



DEATH OF  
**IVAN ILYCH**  
YOUNG & OLEJNICZAK

ORLANDO  
MUSEUM OF ART

**OPERA ON THE TOWN**

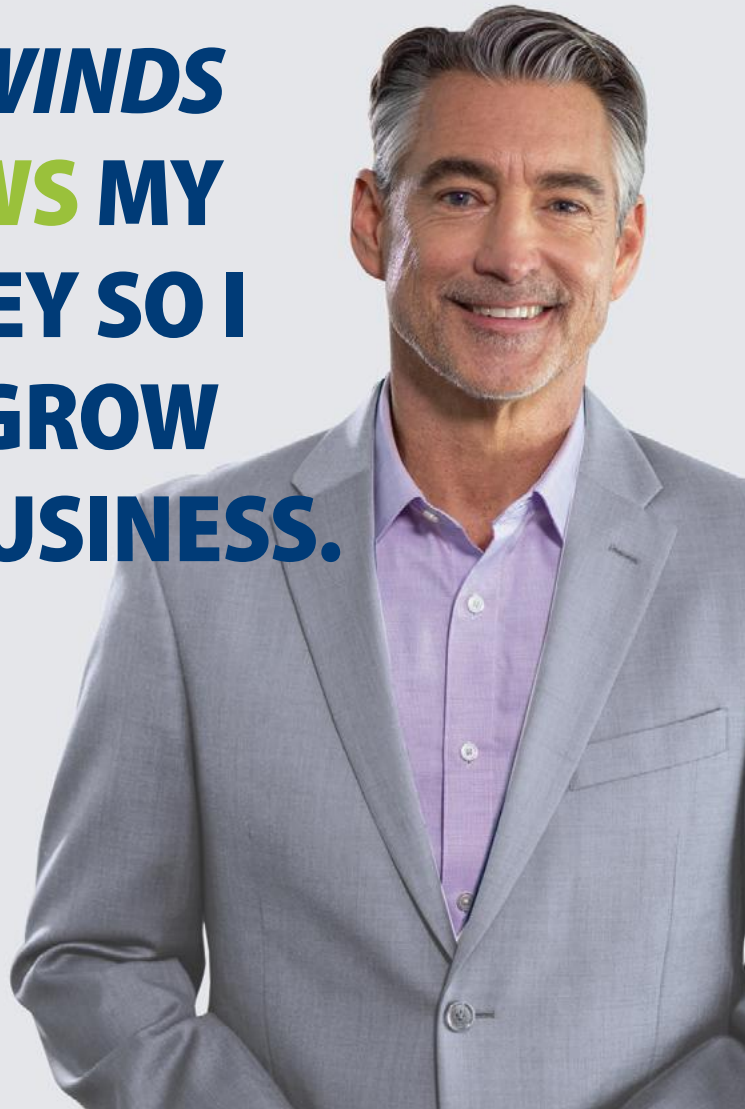
February 19 & 21, 2021  
Grand Gallery Hall

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OPERAORLANDO

2020-21 | The Curtain Rises

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## 2020-21 | The Curtain Rises

Dear Friends,

This time a year ago, the word “coronavirus” was still as novel as the virus itself. Many things have changed as a result of that 11-letter word, the arts industry one of them. Cancelled productions and all-digital content have been the norm for opera companies navigating the pandemic, including us here at **Opera Orlando**. *Death of Ivan Ilych* was a casualty of the virus last season, when we had planned a workshop performance of this new work to be presented at the Orlando International Fringe Festival. The Fringe Festival was cancelled, and those plans changed, but we did not want to abandon this beautiful chamber opera or the wonderful artists and creative team who worked so hard on it. We are grateful now to present this work, not just as a workshop, but as a full production. So, here we are presenting the world premiere of this wonderful work in partnership with our friends at Thompson Street Opera Company. In many ways, *Death of Ivan Ilych*, based on Tolstoy’s novella, is a fitting piece to present in these uncertain and difficult times. It reminds us of our mortality and the need to focus on what’s important in day to day life.

