

# Opera Las Vegas



## **The House Without a Christmas Tree**

Music by Ricky Ian Gordon

Libretto by Royce Vavrek

Based on a book by Gail Rock

### **West Coast Premiere Performances**

Friday, 19 November, 7:30 pm

Saturday, 20 November, 3:00 pm

Sunday, 21 November, 3:00 pm

Summerlin Library Theatre

Las Vegas, NV

This performance is 80 minutes long and is performed without intermission

**These performances are dedicated to the loving memory of the founder of**

**Opera Las Vegas:**

**Gloria Marinacci Allen 1930 - 2021**

# Welcome Letter from our General Director, Jim Sohre



Opera Las Vegas is thrilled to be performing another new opera by Ricky Ian Gordon and Royce Vavrek, *The House Without a Christmas Tree*.

Ever since OLV had a triumphant success producing their opera, “27” in April 2019, we were eager to stage another work by this talented duo, and it has been a joy to discover all the beauties of this wonderful operatic adaptation of Gail Rock’s popular story and the beloved 1972 TV movie of the same name. Royce has crafted a beautiful and nostalgic look back in time, and Ricky has written some of his best music yet for this touching story of overcoming loss and finding common emotional ground.

This project is also a key component in OLV’s Living Composers and Librettists Initiative, which strives to give worthy new works a second or subsequent production to help establish them in the repertoire. Our West Coast Premiere of *The House Without a Christmas Tree* is only the second professional staging since it debuted at Houston Grand Opera. We wish it many more!

Opera Las Vegas is celebrating our 22<sup>nd</sup> Anniversary this season and we hope you’ll check out all we have to offer, from our two other West Coast Premieres to our Opera on Wheels attractions to our Opera with Class educational efforts to the grand finale with Puccini’s fiery drama, *Tosca*.

Please check out our new website designed by Gregory Storkan, and sign up for our mailing list by visiting: [www.operalasvegas.com](http://www.operalasvegas.com)

Enjoy the show! And Happy Holidays!

Best,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be 'Jim Sohre'. The signature is fluid and stylized, with several loops and a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Jim Sohre, General Director

# Cast & Company

## Cast

Adelaide Mills/Miss Thompson/Helen Mills: Taylor See

“Addie” Mills: Cadie Jordan Bryan

Grandma Mills: Ashley Stone

Carla Mae: Courtney Schwalbe

James Addison Mills III (“Dad”): Gabriel Preisser

Billy Wild: Richard Cohen (19, 21 November), Nathan Gibbs (20 November)

Gloria Cott: Lily Robin (19, 21 November), Yna Ocan (20 November)

Opera Las Vegas Youth Chorus

Athena Mertes, Chorus Master

Addisyn Hughes

Alexa Hairston

Alexis Prieto

Allyson Alemany

Amy Mayes

Angelina Grand-Forbes

Ava Angotti

Emily Menjivar

Jayne Gibbs

Lily Robin

Naomi Hullinger

Nathan Gibbs

Richard Cohen

Yna Ocan

Zoe Perez

Marlei Ruiz

Abby Coeto

Sadie Cecil

Sylvia Lenker

Trenton Mellon

Isabella North

Leilani Kim-Manning

Maggie McLaughlin

Natalie Gallindo

Pax Kurr

Roxy Martinez

Opera Las Vegas is deeply grateful to the parents who have so tirelessly supported this production in so many ways, as well as chaperone Mrs. Robin. Thank you!

