

St. Pete Opera
presents

SUSANNAH

Music and libretto by Carlisle Floyd

First performance: February 24, 1956, Florida State University, Tallahassee, FL

October 17, 19 and 21, 2025

The Palladium Theater, 253 Fifth Ave. N, St. Petersburg, FL

ConductorMark Sforzini
Stage Director & Choreographer..... Helena Binder
Original Scenic Design..... Steven K. Mitchell
Scenic Realization Michael Roland
Costume Designer Glenn A. Breed
Lighting Designer.....Keith Arsenault
Wig and Makeup DesignRon Wolek

CAST

Susannah Polk..... Jessica Sandidge
Olin Blitch ^John Robert Green
Sam Polk ^^^Chad Kranak
Little Bat McLean..... Matthew Cerillo
Elder McLean..... Brian Hupp
Elder Ott..... Bret Thom
Elder Hayes Chris Romeo
Elder Gleaton Kevin D. Mitchell, Jr.
Mrs. McLean..... Sarah Heltzel
Mrs. Ott..... Jacquelyn Pileckas
Mrs. Hayes Christine Honein
Mrs. Gleaton..... Andrea Alderman
Chorus of townspeople

Time and Place: The 1920's; New Hope Valley, Tennessee

^Nancy Preis sponsored artist
^^^Rebecca Baker sponsored artist

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There will be one twenty-minute intermission.
ANY VIDEO AND/OR AUDIO RECORDING OF THIS PRODUCTION IS STRICTLY PROHIBITED.

PRINCIPAL CAST (in alphabetical order)



ANDREA ALDERMAN, Mrs. Gleaton

Hometown: Tampa, FL

Education: Southeastern University, BS in Music Education; New York University, MM Vocal Performance. Currently studying with Alissa Deeter

Previous SPO Engagement: *Samson et Dalila*, Chorus

Past Engagements: Opera Tampa: *La Bohème*, Milkmaid/Peasant Girl; *Don Pasquale*, Chorus; San Francisco Opera, *Omar*, Woman #2 Cover



MATTHEW CERILLO, Little Bat McLean

Hometown: Freehold, NJ

Education: Hofstra University, BS in Voice; Mannes School of Music, MM Music

Previous SPO Engagement: *Turandot*, Pong

Past Engagements: Palm Beach Opera, *La Traviata*, Giuseppe & Gastone Cover; Music Academy of the West: *Carmen*, Don Jose; *L'enfant et les sortilèges*, Le petit vieillard



JOHN ROBERT GREEN, Olin Blitch

Hometown: Clintonville, WI; now in New York, NY

Education: UW Madison, BS; University of Illinois Urbana Champaign, MM; current teachers: Mark Schnaible & Patricia McCaffrey

Previous SPO Engagements: *A Little Night Music* 2025, Fredrik Eggerman; *Fidelio*, Don Fernando; *Tosca*, Scarpia Cover and Sciarrone

Past Engagements: Opera Orlando 2022, *Cavalleria rusticana*, Alfio; Salt Marsh Opera, *Falstaff*, Falstaff; New York City Opera, *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, Don Basilio

Upcoming Engagement: Helena Symphony 2026, *Il barbiere di Siviglia* Don Basilio



SARAH HELTZEL, Mrs. McLean

Hometown: Gloucester, MA

Education: Manhattan School of Music; Seattle Opera Young Artist Program

Previous SPO Engagements: *A Little Night Music*, Desiree Armfeldt

Past Engagements: Seattle Opera, *Die Walküre*, Siegrune; Australian Contemporary Opera Co, *The Handmaid's Tale*, Offred; Western Plains Opera, *Carmen*, Carmen; New York City Opera, *The Garden of the Finzi-Continis*, Olga Finzi-Continis; Wichita Grand Opera, *Don Carlo*, Eboli

Upcoming Engagements: Western Plains Opera 2025, *Don Giovanni*, Donna Elvira

PRINCIPAL CAST (in alphabetical order)



CHRISTINE HONEIN, Mrs. Hayes

Hometown: Beirut; now in Seminole, FL

Education: Florida State University, BM Voice; Colorado University, MM Voice. Studied with Rima Tawil

Previous SPO Engagements: Company debut

Past Engagements: The Rossini Festival, Nantucket Chamber Music Festival, Soloist; Opera for Earth, *Dialogues of the Carmelites*, Sister Constance; Opera Tampa Spanish Nights