We are excited to be joined by musicians from **Alterity Chamber Orchestra** in the very unique setting of the **Orlando Museum of Art**, with food and drink provided by **Arthur’s Catering**. This production will be quickly followed by our final MainStage production of the season, *Carmen*, at Dr Phillips Center on April 1 and 3. The **On the Town** series continues after that with two more productions: a piano workshop of **Opera Orlando**’s first commissioned work, *The Secret River*, and the intimate and powerful *As One*.

We are more grateful than ever to be back, presenting live theater. We could not do it without you and your amazing support, patronage, and enthusiasm for this glorious art form. As always, it is great to see you at **The Opera**!



A handwritten signature in white ink, appearing to read 'G. Preisser'.

Gabriel Preisser, executive director  
**Opera Orlando**

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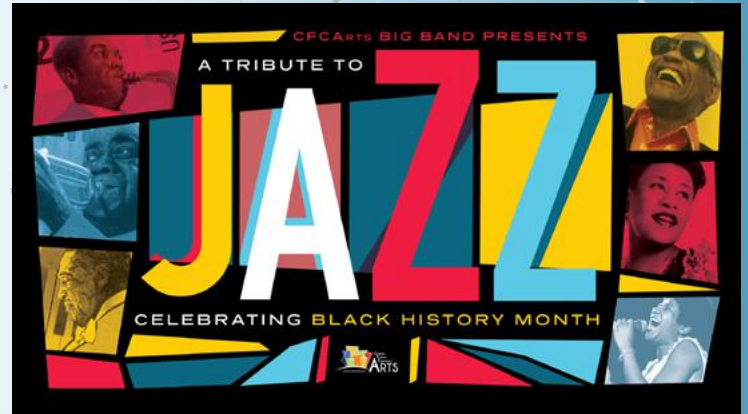


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# DEATH OF IVAN ILYCH

YOUNG & OLEJNICZAK

presented by



music by **John Young**  
libretto by **Alan Olejniczak**

*Based on the novella by **Leo Tolstoy**  
Sung in English*

world premiere in partnership with  
**Thompson Street Opera Company**

Friday | **February 19 at 7:30 p.m.**  
Sunday | **February 21 at 5 p.m.**

**ORLANDO MUSEUM OF ART**  
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**Grant Preisser**, stage director

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## A NOTE ON THE COMPOSITION

Many people pass through your life; they're there for a time - until they're not. John and Alan met while singing in a church choir and in the chorus of the Atlanta Opera. In 2006, after sharing a going-away party, both men moved away from Atlanta. While John left for New York City to pursue his promising singing career, Alan settled in San Francisco as a special educator. Both lost contact and would not connect again for another twelve years.

They found each other again on Facebook and discovered that their lives unfolded much differently than they had planned. Alan was now pursuing a career as a playwright, while John was being treated for Stage 4 throat cancer in his sinuses. John was facing the end of his singing career and possible death.

Their online reunion was bittersweet. While John's cancer treatments were completely successful, the procedures destroyed his singing voice. It was almost a year later when John first broached the idea of an opera collaboration. Despite having sung together for several years, Alan didn't realize that John was also a composer. John emailed Alan samples of his music, including a three-movement suite for piano and oboe called ***The Journey***. This piece catalogued his personal journey through his cancer treatments. ***The Journey*** was the inspiration for selecting ***The Death of Ivan Ilych*** as the subject matter for an opera, with its musical themes integrated into the opera score.

When the final score was completed two years later, Alan casually approached Gabriel Preisser for feedback on the lead baritone role. This meeting eventually became a conversation about a possible workshop, and then, over time, an actual performance.

Creating new opera is always risky, and trusting a first-time opera composer and librettist with a premiere can be a daunting proposition. John and Alan continue to be grateful to **Opera Orlando**, Gabriel and Grant Preisser, their donors, singers and audience for giving life to ***Death of Ivan Ilych***. John dedicates these performances to Dr. Michael Braz.



