

Opera Las Vegas



Proving Up

Music by Missy Mazzoli

Libretto by Royce Vavrek

Based on the short story by Karen Russell

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Friday, 23 September, 7:30 pm

Saturday, 24 September 7:30 pm

Sunday, 25 September, 3:00 pm

Black Box Theatre, University of Nevada Las Vegas

Las Vegas, NV

This performance is 1 hours and 20 minutes long and is performed with no intermission

Welcome Letter from our General Director, Jim Sohre



It is exhilarating to celebrate the beginning of Opera Las Vegas' Twenty-Fourth Season with the events that comprise our Women Composers Festival spanning three weekends, all of which are part of our award-winning Living Composers and Librettists Initiative as recognized by the National Endowment for the Arts. Missy Mazzoli and Royce Vavrek's brooding one act piece, *Proving Up* (23-25 September), is a perfect start to the Halloween season with its spooky tale of hardship settling the Old West, staged in an immersive manner in UNLV's Black Box Theatre.

Emily Clements' *Letters to Lily* (30 September – 2 October), an LGBTQ coming of age story, is a World Premiere and a perfect fit for Pride celebrations, performed at The Center. Emily is a Las Vegas Academy and UNLV alum, and we are beyond excited to be staging a workshop version of (a very self-contained) Act I with orchestra. Audiences will get to participate in a post-show talk back. Human interest item: The opera is superbly orchestrated by her dad, Alex.

Rounding out the Festival is the West Coast premiere of *BelleSongs* (8 October), commissioned for soprano Kara Grover and composed by collaborative pianist Lois Henry. This song cycle will be part of the duo's recital at Southern Nevada Music, and will include other varied works by female composers, including Dr. Linda Lister, head of UNLV's Opera Program.

We hope you'll join us for all three and we wish you hours of enjoyment and enrichment as we stage these distinguished operatic works.

Best,

Jim Sohre, General Director

A handwritten signature in dark ink, consisting of several overlapping loops and a long horizontal stroke at the bottom, characteristic of Jim Sohre's signature.

Cast & Company

Proving Up

Music by Missy Mazzoli

Libretto by Royce Vavrek

Time: The 1870s

Place: Nebraska

Running Time: 1 hour and 20 minutes with no intermission

Miles Zegner: Dylan Morrongiello

Mrs. Johannes “Ma” Zegner: Christina Mancheni

Mr. Johannes “Pa” Zegner: Joseph Lodato

Little Zegner Sister: Kayla Wilkens

Taller Zegner Sister: Hilary Grace Taylor

The Sodbuster: William Meinert

Peter Zegner: Rafael Canizalez

Creative

Conductor: Joshua Horsch

Director: Audrey Chait

Production Pianist: Deborah Gordillo

Stage Manager: Connor McMillan

Costume Coordinator and Designer: Abby Stroot

Lighting Designer: Catherine M. Pratt

Surtitles Operator: Connor McMillan

Fight Coordinator: Sean Critchfield

Technical Director, UNLV Performing Arts Center: Lynn Ware

Cast & Company

Orchestra Featuring Members of the Las Vegas Philharmonic

Violin I

Kevork Mikaelian, Concert Master

Violin II

Shakeh Ghoukasian

Viola

Ian Long

Cello

Moonlight Tran

Bass

Paul Firak

Flute/Piccolo

Bonnie Buhler-Tanouye

Clarinet/Bass Clarinet

Jonathan Cannon

Bassoon/Contrabassoon

Lindsey Bartlett

Horn

Frank Joyce

Trumpet

Tom Wright

Percussion

Patrick Bowen

Harp

Tara Skouson

Keyboard

Deborah Gordillo

Our Heartfelt Thanks

Opera Las Vegas is indebted to
Chris and Anita Murray
for major funding support

These dear friends and generous supporters
Will be honored for their invaluable service
At a National Trustees Awards Dinner produced by
Opera America, the National Center in
New York City on 21 October 2022.
Congratulations, Chris and Anita, we wouldn't be here without you!

