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LA FILLE DU RÉGIMENT

Gaetano Donizetti

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GENA (UNGERER) RANGEL



August 1, 1940 – June 18, 2026

May she rest in peace & may Light Perpetual shine upon her.

❖ IN MEMORIAM ❖

GENA RANGEL

· AUGUST 1, 1940 – JUNE 18, 2026 ·

*Beloved art, in how many a bleak hour,
when I am enmeshed
in life's tumultuous round,
have you kindled my heart to the warmth of love,
and borne me away to a better world!*

*Often a sigh, escaping from your harp,
a sweet, celestial chord
has revealed to me
a heaven of happier times.
Beloved art, for this I thank you!**



GENA (UNGERER) RANGEL was born in McLean, VA, to Virginia Dolan (Joplin, MO) and Herman G. Ungerer (Geneva, NY). At an early age, Gena exhibited an affinity for music and song, as well as high level verbal skills. Gena had a strong connection with the Finger Lakes Region as she and her family would frequently spend summers and holidays in both the Lyons and Geneva areas, as her father's family (Ungerer and Braconier) resided there. She received a full academic scholarship to attend Vassar College in 1957 (all women at that time), where she majored in Music and Spanish.

After graduating, Gena moved to New York City, where she embarked on a career in Music and Teaching. She joined the Arcadia Nova Chamber Ensemble and also became a permanent choir member at the Church of the Ascension (NYC, Greenwich Village) with Vernan DeTar. She became certified to teach High School and got a job teaching at the La Guardia High School for the Performing Arts (NYC) [the "Fame" school]. She also married John Rangel (Ponce, Puerto Rico) and had three sons, and picked up a fabulous stepdaughter in the deal. After retiring from her teaching job in NYC, she made her final full time move to Geneva in 2005.

Gena passed away doing what she loved most: preparing for a new show, working with musicians, stage technicians, set designers, and with the incredibly dedicated, warm, hardworking, appreciative and patient people on the board of the Geneva Light Opera (GLO), the Smith Opera House, along with the wonderful, exuberantly, generous and passionate members in the Geneva community. GLO's production of *The Daughter of the Regiment* is dedicated to her memory. ❖

* "An die Musik" – Franz von Schubert; English translation © Richard Wigmore

❖ LA FILLE DU RÉGIMENT ❖

PREMIER: TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 11TH, 1840

❖

NOT EVERYTHING WENT ACCORDING TO PLAN when Gaetano Donizetti introduced his opéra comique *La fille du régiment* (The Daughter of the Regiment) to the general public on 11 February 1840. The “Salle de la Bourse” was filled to the brim, but the lead tenor Claude-Marie-Mécène Marié de l’Isle, who fortunately used the stage name Marié, had a decidedly off-night. Frequently singing off-pitch, Marié almost caused the collapse of the opera with Donizetti in the audience.



The French tenor Mécène Marié de l’Isle
(1811–1879)

Since the most famous aria “*Ah! mes amis*,” (Ah! my friends) requires the tenor to sing no fewer than eight high Cs, with a ninth frequently added, a struggling Marié certainly didn’t help matters. However, there was an additional reason why the opera came under fire, and that reason was presented in a highly negative review by the French critic and composer Hector Berlioz.

Berlioz claimed that neither the public nor the composer could take this opera seriously:

“... with two major scores for the Opéra, ‘Les martyrs’ and ‘Le duc d’Albe,’ two others at the Théâtre de la Renaissance, ‘Lucia de Lammermoor’ and ‘L’ange de Nisida,’ two at the Opéra-Comique, ‘La fille du régiment’ and another whose title is still unknown, and yet another for the Théâtre-Italien, will have been written or transcribed in one year by the same composer! Donizetti treats us like a conquered country; it is a veritable invasion. One can no longer speak of the opera houses of Paris, but only of the opera houses of Monsieur Donizetti.”

Indeed, Donizetti had been a busy man during his residence in Paris between 1838 and 1840. He was actually working on the Italian opera *Poliuto* for the Paris Opéra, but as that production was delayed, he decided to write the music for *La fille du Régiment*, composed to a French libretto by Jules-Henri Vernoy de Saint-Georges and Jean-François Bayard. Unlike most operas, which are based on pre-existing literary or historical sources, *La fille du régiment* features an original story developed by the librettists.

Featuring youthful rebellion, family drama, and tender young love, *La fille du Régiment* is one of the greatest operatic comedies ever written. It is set in the Austrian Alps and tells the story of Marie, a young orphan raised by a regiment of French soldiers. However, the man of her dreams turns out to be a rebel fighting against her French family, and she has to overcome war and disapproval, and even the discovery of her own noble birth to make the happy ending come true.

Marie was abandoned on a battlefield as a baby. A French regiment found and raised her, and Marie thinks of the soldiers as her family. Now an adult, Marie has recently fallen in love with Tonio, a peasant from a little Tyrolean village. Unfortunately, the French are fighting a war with Tyrol, and Sulpice, the sergeant of Marie's regiment, is furious that Marie has fallen in love with an enemy. Tonio decides to join the regiment so that Marie can marry him. In the meantime, the Marquise of Berkenfield is traveling through Tonio's village on the way to her country home.

She asks Sulpice to help her cross the war zone safely, and she discovers that Marie is her long-lost niece. She decides to take Marie away to live at her castle, but she harbors a secret. Marie is not her niece but her daughter born out of wedlock. As such, Marie cannot inherit the Marquise's fortune, and it is arranged for her to marry the son of the amazingly wealthy Duchess of Krakenthorp. The wedding ceremony is interrupted by the arrival of Sulpice and Tonio, and when the Marquise sees how happy Marie and Tonio are together, she gives them permission to get married.

After the initial hesitation, the French capital surrendered to Donizetti's compositional charms. The score bristles with infectious melodies and a hearty mixture of military tunes and moments of pathos. And while the plot may be clichéd, Donizetti's music certainly isn't. With customary elegance in regard to melody and structure, the work quickly rises above a vulgar farce.

Scholars have suggested that Marie's F minor-F major air in the finale to Act 1 stands as one of Donizetti's greatest accomplishments in communicating genuine, deeply felt emotion.



The complete ease and naturalness of Donizetti's setting of the French text was universally admired. Tonio's air to the Marchioness, "Pour me rapprocher de Marie," shows an equal refinement of sentiment and distinction of melody. Grateful writing for the voice is in evidence throughout the score, and during the 19th century, the Italian version was more popular in England and the USA. The opera truly re-entered the repertoire around the second half of the 20th century and has since become part of the standard repertoire. ❖

[FROM: ARTICLE BY GEORG PREDOTA – INTERLUDE ONLINE MAGAZINE; February 11th, 2024; accessed 07/10/2026 – <https://interlude.hk/on-this-day-11-february-donizetti-la-fille-du-regiment-was-premiered/>]

LIBRETTISTS: JEAN-FRANÇOIS-ALFRED BAYARD & HENRI DE SAINT-GEORGES



❖ PLOT SYNOPSIS ❖

TIME: THE NAPOLEONIC WARS, EARLY 19TH CENTURY

PLACE: THE SWISS TYROL

ACT I

War is raging in the Tyrols and the Marquise of Berkenfield, traveling in the area, is alarmed to the point of needing smelling salts to be administered by her faithful steward, Hortensius. While a chorus of villagers express their fear, the Marquise does the same: "Pour une femme de mon nom" / "For a lady of my family, what a time, alas, is wartime". As the French are seen moving away, all express relief. Suddenly, provoking the fear of the remaining women, who scatter, Sergeant Sulpice of the Twenty-First Regiment of the French army (in the Italian version it is the Eleventh) arrives and assures everyone that the regiment will restore order.

