

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



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## Opera Colorado Presents Wagner's *The Flying Dutchman*

**New production will be directed by Kathleen Smith Belcher and designed by Alan E. Muraoka**

**This will be the first time the well-known opera has been performed at the Ellie Caulkins Opera House since 2008**

**Denver, CO (January 18, 2024)**—Opera Colorado presents Wagner's *The Flying Dutchman*, opening Saturday, February 24 at the Ellie Caulkins Opera House, with additional performances on Tuesday, February 27; Friday, March 1; and Sunday, March 3.

The opera unfolds as a cursed captain and his ghostly crew sail the seas for eternity, condemned to never find rest until he finds someone who can be true to him. When the compassionate Senta encounters the haunted captain, she becomes determined to break the curse through her unwavering devotion. As the story navigates through stormy waters of passion and sacrifice, Wagner's masterpiece takes the audience on a thrilling voyage filled with soaring melodies and a dramatic climax that transcends time and mortality.

"We are tremendously excited to bring the music of Richard Wagner to the Ellie for the first time in a fully staged production in fifteen years," says the Ellie Caulkins General & Artistic Director Greg Carpenter. "This new production of a classic nautical tale, brought to life by designer Alan E. Muraoka and director Kathleen Smith Belcher, will be an exhilarating grand opera experience for long-time fans of opera and newcomers alike. Wagner's masterpiece is a timeless tale of undying loyalty, haunting curses, and the power of redemption. I am thrilled to present this operatic gem to our audiences."

Icelandic baritone **Olafur Sigurdarson**, who played the title role in Opera Colorado's 2018 production of *Falstaff*, returns to play the ghostly captain doomed to sail the ocean until he finds true love. In her Opera Colorado debut, soprano **Marcy Stonikas** brings her "huge, clear, commanding voice" (*Washington Times*) to the role of Senta, who believes she can break the Dutchman's curse. Tenor **Chad Shelton**, who played Don Ottavio in Opera Colorado's 2003 production of *Don Giovanni*, takes on the role of Erik, Senta's former lover. Senta's father, Daland, is played by bass **Harold Wilson**, who appeared in Opera Colorado's productions of *The Barber of Seville* (2019), *La fanciulla del West* (2016), and *Aida* (2015).

For audience members who want to learn more about the production and hear from the cast and creative team, Opera Colorado invites you to **Artists in Conversation** on Wednesday, February 15, in the Chambers Grant Salon at the Ellie Caulkins Opera House. Tickets to this panel discussion are free and available at [operacolorado.org](http://operacolorado.org).

Patrons attending opening night can expand their experience with an additional ticket to our **Opening Night Dinner**, which includes a delectable three-course meal before the performance. Tickets can be purchased on [operacolorado.org](http://operacolorado.org) (Opening Night Dinner tickets do not include the performance).

Tickets for the full production, ranging from \$39-\$219, are available at [operacolorado.org](http://operacolorado.org). For more information about current and future programming at Opera Colorado, contact Jennifer Colgan at [jcolgan@operacolorado.org](mailto:jcolgan@operacolorado.org).

## THE FLYING DUTCHMAN

Music and Libretto by Richard Wagner  
Premiered January 2, 1843, Königliches Hoftheater Dresden

### FEBRUARY 24, 27, MARCH 1, 3

Ellie Caulkins Opera House at the Denver Performing Arts Complex  
*Performed in German, with English and Spanish subtitles at every seat.*

**Estimated Length:** 2 hours and 20 minutes

### A GHOSTLY LEGEND COMES TO SHORE

Wagner's supernatural drama makes landfall with Opera Colorado this winter. The captain of a legendary ghost ship is lost in more ways than one as he is doomed to roam the seas and only come to land for one day every seven years. When the Dutchman is introduced to the idealistic Senta, he begins to wonder if he has found a love strong enough to break his lonely curse.

