITALIAN  
WITH ENGLISH SUBTITLES

RATED PG —  
ADULT THEME, DEATH

One of the most beloved romances ever written. Experience this beautiful powerhouse opera, now set in Milwaukee's 1940s Bronzeville. Luxuriate in the lush movie music and an all-star cast telling this double love story and bromance in a fresh way. Enjoy stage art created by 2019 Nohl Fellowship winner Ras 'Ammar Nsoroma. Bronzeville expert and dramaturg Sheri Williams Pannell helps us explore this thriving-again city within our city, and the artists and citizens who built it. Original sets will bring Bronzeville alive for all of us to celebrate.



Francesco Milioto  
CONDUCTOR



Nadja Simmonds  
STAGE DIRECTOR



Chaz'men Williams-Ali  
RODOLFO



Michelle Johnson  
MIMI

## SHOW EVENTS

### Versed

Week of April 1st |  
Week of April 8th  
At 5:30pm

**Opening Night Dinner**  
April 19 at 5:30pm  
Bradley Pavilion (MPAC)

**Pre-Opera Talk**  
April 19 at 6:30pm and  
April 21 at 1:30pm  
Anello Atrium (MPAC)

**Opening Night  
Post-Show Party**  
April 19 after the show  
Saint Kate Hotel  
Cash bar

## CREDITS

By  
**Giacomo Puccini**

With the **Milwaukee  
Symphony Orchestra**  
and the **Florentine  
Opera Chorus**

**Dr. Benjamin Rivera,**  
Chorus Master

and **St. Marcus  
Lutheran School,**  
Children's Chorus

WE ARE GRATEFUL  
FOR ADDITIONAL  
SUPPORT FROM:

**Plunkett Family Foundation**

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Foundation**

**John Shannon and  
Jan Serr**

**William and Sandy Haack**

**Drs. Peter and Karin  
Drescher**

**National Endowment  
for the Arts**

# MARÍA DE BUENOS AIRES

**May 17, 2024**  
at 7:30pm

**May 19, 2024**  
at 2:30pm

**LOCATION**  
Turner Hall Ballroom

**RUN TIME**  
1h 40m, with one intermission

**PERFORMED IN SPANISH**  
WITH ENGLISH SUBTITLES

**PG13 —**  
ADULT THEME, DEATH

A poor girl comes to Buenos Aires and is drawn into a life of prostitution by the sound of the tango. She dies, her shadow continuing to stalk the city. Astor Piazzolla's sultry and passionate nuevo tango fuels the surreal story of María, born "one day when God was drunk." Explore this drama of seduction, depravity, redemption, and rebirth in Buenos Aires' urban underbelly. This sensual tango, told in the fading beauty of Turner Hall, will knock you over with its powerful storytelling and singing.



**Pablo Zinger**  
CONDUCTOR



**Tomer Zvulun**  
PRODUCTION  
DIRECTOR



**Blas Canedo  
González**  
EL DUENDE



**Catalina Cuervo  
MARÍA**



**Gustavo Feulien**  
EL PAYADOR

## SHOW EVENTS

### **Versed**

Week of April 29th |  
Week of May 6th  
At 5:30pm

### **Opening Night Dinner**

May 17, 5:30pm

### **Pre-Opera Talk**

May 17, 6:30pm and  
May 19, 1:30pm

### **Opening Night**

### **Post-Show Party**

May 17 after the show  
Cash bar

## CREDITS

By

**Astor Piazzolla**

With Musicians from the  
**Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra**

# Al Fresco

The sellout Al Fresco summer series, located in some of the most beautiful and intimate gardens around Southeastern Wisconsin, features some of opera's top talent. And yes, dinner options are available and picnics are welcome!

## A NIGHT OF OPERA

Thursday, July 27, 2023  
Rain Date: Friday, July 28, 2023  
6:30pm Cocktail Hour | 7:30pm Performance

At the River Hills Home of Amalia and Luke Todryk  
1h, no intermission

Join us for an evening of opera scenes featuring Florentine Opera's Summer Studio Ensemble. These emerging voices bring the classics to a gorgeous garden in River Hills.



### ERIC FERRING TENOR

Thursday, August 17, 2023  
Rain Date: Friday, August 18, 2023  
6:30pm Cocktail Hour | 7:30pm Performance

At the River Hills Home of Donna and Donald Baumgartner  
1h, no intermission

Audience favorite tenor Ferring is taking a detour from the world's greatest stages to sing his own favorites to you, hosted by the Baumgartners.



### MARIE-EVE MUNGER SOPRANO

September 21, 2023  
5:30pm

The Atrium  
1h, no intermission

Discover the sparkling voice and personality of this glorious soprano, who performed the Fairy in Lyric Opera's *Cendrillon*. This star will wow us in an intimate performance, before sweeping us away as Adina in this fall's *Elixir of Love*.

# SPOTLIGHT

SHORT, SWEET & SOCIAL

### CHAZ'MEN WILLIAMS-ALI TENOR

March 28, 2024  
5:30pm

Milwaukee County Historical Society  
1h, no intermission

Returning from performing in Germany, Chaz'men's rich tenor will run the gamut from operatic hero to hero in this evening of fun. Meet him before he leads our Bohemians in song in *Bronzeville Bohème*.





GALA WITH A TWIST  
is our annual event celebrating our education  
programming that serves more than 15,000  
Milwaukee Public School students and others!  
A black tie affair full of entertainment.

WITH A  
*Twist*

JOIN US FOR COCKTAILS AND DINNER  
WITH A SPECIAL PERFORMANCE BY  
THE BAUMGARTNER STUDIO ARTISTS!

