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Samson EDalila

February 2, 4, 6, 2007

by Camille Saint-Saëns





### Director's Notes

by WILLIAM FLORESCU

Saint-Saëns' opera, which began life as an oratorio, presents challenges to a stage director - how does one make this piece dramatically gripping and real without resorting to contrived dramatic devices that neither the score nor text call for?

The answer, I believe, lies in trusting the composer's inherent dramatic bent, which is present in all of his music.

If one is familiar with his Organ Symphony or piano concertos, it is immediately apparent that his musical idiom is dramatic at its core. The dancing elements of *Samson* are dramatically gripping, and the opening confrontation with Abimelech, and the doomed temple scene also provide plenty of dramatic possibility. But the "hidden" dramatic possibilities of the score really reside in the tension that exists in scenes where things are about to happen. Dalila's various temptations of Samson are a classic example of how the operatic form freezes a moment in time and then comments and expands upon the situation.

Opera allows for this convention in a way that no other medium does. Because of this device, we as an audience have time to closely observe Samson's struggles between the carnal and the sacred in a most riveting way. In most Biblical epics, the canvas that the dramatic action plays out on is usually quite large, and this opera certainly has those moments as well. But one could make the argument that here (as in Verdi's *Aida*), the most important moments of the opera are quite intimate. Even at the point where Samson, with God's help, brings down the temple around his tormentors, we have the feeling that we are sharing a very private moment for Samson. This point is brought home even stronger with the introduction of the young child who leads him to his and their doom. So, returning to the original point, the stage director merely needs to trust Saint-Saëns and this very timely story to make this piece unfold as the opera that it truly is.

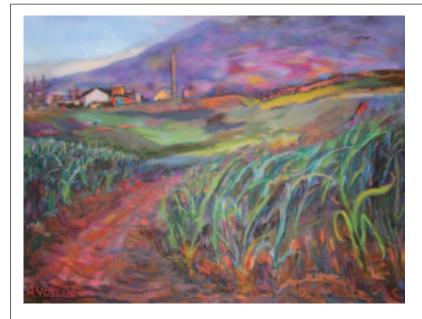




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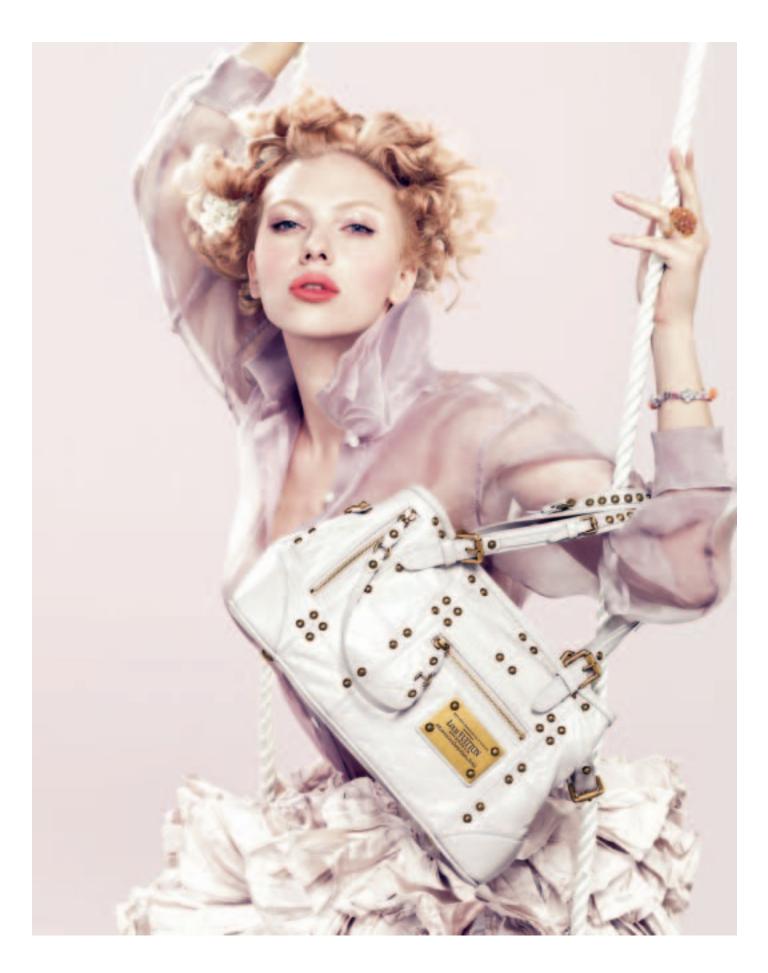