**JOHN YOUNG | composer**  
HOMETOWN: Sarasota, FL

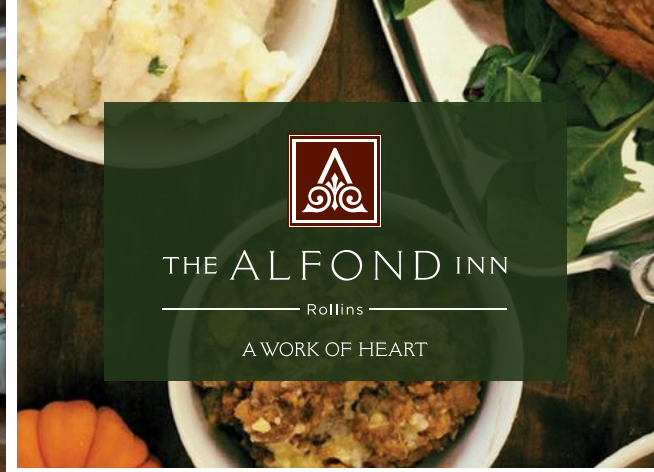
In addition to ***Death of Ivan Ilych***, Mr. Young has recently completed his second opera, and he is developing a youth opera entitled ***The Nightingale***.



**ALAN OLEJNICZAK | librettist**  
HOMETOWN: San Francisco, CA

***Death of Ivan Ilych*** is Mr. Olejniczak's first opera. He currently has six other chamber operas and a Christmas oratorio in development.

To learn more about John Young and Alan Olejniczak, go to:  
[www.johnyoung-composer.com](http://www.johnyoung-composer.com) and [www.alanolejniczak.com](http://www.alanolejniczak.com)



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DEATH OF  
**IVAN ILYCH**  
YOUNG & OLEJNICZAK

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## A NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR

Death and mortality are all too present in our mind these days. Our typical routines have been halted, and we are all searching for or settling in to a new normal. For all the uncertainty that the pandemic has brought to everyone, it has also given us an opportunity to reflect on and reassess our priorities. Death is an inevitability, but it is easy to ignore as we distract ourselves with the more superficial aspects of life. Confronted with the threat of sickness and the unknowns that have surrounded COVID-19, I think we have all spent more time thinking about our time on this Earth and our potential legacy or lack thereof.

*Death of Ivan Ilych*, written over a century ago, feels actually contemporary given our current circumstances, and although it centers on one man's slow and steady approach toward death, it is not morbid or fatalist. Rather, it is a story of Ivan's recognition and ultimate respect for death reconciled with the assessment of his life, his relationships, his dreams, and his accomplishments. Ivan's attitude toward life changes, prompted by pain and the anticipation of his demise. His emotions progress from fear to utter joy. He realizes that his failure to acknowledge death is a delusion, designed to protect him from unpleasant realities but leading only to emptiness and dissatisfaction. An acceptance of death, however, and an acceptance of the unpredictable nature of life allows for confidence and even peace. "It's the not knowing," says the Doctor to Ivan's wife Praskovya, and it is indeed the ambiguity surrounding the moment of death that causes the most heartache and worry. Let death come as it may and will. Focus less on what you can't control and appreciate more the richness of the life that surrounds you.

I appreciate John and Alan for trusting me and the company to present the world premiere production of their first opera, and it has been an honor to develop this piece with them. What it says about death has taught me more about life than I can say.

Grant Preisser, artistic director  
**Opera Orlando**

## SYNOPSIS

St. Petersburg, Imperial Russia | 1883

The opera begins at the end: Pyotr Ivanovich arrives at the wake of Ivan Ilych to pay his respects to Praskovya Fedorovna, Ivan's widow. Social pleasantries give way to the cause of Ivan Ilych's death, which remains a mystery. The scene shifts and flashes back to the Ilych family at dinner. Ivan Ilych complains of having no appetite and a dull pain in his side. Praskovya asks her husband to see a doctor, and Ivan Ilych reluctantly agrees. His health declines, and Ivan Ilych sees many doctors who can't diagnose the ailment. Ivan Ilych is alone with his thoughts. He considers the larger world and the ineffability of life. Ivan Ilych, acknowledging he has not been a loving husband, starts a process of atonement.