Marie, the vivandière (canteen girl) of the Regiment enters, and Sulpice is happy to see her (*duet*: Sulpice and Marie: "Mais, qui vient? Tiens, Marie, notre fille" / "But who is this? Well, well, if it isn't our daughter Marie"). After he questions her about a young man she has been seen with, she identifies him as Tonio, a Tyrolean (in the Italian version: Swiss). At that moment, Tonio is brought in as a prisoner because he has been seen prowling around the camp. Marie saves him from the soldiers, who demand that he die, by explaining that he saved her life when she nearly fell while mountain-climbing. All toast Tonio, who pledges allegiance to France, and Marie is encouraged to sing the regimental song (*aria*: "Chacun le sait, chacun le dit ... Le beau vingt-et-unième!" / "Everyone knows it, everyone says it ... The beautiful 21st"). Sulpice leads the soldiers off, taking Tonio with them, but he runs back to join her. She quickly tells him that he must gain the approval of her "fathers": the soldiers of the Regiment, who found her on the battlefield as an abandoned baby and adopted her. He proclaims his love for her (*aria*, then love duet with Marie: "Depuis l'instant où, dans mes bras" / "Ever since that moment when you fell and / I caught you, all trembling in my arms"), and the couple express their love for each other.

At that point, Sulpice returns, surprising the young couple, who leave. The Marquise arrives with Hortensius. Initially afraid of the soldier, she is calmed by him. The Marquise explains that they are trying to return to her

castle and asks for an escort. Hearing the name Berkenfield, Sulpice immediately recognizes it from a letter found with Marie as an infant. It is discovered that Marie is actually the Marquise's long-lost niece. Marie returns and is surprised to be introduced to her aunt. The Marquise commands that Marie accompany her and learn to be a proper lady. Marie bids farewell to her beloved regiment just as Tonio enters announcing that he has enlisted in their ranks (*aria*: "Ah! mes amis, quel jour de fête" / "Ah, my friends, what an exciting day"). When he proclaims his love for Marie, the soldiers are horrified, but agree to his pleading for her hand. However, they tell him that she is about to leave with her aunt (Marie, *aria*: "Il faut partir" / "I must leave you!"). In a choral finale, she leaves with the Marquise and Tonio is enraged.

(Intermission – 25 minutes)

ACT 2

Marie has been living in the Marquise's castle for several months. In a conversation with Sulpice, the Marquise describes how she has sought to modify Marie's military manners and make her a lady of fashion, suitable to be married to her nephew, the Duke of Crakenthorp. Although reluctant, Marie has agreed and Sulpice is asked to encourage her. Marie enters and is asked to learn a properly decorous piece of music pressed on her by the Marquise. But Marie soon prefers more martial music when encouraged by Sulpice and sings their regimental song instead. The Marquise sits down at the piano and still attempts to work through her piece with Marie, who becomes more and more distracted and, along with Sulpice, takes up the regimental song anyway.

Marie is left alone (*aria*: "Par le rang et par l'opulence" / "They have tried in vain to dazzle me"). As she is almost reconciled to her fate, she hears martial music and is joyously happy (*cabaletta*: "Oh! transport! oh! douce ivresse" / "Oh bliss! oh ecstasy!"), and the regiment arrives. With it is Tonio, now an officer. The soldiers express their joy at seeing Marie, and Marie, Tonio and Sulpice are joyfully reunited (*trio*, Marie, Sulpice, Tonio: "Tous les trois réunis" / "We three are reunited"). Tonio says he has just learned a secret, via his uncle the burgermeister, that he cannot reveal.

The Marquise enters, horrified to see soldiers. Tonio asks the Marquise for Marie's hand, explaining that he risked his life for Marie (*aria*, Tonio: "Pour me rapprocher de Marie, je m'enrôlai, pauvre soldat" / "In order to

woo Marie, I enlisted in the ranks"), but the Marquise dismisses him scornfully. Tonio reveals that he knows that the Marquise never had a niece. She orders him to leave and Marie to return to her chambers; after they leave, the Marquise confesses the truth to Sulpice: Marie is her own illegitimate daughter. Under the circumstances, Sulpice promises that Marie will agree to her mother's wishes.

The Duchess of Crakenthorp, her son the groom-to-be, and the wedding entourage arrive at the Marquise's castle. Marie enters with Sulpice, who has told her that the Marquise is her mother. Marie embraces her and decides she must obey. But at the last minute the soldiers of the Regiment storm in (*chorus*: soldiers, then Tonio: "Au secours de notre fille" / "Our daughter needs our help") and reveal that Marie was a canteen girl. The wedding guests are offended by that, but then impressed when Marie sings of her debt to the soldiers (*aria*, Marie: "Quand le destin, au milieu de la guerre" / "When fate, in the confusion of war, threw me, a baby, into their arms"). The Marquise is deeply moved, admits she is Marie's mother, and gives her consent to Marie and Tonio's marriage, amid universal rejoicing (*final chorus*: "Salut à la France!" / "Hurrah for France! For happy times!").

[SYNOPSIS Archived 3 September 2014 at the Wayback Machine in part from the Metropolitan Opera as well as the booklet accompanying the 1967 Decca recording. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/La_fille_du_régiment#cite_note-FOOTNOTEOsborne1994273-41. EMENDATION: 4th paragraph revised by Geoffrey Riggs for this production by the GLO.]



◆ PRODUCTION ◆

GENA RANGEL (*in pace requiescat*).....ARTISTIC & GENERAL DIRECTOR

DOUGLAS MARTIN CONDUCTOR

STEVE VAUGHAN STAGE DIRECTOR

CAST:

TONIO.....Jingfu Zhang

SULPICE Brian Keith Johnson

MARIE.....Dawna Rae Warren

MARQUISE Milica NikcevicHORTENSIUS Alex Adams-Leytes

CORPORAL **Josh Bassette**

DUCHESS Anneke Honor

PEASANT/NOTARY Michael Brown

PRAYER (ACT 1)..... **Suzanne Murphy, Alejandra Toledo,**

Kathryn Borden, Anneke Honor, Isa Apodaca

TYROLEANS (ACT 1).....Michael Brown, Jon Christiano,

Kathryn Borden, Josh Bassette, Ian Yates, Isa Apodaca

GUESTS (ACT 2).....Suzanne Murphy, Alejandra Toledo,

Kathryn Borden, Ian Yates, Trevor Burrall, Isa Apodaca

UNDERSTUDIES (*covers*):

TONIO Patrick Bessenbacher

SULPICE Raphael Sacks

MARIE Alejandra Toledo

MAROUISE Anneke Honor

HORTENSIUS Michael Brown

CORPORAL **Jason Rober**

DUCHESS Kath Borden

PEASANT/NOTARY Ion Christiano

SOLDIERS CHORUS:

Michael T. Brown

Josh Bassette

Jon Christiano

Jason Rober

Patrick Bessenbacher

Raphael Sacks

Nathan Strock

❖ ORCHESTRA ❖

VIOLIN 1.....	David Brickman , <i>Concertmaster</i>
	Anchi Lin , Edgar Tumajyan , Ellen Stokoe
VIOLIN 2.....	Margaret Leenhouts , Heidi Brodwin , Sophia Klin
VIOLA.....	Bob Donowick , Grant Rieke
CELLO.....	Jan Cone , Svetlana Garitselova
DOUBLE BASS.....	Spencer Philips
FLUTE/PICCOLO.....	Martha Grener
OBOE/ENGLISH HORN.....	Erica Howard
A/Bb CLARINET.....	Kenneth Grant
BASSOON.....	Megan Neuman
FRENCH HORN.....	Alex Shuhan , Madison Warren
TRUMPET.....	Jared Wallis
PERCUSSION.....	Anthony Calabrese , Olly Bangia
LIBRARIAN.....	Anchi Lin
PERSONNEL MANAGER.....	Margaret Leenhouts

