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## **Opera Colorado Announces Artists Selected for the 2022-23 Artist in Residence Program**

*Seven emerging artists join the prestigious program after a nation-wide audition process*

**Denver, CO (August 10, 2022)**—Opera Colorado is pleased to announce that soprano **Francesca Mehrotra**, mezzo-soprano **Joanne Evans**, tenor **David Soto Zambrana**, baritone **Steve Valenzuela**, bass-baritones **Keith Klein** and **Turner Staton**, and collaborative pianist **Oleg Bellini** will join the acclaimed Opera Colorado Artists in Residence Program for the 2022-23 Season.

The highly competitive program provides singers with training, coaching, and myriad performance opportunities at the Ellie Caulkins Opera House and in schools, community centers, and other venues across the state. They take on select mainstage roles for Opera Colorado and are the featured performers in the annual student matinee.

“Our belief is that learning and experience go hand in hand, and that’s the reason Opera Colorado’s program is performance based. Along with ongoing training and feedback, which is important for their growth, our artists enhance and expand their performance skills with a wide array of opportunities and experiences, including roles in our mainstage season and Opera on Tour programs,” says Cherity Koepke, Director of the Artist in Residence Program and Director of Education & Community Engagement.

“Opera Colorado’s Artist in Residence Program is an important thread in the artistic fabric of our company. Artists in Residence are ambassadors for opera through our education and community engagement activities. Their talents are showcased through supporting roles in our mainstage productions, and they represent our commitment to nurturing a new generation of opera artists,” says Greg Carpenter, The Ellie Caulkins General & Artistic Director. “We’re tremendously excited about the group that will be joining us for our 40th Anniversary Season. Their voices and talents will help us bring opera to thousands of people across Colorado.”

The group's first public performance, the Artist in Residence Showcase, takes place on Friday, September 30 at 7:00 p.m. at the Studio Loft at the Ellie Caulkins Opera House. Tickets for this program of opera classics, musical theatre, and more are \$40 on [operacolorado.org](http://operacolorado.org).

For more information about the Artist in Residence Program or upcoming events at Opera Colorado, contact Jennifer Colgan at [jcolgan@operacolorado.org](mailto:jcolgan@operacolorado.org).

The Opera Colorado Artist in Residence Program is sponsored by Ken & Donna Barrow, with additional support from Patrick Spieles, and Dr. Stephen L. Dilts.

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## 2022-23 Opera Colorado Artists in Residence

### Francesca Mehrotra | Soprano



Francesca Mehrotra is an Indian-American soprano originally from Ashburn, Virginia. In the 2022-23 Season, Francesca will perform in *Rigoletto* (Countess Ceprano, Gilda cover), the student matinee performance of *Rigoletto* (Gilda), and *Die tote Stadt* (Juliette). Also at Opera Colorado, she will sing in the touring productions of *The Pirates of Penzance* (Mabel) and *Romeo & Juliet* (Juliet). As an Apprentice Artist at Central City Opera, Francesca will appear in *The Light in the Piazza* (Clara cover) and *Die Fledermaus* (Ida). Previous performances include *Hansel and Gretel* (Gretel) with Fort Worth Opera's Children's Opera Theatre; *Le nozze di Figaro* (Susanna) and *Giulio Cesare* (Cleopatra) at Seagle Festival; *The Ghosts of Gatsby* (Zelda '18) with Opera Birmingham at the Opera America New Works Forum; *Don Pasquale* (Norina) and *Thumbprint* (Mukhtar Mai) at Boston Conservatory; *Serse* (Atalanta) at Opera NEO; and *Falstaff* (Nannetta), *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Tyrania), and *Dark Sisters* (Lucinda) at Texas Christian University. Francesca has a Master of Music in opera performance from the Boston Conservatory, and a Bachelor of Arts in music and a Bachelor of Science in strategic communication from Texas Christian University.

Francesca Mehrotra is sponsored by Ken & Barbara Laff and Laurence & Cynthia Chan.