Upcoming Engagements: Howey Music Series New Chamber Music Soloist



BRIAN HUPP, Elder McLean

Hometown: Pataskala, OH; now in Chicago

Education: Capital University, BM in Music Education; Ohio State, MM in Vocal Performance; voice teachers, Lexi Lobianco, Ken Shaw, Robin Rice

Previous SPO Engagements: *A Little Night Music*, Mr. Lindquist / Fredrik Cover; Holiday Sparkle 2021, Guest Artist; *Pinocchio* 2019, The Wolf; *Don Giovanni* 2018, Don Giovanni Cover; *The Music Man* 2018, Harold Hill Cover

Past Engagements: Chicago Opera Theater, *The Life & Death(s) of Alan Turing* (World Premiere), Alan Turing Cover; Paramount Theater: *Cats*, Old Deuteronomy/Asparagus Cover/Ensemble; *Frozen* (Chicago Premiere), Bishop/King Agnaar Cover

Upcoming Engagements: Lyric Opera of Chicago 2025, *Pagliacci/Cavalleria rusticana*, Chorus



CHAD KRANAK, Sam Polk

Hometown: San Jose, CA; now in Brooklyn, NY

Education: University of California Santa Cruz, BM; University of Colorado Boulder, MM

Previous SPO Engagements: *Pinocchio*, Geppetto; *Don Giovanni*, Don Ottavio Cover

Past Engagements: Tahoe Symphony, *Iolanta*, Vaudémont; Pensacola Opera, *Carmen the Traveler*, Don Jose; Heartbeat Opera, *Tosca*, Cavaradossi



KEVIN D. MITCHELL, JR., Elder Gleaton / Little Bat Cover

Hometown: Houston, TX; now in St. Petersburg, FL

Education: Sam Houston State University, BA Vocal Music; Wichita State University, MM Opera Performance

Previous SPO Engagements: *Pinocchio* 2019, 2021, 2022, 2023 Geppetto; *Pinocchio* 2024, Narrator; Holiday Sparkle 2021, 2022, 2023, and 2024; St. Petersburg Opera: *Fidelio*, Jaquino Cover; *Semele*, Jupiter/Apollo Cover; *Turandot*, Prince of Persia; *Lucia di Lammermoor*, Normanno Cover

Upcoming Engagements: St. Pete Opera, *Take Me to the Water*, February 2026, Holiday Sparkle 2025

PRINCIPAL CAST (in alphabetical order)



JACQUELYN PILECKAS, Mrs. Ott

Hometown: Virginia Beach, VA; now in Orlando

Education: Christopher Newport University, BM Vocal Performance; University of Florida, MM Vocal Performance

Previous SPO Engagements: *Carmen* 2025, *Mercédès*

Past Engagements: Opera del Sol, *Scalia/Ginsburg*, Ruth Bader Ginsburg; Opera Williamsburg: *Les contes d'Hoffmann*, Nicklausse Cover; *Lucia di Lammermoor*, Alisa

Upcoming Engagements: St. Mary's-on-the-Highlands Episcopal Church (Birmingham, AL, Oct 2025), A Concert of Remembrance for All Saints' Day, Soloist; Holy Trinity Episcopal Church (Gainesville, FL, Dec 2025), Bach's *Magnificat*, Alto Soloist



CHRIS ROMEO, Elder Hayes

Hometown: St. Petersburg, FL; now in Tampa

Education: University of South Florida: BM and MM in Vocal Performance; St. Mary's of the Woods: BM in Music Therapy

Previous SPO Engagements: *Lucia di Lammermoor*, Enrico, numerous SPO Chorus performances; *Samson et Dalila*, Philistine 1; *The Medium*, Toby; *Kiss Me, Kate*, ensemble; *Ariadne auf Naxos*, Brighella; *Susannah* 2014, Sam cover; *Pinocchio*, Cat; POPera 2020/21; *Pagliacci*, Canio 2021; *Fidelio*, Jaquino; Holiday Sparkle

Other Gigs: Artistic Director of Diversity, The Voices of Sarasota: Director of One City Chorus



