OPERA ON THE MAINSTAGE for

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OPERAORLANDO

music by Robert Xavier Rodríguez book by Hilary Blecher lyrics and monologues by Migdalia Cruz

Frice

Friday & Sunday January 26 & 28, 2024 dr. phillips center Steinmetz Hall

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Friday & Sunday April 19 & 21, 2024

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Friday & Saturday May 10 & 11, 2024

wish for art



DEAR FRIENDS:



Grammy-award winning baritone **Gabriel Preisser**

This season we are **All for Art**, and and no one embodies this mantra more than the iconic Mexican painter Frida Kahlo. She truly lived for art throughout her tumultuous and often traumatic life, and while the opera focuses on Frida's unique life and career, it also celebrates Mexican art and culture. To better connect with the ever-growing Hispanic community of Central Florida, **Opera Orlando** has been honored to partner with **Casa de Mexico** and the **Hispanic Chamber of Commerce** on a series of community lead up events culminating this weekend on the MainStage at Steinmetz Hall. Additionally, Opera Orlando partnered with **Osceola County public schools** to bring performances of Joe Illick and Mark Campbell's children's opera *Frida Kahlo and the Bravest Girl in the World* to more than 1,000 second and third grade students this past November.

To present *Frida*, finding the right duo to portray the larger than life personalities of Frida and her husband Diego Rivera is crucial, and Opera Orlando knew instantly that this opera would serve as the perfect vehicle to welcome back audience favorite and Mexican-American soprano **Cecilia Violetta López** to sing the title role. She is joined by Venezuelan-American baritone **Bernardo Bermudez** who has performed the role of Diego multiple times throughout the U.S. We are also thrilled to be joined once again by the **Orlando Philharmonic Orchestra** in the pit and to have members of our fabulous **Youth Company** and our four stellar **Studio Artists** in the production.

Make sure to catch the rest of our "All for Art" opera season with a sacrifice for art in Dvořák's *Rusalka* at the **Art and History Museums of Maitland**, a love for art in Donizetti's classic and thrilling *Lucia di Lammermoor* back in Steinmetz Hall, and a wish for art in Phillip Glass and Robert Moran's *The Juniper Tree*, featuring **Phantasmagoria** with puppetry by **Orlando Family Stage** at the Alexis & Jim Pugh Theater. Then raise a glass to art at our end of the season celebration **A Toast! A Toast! A Toast!** at the Citrus Club.

Opera Orlando has been extremely fortunate over the past seven seasons, growing from a \$250,000 budget to more than \$2 million while staying fiscally solvent, growing our cash reserves, and creating an endowment fund with more than \$2.5 million currently in cash, pledges, and bequests. We have experienced exponential growth while expanding our programming and educational efforts. AND we truly could not have done it without all of you. We are so grateful!

Gabriel Preisser general director | Opera Orlando

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Bravo, Opera Orlando!



This fall the **Opera Orlando Youth Company** jumped right into rehearsals for Opera Orlando's MainStage production of Puccini's masterpiece, **Tosca**. The full company was featured in Act I as "choir boys" and acolytes in the church of Sant'Andrea della Valle –terrorizing the Sacristan– sung by the incredible bass Stefan Szkafarowsky, and singing the iconic "Te Deum" finale with the villainous Baron Scarpia, sung by baritone Daniel Scofield.

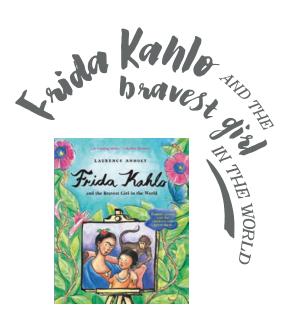
"The real value of our program is in the real-world experience that our Youth Company singers receive when performing alongside world-class professionals on stage. We are so proud of the high standards and level of musicianship that our singers hold for themselves" says education director **Sarah Purser**, "and they have a very busy spring ahead in class and onstage."

Look for six Youth Company members in this production of *Frida*: Harper Fisak, Cooper LaBelle, Sienna Lemieux, B Liborio, Elsa Mejeur, and Maria Valentina Rodriguez Puerta. They all auditioned and were cast to join the ensemble for the Orlando premiere of this beautiful story about Mexican artist Frida Kahlo. Then in May, the entire Youth Company will once again take the stage, but this time "On the Town" in Philip Glass and Robert Moran's dark adaptation of the Grimm Fairy Tale **The Juniper Tree**. Their season ends with their annual Spring Showcase on May 18.