❖ MUSIC & PRODUCTION STAFF ❖

STAGE DIRECTOR.....	Steve Vaughan
CONDUCTOR.....	Douglas Martin
REHEARSAL PIANIST.....	Hannah Harnest
STAGE MANAGER & ASSISTANT DIRECTOR.....	Rose Hays
ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGER.....	Nikki Fae Dahlen
TECHNICAL DIRECTOR.....	Bruce Purdy
COSTUMES.....	Sheila Park
CASTING DIRECTOR.....	Geoffrey Riggs
CHOREOGRAPHER/COMPANY MANAGER.....	Natalia Hulse
CASTING/CHORUS.....	Andrea McGaugh
BACKDROPS.....	Robert Stivanello
SUPERTITLES.....	Meredith Beckley



❖ ABOUT THE ARTISTS ❖



JINGFU ZHANG, *Tonio*

BRIAN KEITH JOHNSON, *Sulpice*

DAWNA RAE WARREN, *Marie*

MILICA NIKCEVIC, *Marquise*

ALEX ADAMS-LEYTES, *Hortensius*

JOSH BASSETTE, *Corporal*

ANNEKE HONOR, *Cover Marquise, Duchess, Prayer (Act 1)*

MICHAEL T. BROWN,
Peasant/Notary/Tyroleans (Act 1), Cover Hortensius, Soldiers Chorus

ALEJANDRA TOLEDO, *Cover Marie, Prayer (Act 1), Guests (Act 2)*

SUZANNE V. MURPHY, *Prayer (Act 1), Guests (Act 2)*

JON CHRISTIANO,
Tyroleans (Act 1), Cover Peasant/Notary, Soldiers Chorus

IAN YATES, *Tyroleans (Act 1), Guests (Act 2)*

ISA APODACA, *Prayer (Act 1), Tyrolean (Act 1), Guests (Act 2)*

KATHRYN BORDEN,
Cover Dutchess, Prayer (Act 1), Tyrolean (Act 1), Guests (Act 2)

JASON ROBER, *Cover Corporal, Soldiers Chorus*

TREVOR BURRALL, *Guests (Act 2)*

PATRICK BESSENBACHER, *Cover Tonio, Soldiers Chorus*

NATHAN STROCK, *Soldiers Chorus*

RAPHAEL SACKS, *Cover Sulpice, Soldiers Chorus*

JINGFU ZHANG, *Tonio*

[TENOR]

Chinese lyric tenor Jingfu Zhang is delighted to make his North American professional debut this summer with Geneva Light Opera. A graduate of Carnegie Mellon University, he earned his Master's degree in Opera Performance under the tutelage of internationally renowned mezzo-soprano Marianne Cornetti. This season, Jingfu covered the role of Tito in *La Clemenza di Tito* and performed Tapioca in Chabrier's *L'Étoile* with Carnegie Mellon Opera. During the 2024–2025 season, he sang major scenes in an opera gala at the prestigious Carnegie Music Hall, joined Opera San Antonio as a studio artist performing scenes as Fenton in Verdi's *Falstaff*, and completed a summer European tour that included recitals at the historic Theatre Manoel in Malta and the role of Prince Charmant in Massenet's *Cendrillon* with the Berlin Opera Academy. Jingfu began singing at a young age as a boy soprano soloist, performing internationally and winning numerous competitions. Before pursuing singing full-time, he enjoyed a successful career in hotel development across the Asia-Pacific region. Jingfu holds a Bachelor's degree in Hospitality Management from Cornell University, with minors in music, information science, and real estate, and an MBA with a concentration in Real Estate Development from Columbia University.





BRIAN KEITH JOHNSON, *Sulpice*

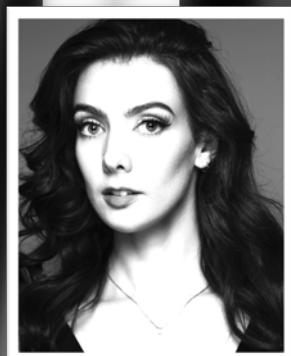
[BARITONE]

Brian Keith Johnson has performed many roles in opera from Figaro in *il barbiere di Siviglia* to Ford in *Falstaff*. As a member of Actors' Equity Association, he has also performed a variety of musical theatre roles ranging from Jim in *Big River* to Father/God in *Children of Eden*. His concert repertoire includes most of the major baritone works such as *Carmina Burana*, *Elijah*, *The Verdi Requiem*, Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony*, *The Brahms' Requiem* and *The Faure's Requiem*. He has performed operatic and musical theatre roles across the United States including performances with The Cleveland Orchestra, Akron Symphony Orchestra, Canton Symphony Orchestra, Cleveland Opera, Lyric Opera Cleveland, Blossom Festival Orchestra, Opera Theatre of Pittsburgh, Opera Western Reserve, Carolina Master Chorale, Charlotte Symphony Orchestra and Porthouse Theatre. Mr. Johnson received his BM Degree from The University of Akron and has also studied abroad at The New Opera Academy of Rome in Rome, Italy and The American Institute of Musical Studies in Graz, Austria. His favorite past engagements include *Sweeney Todd* and *Ragtime* (Coalhouse Walker Jr) at Weathervane Playhouse, Dvorak's *Te Deum*, Concerts with The Cleveland Composer's Guild, Michael Haydn's *Requiem in C Minor*, Willcocks' *From Darkness To Light: A Requiem of Hope*, *Amahl and the Night Visitors*, *The Brahms' Requiem*, Old Thomas in *Glory Denied*, Bob in William Grant Still's *Highway 21*, *The Messiah*, *The White Rabbit* in *Alice and Her adventures in Wonderland* with Nightingale Opera, Tate's *Clans* and Mozart's *C Minor Mass* with The Akron Symphony Orchestra, and *The Coffee Cantata* with Apollo's

Fire. Upcoming performances include *The Boy Wonders* with Apollo's Fire, *Blind Injustice* with Chagrin Arts, *Faust* with Opera Western Reserve, The Mozart *Requiem* with The Summit Choral Society, and *Carmina Burana* with The Akron Symphony, *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* with The Canton Symphony, *Schicchi* (Cover) with The Cleveland Institute of Music, and The Innkeeper and Cervantes (cover) in *The Man of La Mancha* with The Ohio Shakespeare Festival. Brian and his wife Susan retired this year from The Akron Public School System with a combined 68 years of teaching between them. Brian is also an avid motorcyclist.

