Pietro Mascagni’s
CAVALLERIA RUSTICANA
IN CONCERT

IN CELEBRATION OF
NEW ARTISTIC LEADERSHIP FOR MICHIGAN OPERA THEATRE
AND THE DETROIT SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
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This performance of *Cavalleria rusticana: In Concert* is being photographed, and video recorded for future television airing.

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Detroit Opera House Box Office, 1526 Broadway St., Detroit, MI 48226
Welcome to Michigan Opera Theatre’s (MOT) concert performance of *Cavalleria rusticana* on the spectacular grounds of Oakland University’s Meadow Brook Amphitheatre! We are delighted that you have chosen to join us for our first “in-person” public event of 2021 due to the Pandemic. The occasion also marks a significant moment as we salute new artistic leadership during the first year of the appointments for Yuval Sharon, the Gary L. Wasserman Artistic Director for Michigan Opera Theatre and Jader Bignamini, Music Director for the Detroit Symphony Orchestra.

On behalf of the MOT organization, I wish to express appreciation to the many individuals, foundations and corporations who have joined together through their presence and their gifts in order that tonight’s performance can take place with the stellar artists with whom you will experience. A special nod goes out to those listed on the program page of tonight’s performance.

This past year has been an enormous hurdle for most of the individual artists who have joined together for the first public performance since the Pandemic. While they have remained resolute in preserving their individual artistry, they have yearned for a return to working as an ensemble and have not had the benefit of their craft being recognized through paid public performances.

I wish to thank 313 Presents for their extraordinary partnership in making it possible for this “in-person” MOT concert performance to take place. Their assistance in accommodating the myriad details and varying protocols required attests to their commitment in providing a comfortable and safe experience for artists and audiences alike.

For those who were unable to join us and for those who are interested in an encore performance, our media partners at DPTV and WRCJ will broadcast this MOT experience with a projected air date of July 9, 2021. This is an example of partnerships that continue to grow for the benefit of our community.

In closing, we are thrilled to be back with “in-person” performances and hope to see you often throughout the coming season!
CAVALLERIA RUSTICANA
IN CONCERT

MUSIC
Pietro Mascagni

LIBRETTO
Giovanni Targioni-Tozetti and Guido Manasci, based on a story and play by Giovanni Verga

WORLD PREMIERE
Teatro Costanzi, Rome
May 17, 1890

CONDUCTOR
Jader Bignamini

CHORUS MASTER
Suzanne Mallare Acton

LIGHTING DESIGN
Heather DeFauw

SUPERTITLES
Dee Dorsey

STAGE MANAGER
Nan Luchini

CAST
(In order of vocal appearance)

Turiddu - Brian Jagde
Santuzza - Christine Goerke
Mamma Lucia - Ronnita Miller
Alfio - Alfred Walker
Lola - Catherine Martin
Peasant Women - Lucia Helgren, Kristina Riegle

CAVALLERIA RUSTICANA: IN CONCERT
is generously supported by

with additional support from:
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Paul & Mary Sue Ewing,
Carl & Mary Ann Fontana, Elaine Fontana,
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Richard Sonenklar & Gregory Haynes, and
The estate of Sidney Rose
It must have been quite a shock when the curtain first went up on *Cavalleria rusticana* in 1890: instead of opera offering a window into another time or a mythic setting, there on the stage was recognizable life in all its grit and glory. Even if Giuseppe Verdi attempted to capture his contemporaries in *La traviata* 25 years earlier, he nevertheless maintained an emphasis on a higher class – and kept Violetta in distant Paris. Mascagni went where Verdi couldn’t yet go: he sought to capture his time. And from its sensational opening night in Rome, *Cavalleria rusticana* ushered in a new form of opera: verismo.

What makes verismo so inspiring and continuously relevant is not just the idea of naturalism, but more importantly the notion that everyday life could be the subject of the grandest of all art forms. Mascagni took the epic scale of opera and used it to magnify the experiences of people who could be our neighbors; people we pass on the street; those whose private lives might seem forever closed off to us. Opera’s unique blend of music, poetry, and theater open up those closed experiences for all of us to share, to grow, and to see the world through new eyes.

Starting off with Mascagni indicates where we are going throughout our 21/22 season: Mascagni’s colleague (and one-time roommate!) Giacomo Puccini’s form of verismo will be heard at the end of the season, as the life-like, lovable artists of his eternal masterpiece *La bohème* will return to the stage of the Detroit Opera House in April. And these great works have conversation partners with three contemporary works – *Blue*, by Jeanine Tesori and Tazewell Thompson; *Frida*, by Robert Xavier Rodriguez; and *X* by Anthony, Thulani, and Kip Davis – who share that idea that opera can open up new possibilities in the urgent task of understanding each other better. We hope you will join us for each of these productions throughout the year!

As we re-emerge from the pandemic, we are re-committing ourselves to the notion that Mascagni set forth with *Cavalleria*: opera can reflect our lives immediately, magnificently, and unforgettably.

Thank you for being with us tonight!

**Yuval Sharon**

The Gary L. Wasserman Artistic Director
FOR YOUR SAFETY AND COMFORT

On behalf of Michigan Opera Theatre, we are thrilled to welcome you back to experience live opera in Detroit!

- If you experience any known symptoms of COVID-19, we ask that you refrain from entering the Amphitheatre. Symptoms include a fever of 100.4 or higher, cough, shortness of breath, difficulty breathing, chills, muscle aches, headaches.
- While masks are no longer required for outdoor gatherings, guests are more than welcome to remain masked during the show.
- Meadow Brook has adopted a NO BAG policy. Diaper bags and bags needed due to medical necessity are allowed. Bags of any size will be screened by security.
- The performance will proceed rain or shine. In the event of rain, ponchos are encouraged as umbrellas block the view of guests behind you.
- Please remember to be respectful of others and watch your distance throughout the venue.
- Lawn seating for this event has been designed in socially distanced areas for groups of four.
- Blankets are allowed for opera-lovers seated on the lawn. Lawn chairs will be available for rental, and ponchos and blankets will be available for purchase.
- For your comfort and safety, hand sanitizer stations will be available throughout the venue.
- To reduce hand to hand contact, Meadow Brook is highly encouraging guests to go “cash-less.” All major credit cards are accepted throughout the venue.
- Please be aware that this performance will be recorded for future broadcast, and will also be professionally photographed.

A MESSAGE FROM HOWARD HANDLER

On behalf of 313 Presents, I am thrilled to safely welcome you back to experience Meadow Brook again.

313 Presents’ mission is to deliver amazing entertainment and alive moments inspired by the soul of Detroit. What better way to carry out that mission than to welcome one of Detroit’s pillars of arts and culture, Michigan Opera Theatre, to Meadow Brook Amphitheatre for the performance of *Cavalleria rusticana: In Concert*, presented in cooperation with the Detroit Symphony Orchestra.

Meadow Brook Amphitheatre on the Campus of Oakland University has seen an eclectic mix of programming flourish over the years. Its unique ambiance and intimate setting provides an exceptional backdrop to showcase this renowned Italian opera.

We’re honored that MOT chose Meadow Brook Amphitheatre to be a part of their 2021-22 season. The opportunity to work with luminary Artistic Director, Yuval Sharon, and all of our friends at Michigan Opera Theatre has been a tremendous joy during a challenging time for live events and the world.

Thank you for your patience, understanding, and most of all support over the past year, and now, as the curtain rises once again.

Enjoy the show!

HOWARD HANDLER
President
313 Presents
I have been nervous
not knowing how I should react
the first time I encounter you again
face to face
unmediated by a screen
with or without masks . . .