The Opera Orlando Youth Company is a troupe of 28 aspiring young artists interested in classical music, opera, and musical theatre. These school-age singers, ages 8 to 18, are divided into two groups: Young Singers and Emerging Artists. In class they develop a healthy vocal technique, study acting, and explore their individual creativity. They then apply their craft by performing in productions with the professional Company and singing at community events throughout the season.

Auditions for the 2024-25 season will be held on Saturday, August 3. Registration is now open. For more information visit **OperaOrlando.org/Youth**.



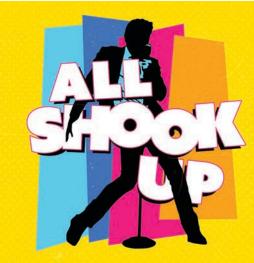


Opera Orlando Studio Artists took the magic of opera into the community this past November with a touring production of Joe Illick and Mark Campbells' *Frida Kahlo and the Bravest Girl in the World* as part of the Opera's "On the Town" series. This 40-minute children's opera based on the book by the same name is about Mariana, a young girl in Mexico who forms an unexpected friendship with the painter Frida Kahlo. While Frida paints her portrait, Mariana overcomes her fears, and learns about friendship and believing in oneself.

2023-24 season Studio Artists joined by mezzo-soprano and development manager **Glorivy Arroyo** toured this bilingual opera sung in "Spanglish" to eight Osceola County third grade ESOL programs, reaching more than 1,000 students. Many of the teachers had students create art projects to bring a cross-curricular element to the experience. There were also three public performances of the opera: two at the Mount Dora Music Hall and one in the community garden in Lake Eola Heights, right next to the Opera offices.

The opera will return for one more performance at the **Mennello Museum of Art** on March 25. For more information contact education director **Sarah Purser** at **SPurser@OperaOrlando.org**.





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presents

Frida

music by Robert Xavier Rodríguezbook by Hilary Blecherlyrics and monologues by Migdalia Cruz

sung in English with some Spanish with English and Spanish supertitles

OPERA ON THE MAINSTAGE

Friday | **January 26, 2024** at **7:30 p.m.** Sunday | **January 28, 2024** at **2 p.m.**

Dr. Phillips Center for the Performing Arts **STEINMETZ HALL**

Jorge Parodi, conductor John de los Santos, stage director & choroegrapher

featuring the Orlando Philharmonic Orchestra



APPROXIMATE RUN TIME ACT I - 60 MINUTES | ACT II - 60 MINUTES

2 hours and 20 minutes with one intermission

SYNOPSIS

ACT I scene 1: Mexico City, 1923

An unruly male gang called Cachuchas, led by the young Frida Kahlo and her boyfriend Alejandro, accosts a group of schoolgirls. Frida and her sister Cristina watch a mother whose child has died beg a vendor for a mat to bury her son. Frida and Cristina witness a celebration of the Zapatista Army of National Liberation and take heart in the promise of the revolution.

scene 2: Frida's room in Coyoacan, 1925

Experiencing her first menstruation, Frida tells Cristina of her hopes and dreams.

scene 3: a street & Frida's room, 1925

Frida and Alejandro board a bus, which is struck by a tram. Frida is severely injured, but she resolves to live and begin her life as a painter.

scene 4: Mexico City, 1928-29

Diego Rivera paints a mural at Frida's school, and his wife Lupe is trying to get his attention. Frida introduces herself to Diego, and Lupe is jealous. Frida shows Diego her portfolio, and he encourages her to pursue a career as an artist. Diego courts her and they marry.

scene 5: Diego's studio, 1930-31

Frida critiques Diego's work as he paints a portrait of Emiliano Zapata. They are interrupted by revolutionary communists who denounce Diego. Frida and Diego resolve to try their luck in the USA.

scene 6: New York City, 1931-33

Frida and Diego attend a dinner party hosted by the Fords and the Rockefellers. Diego enjoys the adulation while Frida ridicules the rich. Rockefeller commissions a mural from Diego and Frida is interviewed by the press.

scene 7: New York City, 1933-34

Diego works on his commission, "Man at the Crossroads." Rockefeller berates Diego for displaying his communist sympathies by portraying Lenin in the painting. The mural is destroyed and Frida miscarries. She persuades Diego to return to Mexico.