DAWNA RAE WARREN, *Marie*
[SOPRANO]

Dawna Rae Warren is delighted to return to Geneva Light Opera to perform the role of Marie in *La Fille du Régiment*, having previously appeared with the company as Nannetta (cover) in *Falstaff*. A versatile artist with a "magnetic, evocative and sure" stage presence, Dawna Rae has established herself as a formidable coloratura soprano. Her recent operatic highlights include performing Salome in Stradella's *San Giovanni Battista* with IN Series, a role for which she was praised by the *Washington Classical Review* for her "vocally virtuosic" performance and "laser-accurate intonation". Other notable roles include Drusilla in *L'incoronazione di Poppea* described by the *Washington Post* as "rich, animated and full-bodied", Calliope in Gluck's *Alceste*, and Adela in the world premiere of *La Casa de Bernarda Alba* with Cleveland Opera Theater. Her other roles include Musetta in *La Bohème*, Lady with a Hand Mirror in *Postcard from*





Morocco, Atalanta in *Xerxes*, Abigail Williams in *The Crucible*, Genovieffe in *Sour Angelica*, Papagena in *The Magic Flute*, and Violetta in *La Traviata*. On the concert stage, she has appeared as a featured soloist with the Toledo Symphony, Eugene Concert Choir, and the Longmont Symphony in performances such as Bach's Mass in B Minor, Handel's Messiah, Beethoven's 9th Symphony, Carmina Burana, and Fauré's Requiem. Dawna Rae holds an Artist Diploma from the University of Colorado, Boulder, a Master of Music from the University of Kentucky, and a Bachelor of Music from the Baldwin Wallace University Conservatory of Music. Her upcoming performances include Sifare in Mozart's *Mitridate, re di Ponto* with The Cleveland Opera, and Monica (cover) in Menotti's *The Medium* with St. Pete Opera. Dawna Rae is represented by Vocal Artists Management Services.

MILICA NIKCEVIC, *Marquise*
[MEZZO-SOPRANO/ALTO]

Dramatic mezzo-soprano **Milica Nikčević** is recognized for the commanding richness of her voice and the dramatic depth of her portrayals. *New York Classical Review* praised her as a singer of "full mezzo and charisma that... holds attention." Her repertoire encompasses Verdi, Wagner, French opera, Bel Canto, and verismo, highlighted by her recent portrayal of Mistress Quickly in *Falstaff* with Geneva Light Opera. Other notable performances include Amneris in *Aida*, Ulrica in *Un Ballo in Maschera*, Federica in *Luisa Miller*, the title roles in *Carmen* and *The Medium*, Isabella in *L'Italiana in Algeri*, Zia Principessa in *Suor Angelica*, Zita in *Gianni Schicchi*, and

Mamma Lucia in **Cavalleria Rusticana**. As a concert soloist, she has appeared in Beethoven's **Symphony No. 9**, Handel's **Messiah**, Bach's **Mass in B Minor**, and **St. John Passion**. Balancing vocal power with emotional depth, Milica Nikčević brings commanding stage presence, vocal richness, and psychological insight to every performance.

ALEX ADAMS-LEYTES, *Hortensius*

[BARITONE]

Minneapolis-based buffo, Alexander Adams-Leytes, makes his role debut as Hortensius and his GLO main cast debut after covering Cascada here two years ago in "Merry Widow." He holds a Master's in Vocal Performance from the University of Minnesota, trained several summers at Lyric Opera Studio Weimar under Damon Ploumis, and has performed throughout the U.S. and Europe with role highlights including Bartolo in "Barber of Seville," Dulcamara in "The Elixir of Love," Mustapha in "Italian in Algiers," Sacristan in "Tosca," Benoit/Alcindoro in "La Boheme," and Don Magnifico in "Cenerentola."

JOSH BASSETTE, *Corporal*

[BARITONE]

After a long absence, Josh Bassette is excited to return to the stage in this production of *The Daughter of the Regiment* as The Corporal. An active member of the Rochester singing community, Bassette performs regularly with high caliber vocal ensembles, such as Dr. Weinert's "Voices", Dr. Wright's "First Inversion", Musica Spei, and as a cantor at Christ Church's Schola Cantorum in Rochester, NY.





ANNEKE HONOR,

Duchess/Prayer (Act 1), Cover Marquise

[CONTRALTO]

Anneke Honor is a German-American contralto whose performances have taken her across the United States and Germany. Her operatic repertoire includes the First Witch in *Dido and Aeneas*, Zita in *Gianni Schicchi*, Sister Mathilde in *Dialogues of the Carmelites*, and Sorella Cercatrice in *Suor Angelica*. As a concert soloist, she has performed Stravinsky's *Les Noces*, Orff's *Carmina Burana*, and Handel's *Messiah* and *Jephtha*. Praised for her interpretations of early music, her performance in *Rodelinda* was lauded by the *Allgemeine Zeitung* in Mainz for her "ability to evoke a profound and somber introspection." She also champions contemporary opera, originating the role of Adelgunde in the world premiere of *The Strange Child*. Based in New York City, she recently performed Rossweisse in *Das Rheingold* and Despina in *Così fan tutte*. Ms. Honor is thrilled to be making her Geneva Light Opera debut.



MICHAEL T. BROWN, *Peasant/Notary/Tyrolean*
(Act 1), Cover Hortensius, Soldiers Chorus

[TENOR]

Michael Brown is thrilled to be returning to Geneva Light Opera this summer. Born and raised in Rochester, NY, he first discovered the world of opera when he sang the role of The Pirate King in eighth grade. In the years since, he has worked as a music teacher, performer, and stage director in the greater DC area and in the Carolinas. While living in South Carolina, he was a member of the Opera Carolina Chorus and performed for three seasons with Opera Carolina's Opera Xpress. As a stage and music

director, he has directed productions at Rush-Henrietta Senior High School, the French International School in Bethesda, MD, Opera Carolina/Opera Xpress' 2022-23 touring production of *The Tortoise and the Hare*, and is co-founder and Artistic Director Emeritus for the Midlands Light Opera Society in Columbia, SC. He is a member of the voice faculty at Hochstein School of Music and sings with Schola Cantorum and the First Inversion Chorale in Rochester, NY.

ALEJANDRA TOLEDO,

Cover Marie, Prayer (Act 1), Guests (Act 2)

[SOPRANO]

Alejandra Toledo, is a soprano from Mexico city, currently pursuing her Master degree in Opera Performance at Binghamton University.. Her performances include appearances at major venues such as Carnegie Hall (USA), the Basilica de Guadalupe (Mexico), Sergio Cardozo Hall (Brazil), and Blas Galindo Hall in Mexico City, where she performed Mozart's Requiem. Her operatic roles include Adele in *Die Fledermaus* (, 2025), Lauretta (cover) in *Gianni Schicchi* (Tri-Cities Opera, 2025), and Gilda in *Rigoletto* (Casa Europa, Mexico, 2023; (cover) Tri-Cities Opera, 2025). Additional roles include Goldilocks in *The Three Little Bears* (Tri-Cities Opera, 2025–2026), Nanita in *Nanita Learns How to Make Flan* (Anderson Center, 2024), Despina in *Così fan tutte* (Villa Puccini–Music Haus, Mexico, 2023), Princesa in *El Gato con Botas* (UNAM, Mexico, 2023), Susanna in *Le nozze di Figaro* (Andrés Sarre Studio, Mexico, 2022), Serpina in *La serva padrona* (Angélica Morales, Mexico, 2020), and the Ladywith a Mirror in *Postcard from Morocco* (Anderson,2026). Center, 2026).