## Adult Vocal Quartet

Taylor Stanley

Connor Preisler

Rachelle Sproul

Chase Gutierrez

# Cast & Company

## Production

Music Director and Conductor: Joshua Horsch

Director: Kate St-Pierre

Stage Manager: Hunter Rose Turner

Set Design: Dygert Design (Tim Dygert)

Technical Director: Jamie Ahlborn

Lighting Design: Ellen Bone

Costume Design: Candice Wynants

Costume Assistant: Molly Donohue

Stage Crew: Donovan Scott, Gary Parlanti

Set Painting: Roxy Mojica

Titles Operator: Emily Clements

## Orchestra

Violin I/Concert Master: Alex Dzyubinsky

Violin II: Ferenc Cseszko

Violin III: Patrick Hsieh

Viola: Dalton Davis

Cello: Lindsay Johnson

Bass: David T. Smith

Flute/Piccolo: Carmella Cao

Oboe/English Horn: Richard Kravchak

Clarinet I: Jay Savoy

Clarinet II/Bass Clarinet: Aki Oshima

Bassoon/Contrabassoon: Ashlea Sheridan

French Horn I: Chris Castellanos

French Horn II: Sandra Donatelle

Trumpet: Larry Ransom

Trombone: Hitomi Shogi

Percussion: Adam Dunson

Harp: Tara Skouson

Piano: Deborah Gordillo

# Our Heartfelt Thanks

We are deeply grateful to all of our community partners that collaborated with Opera Las Vegas to bring this West Coast premiere of *The House Without a Christmas Tree* to life:

Special thanks to Las Vegas Little Theatre for the generous loan of furniture and props for this production. We are extremely grateful for LVLT's ongoing support! <https://www.lvlt.org>

Grace Presbyterian Church and Lisa Elliott  
A Public Fit Theatre  
Leland Leger  
Andrew Kurcan-Stephenson  
Deborah Gordillo

And we thank you, our audience, for attending live opera.

# Summary

*Ricky Ian Gordon and Royce Vavrek's The House Without a Christmas Tree*, is based on Gail Rock's popular story and the beloved 1972 TV movie of the same name.

This heartwarming, family-friendly tale follows a precocious daughter, Addie, who struggles to understand her father's resentment about the holidays and longs at last for a beautiful Christmas tree like other families have, to "make her house look happy."

In this touching coming-of-age story, Addie learns empathy for her father, which is a key part of her growing up. Although she loves her father, all she seems to understand is his disapproval of her. Her grandmother helps her get a glimpse of her dad's painful memory of the profound loss of Addie's mother. Once Addie sees it, she takes positive action that changes all their lives for the better. Her father demonstrably feels her empathy, and they all change.

In short, everyone is healed by the transformative power of the Christmas season.

# Biographies



## **Cadie Jordan Bryan (“Addie” Mills)**

Praised for her “beautiful sound,” “free spirit,” and “silver high notes,” Louisiana-born soprano Cadie J. Bryan is quickly emerging as a captivating and versatile performer in a variety of repertoire. She recently came out of the Marion Roose Pullin Arizona Opera Studio where she performed mainstage leading and supporting roles including Musetta in *La bohème*, Susanna in *Le nozze di Figaro*, Bess in Craig Bohmler’s *Riders of the Purple Sage*, Maid in the Taliesin West Premier of Daron

Hagen’s *Shining Brow*, and Annina in *La traviata*. She spent three seasons with Des Moines Metro Opera during which which she made her mainstage debut as the Second Wood Sprite in the Emmy Award-winning production of *Rusalka* with director Chas Rader-Shieber. In the 2021 season at DMMO, she will appear as Clarine in Rameau’s *Platée* and Chlœ in *The Queen of Spades*. An avid recitalist and lover of art song, Cadie is an alumna of Ravinia’s Steans Music Institute for singers where she developed relationships with world-renowned coaches and collaborative pianists including Helmut Deutsch, Denise Massé, Cori Ellison, Stephen Blier, and JJ Penna.

Dedicated to promoting new works, other career highlights include Chan Parker in Daniel Schnyder’s and Bridgette Wimberly’s *Charlie Parker’s Yardbird* and Lucy in *Fellow Travelers* with Arizona Opera as well as Clara in Jake Heggie’s and Gene Scheer’s *It’s A Wonderful Life* at Indiana University. She received a Masters and a Performance Diploma from the Indiana University Jacobs School of Music under the tutelage of Heidi Grant Murphy and Kevin Murphy and her Bachelors from Louisiana State University.