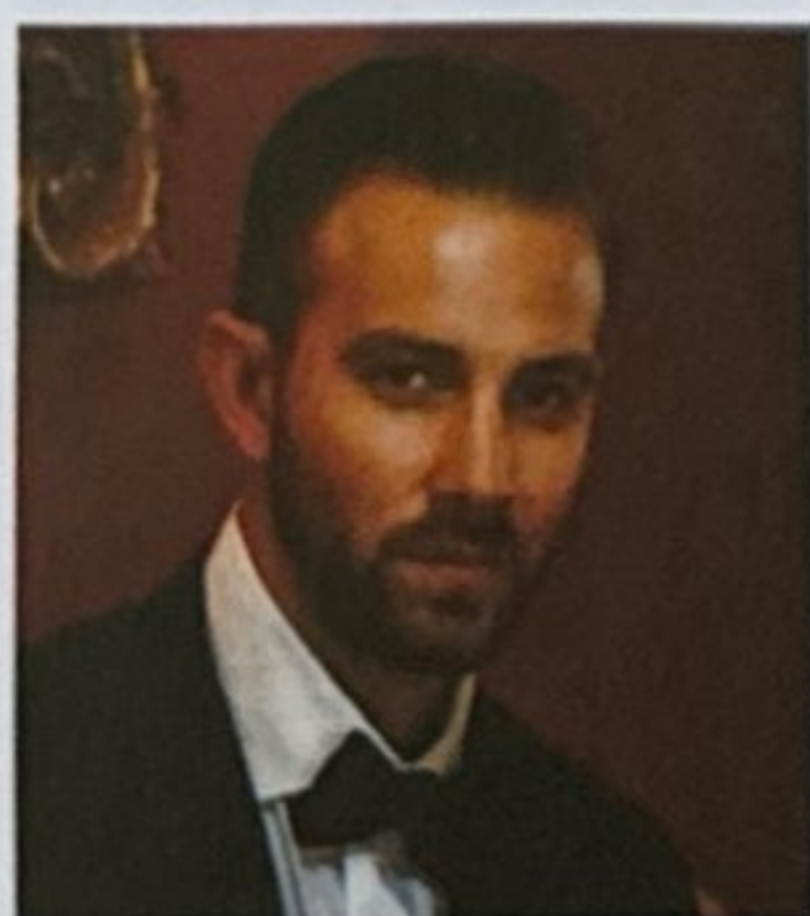
JESSICA SANDIDGE, Susannah Polk

Hometown: Los Angeles, CA

Education: University of California Santa Cruz, BM in Vocal Performance studied with Brian Staufenbiel and Nicole Paiement; New England Conservatory, MM in Vocal Performance; Studied with Carole Haber, Mark Oswald and Victoria Livengood. Currently studies with Reid Burton.

Previous SPO Engagements: *La Traviata* 2018, Violetta; Opera Cowgirls

Past Engagements: Gulf Shore Opera Concert Series, Resident Artist; Delaware Valley Opera, *Susannah*, Susannah; Opera Festival Chicago, *Manon Lescaut*, Manon Lescaut



BRET THOM, Elder Ott

Hometown: Norfolk, VA; now in Lecanto, FL

Education: Florida State University, MM, studied with David Okerlund

Previous SPO Engagements: An Evening with Cole Porter

Past Engagements: Central City Opera, Outreach/Touring Artist

Upcoming Engagements: St. Pete Opera Holiday Sparkle 2025

COVER CAST (in alphabetical order)



LYNDSEY CLOPTON, Mrs. McLean Cover

Hometown: Lakeland, FL

Education: University of South Florida, studied with Dr. Sarah Klopfenstein & Dr. Kyoung Cho; Southeastern University, studied with Dr. Edward Bryant

Previous SPO Engagements: *Hand of Bridge*, Sally; Holiday Sparkle, Broadway Cabaret, featured soloist

Past Engagements: Chicago Summer Opera, *Ariadne auf Naxos*, Composer; South Florida Lyric Opera, *Pierrette et Jacquot*, Jacquot