Praskovya is alone with the doctor. He tells her Ivan Ilych's death is a certainty and that they both must accept this fact. Surrounded by family, Ivan Ilych calls for death and finds light in the end. He dies with joy.

# DEATH OF IVAN ILYCH

YOUNG & OLEJNICZAK

## CAST

IVAN ILYCH  
PRASKOVYA FEDOROVNA  
GERASIM  
DOCTOR  
PYOTR IVANOVICH / PRIEST  
VLADIMIR

Sean Christopher Stork  
Adriana V. Nieves  
Brent Doucette  
Stephen Mumbert  
Jose-Manuel Lopez  
Jurrien Mejeur

## PRODUCTION TEAM

Michelle Engleman  
Teresa Ancaya  
Alison Reid  
Justine Montoya  
Caitlin Durrance

Production Stage Manager / Props  
Rehearsal Pianist  
Costume Designer  
Hair & Makeup Designer  
Stitcher / Draper

## ORCHESTRA

members of Alterity Chamber Orchestra

Beatriz Ramirez, oboe  
Alexander Stevens, violin I  
Andreas Volmer, violin II  
Mauricio Céspedes Rivero, viola  
Hanrich Claassen, cello  
Elliot May, double bass  
Teresa Ancaya, piano

This event is neither sponsored nor endorsed by the Orlando Museum of Art.



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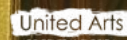
2020-21 | The Curtain Rises

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## THE ARTISTS



**SEAN CHRISTOPHER STORK | Ivan Ilych**

HOMETOWN: Orlando, FL

**OPERA ORLANDO ENGAGEMENTS**

Hortensius, *The Daughter of the Regiment*, 2020 (cancelled due to COVID-19)

Melchior, *Amahl and the Night Visitors*, 2019

Count (cover), *The Marriage of Figaro*, 2019

**PREVIOUS ENGAGEMENTS**

Dancaire, *Carmen* - Opera Tampa

Marcello, *La Bohème* - Peach State Opera (GA)

Tonio, *Pagliacci* - First Coast Opera (FL)

**UPCOMING ENGAGEMENTS**

Soloist, *Magic Moments of the Opera* - The Villages Philharmonic (FL)

Ford, *Falstaff* - Diversitá Arts Opera Company (TX)



**ADRIANA V. NIEVES \* | Praskovya Fedorovna**

HOMETOWN: Austin, TX

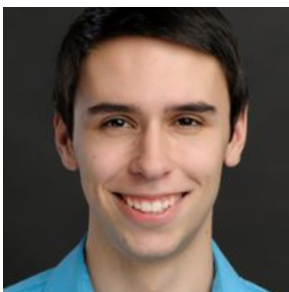
**OPERA ORLANDO ENGAGEMENTS**

Countess (cover), *The Marriage of Figaro*, 2019

**PREVIOUS ENGAGEMENTS**

Mrs. Herring, *Albert Herring* - Boston University Opera Institute (MA)

Harriet, *Emmeline* - Boston University Opera Institute (MA)



**BRENT DOUCETTE | Gerasim**

HOMETOWN: Orlando, FL

**OPERA ORLANDO ENGAGEMENTS**

Dr. Blind, *Die Fledermaus*, 2020

Trin, *The Girl of the Golden West*, 2020

Don Basilio/Curzio, *The Marriage of Figaro*, 2019

**UPCOMING ENGAGEMENTS**

Remendado, *Carmen* - Opera Orlando



**STEPHEN MUMBERT \* | Doctor**

HOMETOWN: Altamonte Springs, FL

**PREVIOUS ENGAGEMENTS**

Soloist, *BWV 89-90* : Bach Cantata Series - Bach Festival Society of Winter Park  
Morales, *Carmen* - Opera Naples  
Riccardo, *I Puritani* - Minnesota Concert Opera

**UPCOMING ENGAGEMENTS**

Baritone Soloist, *Falling Man* - Space Coast Symphony Orchestra (FL)