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inglish Captions by	

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Dalila, priestess of Dagon	Malgorzata Walewska
Abimelech, satrap of Gaza	Ethan Herschenfeld
High Priest of Dagon	Lawrence Harris
First Philistine	Erik Haines
Second Philistine	Patrick McNichols**
An Old Hebrew	Matt Boehler
A Philistine Messenger	Kawika McGuire**
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# The Story of Samson Samson Samson Salila

Synopsis...

Palestine, 1150 B.C. In a square in Gaza, a

group of Hebrews beg Jehovah for relief from their bondage to the Philistines; Samson, their leader, rebukes them for their lack of faith. When the Philistine commander, Abimelech, denounces the Hebrews and their God, Samson kills him and leads the Hebrews away. The High Priest of Dagon comes from the Philistine temple and curses Samson's prodigious strength, leaving with the slain man's bier.

An Old Hebrew praises the returning Samson. The outer walls of the temple disappear to reveal Samson's former lover, the Philistine woman Dalila, who invites him to come that night to her nearby dwelling. She and her maidens dance seductively for Samson, who becomes deaf to the Old Hebrew's dour prophecies.

#### ACT II.

In the vale of Sorek, Dalila calls on her gods to help her ensnare and disarm Samson, promising the High Priest to find a way to render the hero powerless. Samson appears, passionate in spite of himself; when Dalila has him in her power, she feigns disbelief in his constancy and demands that he show his love by confiding in her the secret of his strength, weeping when he refuses. Samson hears rolling thunder as a warning from God but cannot resist following Dalila inside. Not long afterward, having finally learned that the secret of Samson's strength is his long hair, she calls to hidden Philistine soldiers, who rush in to capture and blind Samson.



### ACT III.

In a dungeon at Gaza, the sightless Samson pushes a grist mill in a circle, praying for his people, who will suffer for his sin. He hears their voices castigating him.

During a bacchanal in the Temple of Dagon, Dalila and the High Priest taunt Samson. When they force him to kneel to Dagon, he asks a boy to lead him to the two main pillars of the temple. Samson prays to Jehovah to restore his strength, and with a mighty effort he pulls down the pillars and the temple, crushing himself and his foes.

> by John W. Freeman -- courtesy of Opera News









## Feast for the senses

by Lynne Johnson

It is hard to imagine an opera more interesting from a variety of perspectives than Camille Saint-Saëns' *Samson and Dalila*. One can begin with the origin of the work itself. Its birth was painful. Saint-Saëns' early efforts in 1867 met with such cold reception in Paris that he simply put the work aside. Then in 1870 he ran into Franz Liszt at a Beethoven centennial celebration in Weimar. When Saint-Saëns casually mentioned the opera in hopes the Hungarian might be willing to give him feedback, Liszt declared, "I don't need to hear it. Finish the work and I will stage it for you." He was true to his word. *Samson and Dalila* had its debut at Weimar on December 2, 1877. The opera was a huge hit and has been a favorite with audiences ever since.

For good reason. It has everything: a gripping story, beautiful music, exotic color and depth of symbolism. The opera captures the attention of the audience with its simple but moving plot. Samson, a God-fearing hero of the people, whose physical strength is matched by his sincere devotion and inspiring leadership, incites his people to throw off their chains and rebel against the Philistines, only to fall in love with one of the enemy, who betrays him. Blinded and shorn of his strength, he is taunted by his former lover and his religion mocked. He asks God for a brief return of his former power to seek vengeance against his enemies. With his divinely inspired strength, he brings down the pagan temple, crushing the enemy and sacrificing himself in order to free his people. What could be more dramatic?