Upcoming Engagements: St. Pete Opera Holiday Sparkle 2025



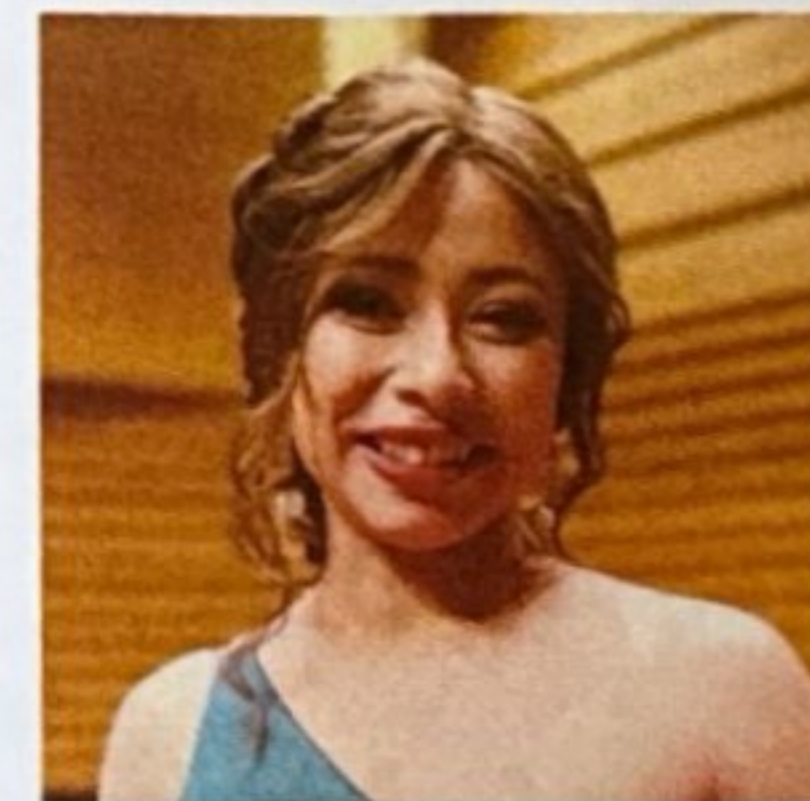
GABRIEL HERNANDEZ, Sam Polk Cover

Hometown: Tampa, FL; now in New York City

Education: University of South Florida, BM Voice; Florida State University, MM Voice

Previous SPO Engagements: *Ariadne auf Naxos*, Brighella Cover; *Turandot*, Pang Cover

Past Engagements: Geneva Light Opera, *Falstaff*, Dr. Caius; Bronx Opera, *Così fan tutte*, Ferrando; Opera Ithaca, *Turn of the Screw*, Peter Quint



MELISSA HITEMAN, Mrs. Gleaton Cover

Hometown: Wellington, FL; now in Tampa, FL

Education: Stetson University, BM, studied with Dr. Karen Coker Merritt; USF, MM, studied with Dr. Kyoung Cho

Previous SPO Engagements: *Samson et Dalila*, *Turandot*, *Carmen*: Chorus

Past Engagements: Stetson University, *Giulio Cesare*, Cleopatra



RIM KARNAVICIUS, Elder Ott Cover

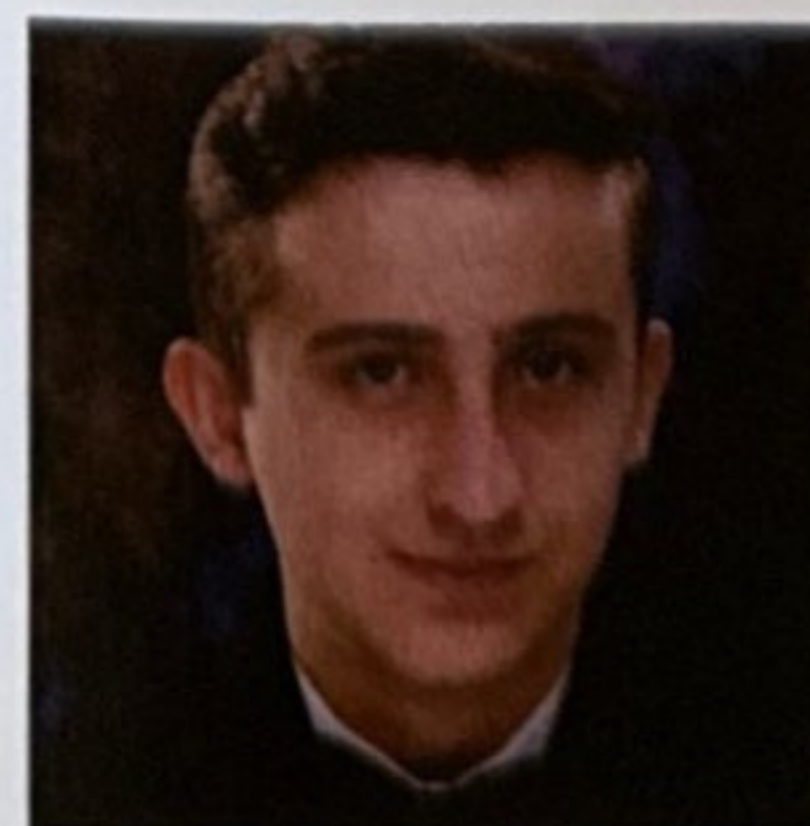
Hometown: Chicago, IL; now in St. Petersburg