### Joanne Evans | Mezzo-Soprano



London-born mezzo-soprano Joanne Evans made her US professional opera debut as Meg Page in Verdi's *Falstaff* at Berkshire Opera Festival, alongside Tamara Wilson and Sebastian Catana. More recently, Joanne made her role debut in *Eugene Onegin* (Olga) with Music Academy of the West. As an Artist in Residence with Opera Colorado, Joanne will perform in the mainstage production of *Rigoletto* (Giovanna, Maddalena cover) and *Die tote Stadt* (Lucienne). Through Opera Colorado's Opera on Tour program, Joanne will perform in *The Pirates of Penzance* (Ruth) and *Romeo & Juliet* (Stéphano/Gertrude). Joanne was recently named a winner of the Met Opera Competition Boston District and was a finalist in the 2019 Harlem Opera Theatre competition.

Joanne Evans is sponsored by Joy & Chris Dinsdale.

## David Soto Zambrana | Tenor



Tenor David Soto Zambrana is native to the sunny skies of San Juan, Puerto Rico. From the humble beginnings of a concert band, he eventually stepped onto the operatic stage, trained in the Bel Canto tradition by the legendary baritone Kim Josephson and certified Vocologist Dr. Leslie John Flanagan at the University of Oklahoma, where he was awarded a prestigious Weitzenhoffer Opera Fellowship and a master's degree. He worked closely with international opera star Marilyn Horne and sang multiple leading roles at the Reynolds Performing Arts Center. Recently, David sang for the Oklahoma premiere of Lori Laitman's *The Scarlet Letter* (Arthur Dimmesdale). He was a Tomita Young Artist with Finger Lakes Opera, performed leading roles with Taconic Opera, and is an alumnus of Musiktheatre Bavaria in Oberaudorf, Germany. As an Artist in Residence, David will perform in the mainstage production of *Rigoletto* (Borsa) and will cover the role of the Duke of Mantua, which he will sing in the student matinee performance. He will also appear in *Die tote Stadt* and *Turandot*. He will perform in Opera Colorado's Opera on Tour productions of *The Pirates of Penzance* (Frederic) and *Romeo & Juliet* (Romeo). David was awarded a Metropolitan Opera Laffont Competition Encouragement Award, Marilyn Horne Performance Award, and the Dame Eva Turner Award for Vocal Performance.

David Soto Zambrana is sponsored by Wendy, Dillon & Lillian Cogdal and Maradith Wilkins.

## Steve Valenzuela | Baritone



Baritone Steve Valenzuela was born and raised in Waterbury, Connecticut. He received his Bachelor of Music from Western Connecticut State University and his Master of Music from Louisiana State University. This season, as an Opera Colorado Artist in Residence, he will perform in the touring productions of *Romeo & Juliet* (Mercutio/Prince) and *The Pirates of Penzance* (Major General), and in the mainstage productions of *Cavalleria rusticana* (chorus), *Rigoletto* (Marullo), *Die tote Stadt* (chorus), and *Turandot* (chorus). Previous operatic performance credits include *Rigoletto* (Count Ceprano), *Le nozze di Figaro* (Count Almaviva and Figaro), *Dog Days* (Howard), *Don Giovanni* (Don Giovanni), *La bohème* (Marcello), *The Rake's Progress* (Nick Shadow), *Threepenny Opera* (John Peachum), *Die Fledermaus* (Frank), *The Merry Widow* (Danilo), *Tenderland* (Top), and *Trouble in Tahiti* (Sam).

Steve Valenzuela is sponsored by Robin & Eric Yaeger.

## Keith Klein | Bass-Baritone



Keith Klein is an operatic bass-baritone native to Kansas City, Missouri. A graduate of the Eastman School of Music (2018) and Florida State University (2020), Keith has a wide musical background. His singing career began with winning the 2014 KC Superstar competition and appearing on season ten of *America's Got Talent*. Since then, he has been honing his craft in classical technique and singing for America's most celebrated institutions. His most recent engagements include Lyric Opera of Kansas City's 2021 production of *Amahl and the Night Visitors* (King Melchior), singing as a Gerdine Young Artist with Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, and being selected as a Fleming Artist for the Aspen Music Festival and School. As an Artist in Residence with Opera Colorado, Keith will be making his role debuts in the touring productions of *The Pirates of Penzance* (Sergeant of Police) and *Romeo & Juliet* (Friar Lawrence) and performing in the mainstage production of *Rigoletto* (Sparafucille).