I have been nervous:
how shall we encounter each other?

But a couple of disconnected things rattle through my head:

Writing of love
and emergence from
the deep isolation of winter
the great Poet-King Solomon writes:
Let’s walk together
for the winter is now past
the rains have moved through
new blossoms are seen
we have touched the time of song
and the voice
of a turtledove
is heard
in our land

So Solomon tells us of
new beginnings
new flowers
and the time of song

and I find myself
in a garden . . .

and I recognize
another old friend
the great Persian poet
Saadi of Shiraz

And I ask him:
Why does Solomon speak
of flowers and music
at such a time?

And Saadi answers:
If I had but two loaves of bread
I would sell one
and buy hyacinths
to feed my soul

Welcome back, my dear friend,
to Michigan Opera Theatre,
welcome
nourish your soul
touch the time of song

---

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Easter morning. Dawn. The natural beauty of the Sicilian landscape unfolds in an orchestral prelude before a lone voice is heard in the distance, singing a love hymn to a beautiful woman named Lola. (We later learn this is the luckless Turiddu, enamored with the wife of the wealthy carter Alfio.) The voice dissolves in the air, and the orchestra once again paints a picture of the landscape in bloom. Soon the farmers and peasants of the town can be heard on their way to Easter Sunday services. Free from labor on this sacred day, the people sing of the sweet smell of orange blossoms and other spring enchantments.

Separated from the chorus, a woman enters in distress. She is Santuzza, and she pleads with Turiddu’s mother, Mamma Lucia, for help finding her son. Sensing trouble, Mamma Lucia first shuns Santuzza’s urgent pleas; but when Lucia invites Santuzza into her home, the young girl refuses: “I am excommunicated.” Before Lucia can learn more, the sound of whips and jingling bells signal Alfio’s boastful return for the Easter holiday. Alfio greets Mamma Lucia and asks for Turiddu, but when he hears that Turiddu is away fetching wine for his mother’s tavern, Alfio claims to have seen Turiddu just this morning near his house. Before this confusion can be cleared up, Alfio runs home to get dressed for the service, which is just about to start.

The townspeople sing an Easter hymn, and although she feels disowned by the church, Santuzza seems to lead them in a powerful prayer (‘Inneggiamo, il Signor non è morto’). As everyone enters the cathedral, Santuzza and Mamma Lucia stay behind. Santuzza now opens her heart and reveals everything: When Turiddu came back from the army, he discovered his former love Lola married to Alfio. In his heartbreak, Turiddu turned to Santuzza, who fell in love with him. (Reading between the lines, some interpreters of the opera believe Santuzza is now pregnant with Turiddu’s child.) Lola, now jealous of Santuzza, reignited Turiddu’s love for her, and their revived affair prompts Turiddu to abandon Santuzza. In her shame, Santuzza refuses to enter the church and instead asks Mamma Lucia to pray for her.

Turiddu appears on his way to the church and encounters Santuzza. He brusquely tries to get past her and her questioning about where he was that morning. But when she confronts him directly about Lola, their impassioned argument threatens to erupt into violence: “Would you have me killed?” the defiant Turiddu asks. “Beat me and insult me, I will still love you,” Santuzza hopelessly confesses. In a stormy silence, Lola’s carefree little song about a flower is heard in the distance, interrupting the heated duet. Lola appears on the scene and is surprised to see Turiddu speaking to Santuzza outside the church. Lola asks Santuzza why she isn’t with the community inside; Santuzza replies that on this Easter Sunday, only those without sin should enter the church. Lola lightheartedly claims no sin and breezily enters the church. Santuzza holds Turiddu back, and with great tenderness she pleads not to be abandoned. When she fails and Turiddu renounces her “madness” with finality, she curses him with a chilling line: “a te la mala Pasqua, spergiuro!” Alfio enters, now dressed for the service. He encounters Santuzza, who tells the cheated husband about Lola and Turiddu’s affair. Enraged, Alfio swears revenge “this very day” as he storms off.

A sudden calm is ushered in with the famous Intermezzo, a wordless hymn and a bold contrast to the mounting dramatic tension of the story. In a staged version of the opera, this might be the moment the chorus is seen exiting the church or some other such stage business. In this concert setting, the Intermezzo offers an opportunity for deeper reflection: in the
wake of such turbulent and extreme emotions, with characters treating each other without mercy or pity, perhaps grace and spirituality can only be found in the silent surroundings of our natural environment?

The townspeople head home. Turiddu wants Lola to stay with him, but she leaves to find Alfio. Turiddu invites the townspeople to his mother’s inn with a forced and off-kilter drinking song. The slightly frenzied jollity is disrupted by Alfio, who offers his own sinister toast; when Turiddu offers him a glass, Alfio ominously refuses it. The tension between the two men is clear to the villagers, who all nervously leave the scene. Left alone, Alfio needs no words to convey to Turiddu that he knows the truth, and he challenges his rival. The gravity of the situation sinks in, and Turiddu is overcome with remorse for how he treated Santuzza – although his sudden conversion does nothing to soften Alfio’s thirst for revenge.

Light-headed from too much drinking, Turiddu now calls for his mother and asks for her blessing as he departs. “If I am never to return,” he says, “take care of Santuzza like your own daughter.” Mamma Lucia is frightened and bewildered by Turiddu’s desperate farewell. Santuzza appears and embraces Mamma Lucia as her own mother, as the bloodcurdling scream of the townspeople announce the news: “They have killed Turiddu!”

ARTIST PROFILES

JADER BIGNAMINI
(CONDUCTOR)

Jader Bignamini was introduced as the 18th music director of the Detroit Symphony Orchestra in January 2020, commencing with the 2020-2021 season. He kicked off his tenure as DSO Music Director with the launch of DSO Digital Concerts in September 2020, conducting works by Copland, Puccini, Tchaikovsky, and Saint-Georges. His infectious passion and artistic excellence set the tone for the season ahead, creating extraordinary music and establishing a close relationship with the orchestra.

In December, Jader returned to the DSO to lead a triumphant performance of Beethoven’s Symphony No. 5, “Eroica,” and music by Richard Strauss and Jessie Montgomery. In May 2021, he closed his DSO season with four programs including performances with violinist Midori and pianist Orli Shaham. Jader will conduct 10 subscription weeks in the DSO’s upcoming 2021-22 season, including concerts with violinists Hilary Hahn and Gil Shaham, pianist Jean-Yves Thibaudet, cellist Alisa Weilerstein, and saxophonist Branford Marsalis.

A native of Crema, Italy, Jader studied at the Piacenza Music Conservatory and began his career as a clarinetist with Orchestra Sinfonica La Verdi in Milan, later serving as the group’s resident conductor. Captivated by the big symphonic works of Mahler and Tchaikovsky, Jader explored their complexity and power.
puzzling out the role that each instrument played in creating a larger-than-life sound. When he conducted his first professional concert at the age of 28, it did not feel like a departure, but an arrival.

In the years since, Jader has conducted some of the world’s most acclaimed orchestras and opera companies in venues across the globe including working with Riccardo Chailly on concerts of Mahler’s Eighth Symphony in 2015 and his concert debut at La Scala in 2015 for the opening season of La Verdi Orchestra. Recent highlights include debuts with the Houston, Dallas, and Minnesota symphonies; Osaka Philharmonic and Yomiuri Nippon Symphony Orchestra in Tokyo; with the Metropolitan Opera, Vienna State Opera, and Dutch National Opera (Madama Butterfly); Bayerische Staatsoper (La Traviata); I Puritani in Montpellier for the Festival of Radio France; Traviata in Tokyo directed by Sofia Coppola; return engagements with Oper Frankfurt (La forza del destino) and Santa Fe Opera (La Bohème); Manon Lescaut at the Bolshoi; Traviata, Madame Butterfly, and Turandot at Arena of Verona; Il Trovatore and Aida at Rome’s Teatro dell’Opera; Madame Butterfly, I Puritani, and Manon Lescaut at Teatro Massimo in Palermo; Simon Boccanegra and La Forza del Destino at the Verdi Festival in Parma; Ciro in Babilonia at Rossini Opera Festival and La Bohème, Madame Butterfly, and Elisir d’amore at La Fenice in Venice.