# Biographies



## Gabriel Preisser (James Addison Mills III “Dad”)

Grammy Award winning baritone Gabriel Preisser has been praised by Opera News for his **“handsome voice, charismatic energy, and timbral allure”** and The New York Times called his performance as Lt.

Gordon **“wonderful.”** His resume includes over 40 operatic and musical theater roles including Danilo in *The Merry Widow* with Utah Festival Opera, Billy

Bigelow in *Carousel* with Minnesota

Orchestra, Figaro in *Il barbiere di Siviglia* with St Petersburg Opera, Dandini in *Cenerentola* with Opera Tampa, Escamillo in *Carmen* with Lyric Opera of the North, Belcore in *L’elisir d’amore* with Shreveport Opera, Le Mari in *LesMamelles de Tiresias* with Opera Parallele, Albert in *Werther* with Minnesota Opera, Mercutio in *Romeo et Juliette* with Opera Tampa and St. Petersburg Opera, Tommy in *Brigadoon* with Gulfshore Opera, Silvio in *Pagliacci* with Opera Naples, Harold Hill in *The Music Man* with Colorado Symphony, and Bob Baker in *Wonderful Town* with Skylark Opera to name a few. He has been praised for having a **“matinee idol’s charm and charisma,” “a beautiful, luscious baritone,”** and **“a compelling, commanding stage presence.”**



# Biographies



## **Taylor See (Adelaide Mills/Miss Thompson/ Helen Mills)**

Taylor See, a native of Las Vegas, Nevada, is recognized as the second place winner of the San Francisco Conservatory of Music (SFCM) Concerto Competition (2020), a finalist in the James Toland Vocal Arts Voice Competition (2020), a finalist in the Classical Singer (CS MUSIC) Voice Competition (2020), and a finalist in the New York Lyric Opera Competition (2017). She began her musical studies at the age of six playing piano, and she began singing at the age of fourteen.

Taylor will make her Opera Las Vegas debut in November 2021 singing the roles of Adelaide Mills/ Miss Thompson/ Helen Mills in the west coast premiere of Ricky Ian Gordon's *The House Without a Christmas Tree*. She has sung the roles of Contessa Almaviva in Mozart's *Le Nozze di Figaro* at SFCM (2019), Lucy in Menotti's *The Telephone* with Vegas City Opera (2021), Teofane in Handel's *Ottone* at SFCM (2020), Valencienne in Franz Lehár's *The Merry Widow* at the Utah Vocal Arts Academy Summer Opera Festival (2017), Lucy Brown in Kurt Weill's *The Threepenny Opera* at SFCM (2018), Julie in David Conte's *Firebird Motel* at SFCM (2020), Novizia in Puccini's *Suor Angelica* at SFCM (2017), and Vixen (cover) in Janáček's *The Cunning Little Vixen* at Opera Steamboat (2018).

She was the soprano soloist in Faure's *Requiem* at SFCM (2019), as well as the soprano soloist in Haydn's *The Seven Last Words of Christ* at Desert Spring United Methodist Church (2016).

Taylor is a graduate of the San Francisco Conservatory of Music (SFCM), earning her Bachelor of Music in Vocal Performance (2020) under the tutelage of César Ulloa. She will be pursuing her master's at SFCM this Fall 2021.

# Biographies



## Courtney Schwalbe (Carla Mae)

Courtney G. Schwalbe, mezzo-soprano, is a Mississippi native whose versatility as a performer has led her to successfully sing leading roles and solos in opera, musical theatre, and major choral works. Ms. Schwalbe has performed roles such as Delores in Frank Pesci's *Royal Flush*, Carmen and Mercédès in *Carmen*, Ruggiero in *Alcina*, the Contralto in *The Four Note Opera*, Maestra Delle Novizie in *Suor Angelica*, and Dorabella in *Così fan tutte*. In concert, she has performed solos in Mozart's *Great Mass in C Minor*, Handel's *Messiah*, Bach's *Mass in B Minor*, and Bernstein's *Missa Brevis*. Ms. Schwalbe holds a Master of Music in Vocal Performance and a Bachelor of Arts. She is currently working on her Doctorate of Musical Arts under the instruction of Alfonse Anderson at the University of Nevada Las Vegas. Ms. Schwalbe resides in Las Vegas with her husband, Michael, and her two dogs, Carmen and Romeo.