SUZANNE V. MURPHY,

Prayer (Act 1), Guests (Act 2)

[MEZZO-SOPRANO]

Suzanne Victurine Murphy holds a Master of Music in Voice from Yale University where she studied with Phyllis Curtin and Richard Lalli. While at Yale, she also served as the Administrative Assistant to piano faculty member Boris Berman. In this capacity she was responsible for the logistical operation of the Yale Merkin Hall Concert Series in New York City. She received her Bachelor of Music in Vocal Performance and Education from Ithaca College. While there, she was named the "Roberta Peters Scholar, Outstanding Vocal Major." She toured widely as an alto soloist for the "Select Concert Choir." While at Ithaca College, she was elected as a member of Phi Kappa Phi Music Honors Society. Suzanne has performed leading roles with the Providence Opera, the Cabot Street Playhouse (Ocean State Light Opera), the Cornell Savoyards, and the Yale Opera, as well as being alto soloist with the Yale Glee Club. She has performed as alto soloist for such major works as Bach's "Mass in B minor," Vivaldi's "Gloria," and Handel's "Messiah." She was named a "Teacher of Distinction" as music educator of a "National Blue Ribbon School of Excellence" by the State of Massachusetts. She was also named as one of the "40 Outstanding Teachers in the Arts" by the Boston Symphony Orchestra. Her post-graduate work includes study at the Kodály Music Institute at the New England Conservatory of Music, the Suzuki Institute of America, the Boston Symphony Orchestra, and the Berklee School of Music in Boston. She is an accredited instructor of the Suzuki Music Association, the



American Kodály Educators organization, and of the American Orff-Schulwerk Association. She is a member of the voice faculty at Hobart and William Smith Colleges, and at FLCC, and St. Peter's Academy. She performed as the alto soloist for the Hobart & William Smith Colleges Community Chorus' performance of Mozart's "Coronation Mass." She performed with the combined HWS Chorus and Syracuse Vocal Ensemble in their production of Orff's "Carmina Burana." She has been an alto soloist in several productions of The American Landmarks Concerts Series, including "The Four Last Songs" by Ralph Vaughn Williams. She performed as "The Second Lady" in the GLO's production of *The Magic Flute*. She was invited to join the Boston Byzantine Choir and has performed and recorded five albums. She performed in "The Ascending Voice," an international symposium of sacred a cappella music held at Pepperdine University.

JON CHRISTIANO,

Tyroleans (Act 1), Cover Peasant/Notary, Soldiers Chorus [TENOR]

Jon Christiano is happy to be back in Geneva for this year's production of *La fille du Régiment*. Former GLO credits include *Falstaff* (Pistola cover) and *The Merry Widow* (Njegus). Regional credits include *A Bronx Tale* (Rudy the Voice) at The Rev Theatre Company; *The Odd Couple* (Vinnie) at Cortland Repertory Theatre; *Beyond Therapy* (Bruce) and *Gloria* (Dean) at CNY Playhouse; *Bare: A Pop Opera* (Priest) with OFC Creations; and *King Lear* (Harold) with Shakespeare in Delaware Park. He has also originated roles in *Swipe* (Dakota) and *Open Mic Night* (Larry). A trained actor-combatant with

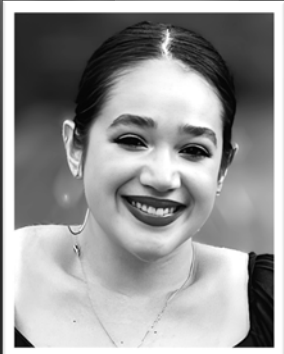




the Society of American Fight Directors and Dueling Arts International, Jon has appeared as a stunt performer in *All for One! Live Stunt Show* (Busch Gardens Williamsburg), *The Panic, Diary of a Lunatic*, and *My Neck!*. @jon_christiano.

IAN YATES, *Tyroleans (act 1)/Guests (Act 2)*
[BARITONE]

Ian is excited to be making his GLO and opera debut in this production! He has performed in the Rochester area for years in various productions, including *The Music Man* (Olin Britt), *The Noteworthy Life of Howard Barnes* (Ensemble), *Cabaret* (Bobby), *Spamalot* (Patsy), and *Seussical* (Horton) at Blackfriars Theatre, as well as *The Seagull* (Konstantin) and *The Cherry Orchard* (Trofimov) with The Classics Company. Ian would like to thank his friends, family, and Nat for all their support in all he does.



ISA APODACA,
Prayer (Act 1), Tyrolean (act 1), Guests (Act 2)
[SOPRANO]

Isa Apodaca is a Soprano finishing their studies at Eastman School of Music under the tutelage of Joshua Conyers. Isa has performed in Bach Cantatas and The Eastman Opera Theatre's productions of *Ainadamar* as a Niña and *The Cure for Love* as co-lead 'Amarilli.' Isa has also been accepted to numerous summer programs such as Miami Summer Opera Festival, SongFest at Sewanee, and Bel Canto in Tuscany. Most recently, Isa spent their summer in Tuscany near Florence studying the Bel Canto technique. At this program Isa was cast as 'The Countess' in Mozart's *Le Nozze de Figaro* and an ensemble member in Bellini's *Norma*.

KATHRYN BORDEN,

Cover Dutchess, Guests (Act 2)

[SOPRANO]

Kathryn is a professional singer and actor based in Rochester NY. Her most recent theatre appearances have been with Blackfriars Theatre, The Company Theatre, and Out of Pocket Inc. She has been a member of First Inversion choir since its inaugural year, and also performs with jazz trio, LumenEssence. She is excited to join GLO for her first opera experience.

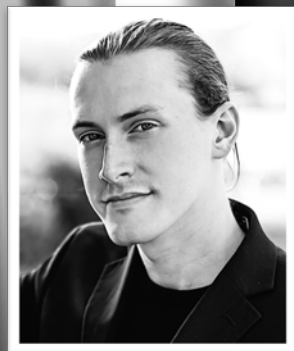


JASON ROBER,

Cover Corporal, Soldiers Chorus

[BARITONE]

Jason Augustus Rober enjoys a variety of opera and oratorio engagements across the United States. Having performed opera roles that span the history of the art form, from Giove in Cavalli's "La Calisto" to Mortimer in Anthony Davis's "Lear on the Second Floor," Jason has also appeared in concert as a soloist with such ensembles as the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra and the Western New York Chamber Orchestra. A lover of all things baroque, he recently returned to the stage with Boston Early Music Festival to perform Telemann's Don Quichotte at the Magdeburger Telemann-Festtage. In 2024, Jason was a Virginia Best Adams Fellow with the Carmel Bach Festival, and has since enjoyed appearances with Colorado Bach Ensemble and Viva Bach Peterborough. Most recently, Jason was a Resident Artist with Teatro Nuovo. Beyond the realm of music, Jason takes delight in hiking New York State and exploring vegetarian cuisine.

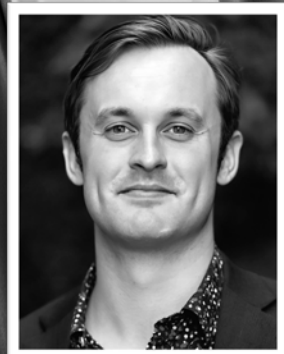




TREVOR BURRALL, *Guests (Act 2)*

[BARITONE]

Trevor is a performing artist. His credits include *America the Beautiful!*, *A Royal Christmas on Ice*, *The Merry Widow*, and *The King and I*. Trevor has done work on the stage for many years. He was recently recognized by St. Peter's Community Arts Academy and contributes to regional live-performance organizations including Naples Drama Club. He regularly works with youth and other like-interested performers.