When Jader leads an orchestra in symphonic repertoire, he conducts without a score, preferring to make direct eye contact with the musicians. He conducts from the heart, forging a profound connection with his musicians that shines through both onstage and off. He both embodies and exudes the excellence and enthusiasm that has long distinguished the DSO’s artistry. A jazz aficionado, he has also immersed himself in Detroit’s rich jazz culture and the influences of American music.

**CHRISTINE GOERKE (SANTUZZA)**

Soprano Christine Goerke (MOT productions include Elektra and Twilight: Gods) has appeared in many of the most prestigious opera houses of the world including the Metropolitan Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, San Francisco Opera, Royal Opera House, Paris Opera, Teatro alla Scala, Deutsche Oper Berlin, Teatro Real in Madrid, and the Saito Kinen Festival. She has sung much of the great soprano repertoire, beginning with the Mozart and Handel heroines and now moving into dramatic Strauss and Wagner roles.

Goerke has also appeared with a number of leading orchestras including the New York Philharmonic, Boston Symphony Orchestra, Chicago Symphony Orchestra, Cleveland Orchestra, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Radio Vara, the BBC Symphony Orchestra at the BBC Proms, and both the Halle Orchestra and the Royal Scottish National Symphony at the Edinburgh International Festival.

Goerke’s recording of Vaughan Williams’ A Sea Symphony with Robert Spano and the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra won the 2005 Grammy Award for Best Classical Recording and Best Choral Performance. Other recordings include the title role in Iphigenie en Tauride for Telarc and Britten’s War Requiem, which won the 1999 Grammy Award for Best Choral Performance.

During the 20/21 season, Goerke’s many engagements included Turandot at the Metropolitan Opera, Elektra at the Vienna State Opera, and performances of Act II of Tristan und Isolde with the National Symphony Orchestra at both the Kennedy Center and Lincoln Center. Due to the ongoing worldwide pandemic,
Goerke's 2020 engagements were unfortunately cancelled. However, starting in the spring of 2021, she will return to the stage in recitals presented by Carnegie Hall, the Lyric Opera of Chicago, Cal Performances, and venues in St. Louis and Princeton. She also appears on tour in Carnegie Hall and in Europe with the Met Opera Orchestra in concert performances of Die Walküre, Act I.

Goerke was the recipient of the 2001 Richard Tucker Award, the 2015 Musical America Vocalist of the Year Award, and the 2017 Opera News Award.

BRIAN JAGDE (TURIDDU)
Heralded internationally as an artist with “a remarkable future” (Opera World), American tenor Brian Jagde brings his dynamic vocalism and captivating stage presence to several of opera's most iconic roles including Cavaradossi in Tosca, Calaf in Turandot, Don José in Carmen, Ennzo Grimaldi in La Gioconda, Don Alvaro in La Forza del Destino, Maurizio in Adriana Lecouvreur, Radamès in Aida, Pinkerton in Madama Butterfly, Turiddu in Cavalleria rusticana, Des Greiux in Manon Lescaut, Prince in Rusalka, and Der Fremde in Das Wunder der Heliane. He appears regularly at the Metropolitan Opera, San Francisco Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Royal Opera House Covent Garden, Opéra National de Paris, Deutsche Oper Berlin, and the Gran Teatre del Liceu.

Due to the ongoing pandemic, many of Jagde’s 2020-2021 season engagements were cancelled. However, he was still able to make his house début at the Wiener Staatsoper as Turiddu in Mascagni’s Cavalleria rusticana, followed by his first collaboration with the Shanghai Symphony Orchestra and Maestro Long Yu to record Mahler’s Das Lied von der Erde for a Deutsche Grammophon release. This spring he makes his debuts with both Opera Philadelphia in special concert performances of Tosca and Michigan Opera Theatre in special concert performances of Cavalleria rusticana, and this summer he returns to the Bayerische Staatsoper in Turandot.

In addition to his stage career, Jagde advocates and volunteers for several arts education organizations and schools in New York City and across the U.S. He is a graduate of San Francisco Opera’s Adler and Merola Programs. Jagde was born and raised in New York, where he currently resides.

CATHERINE MARTIN (LOLA)
Praised by The Washington Post for her “gorgeous, warm voice that you want to keep listening to”, American mezzo-soprano Catherine Martin continues to make an impact in repertoire ranging from Verdi and Wagner to Strauss and Bellini. Her 2019-2020 season included Wellgunde in Götterdämmerung with the National Taichung Theatre in Taiwan, the cover of Sister Helen Prejean in Dead Man Walking and singing the 2nd Norn in Götterdämmerung and Waltraute in Die Walküre at Lyric Opera of Chicago and covering Marguerite in Berlioz’s Le damnation de Faust with The Metropolitan Opera. Engagements for this season include Waltraute in Twilight: Gods with Michigan Opera Theatre and Lyric Opera of Chicago and Dame
Quickly in Falstaff with Berkshire Opera Festival as well as postponed or cancelled productions of Lohengrin with The Dallas Opera and Dead Man Walking with The Metropolitan Opera.

Highlights from recent seasons include Sister Helen Prejean in Dead Man Walking with Minnesota Opera and Dayton Opera as well as covering Sister Helen at Washington National Opera; performances in various roles from Wagner’s Ring Cycle with Lyric Opera of Chicago, Houston Grand Opera, Washington National Opera, Boston Symphony Orchestra, Dallas Symphony, and National Taichung Theatre; Amneris in Aida with Houston Grand Opera, Opera Colorado, and Opera Santa Barbara; Adalgisa in Norma with Florida Grand Opera; Der Komponist in Ariadne auf Naxos at The Glimmerglass Festival; and Maddalena in Rigoletto with New Orleans Opera and Opera Santa Barbara. In addition, she has appeared in multiple contemporary operas including Mary in the world premiere of The Lion, the Unicorn, and Me with Washington National Opera; Genevieve in The Long Christmas Dinner with American Symphony Orchestra; Tamara in Enemies, A Love Story with Kentucky Opera; Eva Crowley in An American Dream with Lyric Opera of Chicago; and Sara Miller in Approaching Ali with Washington National Opera.