### Cast

OLAFUR SIGURDARSON | The Dutchman  
MARCY STONIKAS\* | Senta  
CHAD SHELTON | Erik  
HAROLD WILSON | Daland  
DANA BETH MILLER | Mary  
JONATHAN JOHNSON | Steersman  
Opera Colorado Chorus  
Opera Colorado Orchestra

### Creative Team

ARI PELTO | Conductor  
SAHAR NOURI | Chorus Master & Assistant Conductor  
KATHLEEN SMITH BELCHER | Director  
ALAN E. MURAOKA\* | Set Designer  
MADISON BOOTH | Costume Designer  
KENDALL SMITH | Lighting Designer

\*Opera Colorado debut

*THE FLYING DUTCHMAN* IS SPONSORED BY THE CRAWLEY FAMILY FOUNDATION.

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## ABOUT THE ARTISTS

For a complete list of biographies, visit [operacolorado.org](http://operacolorado.org).

### Olafur Sigurdarson | The Dutchman



In the 2022-23 Season, Olafur Sigurdarson's engagements included *Peter Grimes* (Captain Baltrode) at Teatro alla Scala; *Das Rheingold* (Alberich) and *Tristan and Isolde* (Melot) at Bayreuth Festival; *Tosca* (Baron Scarpia) at Leipzig Opera; and the title roles in *Rigoletto* and *Macbeth* at Prague Opera. Other remarkable highlights of the season include *Lohengrin* (Telramund) at Teatro Comunale di Bologna and *Parsifal* (Klingsor) with Bergen National Orchestra. His recent season appearances include debuts in a new *Das Rheingold* (Bitterolf) with Bayreuth Festival; *Lohengrin* (Telramund) at Grand Theater Liceu; *Siegfried* (Alberich) and the title role *Rigoletto* at Gothenburg Opera; *The Flying Dutchman* (Dutchman) in a house debut with Leipzig Opera, the title role in *Macbeth* with National Theater in Prague; *Peter Grimes* (Captain Baltrode) and the title role in *Don Pasquale* at the Finnish National Opera; and *Luisa Miller* (Miller) at the English National Opera. His other appearances include a debut at Wexford Festival in *Don Quichotte* (Sancho), a return to Prague National Theater in *Lohengrin* (Telramund), the title roles in *Wozzeck* and *The Flying Dutchman* at the Finnish National Opera, *Das Rheingold* (Alberich) at Gothenburg Opera. He was also seen in the title role in *Falstaff* at Opera Omaha and Opera Colorado.

### Marcy Stonikas\* | Senta



A graduate of Roosevelt University's Chicago College of Performing Arts (CCPA) and Oberlin College Conservatory of Music, soprano Marcy Stonikas is a recipient of the prestigious Richard F. Gold Career Grant from the Shoshanna Foundation, as well as a winner of the George London Foundation Vocal Competition and First Prize Winner in the Wagner Division of the Gerda Lissner Foundational Vocal Competition. She is an alumna of the Young Artist Program at Seattle Opera. In the 2022-23 Season, Ms. Stonikas returned to the Metropolitan Opera, making her company stage debut as Convict while covering the leading role of Ekaterina in *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*. Her notable operatic engagements include the title roles in *Turandot*, *Fidelio*, *Ariadne auf Naxos*, *Turn of the Screw* (Miss Jessel), and *Hansel and Gretel* (Gertrude) in multiple appearances with Seattle Opera; *Elektra* (Chrysothemis) with Minnesota Opera; and *The Flying Dutchman* (Senta) with Cincinnati Opera.