**November 10, 2023**

BRADLEY SYMPHONY CENTER  
212 W WISCONSIN AVE, MILWAUKEE, WI 53203

*W*ANDER*L*UST

AN EXPLORATION OF SONGS ABOUT TRAVEL

Join Head of Music Laurann Gilley  
and the Baumgartner Studio Artists  
for an evening of songs from around  
the world, celebrating our love of  
travel and adventure.

Thursday, March 21  
& Friday, March 22, 2024  
at 7:30pm

RUN TIME 1H 15M,  
NO INTERMISSION

WAYNE AND KRISTINE LUEDERS OPERA CENTER  
IN RIVERWEST

## OPERA IN SCHOOLS TOUR

# The Child and the Enchantments

An abridged version of Ravel's *L'enfant et les sortilèges*, sung in French with spoken English dialogue.

In Ravel's words, "this lyric fantasy calls for melody, nothing but melody..." 23/24 Baumgartner Studio Artists pack a visual punch in over-the-top costumes. The grandfather clock and teacup come to life. A mischievous boy is ultimately redeemed in helping a wounded squirrel in the garden. Young audiences will enjoy the magic of opera in their schools and community centers.

**FEATURING THE  
BAUMGARTNER STUDIO ARTISTS**



ANNOUNCING

The Florentine Opera's  
Summer Studio Ensemble

# SUMMER TOUR

It's Mozart in the park! Hear some of Mozart's most beloved music while enjoying some fresh air. The Florentine Summer Studio Ensemble will bring opera scenes to life as part of Milwaukee's outdoor performance tradition.

Look for us at parks and festivals in the Milwaukee area and beyond this July and August!



Victoria Davis  
SOPRANO



Alianis Lozada  
MEZZO-SOPRANO



Jerek Fernández  
TENOR



Nathaniel Malkow  
BARITONE

# 2023/24 BAUMGARTNER STUDIO ARTISTS

Powerful and unforgettable,  
the talent of outstanding singers/actors  
makes each opera experience grand.

The Donald and Donna Baumgartner Studio Artist professional residency is designed to ensure the future of opera by providing emerging artists from around the country with comprehensive training, advanced instruction, and professional performance opportunities.



Laura McCauley  
SOPRANO



Tzytle Steinman  
MEZZO-SOPRANO



Jerek Fernández  
TENOR



Brandan Sanchez  
BARITONE



Fumiyasu Kawase  
PIANIST

## Caroling AT THE Fireplace

Sharon Lynne Wilson Center  
for the Arts in Brookfield  
December 12, 2023 at 7:30pm

## CELEBRATE THE *Holidays*

Join us for a joyful and reflective celebration of the season through timeless Christmas and holiday music from around the world featuring the Baumgartner Studio Artists.

St. Paul's Episcopal Church  
on Milwaukee's East Side  
December 14, 2023 at 7:30pm

## Carols AND Classics

# 23/24 SUBSCRIPTIONS

FIND YOUR LOVE AND PASSION AT THE FLORENTINE.

**Becoming a Subscriber brings you a closer relationship with the art form. The excitement of attending can be yours all year long with a bounty of benefits, including priority seating, early ticket access, and lowest prices of the season.**

All assigned seated tickets are sent out electronically to patron's cell phones through SMS (text message) immediately once processed. Mailed tickets will be sent out after the renewal window has closed.

**Deadline for renewal subscriptions:  
August 1, 2023**

## **BENEFITS INCLUDE —**

**buy a mainstage package for the season  
and save up to 20%**

### **Priority Seating**

Reserve the best seats before tickets go on sale to the public and get first access to add on additional season shows, including *Al Frescos*, *Spotlights*, and *Baumgartner Studio Artist* performances.

### **Free Exchanges**

Call or email at least 48 hours before your performance and pay no fees to exchange your tickets for a different performance of the same production.

### **On the House Mailing**

We know you love your paper tickets, so we will send them for free at your request.

### **Additional Discounts**

Save 20% on additional tickets to any of our mainstage performances all season long.

## SHOW EVENT DESCRIPTIONS

### VERSED

For each Main Stage production, we offer two Versed experiences for the Milwaukee community (and beyond) to learn about composer histories, the first audience's response, historical contexts, culture, and the intentions behind a show.

Our Versed series takes place as an intimate gathering somewhere in Milwaukee. These are FREE and open to the public. Contact [events@florentineopera.org](mailto:events@florentineopera.org) with questions.

### OPENING NIGHT DINNER

Ahead of each Main Stage production opening night, we invite you to enhance your experience with a curated dinner. If you are interested in purchasing dinner tickets before an opening night performance please email [events@florentineopera.org](mailto:events@florentineopera.org).

### PRE-OPERA TALKS

An opportunity for opera-goers and first-timers before each Main Stage production to engage in conversations with stage directors, professors, dramaturgs/historians, music and theatre lovers, and intellectuals in an intimate setting. Main Stage performance held at Uihlein Hall or Wilson Theater at Vogel Hall at Marcus Performing Arts Center. Pre-opera talks are only available to ticket holders.

### OPENING NIGHT POST-SHOW PARTY

We invite all patrons who attended opening night to celebrate with us at a post-show party! If you have questions about the post-show party please email [events@florentineopera.org](mailto:events@florentineopera.org)

OUR SEASON IS MADE POSSIBLE  
WITH GENEROUS SUPPORT  
FROM THESE ORGANIZATIONS

Proud Cornerstone Member of



Herzfeld  
Foundation



The Florentine Opera  
is a professional company member of

THE NATIONAL OPERA CENTER  
AMERICA

BRINGING A LITTLE BIT OF THE WORLD TO MILWAUKEE SINCE 1933

The Florentine Opera 90 YEARS

FIND YOUR LOVE AND PASSION AT FLORENTINE.

Get the best seats at the best price today!  
Visit [FlorentineOpera.org](http://FlorentineOpera.org)  
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