RONNITA MILLER (MAMMA LUCIA)

received her Masters of Music from the Manhattan School of Music and graduated from The Juilliard School before spending two years in the Domingo-Thornton Young Artist Program at Los Angeles Opera. In 2008, she became a principal artist in the ensemble at Deutsche Oper Berlin where she remained until 2019; singing many roles including Mama Lucia Cavalleria Rusticana, Third Lady Die Zauberflöte, Mary Der fliegende Holländer, Madelon Andrea Chenier, Ulrika Un Ballo in Maschera. Miller appeared in several roles in Der Ring des Nibelungen, most notably Erda and First Norn, roles she also sang at San Francisco Opera, Teatro Real Madrid, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Semperoper Dresden and The Metropolitan Opera of New York. She sang concert performances of the work at Tanglewood Festival, the Edinburgh International Festival and in Amsterdam at the Concertgebouw. Miller has appeared in many concerts worldwide, and has shared the concert stage with Christian Thielemann, Simon Rattle, Andrew Davis, Alexander Vedernikov, Donald Runnicles, Fabio Luisi and Riccardo Muti among others. Returning to the US in 2020, the artist joined Atlanta Symphony Orchestra for their Gala concert last fall, and she’s currently appearing as Mrs Peacham The Threepenny Opera at The Atlanta Opera. She returns to the Metropolitan Opera next season for the role of Big Stone in Matthew Aucoin’s Eurydice.
ALFRED WALKER
(ALFIO)
Lauded by Opera News for his “inky bass-baritone and clear projection seemed ideally suited to the role, capturing this isolated man’s passion with telling grief,” in the 2020/21 season Alfred Walker joins Michigan Opera Theatre for Alfio in Cavalleria Rusticana. Among his upcoming engagements, he will return to the Metropolitan Opera for further performances of Crown in Porgy and Bess, to Lyric Opera of Chicago for Vater in Hansel und Gretel and join San Francisco Opera as Scarpia in Tosca. Last season, he sang Crown in Porgy and Bess (Metropolitan Opera), Vater in Hansel und Gretel (San Francisco Opera), Oroveso in Norma (Boston Lyric Opera), and Porgy in Porgy and Bess (Washington National Opera). Recent performances include: Titurel in Parsifal, Parsi Rustomji in Satyagraha and the Speaker in The Magic Flute (Metropolitan Opera); the Ruler in Das Wunder der Heliane (Bard Summerscape); Orest in Elektra (San Francisco Opera, Teatro alla Scala, Deutsche Opera Berlin, Seattle Opera, San Sebastián Festival); Amonasro in Aida and Porgy in Porgy and Bess (Seattle Opera); Mephistophèles in Faust (Teatro Municipal de Santiago, Portland Opera); Der fliegende Holländer, Amfortas in Parsifal, and Amonasro in Aida (Theater Basel); Wotan in Das Rheingold (North Carolina Opera); Bluebeard in Bluebeard’s Castle (New Japan Philharmonic); Pizarro in Fidelio (Caramoor Music Festival); Josh Gibson in The Player King (Pittsburgh Opera); Four Villains in Les contes d’Hoffmann (Den Norske Opera, Komische Oper Berlin); and Der fliegende Holländer (Geneva Wagner Festival, Oper Köln, Seattle Opera, Théâtre de Caen, Grand Théâtre de Luxembourg); Kurwenal in Tristan und Isolde (Angers Nantes Opera, Opéra de Dijon).

SUZANNE MALLARE ACTON
(CHORUS MASTER)
Suzanne Mallare Acton has received wide acclaim for her work as Chorus Master. For Michigan Opera Theatre, she has prepared over 150 productions in eight languages and has conducted 35 operas. She is also the founder and director of the Michigan Opera Theatre Children’s Chorus. Guest conducting credits include productions with Dayton Opera, Augusta Opera, Artpark, Saginaw Symphony, Dearborn Symphony, Birmingham-Bloomfield Symphony, and the Lexington Bach Festival. She is also the conductor of the Detroit holiday favorite, Too Hot to Handel, a work she also premiered in Chicago at the Auditorium Theatre and in Memphis at the Orpheum Theatre. In addition to her work at MOT, Acton has until recently been the Artistic Director of Rackham Choir.
**MOT CHORUS**

**SOPRANO**
- Brandy Adams
- Carol Ambrogio Wood
- Alaina Brown
- Lucia Helgren
- Audrey Kline
- Edwina Luokkala-Burckhardt
- Sandra Periord
- Maitri White
- Heidi Bowen Zook

**MEZZO SOPRANO**
- Andrea Apel
- Hillary LaBonte
- Kristina Riegle
- Diane Schoff
- Tiffanie Waldron
- Antonia Yost

**BARITONE / BASS**
- Zachary Coates
- Benton DeGroot
- Kurt Frank
- Brandon C.S. Hood
- Matthew Konopacki
- David Moan
- Paolo Pacheco
- Kevin Starnes

**TENOR**
- Gregory Ashe
- Diego Roberts Buceta
- Dorian Dillard
- Ryan Hurley
- Richard Jackson, Jr.
- Camron Johnson
- Adrian Leskiw

**BASSOON**
- Derek Weller* - Principal
- Clark Suttle*
- Jean Posekany

*Michigan Opera Theatre Core Orchestra

**MOT ORCHESTRA**

**VIOLIN I**
- Eliot Heaton* - Concertmaster
- Laura Roelofs*
- Jenny Wan*
- Andrew Wu*
- Molly Hughes*
- Velda Kelly*
- Emily Barkakati*
- Beth Kirton*
- Ran Cheng

**VIOLIN II**
- Henrik Karapetyan* - Acting Principal
- Dan Stachyra*
- Bryan Johnston*
- Anna Bittar-Weller*
- David Ormai
- Yuri Popowycz

**VIOLA**
- John Madison* - Principal
- Scott Stefanko*
- Jacqueline Hanson*
- James Greer

**CELLO**
- Andrea Yun* - Acting Principal
- Jinhyun Kim*
- Sarah Cleveland
- Damon Coleman

**BASS**
- Derek Weller* - Principal
- Clark Suttle*
- Jean Posekany

**CONCERTMASTER**

**FLUTE**
- Dennis Carter - Acting Principal
- Laura Larson*

**OBOE**
- Nermis Mieses* - Principal

**CLARINET**
- Chad Burrow - Acting Principal
- J. William King*

**BASSOON**
- Gregory Quick* - Acting Principal

**HORN**
- Andrew Pelletier* - Principal
- Carrie Banfield-Taplin*

**CORNET**
- David Ammer* - Principal
- Gordon Simmons*

**TROMBONE**
- Brittany Lasch* - Principal
- Bryan Pokorney

**TIMPANI**
- Terence Farmer - Acting Principal

**PERCUSSION**
- Dorsey* - Principal
- David Taylor

**HARP**
- Maurice Draughn - Acting Principal

**ORGAN**
- Robert Conway

*Michigan Opera Theatre Core Orchestra

The American Guild of Musical Artists is the official union of the Michigan Opera Theatre Chorus

Detroit Federation of Musicians Local #5 American Federation of Musicians
La scena rappresenta una piazza in un paese della Sicilia. – Nel fondo, a destra, Chiesa con porta praticabile. – A sinistra l’osteria e la casa di Mamma Lucia.
È il giorno di Pasqua.

TURIDDU
(dentro alla scena)
O Lola c’hai di latti la cammisa, si bianca e russa comu la cirasa, quannu t’affacci fai la vuca a risa, biatu pì lu primu cu ti vasa!

Ntra la puorta tua lu sangu è spasu, A warning in blood is written over your door.
ma nun me mpuorta si ce muoru accisu.
E si ce muoru e vaju ‘n paradisu,
ma nun me mpuorta si ce muoru accisu.
scena prima
Coro
DONNE
(di dentro)
Gli aranci olezzano sui verdi margini,
relied on the right, a church with a moveable door. On the left, an inn and the house of Mother Lucia.
It is Easter.

TURIDDU (off-stage)
O Lola, your lips are as red as cherries!
A smile comes to my lips whenever you appear. Lucky is he who first kisses you.

DONNE
Cessin le rustiche opre: la Virgine serena
allietasi del Salvator!

SANTUZZA
Fin qui vieni a cercare il figlio mio?

LUCIA
Non lo so, non lo so, non voglio brighe!

SANTUZZA
Mamma Lucia, vi supplico piangendo,
fate come il Signore a Maddalena...
Ditemi per pietà, dov’è Turiddu?