# Biographies



## Ashley Stone (Grandma Mills)

Ashley Stone received her Doctorate of Music degree in Vocal Performance of Indiana University where she studied with Costanza Cuccaro. Her most recent performances include Dame Quickly in *Falstaff*, The Old Lady in *Candide*, The Principessa in *Suor Angelica*, and Meg in Mark Adamo's *Little Women* with the IU Opera Theater. She received her masters degree in vocal performance and literature from the Eastman School of Music, where she studied with Katherine Ciesinski. While in Rochester, NY, she performed as the Principessa in Eastman Opera Theater's *Suor Angelica* and was a soloist with the Voices Choral Ensemble, the Gregory Kunde Choral, and the Eastman Chorale. Stone completed her undergraduate studies at Texas State University in San Marcos, her hometown. While in Texas, she was a frequent finalist in the NATS regional and district competitions, a Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions regional finalist, and performed as Kate in San Antonio Opera's production of *The Pirates of Penzance*. In 2006, she attended the Brevard Summer Music Festival, where she performed as Baroness Elsa Shraeder in *The Sound of Music*. The following summer at Opera in the Ozarks, she played the roles of Suzuki from *Madama Butterfly* and Cherubino from *Le nozze di Figaro*.

# Biographies



## **Joshua Horsch (Music Director and Conductor)**

Praised for conducting with "steady acumen and considerable aplomb" and "awesome control" (Opera Today), Joshua Horsch is an extremely versatile operatic and symphonic conductor. A two-time winner of the American Prize in Opera Conducting, Joshua serves as Music Director and Principal Conductor of Opera Las Vegas. Joshua's recent and upcoming conducting engagements include appearances with Atlanta Opera, Des Moines Metro Opera, Opera Orlando, Mobile Opera, Pacific Opera Project, Opera Las Vegas, Tri-Cities Opera, and Chicago Summer Opera. With a diverse repertoire of over fifty operas and a broad spectrum of orchestral and choral works, Joshua has recently held positions as a conductor and pianist/coach on the music staff of the St. Louis Symphony Orchestra, Michigan Opera Theatre, Florida Grand Opera, North Carolina Opera, Opera Saratoga, Pensacola Opera, the Boulder Philharmonic Orchestra, and the Newport Music Festival. Joshua studied conducting and piano at the University of Colorado Boulder, the Pennsylvania State University, and Ithaca College.

# Biographies



## **Kate St-Pierre (Director)**

Interdisciplinary artist, director, producer and experiential designer

Kate St-Pierre has a long history of creating award winning work.

Nominated in 2004 for a NY Drama Desk Award for Music, Kate was the original singer for Le Reve and lead vocal soloist in Ka, Cirque du Soleil. As a soloist Kate's voice can be heard in numerous film score, recordings and soundtracks including legendary film trailer composer, Thomas Bergersen.

An alumnus of the Lincoln Center Theater Directors' Lab and the Artistic Director of The LAB LV. Kate has worked and trained extensively with Anne Bogart and SITI Company and co-directed their workshop of their new translation of Euripides' Bacchae (which premiered at the Getty Villa, followed by performances at BAM and Guthrie Theater). Selected directing credits; (Pulitzer) The Royale, Dance Nation, She Kills Monsters, Anne Carson's Antigone, Schoenberg's Erwartung, Elaborate Entrance of Chad Deity, and The Wolves. Kate's 2019 rock concert adaptation of Shakespeare's A Midsummer Night's Dream was nominated 11x and won 9 awards by Broadway World including Best Director, Best Musical, Best Actor and Best Ensemble. In the last 2 years, Kate and her productions have been nominated over 19 times and won 12 awards.

