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A Discussion on Intimate Partner Violence in *Mozart's Don Giovanni*

Opera Colorado, the Rose Andom Center, and Rocky Mountain Public Media join forces for this special event

Denver, CO (September 15, 2023)—[Opera Colorado](#), the [Rose Andom Center](#), and [Rocky Mountain Public Media](#) (RMPBS) invite you to a community discussion focusing on intimate partner violence in [Mozart's Don Giovanni](#), to be performed at the Ellie Caulkins Opera House this November. Join us for a panel discussion, Q&A, and cocktail hour at RMPBS's Buell Public Media Center in downtown Denver on **Wednesday, October 11 at 7:00 p.m.** for this free event.

Mozart's *Don Giovanni* premiered in 1787, but presenting this classic piece to an audience in 2023, especially in the wake of the #MeToo movement, requires a closer examination of some of the behaviors taken in this opera. The story follows a serial womanizer, Don Giovanni, as he wreaks havoc across Spain, while the women he jilted and abused, Donna Anna and Donna Elvira, work to bring him to justice. We see many of Don Giovanni's problematic behaviors towards these women in our society today as well. According to the [National Coalition Against Domestic Violence](#), one in four women and one in nine men experience severe intimate partner physical violence, intimate partner contact, sexual violence, and/or intimate partner stalking. **In honor of Domestic Violence Awareness Month in October, we will be having an open discussion about how these difficult topics are presented in art, what they say about our society, and what kind of resources intimate partner violence survivors have.**

Rose Andom Center's Associate Director, Rachel Rodriguez shares, "Opera, like many other types of art, are often used as escapism, even when they portray heavy topics like domestic violence. It is so important that we have conversations to shed light on these issues, and work to ensure that they are not romanticized or normalized."

"Mozart's *Don Giovanni* is one of his three iconic operas based on Lorenzo da Ponte's libretti and is popular among opera lovers for its beautiful arias, duets, and ensembles. However, the opera presents a story and characters that challenge our twenty-first-century obligation to raise awareness and better understand intimate partner violence," explains Opera Colorado's Ellie

Caulkins General & Artistic Director Greg Carpenter. “We are pleased to partner with the Rose Andom Center and Rocky Mountain Public Media in presenting this important and informative community conversation.”

Panelists will include staff members at the Rose Andom Center, artists from Opera Colorado’s production of *Don Giovanni*, and a member of the musicology faculty at the University of Denver, all moderated by RMPBS’s Senior Director of Community Relations, Amber Coté.

Coté adds, “Art is a powerful tool to help raise awareness, spark conversation, and inspire action around pressing social issues like intimate partner violence. As a survivor of sexual violence and an advocate for survivors, I am humbled to share my experience and to moderate this honest conversation about gender-based and sexual violence in opera and provide a trauma-informed, safe space for people who have been impacted by sexual violence or know someone who has.”

While this event is free, all donations made will support the Rose Andom Center. Reserve your space for this event [here>>](#)

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MEET THE PANELISTS

Ellie Dehn (she/her) | Donna Elvira in *Don Giovanni*



American soprano Ellie Dehn has been praised by critics as “a revelation” (*Chicago Sun-Times*), acclaimed for her “great stage presence and a voice combining metallic clarity and sensual richness” (*Wall Street Journal*). In the 2022-2023 Season, Ms. Dehn will perform *Messiah* with the New Jersey Symphony, *Elijah* with the Florida Orchestra, and return to the Metropolitan Opera in *Falstaff* (Alice Ford, cover). In the 2021-2022 Season, she made her debut at Seiji Ozawa Music Academy in *Die Fledermaus* (Rosalinde) and returned to the Metropolitan Opera in *La bohème* (Musetta, cover) and *Le nozze di Figaro* (Countess). On the concert stage, she sang Britten’s *Spring Symphony* with the Grant Park Music Festival. Pandemic highlights included *Albert Herring* (Lady Billows) in a filmed version with Minnesota Opera.

David Lefkowich (he/him) | *Don Giovanni* Stage Director



David Lefkowich is an accomplished stage director and fight choreographer who has enjoyed success with different companies including the Metropolitan Opera, Teatre alla Scala, San Francisco Opera, New York City Opera, Minnesota Opera, and Glimmerglass Opera. Recent directing engagements include a site-specific *Acis and Galatea* for Out of the Box Opera, an immersive *Pagliacci* at Boston Lyric Opera, a site-specific *Tosca* for Austin Opera, *Tosca* and *La Cenerentola* at Annapolis Opera, and *Pagliacci* at Opera Colorado.

Also, *Don Giovanni* at L'Opéra de Montréal, *Don Giovanni*, *Idomeneo*, *Le Nozze di Figaro* and *L'Histoire du Soldat* at the Ravinia Music Festival with the Chicago Symphony Orchestra and Maestro James Conlon. David made his European debut directing *Le Portrait de Manon* at the Gran Teatre Liceu in Barcelona and followed with *The Rake's Progress* at La Monnaie in Brussels. David is a guest artist and performs master classes at several young artist programs and universities including the San Francisco Opera Center Adler Fellowship Program, Atelier Lyrique at L'Opéra de Montréal, Maryland Opera Studio and Ithaca College. David is a graduate of Northwestern University with a Bachelor of Science in Theatre and has a certificate from École Jacques-Lecoq in Paris, France. David served as the Artistic Director of the Mill City Summer Opera in Minneapolis, Minnesota where he directed the annual summer offerings. Currently, he is the Artistic Director of Out of the Box Opera in Minneapolis, a company dedicated to creating high-quality operatic experiences in site-specific locations, most notably with *Diva Cage Match*, an epic battle of voices, egos, and talent in a boxing gym.

