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## **Opera Colorado Presents Celebratory Concert** **Production of *Cavalleria rusticana***

**This dazzling, one-night-only event kicks off Opera Colorado's  
40th Anniversary Season**

**Denver, CO (August 15, 2022)**—Opera Colorado presents a special, one-night-only production of Mascagni's *Cavalleria rusticana* on Saturday, September 10, at 7:00 p.m. at the Ellie Caulkins Opera House.

This semi-staged evening, directed by **David Lefkowich**, features **Catherine Martin** as Santuzza, **Catherine Cook** as Lucia, **Malcolm McKenzie** as Alfio, **Roberto de Biasio** as Turiddu, and former Opera Colorado Artist in Residence **Kira Dills-Desurra** as Lola. Music Director **Ari Pelto** will lead the Opera Colorado Orchestra and Chorus, onstage in the center of the action.

This concert production highlights Mascagni's magnificent music and the talents of our artists and orchestra as they tell the torrid tale of a small-town love triangle (or two) gone wrong. *Cavalleria rusticana* follows Turiddu, who arrives home from military service to find that his fiancée, Lola, has married another man, Alfio. Scorned, he seduces the peasant girl Santuzza, then discards her when he rekindles his relationship with Lola. In retribution, Santuzza tells Alfio about Turiddu and Lola's affair, and Alfio swears to get even. All of this unfolds during a single Easter Sunday (or a seventy-five-minute tour de force to those in the opera house).

"I am thrilled to present this incredible opera that is full of some of opera's most touching music, from the major chorus numbers to the incredible, iconic 'Intermezzo' that links scene one and two. This is truly opera at its best and shows off the impressive musical talent we are known for as we open our 40th Anniversary Season," says Gregory Carpenter, The Ellie Caulkins General & Artistic Director.

Music Director Ari Pelto says, "I'm so excited to perform this dramatic piece of opera for the first time at the Ellie. Our orchestra is at the heart of Opera Colorado, and having them on stage at the start of this particular season gives the performance such special meaning."

Patrons attending the celebratory evening can expand their experience with our 40th Anniversary Celebration Dinner, which includes pre-performance cocktails and hors d'oeuvres, plus an elegant and delectable three-course meal immediately following the short performance.

Tickets range from \$39-185 on [operacolorado.org](http://operacolorado.org). Patrons who also wish to enjoy the 40th Anniversary Celebration Dinner can purchase [here](#). For more information on all programs and prices, visit [operacolorado.org](http://operacolorado.org) or contact Jennifer Colgan at [jcolgan@operacolorado.org](mailto:jcolgan@operacolorado.org) or 303.468.2025.

*The 40th Anniversary Season is generously sponsored by Marcia & Dick Robinson.*

*The 40th Anniversary Celebration Cocktail Hour is sponsored by Vectra Bank. The 40th Anniversary Celebration Dinner is sponsored by Lisa & Pat Nicholson.*

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## ***Cavalleria rusticana***

### **Semi-Staged Concert Performance**

Music by Pietro Mascagni

Libretto by Giovanni Targioni-Tozzetti and Guido Menasci

### **Saturday, September 10 at 7:00 p.m.**

Ellie Caulkins Opera House at the Denver Performing Arts Complex

*Performed in Italian, with English and Spanish subtitles at every seat*

### **Passion's Consequence**

Opera Colorado celebrates its 40th anniversary by presenting Mascagni's opera as a special one-night-only, semi-staged concert. The tale shines a light on life in an idyllic Sicilian village—a closer look reveals jealousy, betrayal, and secrets lurking beneath the pastoral facade. Rebuked by both the church and her lover, Turiddu, the pious Santuzza must decide whose secrets to keep. What consequences lie ahead for the faithless Turiddu and the adulterous Lola?

### **Cast**

Catherine Martin | Santuzza

Catherine Cook | Lucia

Malcolm McKenzie | Alfio

Roberto de Biasio\* | Turiddu

Kira Dills-DeSurra | Lola

### **Creative Team**

Conductor | Ari Pelto

Director | David Lefkovich

Lighting Design | Joe Beumer

*\*Opera Colorado debut*

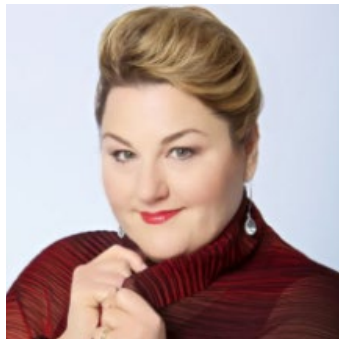
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## Artist Biographies