Education: University of Florida, BA and MFA

Previous SPO Engagements: 61 opera shows since 2006

Past Engagements: St. Pete Opera: *Pinocchio*, Dr. Dulcamara; *Carmen*, Chorus. Opera Tampa, *La Bohème*, Chorus

Upcoming Engagements: St. Pete Opera Holiday Sparkle 2025; Opera Tampa: *The Shining*, *Macbeth*, Chorus



RYAN KOSINSKI, Elder Hayes Cover

Hometown: Largo, FL

Education: Studies with Dr. Sandra Rogers, Kevin Prina

Previous SPO Engagements: *Samson et Dalila*, *Carmen*, Chorus

Upcoming Engagements: St. Pete Opera *Pinocchio* 2025; Opera Tampa, *Macbeth*, Chorus

COVER CAST (in alphabetical order)



JENNIFER LAMONT, Susannah Cover
Hometown: Palm Harbor, FL; now in Tampa
Education: Florida State University, studied with Dr. Wanda Brister
Previous SPO Engagements: *Carmen* (2025), Chorus; *A Little Night Music*, Anne Cover/Mrs. Segstrom Cover; *A Hand of Bridge*, Geraldine; *Lucia di Lammermoor* and *Turandot*, Chorus
Past Engagements: Opera for Earth, *Dialogues of the Carmelites*, Blanche de la Force; South Florida Lyric Opera: *Acis & Galatea*, Galatea Cover; *Pierette & Jacquot*, Pierette/ Jacquot Cover
Upcoming Engagements: St. Pete Opera Holiday Sparkle 2025



EMILY LUSK, Mrs. Hayes Cover
Hometown: Mineola, NY; now in Seminole, FL
Education: Florida State University, studied with Daniel Belcher, Mary Hangle, and David Okerlund
Previous SPO Engagements: *Amahl and the Night Visitors*; *Carmen*, *Lucia di Lammermoor*, *Turandot*, *Madama Butterfly*, *Pagliacci*, *The Merry Widow*, *Le Contes d'Hoffmann*, and *Il Trovatore*
Past Engagements: *Romeo & Davis-Thompson*, *The Triumph of Spring*, *Fidelito*; Opera Tampa, *Romeo et Juliette*, Chorus



KEVIN NICKORICK, Elder McLean Cover
Hometown: Lloydminster, Alberta, Canada, now St. Petersburg, FL
Education: University of Saskatchewan, Bachelor Commerce; University of South Florida, Master of Architecture
Previous SPO Engagements: *Turandot*, Mandarin cover; *Samson et Dalila*, Philistine 2; *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, 2006, Fiorello/Figaro Cover; Coro: *Fidelio*; *Lucia di Lammermoor*; *L'Italiana in Algeri*; *Alcina*, Astolfo/Chorus
Past Engagements: South Florida Lyric Opera, *La Bohème*, Alcindoro; Florida Lyric Opera, *Amahl and the Night Visitors*, Melchior; New Century Opera, *Madama Butterfly*, Sharpless



MIGUEL PEDROZA, Olin Blitch Cover
Hometown: Maracaibo, Venezuela; now in Jersey City, NJ
Education: The University of Houston, BM; University of Cincinnati, MM
Previous SPO Engagement: *Carmen* (2025), Zuniga Cover / Chorus; *Samson et Dalila*, Albimélech Cover
Past Engagements: Paradox Opera, *Amahl and the Night Visitors*, King Balthazar; Opera on the James, *Gianni Schicchi*, Marco; Bronx Opera, *Lady in the Dark*, Randy Curtis

COVER CAST (in alphabetical order)



ROBERT SHERMAN, Elder Gleaton Cover
Hometown: Mexico, NY; now in Tampa, FL
Education: Buffalo State University, Dual BA in Music and Theatre; MM from University of South Florida
Previous SPO Engagement: *Carmen*, Chorus
Past Engagements: Opera Tampa: *La Bohème*, *Don Pasquale*, Chorus
Upcoming Engagements: Opera Tampa 2025, *Love v. Death*, Carl von Cosel