### Chad Shelton | Erik



*Opera News* praises tenor Chad Shelton for one of his trademark roles, claiming that his "Don José was the dramatic heart of this production; this was a performance that grew in complexity as he struggled to reconcile the forces of loyalty, lust and fate. Shelton owned the final scene, as his character descended into despair fueled by psychotic obsession. His bright tone amplified the intensity of the last gripping moments." In the 2021-22 Season, he returned to the Metropolitan Opera in Aucoïn's *Eurydice* (Loud Stone) and Dean's *Hamlet* (Third Player), both company premieres, as well as returns to the production of *Elektra*. He also joined Houston Grand Opera, his home company in *Dialogues des Carmélites* (Father Confessor). He has joined the Opéra National de Lorraine numerous times and is a frequent leading presence with Houston Grand Opera. He is acclaimed for his performances of contemporary works and triumphed in leading tenor roles in the world premiere of O'Regan's *The Phoenix* and in Adams' *Nixon in China* (Chairman Mao) with San Diego Opera. He is the recipient of a Richard Tucker Foundation Career Grant and the Richard F. Gold Career Grant from the Shoshanna Foundation. He holds a Master of Music degree and Artist diploma from the Yale University School of Music and a Bachelor of Music degree from Louisiana State University.

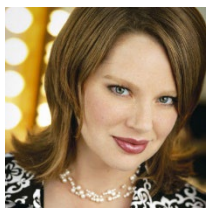
## Harold Wilson | Daland



In the 2022-23 Season, bass Harold Wilson returned to the Metropolitan Opera for their productions of *Aida*, *Der Rosenkavalier*, and *Peter Grimes* (Hobson). In the 2021-22 Season, Mr. Wilson returned to the Metropolitan Opera for multiple productions, including *Boris Godunov*, *Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*, *The Rake's Progress*, and *Elektra* (Guardian). During the summer, he triumphed at Bard Summerscape in the central role of Strauss' *Die Schweigsame Frau* (Sir Morosus). Mr. Wilson has been a part of over a dozen productions at the Metropolitan Opera, including *Roméo et Juliette*, *Boris Godunov*, *Don Carlos*, *Turandot*, *Macbeth*, and

*The Flying Dutchman*. As a member of the Deutsche Oper Berlin for five seasons, his notable performances included *Pelléas et Mélisande* (Arkel), *Lucia di Lammermoor* (Raimondo), *Die Zauberflöte* (Sarastro), and *Carmen* (Zuniga). His previous performances with Opera Colorado include *The Barber of Seville* (Basilio), *La fanciulla del West* (Ashby), and *Aida* (Ramfis).

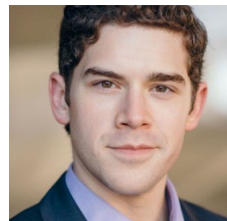
## Dana Beth Miller | Mary



Dana Beth Miller's recent successes include *Suor Angelica* (La Badessa) and *Die Walküre* (Grimgerde) both with Boston Symphony Orchestra, the Metropolitan Opera's acclaimed *Ring Cycle* (Grimgerde, cover), and *The Handmaid's Tale* (Offred's Mother) with Boston Lyric Opera. A former principal in Germany's Deutsche Oper Berlin ensemble, her appearances include two complete *Ring Cycles* (Erda) with both Simon Rattle and Donald Runnicles, *Falstaff* (Dame Quickly), *La Gioconda* (La Cieca), David Alden's *Peter Grimes* (Mrs. Sedley), *Un ballo in Maschera* (Ulrica) and *Il*

*trovatore* (Azucena). Past season highlights include the artist's UK debut with English National Opera in *Aïda* (Amneris), *Das Rheingold* (Erda) at Arizona Opera, *Falstaff* (Dame Quickly) with Opera Colorado, *Un ballo in Maschera* (Ulrica) at Florida Grand Opera and in David McVicar's celebrated new production of *Wozzeck* (Margaret) at Grand Theatre du Geneve in Switzerland, where she also sang *Les Troyens* (Anna) under the baton of Charles Dutoit.