PATRICK BESSENBACHER,

Cover Tonio, Soldiers Chorus, Guests (Act 2)

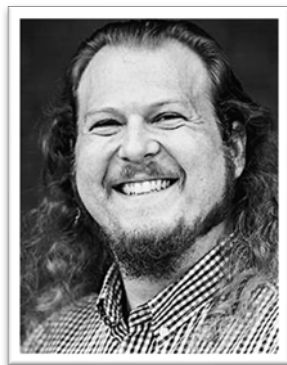
[TENOR]

With "purity of tone and ardent, youthful stage presence" (Opera News), tenor Patrick Bessenbacher is so excited to be joining Geneva Light Opera for the first time this summer. Most recently, Patrick performed the role of Camille de Rossillon in *The Merry Widow* with Sarasota Opera as well as Mechthild in the world premier of Sarah Kirkland Snider's new opera, *Hildegard*. Patrick has had the privilege of performing with other fabulous companies, including Florentine Opera, Opera San Jose, Pacific Opera Project, Opera Theatre of St. Louis, Opera Birmingham, Lincoln Center Theatre, West Bay Opera, and the Opera Company of Middlebury, among others. Patrick is represented by Kathy Olsen of Encompass Arts. He received his Bachelor's in Music at the University of Colorado, Boulder, and his Master's in Music from The Juilliard School. Patrick enjoys spending his free time with family and friends, in the mountains skiing, on the beach having a drink, or just on the couch, enjoying everyone's company.

NATHAN STROCK, *Soldiers Chorus*

[BASS]

Nathan Strock, Bass-baritone, is an Assistant Instructor of Voice at the Crane School of Music. He holds a Master of Music in Music Performance from SUNY Potsdam's Crane School of Music, and a Bachelor of Music in Vocal Performance from the University of North Carolina Wilmington. Nathan has always been an avid performer, from his early days in middle school musicals to traveling across the east coast, bringing performances of famous operas to a wide range of cities. Strock can frequently be found touring with Teatro Lirco D'Europa in New York, New Hampshire, South Carolina, and Florida to name a few. Nathan has been on stage performing operas since 2015, with roles such as Leporello and Il Commendatore (Don Giovanni), Count Ceprano, Marullo, and Monterone (Rigoletto), Don Alfonso (Così fan tutte), Don Magnifico (La Cenerentola), Marchese d'Obigny (La Traviata), and most recently, Il Sagrestano and Angelotti (Tosca).



RAPHAEL SACKS, *Cover Sulpice, Soldiers Chorus*

[BARITONE]



Raphael (they/them) is a singer, dancer and theatermaker, born and raised in NYC, con antenati di Milano. Co-Director of Loom Ensemble since 2010, Co-Founder of WildHeart Center for Performance and Embodiment. Internationally, they've performed with the English National Opera in London; seven years of annual performance seasons in Dubai with Loom Ensemble, three summers with Theater Slava in Stockholm, and with the Art Monastery Project at dozens of venues across Italy, Belgium, Sweden and Berlin. NYC highlights

include Lincoln Center with the NY Phil, BAM with Meredith Monk, and La MaMa with Loom Ensemble. Since childhood, Raphael has followed a clear calling to play in the dirt, conjure fantastical worlds, and bend default culture. Raphael studied voice at Oberlin Conservatory, and is delighted to be returning to the operatic canon after recent years in contemporary music. Much gratitude to Maestro Doug Martin, and to Raphael's voice teacher Harry Dworchak.

❖ MUSIC & PRODUCTION STAFF ❖



STEVE VAUGHAN, *Stage Director*



Steve Vaughan is a prominent theatrical director, actor, and certified fight choreographer based in Buffalo, New York. He is widely recognized across Western New York for his extensive work directing and orchestrating action sequences across traditional theatre, musical theatre, TV, film, and opera. Vaughan has directed productions for regional companies like the Jewish Repertory Theatre of WNY, Shakespeare in Delaware park, Alleyway Theatre, ArtPark, O'Connell and Company, the Lancaster Opera

House, Nickel City Opera, the Lyric Opera of Rochester, and Eastman Opera Theatre, and 6 productions at Geneva Light Opera. As a Certified Fight Director and Certified Stage Combat Teacher with the Society of American Fight Directors, he has created over a thousand action sequences for theatre, opera, film, and TV. This includes choreographing fights for Shakespeare in Delaware Park and contributing to over 50 New York soap opera credits, such as *Guiding Light* and *All My Children*. Vaughan shares his expertise regionally as an educator, serving on the faculty and teaching theatre and stage combat courses at SUNY Fredonia and Niagara University.

DOUGLAS MARTIN, *Conductor*



Doug Martin is very grateful to have gotten to know Gena Rangel during these past few months planning an expansion of Geneva's orchestra, and discovering Gena's skills as a French translator and

French teacher. She was charming, but with an iron will about quality and detail. Doug has enjoyed working with singers, colleagues, and opera companies for decades that have seemed to go by in a flash. For details see: www.DougMartinMusic.com He had recently been involved in bringing a new American Opera by Laura Clayton to the public's attention called *Amazonas*. Mr. Martin became Resident Conductor at the Ashlawn Summer Festival from 1997 - 2001 and as Music Director in 2004 and 2005. Ashlawn led to "La Boheme on Broadway" and to conducting over 100 performances in San Francisco, New York, and Los Angeles.

HANNAH HARNEST, *Pianist, Prayer (Act 2), Music Teacher*

Dr. Hannah Harnest received a Doctor of Musical Arts in Collaborative Piano from the Eastman School of Music in December 2024. In March 2023, she won 3rd prize with Australian soprano Alexandra Flood at the international competition "Das Lied" in Heidelberg. Professional experiences have included a major grant from the German Consulate in New York City to establish the *Music for Thoughts Series*, as well as residencies with Classic Lyric Arts, Seagle Festival, Cincinnati Song Initiative, Songfest, Aspen Music Festival, Britten Pears Young Artist Programme, and Académie musicale de Villecroze. Hannah frequently collaborates with composers to premiere their new works and recently performed Falla's piano concerto "Nights in the Gardens of Spain" with the Community Orchestra Project in Rochester. Hannah is on the faculty at SUNY Geneseo and on staff at Nazareth University. She is currently a candidate for the PhD in Musicology at Eastman. Her dissertation looks at the fate of the German Lied in American exile during the Holocaust.



ROSE HAYS, *Stage Manager, Assistant Director, Intimacy Director*



Rose Hays is a CNY based actor, dancer/choreographer, fight director, and stage manager. She is excited to be joining the GLO for the fifth time this season as the Stage Manager, Assistant Director, and Intimacy Choreographer. Previously with GLO, Rose has stage managed *The Abduction from the Seraglio*, *L'Elisir d'Amore*, *The Merry Widow*, and *Falstaff*. Outside of the operas, Rose most recently fight directed *King Lear* with Syracuse Shakespeare in the Park, and played

Louise Rabiner in the Auburn Player's production of *Dear Jack, Dear Louise*. After this, you can catch her fight directing and playing the Merchant in SSITP's production of *The Taming of the Shrew* and choreographing the Auburn Player's production of *You're a Good Man, Charlie Brown*. Website: www.rosehays.com

NIKKI FAE DAHLEN, *Assistant Stage Manager*

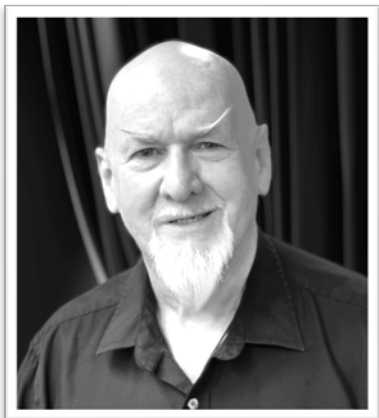
Nikki Fae Dahlen is a multi-faceted theatre practitioner based in Buffalo, NY. Recent projects include playing keys in local theatre pits and transcribing the almost-lost musical *Gulp!* for Buffalo United Artists' production this coming September. They send many warm thanks to our stage manager Rose and GLO for bringing them back for another year, and much love to the cast and crew for being lovely, and for their hard work in bringing this show to life. Enjoy!