LUCIA
È andato per il vino a Francofonte.

SANTUZZA
No! He was seen in the village last night.

LUCIA
Che dici?… se non è tornato a casa!

UPMOUII (di dentro)
In mezzo al campo tra le spiche d’oro giunge
il rumore delle vostre spole,
noi stanchi riposando dal lavoro a voi pensiamo. O belle occhi-di-sole, a voi corriamo, come vola l’augello al suo richiamo!

(II coro entra in iscena)

DONNE
Cessin le rustiche opre: la Virgine serena
allietasi del Salvator!

SCENA I
Chorus
WOMEN (within)
The sweet scent of orange blossoms fill the air and the larks sing from the myrtles.
Now let us sing tender songs that move our hearts.

SCENA II
Santuzza e Lucia

DONNE
Now ce muoru accisu.
E si ce muoru e vaju ‘n paradisu,
ma nun me mpuorta si ce muoru accisu.

LUCIA
Fin qui vieni a cercare il figlio mio?

LUCIA
I only want to know where I can find him.

LUCIA
You come to me looking for my son?

SANTUZZA
I am in tears... I beg you... Please treat me kindly, like our Lord with Mary Magdalene.
Tell me, for mercy’s sake, where is Turiddu?

LUCIA
He’s gone to Francoforte for the wine.

SANTUZZA
No! He was seen in the village last night.

LUCIA
What are you saying? He didn’t come home!
(avviandosi all’uscio di casa)
Entra...

SANTUZZA
Non posso entrare in casa vostra....
Sono scomunicata!

LUCIA
E che ne sai del mio figliuolo?

SANTUZZA
Quale spina ho in core!

SCENA III
Alfio, Coro e dette

ALFIO
Il cavallo scalpita, i sonagli squillano,
schiocca la frusta.—Ehi là!—
Soffii il vento gelido, cada l’acqua e nevichi, a
me che cosa fa?

CORO
O che bel mestiere fare il carrettiere andar di
qua e di là!

ALFIO
M’aspetta a casa Lola che m’ama e mi
consola, ch’è tutta fedeltà.

LUCIA
Beato voi, compar Alfio,
che siete sempre allegro così!

ALFIO
M’aspetta a casa Lola che m’ama e mi
consola, ch’è tutta fedeltà.

ALFIO
M’aspetta a casa Lola che m’ama e mi
consola, ch’è tutta fedeltà.

LUCIA
Non so; Turiddu è andato a provvederme

SCENA IV
Lucia e Santuzza

LUCIA
Perché m’hai fatto segno di tacere?

ALFIO
Se è sempre qui!—L’ho visto stamattina
vicino a casa mia!

LUCIA (sorpresa)
Come?

SANTUZZA (rapidamente)
Tacete! (dalla Chiesa odesi intonare
l’alleluja)

ALFIO
Io me ne vado, ite voi altre in chiesa.
(esce)

CORO INTERNO
(dalla Chiesa)
Regina coeli, laetare—Alleluja!
Quia, quem meruisti portare—Alleluja!
Resurrexit sicut dixit—Alleluja!

CORO ESTERNO
(sulla piazza)
Inneggiamo, il Signor non è morto.
Ei fulgente ha dischiuso l’avel...
ineggiamo al Signore risorto oggi asceso
alla gloria del Ciel!

LUCIA
Perchè m’hai fatto segno di tacere?

ALFIO
But I saw him this morning near my
house!

LUCIA (surprised)
Really?

SANTUZZA (quickly)
Be quiet! (Those in the church are heard singing Alleluia)

ALFIO
I’d better leave and prepare for the service.
(He goes out)

CHORUS (within the church)
Queen of Heaven, rejoice! Alleluia!
For He, whom you have given... Alleluia!
...has risen as He said. Alleluia!

CHORUS (in the square)
Let us rejoice, for our Savior arose from
death. Let us rejoice, for He has opened the
tomb... Let us rejoice. Our Lord has risen and
ascended to Heaven.

He ascends today to the glory of Heaven.
Lola waits; loving and true.
Let us rejoice,
for our Savior arose from death and has
ascended this day to the glory of Heaven.
(The chorus goes out slowly)
SANTUZZA
Voi lo sapete, o mamma, prima d’andar soldato Turiddu aveva a Lola eterna fè guarito. Tornò, la seppe sposa;

e con un nuovo amore volle spegner la fiamma che gli bruciava il core.

m’amò, l’amai.

Quell’invida d’ogni delizia mia, del suo sposo dimentica, arse di gelosia....

Me l’ha rapito.

Priva dell’onor mio rimango:

Lola e Turiddu s’amano,

io piango, io piango, io piango!

LUCIA
Miseri noi, che cosa vieni a dirmi in questo santo giorno?

SANTUZZA
Io son dannata!

Andate, o mamma, ad implorare Iddio, e pregate per me.

Verrà Turiddu, vo’ supplicarlo un’altra volta ancora!

LUCIA (avviandosi alla chiesa)
Ajutatela voi, Santa Maria!
(esce)

SCENA V
Santuzza e Turiddu

TURIDDU
Tu qui, Santuzza?

SANTUZZA
Qui t’aspettavo.

TURIDDU
È Pasqua, in chiesa non vai?

SANTUZZA
Non vo. Debbo parliarti...

TURIDDU
Mamma cercavo...

SANTUZZA
Debbio parlarvi...

TURIDDU
Qui no! Qui no!

SANTUZZA
Dove sei stato?

TURIDDU
Che vuoi tu dire?... A Francofonte!

SANTUZZA
No, non è ver!

TURIDDU
Santuzza, credimi...

SANTUZZA
No, non mentire; ti vidi volgere giù dal sentier.

E stamattina, all’alba, t’hanno scôrto presso l’uscio di Lola.

TURIDDU
Ah! m’hai spiato!

SANTUZZA
No, te lo giuro! A noi l’ha raccontato Compar Alfio, il marito, poco fa.

TURIDDU
Così ricambi l’amor che ti porto?

Vuoi che m’uccida?

SANTUZZA
Oh! questo non lo dire...

TURIDDU
Lasciami dunque,

in van tenti sopire il giusto sdegno colla tua pietà!

TURIDDU
I was looking for Mamma.

SANTUZZA
I need to speak to you.

TURIDDU
Not here!

SANTUZZA
Where have you been?

TURIDDU
Why does it matter? In Francofonte.

SANTUZZA
That’s not true!

TURIDDU
Santuzza, believe me.

SANTUZZA
Don’t lie. I saw you on the other road.

And at dawn you were seen leaving Lola’s house.

TURIDDU
You were spying!

SANTUZZA
No, I swear it! Alfio, her husband, was telling us just now.

TURIDDU
Is this the way you repay my love?

Do you want him to kill me?

SANTUZZA
Don’t say that!

TURIDDU
Then leave me alone!