Musically, the opera strikes a successful balance between traditional eighteenth-century Italian opera and nineteenth-century Wagnerian music drama. While Saint-Saëns faulted Italian opera for chopping up the action into too many pieces with recitatives and arias, thus stunting the flow of action, he also blamed Wagnerian opera for lacking self-contained melodies. In *Samson and Dalila*, Saint-Saëns manages to avoid both extremes. With leitmotifs he provides a sense of

continuity and, with beautiful melodies, he preserves the tradition of the *bel canto*. The powerful and angry melody sung by the High Priest in Act I becomes a triumphant opener to Act III, when Samson is brought before his conquerors, blinded and in chains. While Dalila's beautiful and seductive *Mon coeur s'ouvre à ta voix* and *Réponds à ma tendresse* destroy Samson's will power in Act II, they become the means for taunting the fallen hero in Act III.

The opera abounds in rich symbolism as well as beautiful music. Darkness and night always accompany the Philistines when they have power, while the sun symbolizes the ascendancy of Samson. Samson himself seems to evoke different figures: Moses freeing his people from slavery in Act I, a tragic Greek hero when he falls for Dalila in Act II against his best judgment, and Christ before Pontius Pilate in Act III when he is brought before the people and mocked.

Samson and Dalila might also be viewed as a battle between East and West. The Hebrews, who symbolize the West, are portrayed as god-fearing and noble. The Philistines come across as corrupt, decadent and pagan, but also exotic, and frankly, more interesting. Their music is wonderful, exciting, their dancing erotic, and we would not have them any other way. Samson and Dalila is, in short, a feast for the senses.

Lynne Johnson is currently working on her Ph. D. in Musicology at the University of Hawaii



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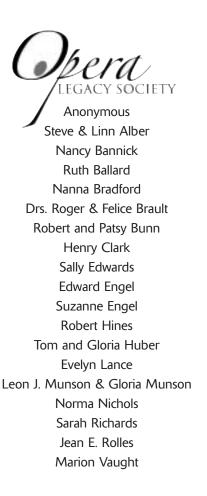
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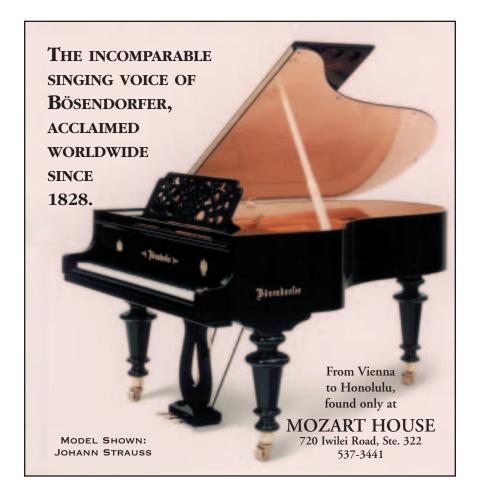
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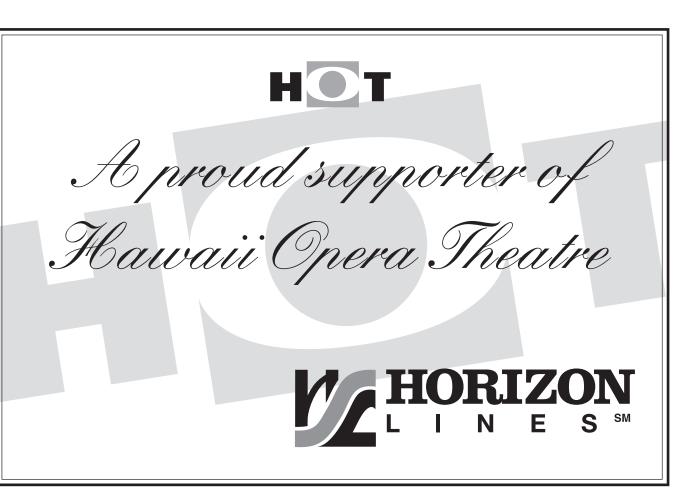