**JOSE-MANUEL LOPEZ | Pyotr Ivanovitch / Priest**

HOMETOWN: Venice, FL

**OPERA ORLANDO ENGAGEMENTS**

José Castro/Billy Jackrabbit, *The Girl of the Golden West*, 2020  
Page, *Amahl and the Night Visitors*, 2019  
Noah, *Noye's Fludde*, 2019  
Chorus, *Tales of Hoffmann*, 2018

Bachelor of Music, voice performance - University of Central Florida



**JURRIEN MEJEUR | Vladimir**

HOMETOWN: Orlando, FL

**OPERA ORLANDO ENGAGEMENTS**

Amahl (*cover*), *Amahl and the Night Visitors*, 2019  
Chorus, *Pagliacci/Pulcinella*, 2019  
*La Bohème*, 2018

**PREVIOUS ENGAGEMENTS**

Chorus, *Noye's Fludde* - Opera Orlando Youth Company  
Bernstein's *Mass* - UCF Performing Arts (FL)

**UPCOMING ENGAGEMENTS**

Chorus, *Carmen* - Opera Orlando  
*The Secret River* - Opera Orlando

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## THE PRODUCTION TEAM



**DENIZ UZ | conductor**

HOMETOWN: Orlando, FL

**OPERA ORLANDO ENGAGEMENTS**

Music Director, *Amahl and the Night Visitors*, 2019

"The Companion" and "Safe Word" from *Three Way*, 2018

Assistant Conductor & Chorus Master, *La Bohème*, 2017

**PREVIOUS ENGAGEMENTS**

Conductor, *Amahl and the Night Visitors* - Gulfshore Opera (FL)

Associate Conductor, *Candide* - Des Moines Metro Opera (IA)

Assistant Conductor, *Werther* - Florida Grand Opera



**GRANT PREISSER | stage director**

HOMETOWN: Chicago, IL

**OPERA ORLANDO ENGAGEMENTS**

Stage Director, *Hansel & Gretel*, 2021

*Die Fledermaus: The Revenge of the Bat*, 2020

*All is Calm*, 2019

**PREVIOUS ENGAGEMENTS**

Stage Director, *Frida* - Opera Steamboat (CO)

*Così fan tutte* - Rochester Philharmonic Orchestra (NY)

*Alcina* - University of Michigan

**UPCOMING ENGAGEMENTS**

Scenic Designer, *Carmen* - Opera Orlando

*As One* - Opera Orlando

*The Secret River* - Opera Orlando



**MICHELLE ENGLEMAN | production stage manager / props**

HOMETOWN: Pittsburgh, PA

**OPERA ORLANDO ENGAGEMENTS**

Production Stage Manager, *Die Fledermaus: The Revenge of the Bat*, 2020  
*The Girl of the Golden West*, 2020  
*All is Calm*, 2019

**PREVIOUS ENGAGEMENTS**

Production Stage Manager, *Looking for Violeta* - Quantum Theatre (PA)  
*Dido & Aeneas* - Opera Steamboat (CO)  
*Fantastic Mr. Fox* - San Antonio (TX)

**UPCOMING ENGAGEMENTS**

Production Stage Manager, *CARMEN* - Opera Orlando  
Production Manager, 2021 Summer Season - Front Porch Theatricals, (PA)



**ALISON REID | costume designer**

HOMETOWN: Orlando, FL

**OPERA ORLANDO ENGAGEMENTS**

Costume Designer, *Die Fledermaus: The Revenge of the Bat*, 2020  
*The Girl of the Golden West*, 2020  
*The Barber of Seville*, 2019

**PREVIOUS ENGAGEMENTS**

Costume Designer, *Poe: Into That Darkness Peering* - Orlando Shakes  
*Becoming Dr. Ruth* - Orlando Shakes  
Draper/Tailor - Orlando Shakes

**UPCOMING ENGAGEMENTS**

Costume Designer, *AS ONE* - Opera Orlando



**JUSTINE MONTOYA | hair & makeup designer**

HOMETOWN: Orlando, FL

**OPERA ORLANDO ENGAGEMENTS**

Hair & Makeup Assistant, *The Girl of the Golden West*, 2020

**PREVIOUS & CONTINUING ENGAGEMENTS**

Graduate of VAMP  
Freelance cosmetologist



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