Mezzo-soprano **Catherine Martin**'s 2021-22 season featured her role debut in *Orfeo ed Eurydice* (Orfeo) with Kentucky Opera, her debut with Dallas Opera in *Flight* (Minkswoman), *Hansel and Gretel* (Witch) with Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra, and her debut with Maryland Lyric Opera in *Don Carlos* (Eboli). Highlights from past seasons include *Twilight: Gods* (Waltraute) with Michigan Opera Theatre and Lyric Opera of Chicago; *Dead Man Walking* (Sister Helen Prejean) with Minnesota Opera and Dayton Opera; performances in various roles from Wagner's *Ring Cycle* with Lyric Opera of Chicago, Houston Grand Opera, Washington

National Opera, Boston Symphony Orchestra at Tanglewood, the Dallas Symphony, and National Taichung Theatre in Taiwan; *Aida* (Amneris) with Houston Grand Opera, Opera Colorado, and Opera Santa Barbara; *Norma* (Adalgisa) with Florida Grand Opera; *Ariadne auf Naxos* (Der Komponist) at the Glimmerglass Festival; *Les Troyens* (Hécube) with Lyric Opera of Chicago; *Rigoletto* (Maddalena) with New Orleans Opera and Opera Santa Barbara; *Salome* (Herodias) with Dayton Opera; *Lieder eines fahrenden Gesellen* with the American Youth Philharmonic Orchestra; and *Messiah* with the Handel Oratorio Society. Ms. Martin is also an avid interpreter of contemporary opera and has appeared in the world premiere of *The Lion, the Unicorn, and Me* (Mary) with Washington National Opera; *The Long Christmas Dinner* (Genevieve) with American Symphony Orchestra; *Enemies, A Love Story* (Tamara) with Kentucky Opera; *An American Dream* (Eva Crowley) with Lyric Opera of Chicago, and many others.



In a career spanning over two decades, mezzo-soprano **Catherine Cook** has excelled in a wide range of roles with leading opera companies throughout the United States, including the Metropolitan Opera, Houston Grand Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Opera Colorado, Opera Philadelphia, Portland Opera, Opera Parallele, and Santa Fe Opera. She returns to Opera Colorado following past performances in *Rusalka* (Ježibaba) and *April in Paris* (Julia Child).

Recent highlights include *The Barber of Seville* (Berta) in a drive-in production, new production of *Le nozze di Figaro* (Marcellina), and *It's a Wonderful Life* (Mother Bailey) all with San Francisco Opera; the North American premiere of Thomas Adès's *The Exterminating Angel* (Camila) at the Metropolitan Opera, which was also broadcast live in HD; and a semi-staged version of *Boris Godunov* (Innkeeper) with the San Francisco Symphony with Michael Tilson Thomas conducting.

Since her debut with San Francisco Opera, Ms. Cook has appeared in over fifty productions, culminating in more than 350 performances. Some highlights include the title role in Tobias Picker's *Dolores Claiborne*, the world premiere of Jake Heggie's *Dead Man Walking* (Jade Boucher), *Le nozze di Figaro* (Marcellina), *Otello* (Emilia), *Peter Grimes* (Mrs. Sedley), and *Der Rosenkavalier* (Annina).

Ms. Cook's discography includes *Dead Man Walking* (Heggie)/Erato, *After Life* (Cipullo)/Naxos, *The Parting* (Cipullo)/Naxos, and Beethoven's *Symphony No. 9* with Cincinnati Philharmonic Orchestra, released by Centaur Records. In addition to her performing schedule, Ms. Cook is on the Voice Faculty of the San Francisco Conservatory, where she holds the Frederica von Stade Distinguished Chair in Voice.



Baritone **Malcolm MacKenzie** has been heard at leading opera houses throughout the U.S. and Europe, appearing at the Metropolitan Opera, New York City Opera, Paris Opera (Bastille), Finland's Savonlinna Festival, Washington National Opera, Los Angeles Opera, Glimmerglass Opera, San Diego Opera, Arizona Opera, Fort Worth Opera, and Pittsburgh Opera, in roles including Simon Boccanegra, Iago, Tonio, Baron Scarpia, Don Giovanni, Count di Luna, Renato, Jack Rance, Marcello, Germont, and Count Almaviva.

Mr. MacKenzie's 2021-2022 season featured him in the title role in *Gianni Schicchi* at Piedmont Opera, a reprise of his much-lauded role in *La traviata* (Germont) at Toledo Opera, and the Metropolitan Opera's premiere of the five-act *Don Carlos* (Rodrigue).