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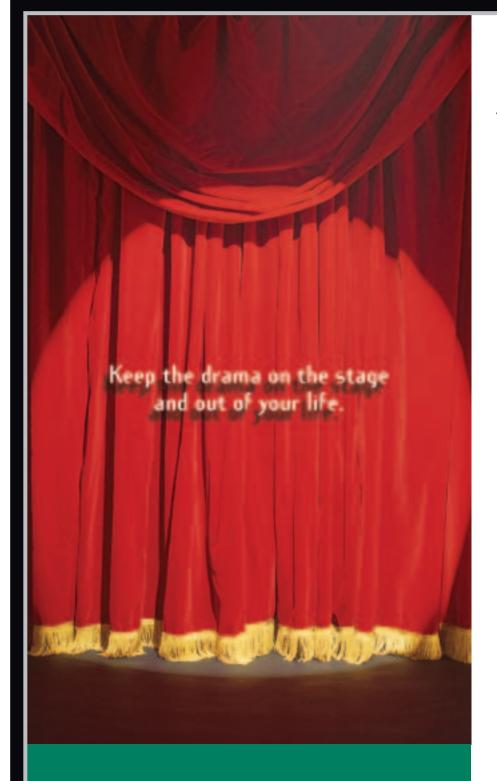
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### **Hawaii Opera Theatre**

# Principal Cast



Mark Lundberg,
Heldentenor (Samson)
Mark Lundberg has
been hailed
internationally as
having "the perfect
baritonal Heldentenor
colour and

immaculate diction" (Guardian, UK). He made his Brussels debut this season as Tristan in Tristan und Isolde. Other future performances include Verdi's Otello with Opera Lyra Ottawa and Manitoba Opera. Recent highlights include his Lyric Opera of Chicago debut as Wagner's Siegfried; Otello in Bilbao, for Opera Ontario, Hawaii Opera Theatre, and Utah Opera; and Das Lied von der Erde in Warsaw. Mr. Lundberg has sung multiple performances of Florestan in Fidelio, Samson in Samson and Dalila, Siegmund in Die Walküre, Siegfried in Götterdämmerung, Bacchus in Ariadne auf Naxos and Canio in Pagliacci, with companies including Deutsche Oper Berlin, Opéra de Nice and Staatstheater Stuttgart. Mr. Lundberg can be heard as Siegmund in Die Walküre on the Calig recording label with Ivan Törzs conducting.



Malgorzata
Walewska,
Mezzo-Soprano
(Dalila)
Walewska made her
Metropolitan Opera
debut in 2005 as
Dalila and returned

later in the season as Amneris. This was followed by *Carmen* in Warsaw, performances of *Dalila* with the Met in the Parks, Amneris in *Aida* at the Savonlinna Festival, and Eboli in Tokyo. Upcoming debuts in 2006 and beyond include Azucena in *Il Trovatore* in San Francisco and Geneva, Maddalena in *Rigoletto* in Washington and Fenena in *Nabucco* in Baltimore. In summer 2006 she returned to the Savolinna Festival as *Carmen*. In recent seasons she sang Ulrica in Montpellier, Azucena and Amneris at the Deutsche Oper

Berlin, Ulrica in Bologna, Eboli at the Finnish National Opera and in Graz, La Damnation de Faust in Warsaw, her Dresden debut in Lady Macbeth of Mtentsk, Dalila in Palm Beach, and Carmen (Maddalena), and Olga in Eugene Onegin at the Vienna State Opera.



Ethan
Herschenfeld, Bass
(Abimelech, Satrap of Gaza)
Ethan Herschenfeld
has been performing recently in Europe
and is thrilled to be

back in the US for his debut with HOT. This season he debuted at the Deutsche Oper Berlin in *Die Zauberfloete* singing Sarastro--a role he has sung the last two seasons at Teatro la Fenice in Venice and at the Stuttgart Staatsoper--and he added a new role to his repertoire singing Leporello in *Don Giovanni* in Brescia, Como, and Cremona. Between those performances he returned to the Florentine Opera Milwaukee for the fourth time, singing the Commendatore in their Don Giovanni. In April he debuts at Teatro Regio di Torino as King Marke in *Tristan* und Isolde, in July he sings Fafner in Wagner's Ring at the Tiroler Festspiele in Austria, where he spent last summer as King Marke and Gurnemanz, and he begins next season at Teatro Lirica di Cagliari singing Osmin in Die Entführung aus dem Serail.