ERIKA VASALLO, Mrs. Ott Cover
Hometown: Miami, FL; now in Davenport
Education: New World School of the Arts College Division/ University of Florida, BM; Florida International University, MM
Previous SPO Engagement: Company debut
Past Engagements: Opera Orlando: *Opera by the Glass*, Soloist; *Beatrice & Benedict*, Ursula; University Club of Winter Park, Bastille Celebration: Edith Piaf Songs, Soloist

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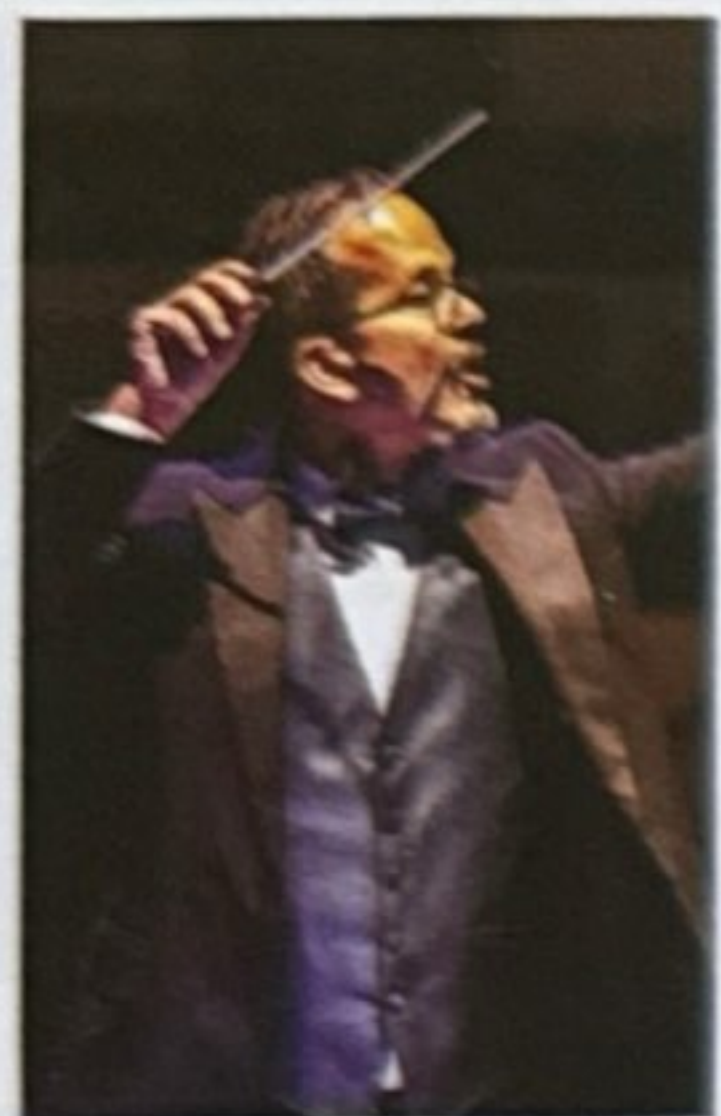
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CREATIVE TEAM



MARK SFORZINI (General Director/Conductor) is not merely a visionary leader who established an innovative and successful nonprofit business (although he is, and he did). He is a composer whose orchestral and chamber works have been commissioned and performed by the Florida Orchestra, Tampa Bay Symphony, Alabama Symphony, Omaha Symphony, Eastern Music Festival, Toledo Symphony Orchestra and numerous others. He has written and produced several one-act opera and music programs based on operatic repertoire. Sforzini's acclaimed Concerto for Clarinet and Bassoon debuted in 2018.

The Alabama native served as principal bassoon of the Florida Orchestra from 1992 to 2007. He was the artistic director of the prestigious Encore Series of chamber music at the Palladium Theater for several years. He co-founded FloriMezzo in 2003, serving as its artistic director for five years. In addition, he was Music Director of the Pinellas Youth Symphony and a composer-mentor for Hillsborough County Schools.

In 2005, he was invited to guest-conduct a one-time production of *Madama Butterfly* at the Palladium Theater. And so, St. Petersburg Opera Company was born.