You’ve insulted me. Don’t look for my pity now.
SANTUZZA
Tu l’ami dunque?
Assai più bella è Lola...
TURIDDU
Taci, non l’amo!
SANTUZZA
L’amì.... Oh! maledetta!
Quella cattiva femmina ti tolse a me!
TURIDDU
Bada, Santuzza, schiavo non sono di questa
vana tua gelosia!
SANTUZZA
Battimi, insultami, t’amo e perdono, ma è
troppo forte l’angoscia mia.
LOLA
(dentro alla scena)
Fior di giaggiolo,
gli angeli belli stanno a mille in
cielo,
ma bello come lui ce n’è uno solo.
Fior di giaggiolo! (entrando)
Oh! Turiddu.... È passato Alfio?
TURIDDU
Son giunto ora in piazza. Non so...
(impacciato)
SANTUZZA
L’ami.... Oh! maledetta!
TURIDDU
Tu l’ami dunque?
LOLA
(off-stage)
Fior di giaggiolo.
SANTUZZA
L’amì.... Oh! maledetta!
Quella cattiva femmina ti tolse a me!
TURIDDU
Taci, non l’amo!
SANTUZZA
Tu l’ami dunque?
Assai più bella è Lola...
TURIDDU
Bada, Santuzza, schiavo non sono di questa
vana tua gelosia!
SANTUZZA
Battimi, insultami, t’amo e perdono, ma è
troppo forte l’angoscia mia.
LOLA
(Ironically)
You do that, Lola!
SANTUZZA
(Sadly)
I was saying that it’s Easter...
...and that God sees everything!
TURIDDU
(Sadly)
No, only those who are without sin
should go.
TURIDDU (s’avvento)
Ah! perdio!

SANTUZZA
Squarciami il petto…

TURIDDU (advancing)
So help me, I’ll…

SANTUZZA
Tear out my heart!

TURIDDU (drawing back)
No! Go!

SANTUZZA (beseecingly)
Turiddu, listen!

No, Turiddu, stay with me. How can you abandon me like this?

TURIDDU
Why must you follow me? Why are you spying, following me to the very doors of the church?

SANTUZZA
No, Turiddu, stay with me. How can you cast me aside like this?

TURIDDU
Go! Don’t provoke me. You’ve insulted me.

SANTUZZA
Your Santuzza is begging you in tears. How can you cast me aside like this?

TURIDDU
Go! Leave me alone

SANTUZZA
How can you abandon me like this?

TURIDDU
I’ve had enough of this madness! (He throws her on the ground and rushes into the church)

SANTUZZA (threatening)
I’m warning you!

SANTUZZA (in greatest fury)
An Easter curse on you, you liar!

SCENA VIII
Santuzza e Alfio

SANTUZZA
Oh! il Signore vi manda, Compar Alfio!

ALFIO
A che punto è la messa?

SANTUZZA
È tardi omai,
Ma per voi, Lola è andata con Turiddu!

ALFIO
Che avete detto?

SANTUZZA
Che mentre correte all’acqua e al vento a guadagnarvi il pane, Lola v’adorna il tetto in malo modo!

ALFIO
Ah! nel nome di Dio, Santa, che dite?

SANTUZZA
Il ver. Turiddu mi tolso l’onore, e vostra moglie lui rapiva a me!

ALFIO
Se voi mentite, vo’ schiantarvi il core!

SANTUZZA
Uso a mentire il labbro mio non è!

ALFIO
Se voi mentite, vo’ schiantarvi il core!

SANTUZZA
Diesi a mentire il labbro mio non è!
Per la vergogna mia, pel mio dolore la trista verità vi dissi, ahimè!

ALFIO
If you’re lying, I’ll cut out your heart!

SANTUZZA
I am not a liar!
To my shame and sorrow, I’ve told you the sad truth.

ALFIO
Santuzza, I’m grateful that you told me.

SCENE 8
Santuzza and Alfio

SANTUZZA
The Lord himself sent you, Alfio.

ALFIO
Has Mass already begun?

SANTUZZA
It’s almost over. And I must tell you...

ALFIO
What did you say?

SANTUZZA
While you’ve been out working, riding through wind and rain, trying to make a living... Lola has brought shame upon you.

ALFIO
In God’s name, what are you saying?

SANTUZZA
The truth. Turiddu dishonored me. And then your wife stole him from me.

ALFIO
Turiddu has dishonored me!

SANTUZZA
The Lord himself sent you, Alfio.
ALFIO
Infami loro; ad essi non perdono; vendetta
avrò pria che tramonti il dì. Io sangue voglio,
in odio tutto l’amor finì…

SANTUZZA
Infame io son che vi parlai così!

ALFIO
They were wrong! They don’t deserve
forgiveness. I’ll have revenge before the day
is out! Blood will flow!
All my love has turned to hatred.

SANTUZZA
It was wrong of me to tell you.

ALFIO
They don’t deserve forgiveness. I’ll have
revenge by sundown!

SCENA IX
Tutti escono di chiesa, Lucia traversa la scene ed
 entra in casa.
Lola, Turiddu e Coro

UOMINI
A casa, a casa, amici, ove ci aspettano le
nostri donne, andiam…

Or che letizia rasserena gli animi senza
indugio corriam.
A casa, a casa, amiche, ove ci aspettano I
nostri sposi, andiam…
Or che le letizia rasserena gli animi senza
indugio corriam. (il Coro si avvia)

TURIDDU
Comare Lola, ve ne andate via senza
nemmeno salutare?

LOLA
Vado a casa e non ho visto compar Alfio!

TURIDDU
Viva il vino spumeggiante nel bicchiere
scintillante
come il riso dell’amante mite infonde
il giubilo!
Viva il vino ch’è sincero che ci allieta ogni
pensiero,
e che annega l’umor nero nell’ebbrezza
tenera!

TURIDDU (a Lola)
Ai vostri amori!

LOLA (a Turiddu)
Alla fortuna vostra! (beve)

TURIDDU
Beviam!

TURIDDU (to Lola)
Your good fortune! (drinks)

TURIDDU
Let’s have another!

CHORUS
Let’s drink! Let’s have another round!

SCENA X
Alfio e detti

ALFIO
A voi tutti salute.

TURIDDU
Benvenuto! con noi dovete bere!
(empie un bicchiere)

ALFIO
Grazie, ma il vostro vino io non l’accetto…
divenerebbe veleno entro il mio petto!

TURIDDU
Ahimè! che mai sarà?

TURIDDU
Viva il vino spumeggiante nel bicchiere
scintillante
come il riso dell’amante mite infonde
il giubilo!
Viva il vino ch’è sincero che ci allieta ogni
pensiero,
e che annega l’umor nero nell’ebbrezza
tenera!

TURIDDU (to Lola)
Your loves!

LOLA (to Turiddu)
To your good fortune! (drinks)

TURIDDU
Let’s have another!

CHORUS
Let’s drink! Let’s have another round!

TURIDDU
Welcome, Alfio! Have a drink with us!
(he fills a glass)

ALFIO (pushing away his arm and the glass)
I can’t accept the wine you offer… It would
turn to poison in my stomach.

TURIDDU
Benvenuto! con noi dovete bere!
(empie un bicchiere)

ALFIO (respingendolo)
Grazie, ma il vostro vino io non l’accetto…
diverrebbe veleno entro il mio petto!

TURIDDU (getta il vino)
As you like.

LOLA
What will happen now?

TURIDDU
Long live wine, sparkling in the glass! Wine
spreads joy like a lover’s smile.
A toast to wine that sparkles and shimmers…
spreading joy, like a lover’s smile.
Long live wine that truly eases every care,
and drives away all our worries.
Wine eases every burden. It banishes all our
cares!

TURIDDU (to Lola)
To your loves!

LOLA (to Turiddu)
To your good fortune! (drinks)

TURIDDU
Let’s have another!

ALFIO (entering)
To your health!

TURIDDU
Welcome, Alfio! Have a drink with us!
(he fills a glass)

ALFIO (pushing away his arm and the glass)
I can’t accept the wine you offer… It would
turn to poison in my stomach.
TURIDDU
Avete altro da dirmi?

ALFIO
Io? Nulla!

TURIDDU
Allora sono agli ordini vostri

ALFIO
Or ora!

TURIDDU
Or ora!