Keith Klein is sponsored by Joyce de Roos and Donald K. Braden.

## Turner Staton | Bass-Baritone



Turner Staton is a native of Kansas City, Missouri. His degrees include an artist diploma from William Jewell College, a master's from Cincinnati Conservatory of Music, and a bachelor's from Pepperdine University. In 2022, Turner finished his tenure as an Apprentice Artist with the Lyric Opera of Kansas City where he performed in *Amahl and the Night Visitors*, *Steve Jobs*, *Tosca*, and was featured in the premiere of *Baseball: A Musical Love Letter*. Recent performances include *Le nozze di Figaro* (Figaro), *Così fan tutte* (Don Alfonso), *Elizabeth Cree* (Uncle), *Don Giovanni* (Don Giovanni), *La Calisto* (Mercurio), and Rossini's *Petite messe solennelle*. Festivals include Opera Saratoga as a 2022 Festival Artist and Tanglewood Music Festival as a 2020 and 2021 Vocal Fellow. Turner will be seen in the touring productions of *The Pirates of Penzance* (Pirate King) and *Romeo & Juliet* (Capulet/Tybalt), as well as the mainstage productions of *Rigoletto* (Monterrone cover/student matinee), *Die tote Stadt*, and *Turandot*.

Turner Staton is sponsored by Gayle & Gary Landis.

## Oleg Bellini | Collaborative Pianist



Oleg Bellini was born and raised in Alessandria, Italy, the son of an opera singer. He holds a master's degree in piano performance from Conservatorio Statale di Musica A. Vivaldi in Italy. He also holds a master's degree in collaborative piano from the University of Georgia, where he studied with Dr. Liza Stepanova and Prof. Kathryn Wright. He completed graduate studies in harpsichord at the Royal College of Music in Stockholm, Sweden. While studying at UGA, Bellini served as assistant vocal coach and principal collaborative pianist to Prof. Frederick P. Burchinal and Prof. Kathryn Wright on Opera productions including *Don Giovanni*, *Le nozze di Figaro*, *Don Pasquale* and many opera scenes productions. Oleg has performed as a solo pianist in cities across Europe and in the United States, including performances for the Stockholm Music Society in Sweden, Accademia R. Romanini of Brescia in

Italy, and Steinway Piano Galleries of Atlanta. He has participated in summer music festivals such as La Musica Lirica in Novafeltria, Italy, under the baton of Maestro Joseph Rescigno, and Stafford Opera troupe summer programs in Virginia. One of his most recent professional collaborations was with Mazowiecki Teatr Muzyczny's production of *The Merry Widow* in Warsaw, Poland, with Maestro Arif Dadashev. He joined Opera Colorado as the Collaborative Pianist for the Artist in Residence Program in 2021 and is excited to be returning for the second year with the Opera Colorado family. For the 40th Anniversary Season, he will act as répétiteur and pianist for the touring productions of *The Pirates of Penzance* and *Romeo & Juliet* as well as the student matinee production of *Rigoletto*.

Oleg Bellini is sponsored by David & Elizabeth Budd and Suzanne D. Bucy.

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## **About Opera Colorado**

Opera Colorado has served as a cornerstone of Denver's cultural community since its first season in 1983. In addition to its mainstage performances at the Ellie Caulkins Opera House each season, the company affirms its commitment to the future of the art form by annually presenting new works; with its nationally recognized Artist in Residence Program that trains the next generation of opera performers; and by each year reaching more than 45,000 students and adults through its many education and community engagement programs throughout the Rocky Mountain region. For more information, visit [operacolorado.org](https://operacolorado.org).