- INTERMISSION -

ACT II scene 1: San Angel, Mexico, 1934-35

Back in Mexico, Frida and Diego move to adjacent blue and pink homes. Frida chooses to ignore the parade of lovers that go through Diego's house, but she is horrified to see her sister Cristina among them.

scene 2: San Angel, Mexico, 1937

Leon Trotsky and his wife Natalia visit the Riveras in Mexico. Diego and Natalia confront Frida and Trotsky over their undeniable attraction. Cristina expresses regret for betraying Frida. Diego and Frida realize that their differences cannot be reconciled.

scene 3: Frida's bath

Frida retreats to the seclusion of her home, taking comfort in both male and female lovers.

scene 4: New York, 1938

Diego promotes Frida's work in the USA and sells her work to American actor Edward G. Robinson. Diego urges Frida to pursue her own career. They divorce.

scene 5: Frida's dreams

Frida paints while being overwhelmed and haunted by her physical and emotional pain.

scene 6: a hospital, Frida's final days, 1954

Delirious, Frida relives episodes of her life. Diego returns and sings to entertain Frida, finishing with a proposal to marry her again. Frida agrees and a joyful celebration culminates in her cry of "Viva la vida, alegria, and Diego! / Long live life, joy, and Diego!"





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A NOTE ON THE COMPOSER

www.RobertXavierRodriguez.com/

ROBERT XAVIER RODRÍGUEZ

(b. June 28, 1946)

Robert Xavier Rodríguez was born in San Antonio, Texas, and went on to study music at the University of Texas at Austin, University of Southern California, Tanglewood, and the Conservatoire Americain in Paris. Rodríguez first gained international recognition in 1971, when he was awarded the Prix de Composition Musicale Prince Pierre de Monaco by Prince Rainier and Princess Grace at the Palais Princier in Monte Carlo. Rodríguez has served as composer-inresidence with the San Antonio Symphony and the Dallas Symphony. He currently holds the endowed chair of university professor of music at the University of Texas at Dallas.

Rodríguez's work has received orchestral and operatic performances internationally in recent seasons including Vienna Schauspielhaus, The National Opera of Mexico, New York City Opera, Houston Grand Opera, Florida Grand Opera, and the Boston and Chicago Symphonies.

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The enduring fascination with Frida Kahlo's painting is surpassed only by the fascination with her all too short life. Concurrent to her astonishing artistic output, she was also a political revolutionary, a pioneer of sexual expression, and a devoted wife who lived by her own rules. The psychological and emotional range of her work depicts a unique universe filled with vivid eroticism, excruciating pain, and vibrant hopefulness. Encapsulating this range into a single evening is an exciting challenge as several events in Frida's life warrant operas of their own. We have worked to coalesce many of these key moments into a seamless parade of images, while also referencing some of her less familiar works (such as "Girl with Death Mask").

The opera *Frida* premiered in 1991 and was commissioned by the American Music Theater Festival with an original libretto written in English with some Spanish. It was inspired by and based on the sprawling biography of Frida Kahlo written

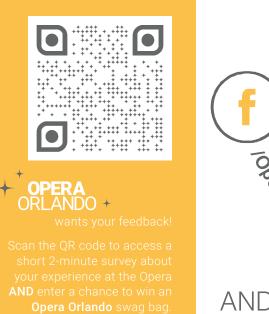
WHAT DID YOU THNK?

by Hayden Herrera. The beauty of how Rodríguez and his librettist Hilary Blecher and Migdalia Cruz approached the piece is how flexible it is in its structure and presentation. Like her paintings, the scenes progress from something very logical and chronological to more and more surreal and jumbled. This was the point of departure for our design team. We wanted to reinforce this idea for the audience by creating a scenic world of ever shifting large-scale, graduated canvases. Frida and Diego's work is projected across these canvases in static and fleeting moments to give a sense of the whirlwind life they lived as artists and celebrities.

Our hope is that you will leave this performance with a deeper awareness of the woman behind the iconic self-portraits and be inspired by the healing power of her genius.