Special Gratitude to Our Wonderful Artist Home Hosts

Bob and Shirley Kramer
Wanda LaFollette
Julie and Sal Longo
Betty Miller
Chris and Anita Murray

Our Heartfelt Thanks

We are deeply grateful to the Las Vegas Philharmonic for being such wonderful collaborators during the 2022-2023 season and beyond!

With additional special thanks to our valued friends:

Spencer Baker
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William Schroder
Southern Nevada Music
The Center
UNLV Performing Arts Center
UNLV Black Box Theatre House and Technical Staff

Summary

Proving Up is an opera about the American Dream, told through the story of Nebraskan homesteaders in the 1870s. A family dreams of "proving up" and obtaining the deed to the land they've settled. They obsessively list the requirements of the Homestead Act: five years of harvest, a sod house dwelling, and perhaps the most elusive element — a glass window. With their eldest son incapacitated, Ma and Pa Zegner send their youngest living child Miles on a mission to share the valuable commodity with their distant neighbors who are expecting a visit from a government inspector. Miles mounts his gray mare with the window wrapped in burlap and gallops across the land. The elements, natural and otherwise, have other plans, and Miles comes face to face with a strange man who turns out to be the ghost of a neighboring farmer, driven mad by the requirements of "proving up." The willowy figure knows all too well the cost of the American Dream, and the window soon becomes a broken mirror reflecting great tragedy.

Ms. Mazzoli conjures aural bleakness with an uncanny, confident mixture of instrumental savagery and eerie lightness. The shadowy sound of guitars drifts through the music; chaotic refractions of hoedown fiddling occasionally explode within a landscape of jittery unease. Mazzoli's colorful, fragmentary, and evocative contemporary score perfectly complements Vavrek's terse, cogent texts.

Biographies



Miles Zegner: Dylan Morrongiello

Known for his “agile character tenor” and “over-the-top committed” portrayals, tenor Dylan Anthony Morrongiello will embark on an exciting 2021-2022 season as he joins the rosters of the Lyric Opera of Chicago covering Monostatos in *The Magic Flute*, and the Metropolitan Opera making his debut singing the Dean in *Cinderella* and covering Don Curzio and Don Basilio in *Le nozze di Figaro*, Player 2 in Brett Dean’s *Hamlet*, and Sellem in *The Rake’s Progress*. This fall, he will join Opera Las Vegas as Miles Zegner in *Proving Up*, and in the spring of 2023, he will make his company debut with Arizona Opera as Monostatos in *Die Zauberflöte*. Mr. Morrongiello’s recent scheduled engagements included his debut with Opera Theater of Saint Louis where he was scheduled to perform the role of Dr. Blind in *Die Fledermaus* (COVID19) and cover the roles of Elder Hayes and Little Bat in *Floyd’s Susannah* (COVID19).

Biographies



“Ma” Zegner: Christina Mancheni

Christina Mancheni, soprano, is a current doctoral student at the University of Nevada Las Vegas. Christina was recently a featured artist in the 34th St. Bart’s Music Festival, under the direction of Maestro Steven Mercurio. Recent roles include Fanchette (*The Sea Cadet*), Adele (*Die Fledermaus*), Salomea (*Frederica*) and Nichette (*Madeleine*) all with the Concert Operetta Theater. She also was featured as the soprano soloist in the *Brahms’ Requiem*, with the Richmond Symphony Orchestra. During her studies at Miami University, she performed the roles of Sister Genovieffa (*Suor Angelica*), Nella (*Gianni Schicchi*) and The Fairy God Mother (*Cendrillon*). Christina also performed the title role in *Alcina*, as well as Despina (*Così Fan Tutte*) and Papagena (*The Magic Flute*) with the UNLV Opera Theater. Christina won first place in the prestigious New Jersey State Opera Alfredo Silipigni Vocal Competition. She has also won awards from the Gerda Lissner Foundation as well as from The National Association of Teachers Singing.