Lawrence Harris,
Baritone
(High Priest of
Dagon)
Lawrence Harris is
quickly gaining a
reputation as an
important new

Verdi/Puccini baritone. Mr. Harris has received wide critical acclaim for the rich color and unique beauty in his voice as well as being the consummate singing-actor. The New York Times critic, Bernard Holland, hailed



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Lawrence Harris as a "major voice" following his 1993 New York debut. Lawrence has since appeared in leading roles with Opera North, Philadelphia's Center City Opera Theater, Connecticut Grand Opera, Center for Contemporary Opera, New York Grand Opera, the Wagner Society of Washington DC, the Metropolitan Opera Guild, New Rochelle Opera, Opera East Texas, San Antonio Opera, Tulsa Opera, Michigan Opera, One World Symphony, Manhattan Chamber Sinfonia, Garden State Philharmonic and the Little Orchestra Society in NYC. Recent leading roles include the title role in *Rigoletto*, Germont in La Traviata, Scarpia in Tosca, Amonasro in Aida, and Tonio in I Pagliacci.



**Erik Haines,** Tenor (First Philistine) Mr. Haines holds a Master of Music Degree from the University of Hawaii at Manoa and has taught there as well as at Chaminade University, Windward Community College and Punahou Music School. He has been a National Association of Teachers of Singing State

Governor, a board member of the Hawaii Alliance for Arts Education and is currently president of the Waikele Elementary PTSO. He is the Director of Education for Hawaii Opera Theatre.



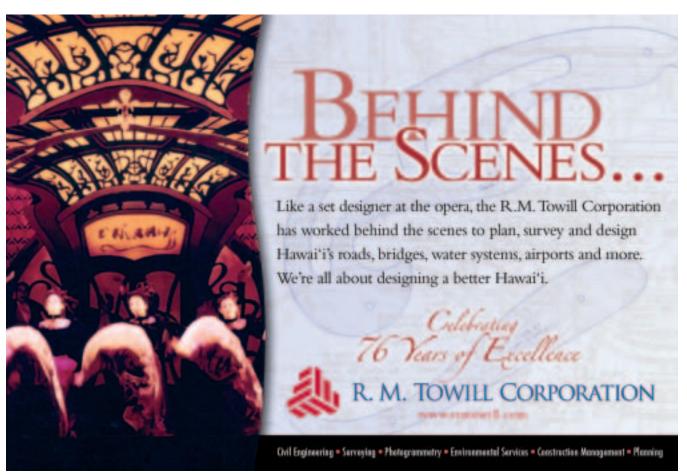
Patrick McNichols, Baritone (Second Philistine)

Originally from Laguna Beach, California, Mr. McNichols has been raised, educated, and employed in Hawaii since 1970. He has performed locally throughout the years in various venues including the Hawaii Vocal Arts Ensemble,

Kawaiolaonapukanileo, Kona Association for the Performing Arts, the Honolulu Symphony and Chorus as well as other HOT performances. Mr. McNichols joined the HOT Chorus in 1998 and made his comprimario debut as the Imperial Commissioner in HOT's production of *Madama* Butterfly, 2000 season. He has been a HOT Mae Z. Orvis Opera Studio Scholarship recipient since the year 2000 and has performed as a soloist in the following HOT productions: L'Enfant et les Sortileges, La Traviata, Amahl and the Night Visitors, The Magic Flute, La Bohème, Otello, The Merry Widow and Susannah.