Far from resting on his considerable laurels, Sforzini continues to stretch, to test the boundaries of what an opera company can and should be. Each season brings several lavishly-staged and fully-orchestrated productions of classic operas, pops and cabaret shows, a children's introduction to opera, seasonal showcases, and other vastly entertaining offerings.

In addition to his duties as St. Pete Opera's general director, chief visionary, arranger, and conductor, Maestro Sforzini is in demand as an adjudicator, clinician, and chamber music coach. Since 2012, he has been music director and conductor of the Tampa Bay Symphony and established a Call for Scores Competition to promote 21st-century works by composers worldwide. Mark Sforzini was chosen by Musical America as one of 30 international industry professionals as a "Profile in Courage." These top industry leaders have "taken a risk, spoken out where others were silent – all to the measurable benefits of their arts organizations and the field." www.marksforzini.com



FELIX JARRAR (Assistant Conductor) is a multidisciplinary artist, distinguished as a composer, coach and conductor. Jarrar has had the privilege of collaborating with numerous esteemed organizations, including Santa Fe Opera, OPERA San Antonio, The New School, Opera Naples, Opera North, Opera Ithaca, Penn Square Opera, Hogfish, University of Memphis and the iconic Apollo Theater.

For the 2025/2026 season, he returns for a second season as Assistant Conductor with Florida Grand Opera, working on productions of *Silent Night*, *Die Fledermaus*, and *Turandot*. Jarrar's impressive compositional catalog comprises 275 works, including 235 art songs, 14 operas, two string quartets, and a symphony.

CREATIVE TEAM



HELENA BINDER (Stage Director & Choreographer) has been a theater professional for more than 40 years and has brought her wit and warmth to many of the finest companies in the United States. Known for her masterful sense of timing and for fostering natural, genuine and moving performances, her innovative and imaginative productions have been seen at New York City Opera, Dallas, Minnesota, Atlanta, Pittsburgh, Palm Beach, Portland, Anchorage and Shreveport Opera, Wolf Trap, Opera Saratoga, Opera Omaha, Opera Idaho, Opera North, Chattanooga Symphony and Opera, Syracuse, Roanoke and Toledo Opera, among many others.

A choreographer as well, Ms. Binder has collaborated with such notable directors as Frank Corsaro, Simon Callow and Christopher Alden and has created dances for New York City Opera, Dallas, Pittsburgh and the Glimmerglass Festival, where she also went on for an ailing countertenor.

An accomplished actor, Helena has performed roles ranging from Peter Pan to Shakespeare's Juliet. She was a member of the band Blotto, that recorded the hit "I Wanna Be A Lifeguard," and about which a documentary has recently been released. Named a Union Notable by her alma mater, Union College, she holds an M.A. from New York University and studied acting at Circle in the Square. Ms. Binder has been on the faculty of Union College, Boston University and the New England Conservatory, as well as a guest teacher at Dartmouth College. www.helenabinder.com.



KEITH ARSENAULT (Lighting Designer) has worked with The Joffrey Ballet, Opera Company of Boston, Palm Beach Opera, and Ballet Nacional de Colombia. He was General Manager for San Francisco's record-breaking *Cloud 9* and has worked across 45 states, Canada, and Latin America.

His lighting designs include 48+ St. Pete Opera productions, notably *Susannah*, released on DVD by NAXOS. His work has been seen at Tampa Repertory Theatre, American Stage, Palm Beach Opera, Symphony Space (NYC), and Teatro Colón (Bogotá).

With 40+ years in production, management, and consulting, he runs CIRCUS NEXUS, touring nationwide. He was Stage Manager for the Youth American Grand Prix Gala at Lincoln Center. He managed Hillsborough Community College's performing arts facilities for 15 years and now oversees the New Tampa Performing Arts Center.



RON WOLEK (Wig & Makeup Designer) is a third-generation wig designer who began his career in 1998, apprenticing to Disney legend Janet Wolek. Other notable experience comes from his work as a wig designer for *Santa Claus Beards* (Ed Asner, Bryan Cranston, Bobby Moynihan), *War Horse* the Broadway Tour, Disneyland, *Stranger Things*, *The Walking Dead*, *Vampire Diaries*, and more.

He owns and operates Big Wig Studios Inc, a theatrical design company, as well as mustacheparlor.com and captronwolek.com. Prior opera experience includes several seasons at Orlando Opera as a makeup supervisor, Palm Beach Opera, Vero Beach Opera, and Glimmerglass Opera.