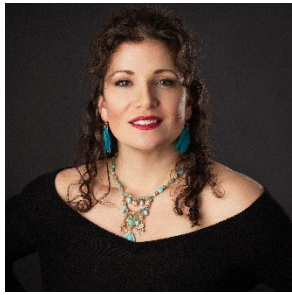
Lucia McNeal (she/her) | Client Services Manager at the Rose Andom Center



Lucia McNeal is the Client Services Manager at the Rose Andom Center, Colorado's first family justice center. With a BSW from the University of Iowa and over seven years of advocacy experience, Lucia values a trauma-informed and strengths-based approach with survivors. Lucia started her career as a volunteer answering the crisis hotline at the Domestic Violence Intervention Program (DVIP) in Iowa City, Iowa. She was soon hired as staff at DVIP's emergency shelter, where she worked for two years before being promoted to DVIP's rapid rehousing program. After DVIP, Lucia worked as a Victim Witness

Coordinator at the Johnson County Attorney's Office in Iowa City. She then became a case manager at Catherine McAuley Center's transitional housing program, a residential and skill-building initiative for female survivors of trauma. Today, Lucia is honored to continue advocating at the Rose Andom Center, supporting staff and clients alike.

Danielle Pastin (she/her) | Donna Anna in *Don Giovanni*



Quoted as having “a lovely demeanor and irresistible creamy timbre” by *Opera News*, American soprano Danielle Pastin is gaining accolades from opera houses around the country. In the 2021-22 Season, Pastin returned to Pittsburgh Opera in *Carmen* (Micaëla) and made her house and role debut in *Gianni Schicchi* (Nella) with Tulsa Opera. On the concert stage, she joined the Glacier Symphony for their Mozart and Mahler Spring Festival, with repertoire including Mozart’s *Requiem* and Mahler’s *Liebst du um Schönheit*. This season, she will also return to her role in *Pagliacci* (Nedda). She made her mainstage Metropolitan

Opera debut in *The Queen of Spades* (Masha/Chloë, cover) and has since been invited back to perform in *Pagliacci* (Nedda), a new production of Massenet’s *Manon* (Javotte), *Carmen* (Frasquita), a role she also performed in her debut with the Dallas Opera, and *Francesca da Rimini* (Samaritana, cover).

Rachel Rodriguez (she/her) | Associate Director at the Rose Adom Center



Rachel Rodriguez is a dedicated and passionate advocate for survivors of violence who strives to increase awareness on the issues of domestic and sexual violence and works toward ending it. She has devoted over fourteen years to working with survivors at the local, state, and national levels. Rachel is currently the Associate Director at the Rose Adom Center and was previously the Director of the Domestic Violence Outreach Program at Family Tree, Inc. She also worked as the Bilingual Advocate & Crisis Line Volunteer Supervisor at SafeHouse Denver.

Before coming to Colorado, Rachel served as the Manager of Hotline Services for the National Domestic Violence Hotline. There, she managed staff and assisted in facilitating new hire training as well as training advocates who travel throughout the country and as far as the Northern Mariana Islands. Rachel started her career in Austin, Texas working as Shelter Resident Advisor at SafePlace (now known as The SAFE Alliance), a local dual agency serving survivors of domestic and sexual violence. She eventually became the Community Education Training Specialist where she went out in the Austin community, bringing awareness and facilitating trainings on domestic and sexual violence. Rachel has served on panel discussions and task forces, facilitated support groups, and provided over 400 trainings to diverse populations, entities, and professionals throughout communities on various issues relating to the dynamics of domestic, sexual violence, trauma-informed care, danger assessment and safety planning, effective advocacy, intersections with domestic violence, etc. Rachel recently facilitated a workshop at a Colorado statewide conference on “Societal Messages and the Impact on Survivors of Domestic Violence and Marginalized Populations.” Rachel grew up in Austin, Texas where she attended the University of Texas and eventually raised her family. She is the proud mother of four children, five grandchildren, and one fur baby. She returns home as often as she can to visit her parents, three siblings, and friends, and eats her way through Tex-Mex food, BBQ, and Whataburger. She also enjoys watching and supporting the Texas Longhorns, collecting cookbooks, cooking, discovering local eateries, and retail shoe therapy.

Jack Sheinbaum (he/him) | Musicologist



Jack Sheinbaum is Professor of Musicology and Associate Director for Academic Affairs at the University of Denver's Lamont School of Music, and curates the Pre-Concert Talks at the Bravo! Vail Music Festival. He teaches and writes about Western art music of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, particularly Mahler's symphonies, and popular music. Sheinbaum's research has appeared in numerous scholarly journals and collections of essays, and he is the author of *Good Music: What It Is and Who Gets to Decide* (University of Chicago Press, 2019).

Amber Coté (she/her) | Moderator and Senior Director of Community Relations at Rocky Mountain Public Media



Amber Coté, Senior Director of Community Relations at Rocky Mountain Public Media, was born and raised in the homeland and unceded historic territory of the Ute Peoples, also known as Southern Colorado. She's worked and volunteered in social change movements for most of her adult life, with 25 years of experience in leadership and governance roles for regional and statewide organizations focused on health and human services, victim advocacy, youth development, arts, early education, food access, and nonprofit capacity-building. And now, has the honor of lifetime building relationships for Rocky Mountain Public Media across the sixty-four counties of Colorado to create a Colorado where everyone feels seen and heard. Amber also finds great joy in riding bikes, hiking, writing poetry, listening to music, meditating, eating spicy food, drinking excellent wines, having deep conversations, and laughing as much as possible.