### Matt Boehler, Bass (An Old Hebrew)

This past summer Boehler returned as a guest alumnus to Wolf Trap Opera Company, seen as Pluto (Orpheus), Bartolo (Le Nozze di Figaro) and Frere Laurent (Roméo et Juliette), where previously he had been seen as the title role in Sweeney Todd, Leporello (Don Giovanni) and





Basilio (*Barbiere*). Future engagements include Don Juan in Prague based on *Don Giovanni*, for the Prague National Theatre and the Brooklyn Academy of Music, and his debuts with Opera Theater of Saint Louis in *The Mikado* and Chicago Opera Theater in *Don Giovanni*. On the concert platform he has been

heard at Carnegie Hall with the Orpheus Chamber Orchestra in Bach's *Magnificat*, the Oratorio Society of New York in Charpentier's *Te Deum* and the Mozart *Requiem*. Future concert engagements include his Avery Fischer Hall debut in Mozart's *Mass in C-minor* with National Chorale.



Kawika McGuire, Tenor
(A Philistine Messenger)
Kawika has had a passion for music from an early age. The child and grandchild of Hawaiian entertainers, Kawika has always been surrounded by those who have helped to develop his love of music. He was a part of the select concert glee

club of the Kamehameha schools and has in recent years pursued his love of classical music as a scholarship recipient of the Mae Z. Orvis Opera Studio. Some of Kawika's studio experiences have included singing for Renee Fleming's master class as well as coaching with Mark Morash of the San Francisco Opera's Merola program. Kawika is a past winner of the Lotte Lehmann Art Song Competition and has been a member of the Hawaii Opera chorus since 2004. He is a student of Neva Rego and Betty Grierson and is honored to be working with the company in his role tonight.



Lynn Barre, Female Dance Soloist Lynn Barre began classical dance training in South Florida with Victoria Leigh and continued her movement studies at the New World School of the Arts. Her professional career began with Freddick Bratcher and Company in Miami and continued with the Philadelphia Dance

Company, also known as Philadanco. After landing in New York, Lynn danced with Elisa Monte, Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, and Complexions Contemporary Ballet. She has had the privilege of traveling the world performing the works of artists including Alvin Ailey, Redha Benteifour, Ronald K Brown, Donald Byrd, Ulysses Dove, Jodie Gates, Gene Hill Sagan, Judith Jamison, Donald McKayle, Hans Van Manen, Elisa Monte, Lynn Taylor Corbett, and Dwight Rhoden. Lynn resides on the Big Island where she teaches

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both dance and yoga, a practice she has explored for fifteen years. She currently assists in staging ballets in the United States and abroad and enjoys performing in independent dance projects.



Derek Daniels, Male Dance Soloist Derek Daniels, born and raised in Hawaii has traveled, lived and worked around the world for over two decades in places

such as New York, Los Angeles, Paris, London, Tokyo, Vienna, Rome, Barcelona, Switzerland, Singapore, Hong Kong, Vancouver and Sydney, Australia. He has studied in New York City with the Alvin Ailey, Dance Theater of Harlem, Broadway Dance Center, Steps and San Joaquin concert ballet in Stockton, California. His international and national credits include the Broadway musical Cats. West Side Story, A Chorus Line, The Wiz, Grease, Evita, Smokey Joe's Cafe, Radio City Music Hall's Christmas Spectacular, the television Fame, Paris Disney and appeared in numerous commercials, music videos and films. In addition he has worked with internationally acclaimed recording artists such as Grace Jones, The Pet Shop Boys, Salt 'n Pepa, Boy George and Martha Wash. Derek is happy to make his dance debut with Hawaii Opera Theatre.



A Boy In 2001, my family moved to Hawaii.

Riley Lynch,

Since that time, I have developed a passion for dancing and theatre arts. I've

performed with Diamond Head Theater and Ballet Hawaii. In 2005, I played the part of the Page in HOT's production of *Turandot*. Currently, I am a freshman at Punahou School.