Biographies



“Pa” Zegner: Joseph Lodato

Italian-American Baritone, Joe Lodato, “an artist the world is excited to see,” is a top contender for the Verdi Baritone repertoire in the international marketplace. Having sung the title role of Rigoletto, Amonasro in Aida, Renato in Un Ballo in Maschera, Giorgio Germont in La Traviata, and Peter in Hansel und Gretel to great acclaim, he has diligently prepared many of the core roles in the fash with the world’s top maestri. Upcoming engagements in 2022 include appearances with Boheme OperaNJ, Opera at Florham, and Dikson in New Amsterdam Opera’s production of Boidelieu’s La Dame Blanche. His voice has been described as possessing a “stunningly beautiful timbre, Italianate snarl, mixed with a controlled passion and deep understanding of the repertoire”, proving further that this is an artist poised to breakthrough in a major way.

Mr. Lodato was educated at Westminster Choir College, the University of Miami, and Salzburg College, and subsequently completed Young Artist training under the auspices of the Metropolitan Opera, Sarasota Opera, and Aspen Music Festival. He has been awarded top prizes by the Metropolitan Opera National Council, Los Angeles Opera, Florida Grand Opera, Aspen Music Festival, and Premiere Opera Foundation. Equally adept and attuned to the musical theater and jazz idioms, Mr. Lodato has been seen in performance with world-renowned artists such as Tony Award winner Betty Buckley, jazz icon Lea DeLaria, and award-winning composer and pianist John Musto.

An aggressive champion of song and new works, Joe has premiered many works including the cycle Dear Theo based on the letters of Vincent Van Gogh, composed by Ben Moore; he has also appeared in concert performance with composers Jake Heggie and Ricky Ian Gordon, presenting their works to great acclaim.

Biographies



Little Zegner Sister: Kayla Wilkens

With a passion for musical theatre and opera, soprano Kayla Wilkens is a versatile young artist originally from Salem, Oregon. An enthusiastic supporter of developing new works, she has performed leading roles in the ASCAP award-winning premiere readings of *Persephone Unplugged* (*Persephone*) and Jonathan Reid Gealt's *Dust and Shadow* (*Miss Monk*), in the World Music Award-winning premiere of the opera *O Pioneers!* (*Marie Shabata*), John Muehleisen's *Pietà* (soprano soloist) and in Libby Larsen's *Moabit Sonnets* (soprano soloist). Her featured roles in new works include *Vía Láctea* (Peggy cover/featured soloist) with OperaBend, the American debut of Robert Owen's opera *Culture, Culture!* (featured coloratura) international live webcast, and the national prize-winning full orchestra premiere of Mary Zimmerman's adaptation of Bernstein's *Candide* (Cunegonde cover).

Other recent productions include performing as a featured soloist in concerts with Tony-winning composers Steven Lutvak and Stephen Bray. Her recent roles include *Into the Woods* (*Rapunzel/Cinderella's Mother*) with Musical Theater Heritage, *L'Etoile* (*Princess Laoula*) with Sin City Opera, *Sweeney Todd* (*Johanna*) with OmniArts, and in the tour of *The Drowsy Chaperone* (*Janet Van De Graaff*) with the Stage Theater. Kayla has also performed as a featured soloist in the original historical revues *Songs of the Great War* at Musical Theater Heritage and in the Abraham Lincoln Birthday Celebration production of *Civil War Voices*. Other favorite roles include *La Fée* in *Cendrillon*, *Belle* in *Beauty and the Beast*, *Adina* in *L'elisir d'amore*, and *Adele* in *A Man of No Importance*.

Biographies



Taller Zegner Sister: Hilary Grace Taylor

Hilary Grace Taylor, mezzo-soprano, is a native of Dallas and is becoming known for her versatility of repertoire and love of contemporary music. Most recently Hilary performed Indiana Elliot (Mother of Us All) with Chautauqua Opera and was a Young Artist in their 2020 virtual season. For three seasons she was an Education Outreach Young Artist with The Dallas Opera and recently recorded and filmed the role of Sappho in Mark Adamo's Lysistrata with Pittsburgh Festival Opera.

Hilary was a Semifinalist in the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions, a Finalist in the Mildred Miller International Voice Competition, a Semi-Finalist in the TCO NEXT: A Virtual Vocal Competition, the First Place Winner of the Lewisville Lake Symphony International Voice Competition, and a winner of the University of North Texas Concerto Competition. She has debuted a number of opera roles including Dorabella (Cosi fan tutte) and Principessa (Suor Angelica) with Varna International, Giovanna (Rigoletto) with the Sacramento Symphony and Opera, and appeared as the mezzo soloist in the Verdi Requiem at the Durham Cathedral in Durham, England at the Brass Band Festival.