John de los Santos stage director & choreographer









Frida

music by Robert Xavier Rodríguezbook by Hilary Blecherlyrics and monologues by Migdalia Cruz

cast

FRIDA KAHLO DIEGO RIVERA Cecilia Violetta López Bernardo Bermudez

YOUTH ENSEMBLE(Youth Company members)Harper FisakB LibrorioCooper LabelleElsa MejeurSienna LemieuxMaria Valentina Rodriguez Puerta

DANCERS Ernesto Caballero Danny Enriquez Jenny Rios-Caballero Natalia Soto

* Studio Artist



CALAVERA #1 Isis Bermudez Rivera



CALAVERA #2 Lisamarie Guadalupe



CALAVERA #3 Sarah Purser



Torlef Borsting

Jacqueline Enrique Cohen

ensemble



production team

Jorge Parodi John de los Santos

Tiffany Meadows-Green Grant Preisser Howard Vincent Kurtz Destinee Steele Tláloc López-Watermann Philip Lupo Sarai Goley

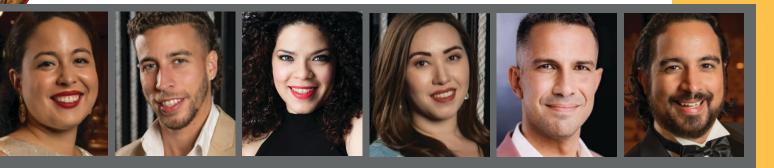
Daniel Marcos Rodriguez Nathan Cicero Emily DeNardo Christine Kindred Grace Zottig Ardean Landhuis Tyler Bargfrede Cait Durrance Magdalena Tronina Xavier Krejcha conductor stage director & choreographer production stage manager scenic designer costume designer hair & makeup designer lighting designer projection designer props designer

associate conductor rehearsal pianist company manager assistant stage manager assistant stage manager technical director scene shop foreman associate costume designer lighting assistant audio assistant Andrew Blunt Gustavo Cruz Jonathan "Toby" Jones Thomas Stone Andrew Watson Charles Richardson Emily Pupo Amanda Seckington Mikayla Winger Kristy Kuehler Laura Zalneraitis carpenters

lead scenic artist scenic artists

principal tailor supertitles

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Linda Maritza Collazo * José Cuartas *

is* Ma

Maria Laetitia

Laura Corina Sanders * John Teixeira

David Soto Zambrana *

THE **ARTISTS**



CECILIA VIOLETTA LÓPEZ | FRIDA KAHLO HOMETOWN: Albuquerque, NM

OPERA ORLANDO ENGAGEMENTS La Traviata, 2021 - Violetta La Bohème, 2017 - Mimi One Voice Orlando, 2016 - soloist

PREVIOUS ENGAGEMENTS

Violetta, *La Traviata* (Florida Grand Opera) Desdemona, *Otello* (Central City Opera) Rose, *The Factotum* + (Lyric Opera of Chicago)

UPCOMING ENGAGEMENTS

Juliette, *Roméo et Juliette* (Opera Idaho) Micaëla, *Carmen en español* (Opera Southwest) Susanna, *Le nozze di Figaro* (Hudson Valley Voice Festival)



BERNARDO BERMUDEZ * | DIEGO RIVERA HOMETOWN: Santa Diego, CA

PREVIOUS ENGAGEMENTS

Diego Rivera, *Frida* (Portland Opera, Anchorage Opera, Long Beach Opera) Laurentino, *Cruzar la Cara de la luna* (Opera Santa Barbara) Chucho, *El milagro del recuerdo* (San Diego Opera) Pleasure, *The Romance of the Rose* + (Long Beach Opera)

UPCOMING ENGAGEMENTS

Moncada, Zorro (Opera Santa Barbara)

* Opera Orlando debut | ^ role cover | + world premiere

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JORGE PARODI | CONDUCTOR HOMETOWN: New York, NY

OPERA ORLANDO ENGAGEMENTS Die Fledermaus, 2021 - conductor The Tales of Hoffmann, 2018 - conductor

PREVIOUS ENGAGEMENTS conductor, *Falstaff* (Knoxville Opera)

conductor, *Madama Butterfly* (Savannah OPERA) conductor, *La Traviata* (El Paso Opera)

UPCOMING ENGAGEMENTS

conductor, *Rigoletto* (Opera San Jose) conductor, *Turandot* (Gulfshore Opera) conductor, *La Rondine* (International Summer Opera Festival of Morelia)



TIFFANY MEADOWS-GREEN | PRODUCTION STAGE MANAGER HOMETOWN: Orlando, FL

OPERA ORLANDO ENGAGEMENTS

Frida Kahlo and the Bravest Girl in the World, 2023 - stage manager

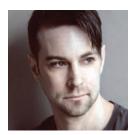
Tosca, 2023 - stage manager The Daughter of the Regiment, 2023 stage manager