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# Principal Artistic Team



Mark D. Flint, Conductor Conductor Mark D. Flint returns for his thirteenth season with HOT having led last season's Rigoletto and such recent productions as The Flying Dutchman, The Merry Widow and The Tales of Hoffmann. Currently Artistic Director of the Augusta Opera in Georgia, he has conducted in

the leading opera houses in both the United States and Canada, including New York City Opera, Michigan Opera Theatre, L'Opera de Montreal, Edmonton Opera, Nashville Opera and Orlando Opera. This season he opened the Orlando Opera's production of Samson and Dalila starring Denyce Graves, and will close the Nashville Opera season with Madama Butterfly. Recent engagements include La Bohème in Edmonton, Cenerentola in Detroit, and the world premiere of Ned Rorem's Our Town at the Lake George Opera in Saratoga. He is currently orchestrating the new David DiChiera opera Cyrano, for which he will conduct the world premiere next fall. For his company in Augusta, he will lead both Hansel and Gretel and La Bohème. Upcoming commitments include Romeo et Juliette for Michigan Opera Theatre, Il Trovatore for Nashville Opera, *Turandot* for the Orlando Opera, and his debut with Florentine Opera conducting The Merry Widow.



William Florescu, Director Florescu became the General Director of Milwaukee's Florentine Opera in May of 2005. Prior to coming to the Florentine, he was the General Director of Lake George Opera from 1999 until his appointment to the Florentine Opera. Previously, he had been General Director

of the Columbus Light Opera. While in Ohio, he was also

Associate Dean and Director of Opera/Musical Theatre at the Capital University Conservatory of Music. On the operatic stage, he has appeared in leading and supporting roles with Opera Columbus, Columbus Light Opera, Dorian Opera, Toledo Opera, and the National Opera Company. As a stage director, he has mounted operas for Lake George Opera, the Columbus Light Opera, and Augusta Opera, as well directing Rigoletto for HOT in 2006. This April, he will make his directing debut with his own company, staging *The Barber of* Seville. Mr. Florescu serves as both a panelist and on-site reviewer for the National Endowment for the Arts.



Patrick Corbin, Choreogapher Patrick was born and raised in Potomac, Maryland. In 1989 after being a member of the Joffrey Ballet for four years, Patrick joined the Paul Taylor Dance Company where he became one of its most celebrated members and danced there until 2005. Patrick was

featured in five PBS Great Performances between 1988 and 2004 and the 1998 Academy Award nominated documentary Dancemaker. In 2001 Patrick was the recipient of the New York Performance Award (Bessie) for Sustained Achievement with The Paul Taylor Dance Company. Patrick founded his own company CorbinDances in 2003 and stages his own work as well as the work of Paul Taylor in companies throughout the United States. As well as teaching modern dance at the Taylor School and the La Guardia School for the Performing Arts in New York City, Patrick also teaches dance to children with Autistic Spectrum Disorders in Carlstadt, New Jersey.







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# Principal Artistic Team



### Peter Dean Beck,

Scenic and Lighting Designer Beck has designed scenery and/or lighting for over two hundred productions around the country. During his twenty previous seasons with Hawaii Opera Theatre, he has designed the sets for thirty-six productions and the lighting

for fifty-six, among them: La Bohème, Eugene Onegin, The Tales of Hoffmann, Tristan and Isolde, Electra, Macbeth, L'italiana in Algeri, and Samson and Dalila. Among his other opera credits are Falstaff, Turandot, Manon, Madama Butterfly, Hansel and Gretel, A Midsummer Night's Dream, and Romeo et Juliette for such companies as Atlanta Opera, Florida Grand Opera, Glimmerglass Opera, Virginia Opera and Chautauqua Opera. His musical theater credits include West Side Story, Guys and Dolls, Candide, The King and I, and Fiddler on the Roof. In 2004, he designed *The Nutcracker* for Ballet Hawaii. And recently, he did a double bill of Le Rossignol, and Cavalleria Rusticana for Sakai City Opera in Japan (built and painted by HOT Scene Shop) and The Indigo Girls Project for Atlanta Ballet.