La fille du Régiment

LA FILLE DU RÉGIMENT

BRUCE PURDY, *Technical Director*



Technical director Bruce Purdy has been with Geneva Light Opera since its inception. The former technical director for the Smith Opera House, Bruce has been behind the scenes in theatre for fifty years. On stage, he is a professional magician, but backstage he does his best to support the amazing talent he is blessed to work with.

NATALIA HULSE, *Choreographer, Company Manager, Dance Mistress*

Natalia Hulse is a New York-based soprano, actor, and dancer and has graciously been a part of the GLO family since 2018. Favorite GLO credits include: Nannetta (Falstaff), Valencienne Cover (The Merry Widow), Adina Cover (The Elixir of Love). She is a company member of the New York Gilbert and Sullivan Players and regularly performs opera, musical theater, and theater all over the country. Recent credits: Nina in *The Seagull* (The Classics Company), Elsie Maynard in *The Yeomen of the Guard* (NYGASP), Clara Johnson in *The Light in the Piazza* (Blackfriars Theater), Rosa Bud in *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* (Lamplighters Music Theatre). She holds an MM in Vocal Performance from the San Francisco Conservatory of Music as well as a BM from the Eastman School of Music, and a BA in English Literature from the University of Rochester. @nataliahulse. / www.nataliahulse.com



La fille du Régiment.

“Ah! Mes amis”

Gaetano Donizetti



ANDREA McGAUGH, *Chorus Consultant*



Andrea is delighted to return to GENEVA LIGHT OPERA for her fifth summer! Previous GLO productions include *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*, *Così fan tutte* (Dorabella), and *The Magic Flute* (Third Lady). Based in Rochester, Andrea enjoys a multifaceted singing career as a concert soloist, stage performer, recitalist, and ensemble singer. Recent performance highlights include *The Light in the Piazza* (Margaret Johnson) with BLACKFRIARS

THEATRE; *The Gondoliers* (The Duchess of Plaza-Toro) and *The Sound of Music* (Frau Schmidt) with OHIO LIGHT OPERA; Fauré's *La Chanson d'Ève* and Argento's *From the Diary of Virginia Woolf* with pianist Gregory Smith; and numerous choral concerts throughout Western New York. Last year she finished a choral residency at the NORFOLK CHAMBER MUSIC FESTIVAL, and performed song recitals of Liebertson's *Rilke Songs* and George Crumb's *Apparition*. In her free time, Andrea enjoys playing harp, settling Catan, watching football (go Bills!), and spending time with friends and family. [www.andreamcgaugh.com]



❖ GENEVA LIGHT OPERA ❖

ARTISTIC AND GENERAL DIRECTOR:

GENA RANGEL (*in pace requiescat*) August 1, 1940 – June 18, 2026

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THE MISSION OF GENEVA LIGHT OPERA is to inspire, educate and entertain audiences in the Finger Lakes region by presenting opera and operetta in productions of high quality through collaboration with emerging young performers, local professionals, and nationally known artists.

Geneva Light Opera is a nonprofit public benefit corporation and is not organized for the private gain of any person. It is organized under the Nonprofit Public Benefit Corporation Law for charitable purposes. The purposes for which this corporation is formed are exclusively charitable and educational within the meaning of Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986.

Gena Rangel – had been the Artistic & General Director of Geneva Light Opera since its inception. She also served as Artist Liaison for American Landmark Festivals⁽¹⁾ from 1988 to 2006, when she then became its Director. She studied music at Vassar College and the Juilliard School and served on the Voice Faculty of New York City's High School of Performing Arts ("Fame School") where she established its opera workshop. Having sung with various professional ensembles in New York City, she also served on the production crew of the New York Grand Opera. This production of *La fille du Régiment* is dedicated to her memory. *May she rest in peace.*

(1) *American Landmark Festivals* is a nonprofit organization dedicated to the presentation of performances and cultural events in landmarks of significance.

❖ ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ❖

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RECEPTION:

- Kim Naimoli
- Sheila Bennett
- Ravine's Winery

SPECIAL THANKS:

- St. Michael's Orthodox Church
- Fr. Gregory & Suzanne Murphy
- First Presbyterian Church
- Valerie Venuti
- Hand-painted backdrops (dating from the famous Sormani Studio in Milan, which provided scenery for Verdi's "La Traviata" in 1838), courtesy of the Stivanello Costume Co., New York City.
- Orchestral reduction, Motet Music Publishing Company

SMITH OPERA HOUSE

A LANDMARK OF SIGNIFICANCE

by Gena Rangel

IN THE 1890's, LINDEN HALL OPERA HOUSE was the major entertainment center of Geneva, New York. It had been named in honor of Jenny Lind, the "Swedish Nightingale" who had included Geneva on her tour of the United States in 1850. Located on the corner of Seneca and Linden Streets, this hall was destroyed by a fierce fire in December 1892. Its owner and manager, F. K. Hardison, subsequently met nurseryman William Smith on the street and obtained his commitment to fund the building of a replacement.

The architectural firm of Pierce and Bickford of Elmira, NY was hired to construct the building, and theatrical architect Leon H. Lempert of Rochester contracted to design the interior. The design envisioned electric lights (not then widely in use), moveable floors, and intricate curtains and stage devices, and a basically French décor. The brick façade that Pierce and Bickford designed in an unusual combination of Italian Renaissance and English Baroque style still stands looking much as it did when the building opened in October 1894 with a performance by famous actor James O'Neil in the play "The Count of Monte Cristo." Operas followed, comedies, dramas, Gilbert and Sullivan, and concerts in which (in addition to actor James O'Neil) such luminaries as actress Ellen Terry, Alma Gluck, baritone David Bisham, the dancers of Isadora Duncan appeared.

In the 1930's the interior of the space was altered, retrofitted as a movie palace with an exceptionally wide screen and nouveau Moorish details. The acoustics of this space — known at various times as The Smith Opera House or The Geneva Theatre — which had always made performances there so appealing, were not diminished by those renovations or the passage of time that left the space in sorry shape when it was put up for sale in 1977. Not long after greatly needed repairs to the building were finally undertaken to save it from demolition (through the efforts of such Geneva residents as former councilman Ken Camera, newspaper owner Sam Williams, and Steve Hastings, Paul Brown, Dan Belliveau, and Jeff Rathaus), the famous violinist Itzhak Perlman appeared on nationwide TV praising the sound of his instrument in an old hall he had just played in upstate New York.

Now one of the oldest performance spaces in the United States that has been in continual use since its opening, The Smith Opera House stands as a testament to the will and work and vision of those many from our past and present who value the experience of theatre, drama, music, and dance as our shared heritage.





DOMENICO GAETANO MARIA DONIZETTI

(November 29, 1797 – April 8, 1848)

BORN IN A WINDOWLESS CELLAR in a straggle of houses clinging to the hillside at Bergamo in 1797, a ragged child, Gaetano Donizetti had the near-miraculous good fortune to be taken under the wing of Johann Simon Mayr, Maestro di Cappella of the Lombard city who educated, protected and sent him on for further musical training under the renowned Padre Stanislao Mattei at Bologna.

At first inclined to devote himself to church music, the youthful Donizetti only tentatively embraced the stage. Always flaunting his quick-wit and ingenuity, he drew attentive ears even in the age of Rossini. Between 1820 and 1830 he diligently attempted every type of opera, sometimes with fleeting success [*Zoraida di Granata* (1822) and *La zingara* (1822)], sometimes with abject failure [*Chiara e Serafina* (1822) and *Alfredo il grande* (1823)], but always relentlessly professional and fluent.