Hilary holds degrees from the University of Texas at Austin and the University of North Texas. With UNT Opera she debuted Donna Elvira (Don Giovanni), Desirée Armfeldt (A Little Night Music), Madame de Croissy (Dialogues des Carmélites), Dritte Dame (Die Zauberflöte), Martha (Faust), Mrs. Jones (Street Scene), Regina (Regina) and Gertrude Stein (After Life by Tom Cipullo) and will return this spring to perform Carmen (Carmen). While pursuing her DMA, Hilary served as a Teaching Fellow in Vocal Studies at the University of North Texas and is currently an Adjunct Instructor of Voice at Texas Woman's University.

Biographies



The Sodbuster: William Meinert

Praised for his “rich vibrant bass” (Opera Today) and “charismatic [and] exhilarating comic flair” (Boston Musical Intelligencer), William Meinert recently made his European debut with Tiroler Festspiele Erl as **Mordred** in *Le roi Arthus* and joined the Internationale Meistersinger Akademie in Neumarkt i.d.OPf., Germany. In 2021 he joined Atlanta Opera as a Studio Artist, debuting as **Curio** in *Giulio Cesare*, and returned to Santa Fe Opera, where he performed **Snug** in *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* and covered **Gremin** in *Eugene Onegin* as an Apprentice Artist. He also debuted with Dallas Opera as the **Imperial**

Commissioner in *Madama Butterfly* and joined the National Symphony Orchestra as bass soloist for Handel’s *Messiah*, the NEC Philharmonia & Symphonic Choir for Shostakovich’s Symphony No. 13 “Babi Yar,” and the American Bach Soloists. First Prize Winner in the 2022 Shreveport Opera Mary Jacobs Smith Singer of the Year Competition and the 2019 Houston Grand Opera Eleanor McCollum Competition, William is a recent graduate of the Cafritz Young Artist program at Washington National Opera, where he performed **Sarastro** in *The Magic Flute* and the **Secret Police Agent** in *The Consul*. He has sung **Commendatore** in Mozart’s *Don Giovanni* (Baltimore Concert Opera), **Commentator** in Derrick Wang’s *Scalia/Ginsburg* (Opera North), **Vodník** in *Rusalka* (Madison Opera), and **Le Duc** in Gounod’s *Roméo et Juliette* (Pensacola Opera). As a Santa Fe Opera Apprentice Artist, he covered **Hjarne** and **Corbin** in the world premiere of Poul Ruders’ *The Thirteenth Child*. He was scheduled to return to the 2020 Santa Fe Opera Apprentice Artist program to sing **Second Armored Man** in *Die Zauberflöte* and cover **Vodník** in Dvořák’s *Rusalka*. He has been featured in Beethoven’s Symphony No. 9 with Baltimore Choral Arts Society, Monteverdi’s *Vespers of 1610* with American Bach Soloists, and Handel’s *Messiah* with Washington Bach Consort. A Master of Music graduate of Peabody Institute, William is also co-founder of Parea Series—a digital performance series combining music, innovative theater, and lively discussion—in which he is not only a principal performer but also responsible for filming, video editing, and lighting design.

Biographies



Peter Zegner: Rafael Canizalez

Rafael is a fourth year student at UNLV majoring in Theatre Studies and Health Care Administration. Most recent credits include Hero in LVLT's *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum* and William Barfee in *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee*. Other recent works include the production of UNLV Second Stage's 5th season, direction of *Ordinary Days* by Adam Gwon, and scenic design and construction for productions of *Exit Laughing* and *Les Miserables*. An all-around

lover of theatre, Rafael is excited to join this cast and branch out into a new world of performance.

Biographies



Director: Audrey Chait

Audrey Chait is a director, writer, and producer specializing in opera and multi-disciplinary performance art.