(Alfio e Turiddu si abbracciano. Turiddu morde l’orecchio destro di Alfio.)

ALFIO
Compar Turiddu, avete morso a buono... c’intenderemo bene, a quel che pare!

TURIDDU
Compar Alfio, lo so che il torto è mio...

...e ve lo giuro nel nome di Dio che al par d’un cane mi farei sgozzar; ma... s’io non vivo,

resta abbandonata... povera Santa!... lei che mi s’è data...

Povera Santa!

Vi saprò in core il ferro mio piantar!

ALFIO (freddamente)
Compare Turiddu, aspettami qui fuori, dietro l’orto.

(Turiddu esce)

SCENA XI
Lucia e detti, meno Alfio

TURIDDU
Mamma, quel vino è generoso...
e certo oggi... troppi bicchieri ne ho tracannati...

vado fuori all’aperto....

TURIDDU
Ma prima voglio che mi benedite come quel giorno che partii soldato...
e poi... mamma... sentite...

e’io... non tornassi...

voi dovrete far da madre a Santa

ch’io la avea giurato di condurla all’altare...—

voi dovrete far da madre a Santa...

s’io non tornassi...

LUCIA
Perché parli così, figliuolo mio?

TURIDDU
Oh! nulla! È il vino che mi ha suggerito!

Per me pregate Iddio!— Pray to God for me!

Un bacio, mamma...un altro bacio...

And if I don’t return, be a mother to Santuzza!

(He embraces her and goes out quickly)

SCENA XII
Lucia, Santuzza e detti

LUCIA
Oh Turiddu?! che vuoi dire?

Donne
Hanno ammazzato compare Turiddu!

(Alcune donne entrano, ed una di esse grida disperatamente. Tutti si precipitano sulla scena.

SANTUZZA cade priva di sensi. LUCIA sviene, ed è sorretta dalle donne del Coro.)
In a season filled with portrayals of modern humanism, of life in its realistic, troubled, and groundbreaking forms, it is fitting that Michigan Opera Theatre’s season begins with a concert presentation of *Cavalleria rusticana* (1890). A consciously Italian realist work, Pietro Mascagni’s first opera launched the operatic *verismo* movement. A decade after its premiere, a Roman journalist reflected on the impact of this sensationally successful opera in an article entitled “The Direction and Promises of Italian Art”: audiences “had to realize that it was the natural consequence of a new attitude of spirits... It seemed healthy to return to the pure and raw and naked—very naked!—reality. The heroic era was declining; Verdian patriotism had used and abused scepters and swords and tyrants; romanticism had tired us with eternal languors.”

Mascagni’s one-act work featured neither nobles nor pompous heroes of generations prior. *Cavalleria*’s peasant characters and working-class Sicilian environment articulated a new aesthetic perspective for audiences. Idealism became trite. The echoes of the Italian Risorgimento were certainly outdated by the turn of the twentieth century. With its layered soundscapes, streamlined drama, declamatory vocal lines, and use of local dialect, Mascagni’s *verismo* opera eschewed the Romanticism of a previous era.

The plot of *Cavalleria rusticana* is derived from Giovanni Verga’s short story and play of the same name. Verga, regarded among the forefathers of literary *verismo* in the 1870s, published stories to northern Italian audiences about the ordinary lives of impoverished citizens in his hometown of Catania, a port city in Sicily. Verga published *Cavalleria in Vita dei campi* (1880), a collection of novellas and short stories. Also included in this volume is a letter from Verga to fellow writer Salvatore Farina. In it, he lays the groundwork for Italian *verismo*. “In its living contours,” Verga describes, stories “will preserve no imprint of the mind that brought it to life, no shadow of the imagination that first conceived it.”

Works of *verismo* should appear as natural, or as true to reality, as possible. In 1884, Verga adapted the short story as a play. The play was such a hit that Mascagni and his librettist, Giovanni Targioni-Tozzetti, chose Verga’s staged adaptation as the foundation for his entry for the 1888 Sonzogno competition for young opera composers. They hoped that the play’s popularity would appeal to the Milanese judges and northern Italian audiences. It evidently did.

Taken in full, the fast-paced, layered scenes of *Cavalleria rusticana* create a kaleidoscopic soundscape, capturing the many shades of human complexity that underlie even the simplest bucolic setting. In creating a multifaceted, operatic version of *verismo*, Mascagni also reinforces the troubling and political undertones of this artistic movement as well. The opera’s hymns, antiphons, and songs of celebration provide an idealistic sonic backdrop that is constantly juxtaposed with the dark, richly vocal drama of the local Sicilian characters, offering a pessimistic, regional view of Italian realism. This mixture of expressive registers complements contemporary images of southern Italy (the Mezzogiorno) that were often conjured up by northern Italian journalists, photographers, and intellectuals in the late nineteenth century. Following the Italian Unification in the 1860s, the nation’s south was imagined as a region that was uncivilized, resistant to national uniformity.

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and modernity. Marginalized by the north, southern Italy was considered idyllically agrarian, yet socially depraved. *Cavalleria rusticana*’s explorations of character deviance—of passionate adultery, violence, and alcoholism—support these visions. Mascagni relies on local color, or *tinta*, to convey his characters’ deviancy, suggesting an intrinsic relationship between a distinctly southern Italian identity and its association with human vice. The textual elements of *Cavalleria* augment this *verismo*-specific vision of Italianness as well. Mascagni mixes local Sicilian dialect, Latin, and modern standard Italian throughout the opera. These linguistic choices portray the characters’ “southerness” not only as distinctive, but literally deviating from a standard language that was actively being formed in Italy at this time.

Mascagni insisted on his faithfulness to Verga’s original text by featuring the story’s love triangle, quick-paced dialogue, Sicilian setting and dialect, and the characters’ coarseness. Following a brief orchestral introduction, Turridu sings a pastoral *siciliana* about his adulterous lover, Lola, before dawn breaks. Soft harps resembling a strummed guitar accompany his sensual, offstage song, the text’s dialect derived from the original story. The day rises to a bustling square on Easter morning. A chorus of villagers emerges to welcome the day, singing paeans to spring and a hymn to the Virgin Mary as bells toll. A shadowy leitmotif on low strings sounds at the opening of the following scene, when Santuzza, Turridu’s naïve lover, visits Lucia, Turridu’s mother.

“Dite, Mamma Lucia”

The theme, which reoccurs many times throughout the opera, reveals that the pastoral quality of the scene is merely a façade. Darkness lies beneath the community’s surface. Suspecting Turridu has been unfaithful to her, Santuzza asks Lucia where he has gone. The orchestra shifts energetically to accompany the bold entrance of Alfio, Lola’s husband. Tensions rise between Alfio, Turridu, and Lola, but an offstage iteration of the *Regina coeli* interrupts their secular affairs. In the following Romanza, Santuzza returns to Lucia to disclose all that has ensued. With alternations of gentle lyricism and dramatic exclamation, Santuzza evokes pity in Turridu’s mother. A three-part duet ensues between Santuzza and Turridu, the leitmotif weaving through their tense exchanges. Santuzza reveals that she knows of his affair just as Lola’s *stornello* interrupts from a distance. Her street song, “Fior di gaggiolo,” initiates an uncomfortable exchange between the three. Turned off by Santuzza’s cloying jealousy, Turridu brutally rejects her. The spurned lover finds Alfio, the scene ending with her impassioned cries of shame and his thirst for blood. The following Intermezzo recalls the *Regina coeli*, indicating the passing of Easter Mass. After the service, the chorus disperses in happy song while Turridu heads to the tavern, launching into the *brindisi*, “Viva il vino spumeggiante.” The chorus joins in drunken merriment until Alfio appears. Refusing to imbibe, Alfio dampens the mood, and the crowd disperses, sensing danger. The two agree to a fight to the death, initiated in traditional Sicilian fashion by an embrace and bite to the ear. A brief reminiscence of the tragic leitmotif sounds during their final, solemn exchange. A charged duet arises as Turridu returns to Lucia to bid her farewell. Dissonant orchestration accompanies screams from a distance, pronouncing Turridu’s death. Villagers rush in as Lucia cries in agony and Santuzza faints, ending the opera.