**Richard Stead,** Wig & Make-up Designer This season, Mr. Stead celebrates his 25th consecutive season with HOT. He has been Wigmaster at The San Francisco Opera where he won an Emmy Nomination. He has worked with Netherlands Opera, Royal Shakespeare Company, Central City Opera, Utah

Opera, Boston Opera, Minnesota Opera, American Conservatory Theatre, Spoleto Festival USA, Bolshoi Ballet, San Francisco Ballet, Ballet Hawaii, films and television. He was on the faculty of San Francisco State University and University of California. Mr. Stead operates his own wig and make-up company.



Helen E. Rodgers, Costumer Rodgers is happy to return to HOT for her sixth season, where she has designed costumes for The King & I, Il Trittico, Susannah, La Bohème and Cosi fan tutte as well as serving as Costumer for the company. Recent work at other

companies includes costume design for

Le Nozze di Figaro for Chautauqua Opera, and Il tabarro and Gianni Schicchi for Mannes Opera. She designed costumes for a Wild West Don Pasquale for the San Diego Opera, which has been presented at companies across the US and Canada, and will be presented by Connecticut Opera this spring. Other company credits include former resident costume designer for Opera Memphis, Canadian Opera Company, Virginia Opera, Utah Festival Opera, New York City Opera, Miami City Ballet and Florida Studio Theatre.



**Gretchen Mueller,** Stage Manager Ms. Mueller has stage managed for San Francisco Opera, Los Angeles Opera, The Washington Opera, Seattle Opera, Opera Theatre of St. Louis, HOT, Wolf Trap, Banff School of Fine Arts, and Tanglewood Music Center. During her career she has worked on two productions of The Ring

Cycle, two productions of War and Peace, other Russian epics including Boris Godounov and Khovanshchina, and







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# Principal Artistic Team

world premieres written by Osvaldo Golijov, Robert Zuidam, Minoru Miki and Paul Schofield. Although she specializes in opera production, she has also served as Company Manager, Stage Manager and Technical Liaison for International Attractions' tours of The Rustavi Company of Tbilisi, Georgia and of The Peking Opera of Chongching, China. This year she will be returning "full-time" to San Francisco Opera, but is pleased that she will be able to continue to work with HOT, the wonderful company that it is.

Beebe Freitas, Associate Artistic Director/Co-Chorus Director



A graduate of Oberlin College, Ms. Freitas received her Master's Degree from Boston University and was in the Special Studies Program at Juilliard. She has been soloist with several orchestras including the Boston 'Pops', the Youngstown and the Honolulu Symphonies. She has performed with such renowned soloists as Yo Yo Ma, Leonard Rose, and David Shifrin; has been rehearsal pianist for many conductors such as Leonard Bernstein, Thomas

Schippers, Robert Shaw, and William Steinberg. She has been the recipient of honors bestowed by the National Society of Arts and Letters, the YWCA, a Honpa Hongwanji Mission's Living Treasure Award, the City and County of Honolulu Commission on Culture and the Arts Award, and the Hawai'i Arts Alliance's prestigious *Alfred Preis Award*.

### Nola A. Nahulu, Co-Chorus Director

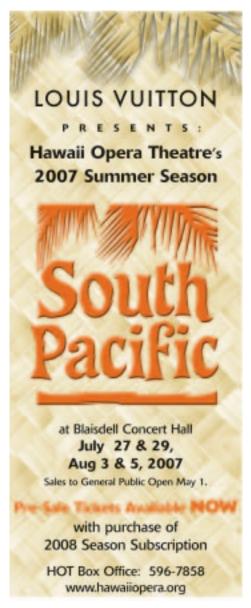


Ms. Nāhulu has been Choral Director with HOT since 1991 and with Hawaii Youth Opera Chorus since 1986 where she serves as Executive & Artistic Director. A native of Wai'anae, 'O'ahu, she also is Choral Director for the Pearl Harbor Hawaiian Civic Club and the Kawaiaha'o Church. She is a lecturer at the University of Hawai'i, Mānoa, in Hawaiian Choral Music and Director of Kawaiolaonapukaileo, an a cappella vocal ensemble whose goal is to perpetuate Hawaiian Choral Music. She is past-president of

the Executive Board of the Hawai'i Chapter of the American Choral Directors' Association.

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