In the 2020-2021 season, Ms. Chait directs the world premiere of *Marie Begins* for Westminster Opera Theater (online release), *The Telephone* for Parea Recital Series (online release), *Gallantry* for Northern Kentucky University, *L'inganno felice* for Opera Southwest, and *Don Pasquale* for Opera Las Vegas. In the 2019-2020 season, Ms. Chait directed *The Bartered Bride* and the North American premiere of *Dark Star Requiem*, both at

CCM, and *La fille du regiment* for Winter Opera St. Louis. In summer 2021, Ms. Chait joins the prestigious Merola Opera Program.

Previous directing credits include Bolcom's *Dinner at Eight*, and the Bach *St. John Passion*, both at CCM, *Scalia/Ginsburg* with Opera North, *The Magic Flute* (Outreach Tour) at Kentucky Opera, and *La cenerentola* at Opera Las Vegas. Her production of *L'elisir d'amore* at Winter Opera St. Louis in 2018 was nominated for a St. Louis Theater Critics Circle Award. Ms. Chait's assistant director credits include Santa Fe Opera, the Glimmerglass Festival, Carnegie Hall, Portland Opera, and Opera Colorado.

In her prior career as a producer and stage manager, Ms. Chait specialized in large-scale site-specific theatrical projects, including several collaborations with On Site Opera: at Madame Tussaud's Wax Museum, the Cotton Club, and the Fabbri Mansion. She also oversaw a multi-venue TEDx conference produced at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. As an administrator, she worked for two years at the Marcus Institute for Vocal Arts at the Juilliard School.

Ms. Chait holds a BA in Literary Arts from Brown University, where she studied playwriting and performance art with Erik Ehn. While at Brown, she was selected to travel to Berlin to meet with students in Daniel Barenboim's West-Eastern Divan Orchestra. In 2009, she directed her first opera and never looked back.

Her writing (fiction, poetry, and plays) tends toward magical realism, broad comedy, and often incorporates operatic elements in both style and content.

Biographies



Conductor: Joshua Horsch

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,

Greensboro Opera, Mobile Opera, Pacific Opera Project, Opera Las Vegas, and Tri-Cities Opera. With a diverse repertoire of over sixty 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, Austin Opera, 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



Composer: Missy Mazzoli

Grammy-nominated composer Missy Mazzoli was recently deemed “one of the more consistently inventive, surprising composers now working in New York” (The New York Times) and “Brooklyn’s post-millennial Mozart” (Time Out New York), and has been praised for her “apocalyptic imagination” (Alex Ross, The New Yorker). Mazzoli is the Mead Composer-in-Residence at the Chicago Symphony Orchestra, and her music has been performed all over the world by the Kronos Quartet, eighth blackbird, pianist Emanuel Ax, Opera Philadelphia, Scottish Opera, LA Opera, Cincinnati Opera, New York

City Opera, Chicago Fringe Opera, the Detroit Symphony, the LA Philharmonic, the Minnesota Orchestra, the American Composers Orchestra, JACK Quartet, cellist Maya Beiser, violinist Jennifer Koh, pianist Kathleen Supové, Dublin’s Crash Ensemble, the Sydney Symphony and many others. In 2018 she made history when she became one of the two first women (along with composer Jeanine Tesori) to be commissioned by the Metropolitan Opera. That year she was also nominated for a Grammy in the category of “Best Classical Composition” for her work *Vespers for Violin*, recorded by violinist Olivia De Prato.

Missy attended the Yale School of Music, the Royal Conservatory of the Hague and Boston University. She has studied with (in no particular order) David Lang, Louis Andriessen, Martin Bresnick, Aaron Jay Kernis, Martijn Padding, Richard Ayres, John Harbison, Charles Fussell, Martin Amlin, Marco Stroppa, Ladislav Kubik, Louis DeLise and Richard Cornell.

Her music is published by G. Schirmer.

Biographies



Librettist: Royce Vavrek

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

Letters to Lily by Emily Clements: September 30 - October 2, 2022

A Capacity for Evil by Evan Snyder and John Riesen: January
27-29, 2023

Approaching Ali by D.J. Sparr, Davis Miller, and Mark Campbell:
March 18-19, 2023

La traviata by Giuseppe Verdi and Francesco Maria Piave: June
9-11, 2023

Information and tickets available at www.operalasvegas.com

About Opera Las Vegas

Opera Las Vegas heads into 2022-23 — its 24th 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.

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