Donizetti, c. 1828

In 1826 he tried his hand at tragedy for the first time [*Gabriella di Vergy* (staged in 1842 in Naples)]; from 1827 onwards he turned his hand to heroic neo-classical drama [*L'esule di Roma* (1828)] and film-script-like travelogue plots [*Otto mesi in due ore* (1827), *Il castello di Kenilworth* (1829) and *Emilia di Liverpool* (1824 revised in 1828)] capping the decade with gory romantic melodrama [*Il Paria* (1829) and *Imelda de' Lambertazzi* (1830)]. Successful comedy also co-existed throughout this long pilgrimage [*L'ajo nell'imbarazzo* (1824); *Le convenienze ed inconvenienze teatrali* (1827); and *Il giovedì grasso* (1829)] so that, unlike most of his rivals, he found himself with every style at his disposal for the rest of his life. To bring this whole phase to a climax, to mark the end of this evolution – sometimes light-hearted, often painful, always vivid – his momentous *Anna Bolena* of 1830 proved to be a catalyst, a turning point. Championed by the soprano Giuditta Pasta and Giovanni Rubini, the superstars of the day, he burst beyond the Italian frontiers to shine on every major stage. Henceforth Donizetti took the operatic world by storm.

Expansive, good-natured and prodigious, he was always at his desk. Indifferent or unaware of the jealousies that surrounded him, he wrote two



or three prominent operas a year, together with cantatas, masses and motets, fulfilling every commission. In a flurry of contracts, of libretti, at the hub of all theatrical turmoil, he took on a teaching role at Naples Conservatoire in 1834-5 surrounding himself with pupils, who remembered his warmth and generosity for the rest of their lives. In May 1827, he announced his engagement to Virginia Vasselli, the then 18-year-old daughter of the Roman family who had befriended him there. The couple were married in July 1828 and immediately settled in their new home in Naples. During the next few

years, she gave birth to three children, none of whom survived and, within a year of his parents' deaths, on 30 July 1837, she also died from what was believed to be cholera or measles.

In October 1838, Donizetti moved to Paris vowing never to have dealings with the San Carlo again after the King of Naples banned the production of *Poliuto* on the grounds that such a sacred subject was inappropriate for the stage. Thus, in 1838, Naples lost for good the composer of most of the operas that shone brightest in the decade: *L'elisir d'amore* (1832), *Parisina* (1833), *Lucrezia Borgia* (1833), *Roberto Devereux* (1837), and above all – *Lucia di Lammermoor* of 1835 – the one opera that straddled the annals of the day more brilliantly than any other.

Moving first to Paris, then to Vienna, where he was given the appointment of Court composer, he intensified his output – writing ever more ambitious scores, the international sophistication of his life coloring both his instrumentation and his expressive vocabulary. **To French texts, he wrote *La Fille du Régiment* (1840), *Les Martyrs* (1840), and *La Favorite* (1840)** a grand-slam which left the Paris stage reeling, following this with *Don Sébastien, roi de Portugal* of 1843 – which he considered his masterpiece. In Vienna he wrote *Linda di Chamounix* (1842) and *Maria di Rohan* (1843) both of which were soon transferred to Paris in suitably modified editions. His acute sensitivity to local tastes and command of vernacular style were never more in evidence. In Paris, he wrote his last and most momentous comedy, *Don Pasquale* (1843), which not only raised the roof with an unparalleled cast (Grisi, Mario, Tamburini, Lablache), but had the honor of bidding farewell, almost, to the long and irresistible tradition of Italian comic opera.

Giuseppe Donizetti

LA FILLE DU RÉGIMENT

For decades Donizetti had suffered from fevers, headaches, nausea, and illnesses for which no real diagnosis was ever made, these were accompanied by feverous compositions indicative of a cerebral dysrhythmia quite beyond the normal span. In 1845 he was struck by paralysis, followed by a rapid dementia. This condition continued well into 1848, unchanged until a serious bout of apoplexy occurred on the 1st of April followed by further decline and the inability to take in food. Finally, after the intense night of Friday, April 7th, Gaetano Donizetti died on the afternoon of April 8th, 1848.



Daguerreotype taken on 3 August 1847:
Donizetti with his nephew Andrea in Paris

No adequate medical diagnosis has been given for this decline, although unsubstantiated rumors have persisted to this day. Initially, Donizetti was buried in the cemetery of Valtesse, but in 1875 his body was transferred to Bergamo's Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore near the grave of his teacher, Simon Mayr.



Donizetti's life, from rags to world fame, epitomized the romantic flights of fancy of his day. His intensity and his expressive vocabulary – always sustained by his inimitable style and unforgettable melodies – reflected the human drama, both the splendors and miseries, which he found in the events of his life and, more evocatively, within himself.

After the death of Bellini, Donizetti was the most significant composer of Italian opera until Verdi. His reputation fluctuated, but since the 1940s and 1950s his work has been increasingly performed. His best-known operas today are *Lucia di Lammermoor*, *La fille du Régiment*, *L'elisir d'amore*, and, of course,

Don Pasquale. Giuseppe Mazzini praised Donizetti's operas for embodying the spirit of the Risorgimento, viewing them as expressions of Italian identity and cultural pride. ❖

[FROM: <https://www.donizettisociety.com/donizettilife.htm> (Alexander Weatherston); and https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gaetano_Donizetti. Edited & emended by GM for use in this program book]

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The Syracuse Orchestra closes the season with works of two celebrated nationalist composers and a work of national remembrance: Sibelius *Concerto for Violin in D minor, Op. 47* with soloist Elina Vähala, Shostakovich *Symphony No. 5 in D minor, Op. 47*, and Natalie Draper *Energy and Light*, written in tribute to the victims of PanAm Flight 103.

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Who's Who in *La Fille du Régiment*

CHARACTER	PRONUNCIATION	VOICE TYPE	THE LOWDOWN
Marie An abandoned child raised by a regiment of French soldiers	mah-REE	soprano	The “daughter of the regiment” of the opera’s title, Marie is actually the child of the Marquise of Berkenfield. Marie loves the villager Tonio, but the Marquise wants her to marry a wealthy nobleman instead.
Tonio A Tyrolean villager	toe-NYOH	tenor	As a proud Tyrolean patriot, Tonio hates the French soldiers who have invaded his homeland. But when he realizes the only way to be with Marie is to join the French regiment, he readily chooses love over politics.
Sulpice A French sergeant	sool-PEES	bass	Sulpice is the leader of the regiment that raised Marie. A gruff but good-natured soldier, he loves Marie and wants nothing but the best for his adopted child.
Marquise of Berkenfield A wealthy Tyrolean noblewoman, Marie’s mother	mar-KEEZ of BEAR-ken-field	mezzo-soprano	As a young, unmarried woman, the Marquise was forced to give up her baby, Marie. She is thrilled to find her long-lost daughter, but—afraid to admit she had a child out of wedlock—she claims that Marie is her niece.
Hortensius The Marquise’s butler	oar-tahn-see-OOS	bass	Although merely a servant, Hortensius is the Marquise’s most trusted friend and helper.
Duchess of Krakenthorp An even wealthier noblewoman, Marie’s intended mother-in-law	Duchess of CRACK-en-torp	spoken	The aunt of the man the Marquise wants Marie to marry, the Duchess is an arrogant snob who cares for nothing but social status.





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