Though the realism of Mascagni’s *Cavalleria rusticana* carries both innovative and historically troubling weight, we learn an important lesson about the early origins of operatic realism, one that makes our experience as listeners and spectators all the more human. The stark “realities” of Italian *verismo* are at once messy, moving, and subjective, informed by cultural biases and political agendas, as art often is. We can hear and hold this irony as modern audiences, listen thoughtfully and self-reflectively to such histories—to adapt Verga’s own words from long ago—“of reality as it was, or as it should have been.”

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What exactly is opera? This simple question typically elicits very different responses. All of the answers I’ve heard, however, are correct, if different in focus: sound, voice, narrative, spectacle, instruments, acoustic performance, and amplification all are a part of operatic performance. Even the question of what to call a group of people watching an opera—audience, viewers, patrons, spectators—gestures towards the genre’s many elements. To call these people an “audience” for instance, emphasizes the process of audition, the listening, and thus the sounds that are a part of the genre. “Spectator” and “viewer” point to the role of watching. Spectacle is an inherent part of any opera regardless of the size of the work. And “patron?” This word references the complex system of funding historical and contemporary performances alike. The genre of opera is a teeming mass of signifiers, sounds, sights, stories, and crucially, spectators, audience members, viewers, and patrons. The many elements that make up an operatic production are meant to exist in tension with one another, and this is also one of the reasons operatic performances can be so exciting and overwhelming.

What about the space in which the spectacle is taking place? This specific operatic convention—the opera house—represents far more than the building that contains operatic components. Rather, the opera house concretizes particular relationships between sight and sound. In facilitating these relationships, the opera house also represents more than simply a space for looking and listening. When operatic performance is taken out of the opera house, far more occurs than a reorganization of the way individuals might watch and listen—although that happens too!

Operas and events staged in public spaces beyond the opera house offer the opportunity to rethink what it means to access and engage with the genre, and indeed, to reckon with its complex history.

This process of reckoning and engagement is at the heart of the performances featured in the first part of MOT’s 2021-2022 season. Operatic performances outside of the opera house can take many forms and in turn, engage with civic spaces in different ways. For instance, a work like Pietro Mascagni’s *Cavalleria rusticana*, presented at the Meadow Brook Amphitheatre, will be performed in what might be appear to be a set up more similar to that of the Detroit Opera House, with audience members facing a proscenium-style stage. The similarities may end there, however. For instance, audience members may listen differently as they feel the cool night air and watch the sun dropping below the stage. Bringing this narrative outside of the opera house and into the open space of the amphitheatre might even recall the village square upon which much of the opera’s action takes place. A work like Jeanine Tesori and Tazewell Thompson’s *Blue* is situated in an even more definitive way in Detroit. In traveling to the Aretha Franklin...
Amphitheatre, ticketholders using Woodward (Avenue) might pass Hubert Massey’s “Power to the People” mural, painted by twenty Detroit teens and unveiled on June 19, 2020 in support of the Black Lives Matter movement. The narrative of Blue—a Black family negotiating the consequences of structural racism in their community—is thus staged “in conversation” with the civic space of Woodward Avenue and the Aretha Franklin Amphitheatre.

Leaving the opera house, as demonstrated by the first part of Michigan Opera Theatre’s season, allows for a work to be civically minded in a way that can differ from mainstage-oriented ways of thinking about community engagement. In other words, opera companies frequently center much of their focus on the mainstage season (which makes sense) and use the auxiliary events as a way to draw audiences into the mainstage space. Regional opera companies around the country have engaged in these types of “beyond-the-mainstage” activities and programming for many years. These events, what I call “auxiliary programming” in my own writing, have the potential to enact a relationship between opera company and the community for whom it is a part in multiple ways.

Historically, “auxiliary programming” might be understood as any kind of programming that takes place beyond the scope of the mainstage, encompassing both outreach and education. These events might take the form of pop-up performances at nightclubs (San Francisco Opera), site-specific performances in community gardens (Atlanta Opera), food trucks offering aria performances (Portland Opera), storybook hours for kids (Cincinnati Opera), and flash mobs (Opera Philadelphia). At Michigan Opera Theatre, past auxiliary initiatives have taken the form of programs like “Opera Goes to Church,” in which performances were offered at Detroit churches and the 2018-19 “Page to Stage” series offered at Detroit-metro public libraries. In general, these auxiliary events are seen as a way to facilitate the opera company’s relationship to the community and the programming is often shaped around mainstage season offerings. What makes both the appointment of Davóne Tines as Artist-in-Residence and the first part of MOT’s 2021-2022 season significant is that the model of mainstage/auxiliary; center/periphery has been inverted. In other words, the Detroit community is being foregrounded as key to enacting the mainstage. This new model might also be understood as exerting a kind of centrifugal force. The Detroit-based Act I of the 21-22 season (Cavalleria rusticana, Blue, and Bliss) creates a kind of community-driven momentum. As Act II (Frida, La bohème, and X: The Live and Times of Malcolm X) begins, we then return to our seats inside Music Hall and the Detroit Opera House and confront the problems and situations that occur outside in everyday life and now also onstage.

While this type of community-oriented turn is significant, opera is not an innocent ambassador. It is an art form with a complex history. Works staged outside of the opera house can reproduce some of the hierarchies and inequalities of the genre that take place in conventional spaces, and crucially, all companies must be aware of the types of spaces into which these performances are brought. What is so fascinating about Act I of the Michigan Opera Theatre’s 2021-2022 season, however, is that these
company choices are not just a form of opera for the COVID-19 era. Instead, they signify the ways operatic performance both in and out of the house could constitute the genre for the future. These works are ambitious: they perform a definition of opera that is civic minded, and that reflects the experience of everyday people. They have the potential to mobilize the realism of verismo from narrative into production. “My goal with any project I ever do is that I want every single person to recognize themselves in the work we create,” Yuval Sharon said to me in October 2020. Sharon was speaking of collaborative processes with other artists, but these words describe the civic orientation of Michigan Opera Theatre as well. In the process, we have arrived at a further word to describe those audiences, spectators, viewers, and patrons whom I mentioned at the beginning of this essay: collaborators. The definition of opera keeps expanding.

Note: This essay is indebted to the ideas of Joy Calico regarding operatic spectatorship and spectacle, Ryan Ebright’s work on Anthony Davis’s X: The Life and Times of Malcolm X and also amplification in the opera house, and finally, the writings of David Levin and Roger Parker on operatic ontologies.

Megan Steigerwald Ille is an Assistant Professor of Musicology, Educator, at the College-Conservatory of Music, University of Cincinnati. Her research on the twenty-first century U.S. American opera industry considers the intersections of operatic, popular, and digital cultures. She has published articles in the Journal of the Society for American Music, The Opera Quarterly, and Sound, Stage, Screen. Her monograph-in-progress, Opera for Everyone: Experimenting with American Opera in the Digital Age, is an ethnographic study of the experimental opera company, The Industry.
EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY PROGRAMS
Mark Vondrak, Associate Director of Community Programs

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Robert Martin, Head Flyman
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