Kate is on the National Endowment for the Arts advisory board for Shakespeare in American Communities, Kate was nominated for the Stage Directors and Choreographers Union's Zelda Fichandler Award, Roster Artist with the Nevada Arts Council, Roger's Art Loft Founding Board Member and StateraArts Ambassador, Adjunct Professor of directing at UNLV and the President of the Producers Alliance of Southern Nevada. Mom to Alex and Eden.

# Biographies



## **Ricky Ian Gordon (Composer)**

Ricky Ian Gordon (b. 1956 in Oceanside, NY) studied piano, composition and acting, at Carnegie Mellon University. After moving to New York City, he quickly emerged as a leading writer of vocal music that spans art song, opera, and musical theater. Mr. Gordon's songs have been performed and or recorded by such internationally renowned singers as Renee Fleming, Dawn Upshaw, Nathan Gunn, Nadine Sierra, Stephanie Blythe, Denyce Graves, Judy Collins, Kelli O'Hara, Audra

MacDonald, Kristin Chenoweth, Nicole Cabell, Frederica Von Stade, Andrea Marcovicci, Harolyn Blackwell, Betty Buckley, and the late Lorraine Hunt Lieberson, among many others.

# Biographies



## Royce Vavrek (Librettist)

**Royce Vavrek** is a Canada-born, Brooklyn-based librettist and lyricist who has been called “the indie Hofmannsthal” (*The New Yorker*) a “Metastasio of the downtown opera scene” (*The Washington Post*), “an exemplary creator of operatic prose” (*The New York Times*), and “one of the most celebrated and sought after librettists in the world” (*CBC Radio*). His opera “Angel’s Bone” with composer Du Yun was awarded the 2017 Pulitzer Prize for Music.

With composer Missy Mazzoli he wrote “Song from the Uproar,” premiered by Beth Morrison Projects in 2012, and subsequently seen in multiple presentations around the country. Their second opera, an adaptation of Lars von Trier’s “Breaking the Waves,” premiered at Opera Philadelphia, co-commissioned by Beth Morrison Projects, and directed by James Darrah to critical acclaim in September of 2016. The work won the 2017 Music Critics Association of North America award for Best New Opera and was nominated for Best World Premiere at the 2017 International Opera Awards. A new production premiered at the Edinburgh International Festival in the summer of 2019, produced by Scottish Opera and Opera Ventures, helmed by Tony Award-winning director Tom Morris and earned star Sydney Mancasola a coveted Herald Angel Award for her performance. Their next opera, an adaptation of Karen Russell’s short story “Proving Up,” was commissioned and presented by Washington National Opera, Opera Omaha and The Miller Theatre in 2018, was a finalist for the MCANA Best New Opera Award of that year. They are currently developing a grand opera for Opera Philadelphia and the Norwegian National Opera based on an original story by two-time Governor General’s Award-winning playwright Jordan Tannahill, as well as an adaptation of George Saunders’ Booker Prize-winning novel “Lincoln in the Bardo” for The Metropolitan Opera.

# Save the Dates

21, 22, 23 January 2022:

West Coast premiere of D.J. Sparr, Mark Campbell and Davis Miller's **Approaching Ali** | The Space

22, 23, 24 April 2022:

West Coast Premiere of Michael Torke and A.R. Gurney's **Strawberry Fields**, paired with Leonard Bernstein's **Trouble in Tahiti** | Horn Theatre, College of Southern Nevada

10, 12 June 2022:

Giacomo Puccini's **Tosca** | Judy Bayley Theatre, UNLV



# About Opera Las Vegas

Opera Las Vegas heads into 2021-22 — its 22nd year — of enriching the cultural landscape of Southern Nevada by strengthening our Las Vegas communities' relationship to the art of opera through accessible, engaging, and high caliber performance experiences.

## **People of Opera Las Vegas**

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