PREVIOUS ENGAGEMENTS

production manager at **St. Luke's United Methodist Church** production stage manager, **Sounds of the season** (St. Luke's United Methodist Church)

UPCOMING ENGAGEMENTS

production stage manager, *Rusalka* (Opera Orlando) production stage manager, *Lucia di Lammermoor* (Opera Orlando) production stage manager, *The Juniper Tree* (Opera Orlando)



JOHN DE LOS SANTOS * | DIRECTOR & CHOREOGRAPHER HOMETOWN: New York, NY



GRANT PREISSER | SCENIC DESIGNER HOMETOWN: Chicago, IL

OPERA ORLANDO ENGAGEMENTS

Frida Kahlo and the Bravest Girl in the World, 2023 - sscenic designer Tosca, 2023 - scenic designer Baseball: a Musical Love Letter, 2023 -

scenic designer

PREVIOUS ENGAGEMENTS

director & librettist, *The Christmas Spider* (Opera Louisiane) director, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Manhattan School of Music) director & choreographer, *Aida* (Utah Festival Opera)

UPCOMING ENGAGEMENTS

director & choreographer, *Before Night Falls* (Opera Southwest) librettist, *Service Provider* (Minnesota Opera) director, *Master Class* (Charleston Opera Theatre)

PREVIOUS ENGAGEMENTS

scenic designer, *II barbiere di Siviglia* (Florida State Opera) scenic designer, *The Cunning Little Vixen* (Stetson Opera Theatre) scenic designer, *La bohème* (University of Michigan)

UPCOMING ENGAGEMENTS

scenic designer, *Lucia di Lammermoor* (Opera Orlando) scenic designer, *The Juniper Tree* (Opera Orlando) scenic designer, *Lucia di Lammermoor* (St. Pete Opera)



HOWARD VINCENT KURTZ | COSTUME DESIGNER HOMETOWN: Maitland, FL

OPERA ORLANDO ENGAGEMENTS Bella Notte at Bella Collina, 2023 -

costume designer Lizbeth, 2022 - costume designer The Mozart Dinner, 2022 - costume designer

PREVIOUS ENGAGEMENTS

professor of costume design at University of Central Florida costume designer, *True North*, (Orlando Family Stage) costume designer, *Miss Bennet: Christmas at Pemberley* (Orlando Shakespeare Theater)

UPCOMING ENGAGEMENTS

costume design advisor at University of Central Florida costume design professor emeritus at George Mason University costume designer with United Scenic Artist



DESTINEE STEELE | HAIR & MAKEUP DESIGNER HOMETOWN: Haines City, FL

OPERA ORLANDO ENGAGEMENTS Tosca, 2023 - hair & makeup designer Bella Notte at Bella Collina, 2023 hair & makeup designer

PREVIOUS ENGAGEMENTS

hair & makeup designer, *Natasha, Pierre, and the Great Comet of 1812* (Pittsburgh CLO) hair & makeup designer, *The Music Man* (Broadway at Music Circus) hair & makeup designer, *Beautiful: The Carole King Musical* (Maltz Jupiter Theatre)

UPCOMING ENGAGEMENTS

hair & makeup designer, *Jersey Boys* (Broadway at Music Circus) guest teaching artist at the International Thespian Festival, 2021-23



TLÁLOC LÓPEZ-WATERMAN | LIGHTING DESIGNER HOMETOWN: Galisteo. NM

OPERA ORLANDO ENGAGEMENTS The Secret River, 2021 lighting & projection designer

PREVIOUS ENGAGEMENTS

lighting designer, *Frankenstein* + (Arizona Opera) lighting designer, *Rigoletto* (Opera Delaware, Baltimore Opera) lighting & projection designer, *Iphigénie en Tauride* (Pittsburgh Opera)

UPCOMING ENGAGEMENTS

lighting designer, *Florencia en el Amazonas* (Opera San Jose) lighitng designer, *The Marriage Of Figaro* (Opera Roanoke)



PHILIP LUPO | PROJECTION DESIGNER HOMETOWN: Orlando, FL

OPERA ORLANDO ENGAGEMENTS Lizbeth, 2022 -

lighting & projection designer As One, 2021 lighting & projection designer

5 5 1 5

PREVIOUS ENGAGEMENTS

scenic & lighting designer, *Nosferatu* (Renaissance Theatre Company) lighting designer, *Howl-O-Scream* (SeaWorld Orlando) lighting designer, *Bring It On* (Dr. Phillips Center)