In past seasons, he returned to Pittsburgh Opera in Jake Heggie's *Moby-Dick* (Stubb), the Metropolitan Opera in *Carmen* (Dancaïro), and made role debuts in North Carolina Opera's *Rigoletto* in the title role, Opera Omaha's *Tosca* (Baron Scarpia), and Opera San Jose's *Così fan tutte* (Don Alfonso). He returned to Dayton Opera in *Pagliacci* (Tonio), created the role of Roger Chillingworth in Opera Colorado's world premiere of *The Scarlet Letter* by Lori Laitman, and returned to Los Angeles Opera in Jake Heggie's *Moby-Dick* (Stubb). Additionally, he has sung in *Lucia di Lammermoor* (Enrico) with Eugene Opera; *La traviata* (Germont) with Virginia Opera; *La bohème* (Schaunard) with San Diego Opera; the title role in *Simon Boccanegra* with Kentucky Opera; *L'elisir d'amore* (Belcaore) with San Diego Opera; *Otello* (Iago) with Nashville Opera; *Il trovatore* (Count di Luna) with Arizona Opera; *Cavalleria rusticana* (Alfio) and *Pagliacci* (Tonio) with Arizona Opera; and *La fanciulla del West* (Jack Rance) with Nashville Opera.



**Roberto De Biasio** made his operatic debut in December 2006, singing in *Lucia di Lammermoor* (Edgardo) at the Teatro Donizetti of Bergamo. His "virile, glistening voice" (*New York Times*), "appealingly natural sense of Italianate phrasing" (*Boston Globe*), and "fluid phrasing and an exciting, ringing top" (*San Francisco Chronicle*) are celebrated by press and audiences alike. Before the pandemic, he sang *Lucia di Lammermoor* (Edgardo) and *Madama Butterfly* (Pinkerton) at Opéra de Toulon and *Carmen* (Don José) at Maggio Musicale Fiorentino in Florence. Other notable appearances include *Madama Butterfly* (Pinkerton) and the title role in *Ernani* at the Metropolitan Opera of New York; *Nabucco* (Ismaele) at Liceu de Barcelona; *La traviata* (Alfredo) at Opéra de Montreal, Teatro Municipal de São Paulo, Teatro La Fenice di Venezia (under Myung Whun Chun) and Opéra de Strasbourg; *Macbeth* at Teatro Comunale di Bologna staged by Robert Wilson and conducted by Roberto Abbado; *Simon Boccanegra* at Wiener Staatsoper under Evelino Pidò and at Musikverein in Vienna with the Wiener Symphoniker, conducted by Fabio Luisi; Verdi's *Messa da Requiem*

under Lorin Maazel at Festival Verdi di Parma; and *Norma* (Pollione) with the Boston Symphony Orchestra for the opening of Tanglewood Festival under the baton of Charles Dutoit.



**Kira Dills-DeSurra** is a vibrant American mezzo-soprano whose magnetic stage presence communicates effortless charm and truth. A champion of new and rarely performed works, Dills-DeSurra has appeared in many American premieres, and she also cultivates skills in musical improvisation and circus arts as part of her broad-ranging palate of storytelling tools. Dills-DeSurra is excited to be celebrating two amazing Denver opera company anniversaries this year. For Central City Opera's 90th season, she performed in *Die Fledermaus* (Prince Orlofsky) and will perform in *Frida Kahlo and the bravest girl in the*

*World* (Frida Kahlo). This season she will also be featured in Lori Laitman's *The Three Feathers* (Tilda) with Opera Steamboat. Previously, she was an Artist in Residence with Opera Colorado singing in *The Barber of Seville* (Rosina), *La traviata* (Flora), Tom Cipullo's *After Life* (Gertrude Stein), and *Le nozze di Figaro* (Cherubino). She was also featured in touring productions of *Roméo et Juliette* (Stéphano) and *Hansel and Gretel* (Hansel), and the title role in *Carmen*. Dills-DeSurra was also an Apprentice Artist in Central City Opera's 2018 and 2017 summer festivals, performing *Die Zauberflöte* (Zweite Dame), *Il trovatore* (cover Ines), and featuring as a soloist in *Encore: A Musical Revue*, and singing in *Carmen* (Mercédès). Dills-DeSurra has also endeavored into early music, playing in *La Calisto* (Diana/Giove in Diana) with Opera NEO. The same season she joined San Diego Symphony as the mezzo-soprano soloist in Mendelssohn's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* under Maestro Rafael Payare.

She made her role debut as Vera Boronel in a Chicago Opera Theater and Long Beach Opera co-production of *The Consul* in 2017. With Chicago Opera Theater and Long Beach Opera, she was also featured in Glass's *The Perfect American* (Nurse and Secretary), Frank Martin's *Le Vin Herbé* (Isolde of the White Hands), and *The Fairy Queen* (Lysander cover). Additional credits with Chicago Opera Theater include *Gianni Schicchi* (La Ciesca), Mozart's *Lucio Silla* (Cecilio cover), and the Chicago premiere of Amy Beach's *Cabildo* (Mary). Dills-DeSurra is a graduate of the Chicago Opera Theater Young Artist Program.

Hailing from Petaluma, California, Dills-DeSurra earned a Master of Music and Artist Diploma from Roosevelt University: Chicago College of Performing Arts and a Bachelor of Music from University of Southern California.

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## **ABOUT OPERA COLORADO**

Opera Colorado has served as a cornerstone of Denver's cultural community since 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](http://operacolorado.org).