## Jonathan Johnson | Steersman



Rising young tenor Jonathan Johnson's many recent engagements have included *Sweeney Todd* (Anthony Hope) at Opera Omaha, *The Love of Three Oranges* (The Prince) with Opera Philadelphia (where he was named as one of their Emerging Artists), *Silent Night* (Jonathan Dale) with Utah Opera, *Die tote Stadt* (Gaston/Victorin) and *Pagliacci* (Beppe) with Opera Colorado, the title role in *Candide* with the Seoul Philharmonic Orchestra, Utah Symphony Orchestra, and Des Moines Metro Opera; *Lucia di Lammermoor* (Arturo) at Lyric Opera of Chicago, and *Falstaff* (Fenton) at San Diego Opera. He has also appeared with the Detroit

Symphony in *Messiah* and with Cincinnati Symphony for Schumann's *Das Paradies und die Peri*. Hailing from Macon, GA, Mr. Johnson is a graduate of the Patrick G. & Shirley W. Ryan Opera Center at the Lyric Opera of Chicago. He holds a master's degree and Professional Artist Certificate from the A.J. Fletcher Institute of the University of North Carolina School of the Arts and earned a Bachelor of Music from Townsend School of Music at Mercer University.

## Ari Pelto | Conductor



Ari Pelto was appointed in 2015 as Opera Colorado's first-ever music director. His "breathtaking wizardry in the pit" (*The Denver Post*) has been widely celebrated, with Pelto in demand at opera houses and concert halls throughout the United States. At the age of 24, Pelto was appointed Assistant Conductor at the Spoleto Festival, and he has since gone on to conduct worldwide. International engagements include performances with Bochumer Philharmoniker and opera productions at New National Theatre of Tokyo and the Teatro Nacional Sucre in Quito, Ecuador. In 2004 he made his highly-praised debut with New York City Opera, conducting *La*

*traviata*, after which he became a regular, returning for productions of *Madama Butterfly*, *La bohème*,

and *Carmen*. Recent successes include performances of *The Nutcracker* with Atlanta Ballet and *The Flying Dutchman* with Utah Opera.

## **Kathleen Smith Belcher | Director**



Stage director Kathleen Smith Belcher is currently engaged in her twenty-first year as a member of the directing staff at the Metropolitan Opera. Among others, she has worked extensively with the San Francisco Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, Houston Grand Opera, Los Angeles Opera, and the San Diego Opera. Belcher assisted Peter Sellars on the world premiere of John Adams's *Dr. Atomic* in San Francisco and helped to remount the production for the Netherlands Opera (Amsterdam), and the Lyric Opera of Chicago. Woody Allen, Michael Mayer, Bartlett Sher, Susan Stroman, and Julie Taymor are just a few of the directors with whom she has collaborated. As a member of the Metropolitan Opera directing staff, she has collaborated on numerous "Live in HD" broadcasts, including the Emmy-winning production of *Don Pasquale*. In the 2022-2023 Season, Belcher helmed *Le comte Ory* at Lyric Opera of Chicago, *Lohengrin* at The Metropolitan Opera, and debuts with Pacific Symphony for *Rigoletto*. The 2021-2022 Season took Belcher to Florida Grand Opera and Orlando Opera for *Rigoletto*, as well as to The Metropolitan Opera for *Porgy and Bess*, *La bohème*, and *Rigoletto*.

## **Alan E. Muraoka | Set Designer**



Alan E. Muraoka has worked in the entertainment industry as a production designer and art director for film and television, as well as a theatrical set designer for Ned Rorem's *Our Town* and Jake Heggie's *Dead Man Walking* for Central City Opera, Ricky Ian Gordon's *Orpheus and Eurydice* for Long Beach Opera, Tobias Picker's *Thérèse Raquin*, Philip Glass's *Fall of the House of Usher*, and the world premiere of Stewart Copeland's *The Invention of Morel* at Chicago Opera Theater. Recent projects include John Corigliano's *The Ghost of Versailles* in a season that included the "Beaumarchais Trilogy," *Il barbiere di Siviglia* and *Figaro 90210* for Chautauqua Institute. Alan also works as a production designer in film and television and is currently designing the television series *New Amsterdam* for NBC/Universal. Alan is a member of both the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences and the Academy of Television Arts and Sciences.

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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).