UPCOMING ENGAGEMENTS

lighting designer, *Venus in Fur* (Orlando Shakespeare Theater) lighting designer, *Vanya, Sonia, Masha, & Spike* (IceHouse Theatre) lighting designer, *Surf Holiday* (SeaWorld Orlando)

* Opera Orlando debut | ^ role cover | + world premiere

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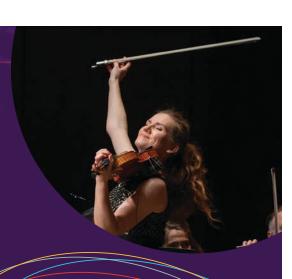
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Crew

Thank you to all **Dr. Phillips Center** staff and production crew for their help and support of this production.

TIOO artist patrons



Frida Kahlo is underwritten by Sherry Bremer pictured at Opera Orlando's 2022 board retreat



Diego Rivera is underwritten by Nancy Wagers pictured with Russell P. Allen at the Sunday performance of Tosca



ensemble / Maria Laetitia is underwritten by Steve and Kathy Miller pictured at their 50th wedding anniversary celebration



Calavera #1 is underwritten by Steven Clawson pictured at Grande Masque 2006

Calavera #3 is underwritten by Leila Trismen pictured at the Season Sparkler 2022

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conductor / Jorge Parodi is underwritten by Blaine and Rebecca Sweatt pictured at the opening night of Tosca 2023

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Bay Street Players Karen Evans Judy Lee Carol Meijer Geraldine Preisser The Sewing Studio Valeria & Jim Shapiro John Teixeira Lizette Valarino Todd Weaver Frank Wells

All the many volunteers who help bring the splendor of opera to Central Florida

Image: Several several



TOSCA OPERAINSIGHTS October 12, 2023

Opera Orlando offers its Ambassadors level contributors and their friends the opportunity to hear the MainStage artists a few days prior to the performances of the MainStage productions in an intimate luncheon setting. These sold-out events also provide a fantastic opportunity for Artists Patrons to get to visit and spend time with their sponsored artist.



Allie Harrington, Roseann Harrington, Gabriel Preisser, & Virginia Goren



Jeannie Abramovitz & Lynne Rickman

AMBASSADORS MIXER November 11, 2023

Jeanne and Avie Abramowitz graciously opened their home to Opera Orlando Ambassadors for a wonderful evening of food and wine provided by Winter Park Wine's Julia Frazier. The evening also featured performances by baritone Gabriel Preisser and soprano Anna Eschbach.



TOSCA ARTIST PATRONS PARTY October 27, 2023

Opera Orlando artists for every production are underwritten by members of the **Artist Patrons Society**. Artist Patrons get together following opening night performances to celebrate the production's talented cast and creative team. Additionally, donors at this level get the opportunity during the course of the season to get to know their artist at various events and lead-up activities.









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	private dinner with conductor and general director	\diamond									
	private dinner with general and artistic director	\diamond	\diamond								
	lunch with MainStage artist	\diamond	\diamond	\diamond							
	lunch/golf with general director	\diamond	\diamond	\diamond							
	invitation to board annual meeting	\diamond	\diamond	\diamond	\diamond						
	invitation to exclusive cocktail parties with MainStage artists	\diamond	\diamond	\diamond	\diamond						
	invitation to MainStage dress rehearsal	\diamond	\diamond	\diamond	\diamond	\diamond					
	backstage tour of the production	\diamond	\diamond	\diamond	\diamond	\diamond	\diamond				
	invitation to Studio Artists donor party	\diamond	\diamond	\diamond	\diamond	\diamond	\diamond	\diamond			
	lunch/bridge with development director	\diamond	\diamond	\diamond	\diamond	\diamond	\diamond	\diamond			
	invitation to Ambassadors receptions	\diamond	\diamond	\diamond	\diamond	\diamond	\diamond	\diamond	\diamond	\diamond	
	subscription to Meet the Artists and Behind the Scenes emails	\diamond	\diamond	\diamond	\diamond	\diamond	\diamond	\diamond	\diamond	\diamond	\diamond
	company t-shirt & name tag	\diamond	\diamond	\diamond	\diamond	\diamond	\diamond	\diamond	\diamond	\diamond	\diamond
		\$75,000	\$35,000	\$15,000	\$5,000	\$2,500	\$1,500	\$1,000	\$500	\$250	\$100

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