

**MSM OPERA THEATRE**

***Seven Sisters***

A Chamber Opera Workshop

**Justine F. Chen**, Composer  
*MSM Artist Scholar*

**Stephanie Fleischmann**, Librettist

**Kelly Kuo**, Conductor  
**Aya Ogawa**, Director  
**Jeremy Chan**, Music Director

# Welcome

MSM is honored to be part of the development of *Seven Sisters*, a new opera by composer and MSM Artist Scholar Justine F. Chen and librettist Stephanie Fleischmann. By facilitating a piano/vocal workshop, our students have the rare opportunity to be part of the creative process of a new work by underrepresented creators whose story has not been told in the traditional Western opera canon.

The piano/vocal workshop is an important part of the creation of a new opera because it allows the composer and librettist the chance to hear their work sung for the first time and to glean important information that will best serve the opera as it journeys towards its ultimate goal—a world premiere.

A workshop like this would hire professional singers and all would work together for one or two weeks in an intensive process, sometimes culminating in a presentation. Using students for this requires a somewhat different process, but the experience they will gain is invaluable. Preparing the music over the course of the semester and then working for a week with the guest creative and artistic team allows the students the time to accurately learn the music under the guidance of MSM coaches so that they can successfully participate in and contribute to the workshop.

This is the future of opera and MSM is proud to be part of the development of this important new work.

Carleen Graham, Ed.D.  
*Dean of Vocal Arts*

Friday, April 8, 2022 | 4 PM  
William R. and Irene D. Miller Recital Hall

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### *Seven Sisters*

#### A Chamber Opera Workshop

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**Jeremy Chan**, Music Director

**Kristen Kemp**, Music Preparation

**Cori Ellison**, Dramaturg

**Chun-Wei Kang**, Diction Coach & Supertitles Author and Operator

**Joy Chia-Yu Lu**, Taiwanese Language Preparation

**Justina Lee**, IPA Preparation

**Gabriel Costache**, Percussionist

**Mei-Chi Wang**, Off-Stage Voice Teacher

**Stephanie Foster**, Production Stage Manager

**Foo Jeng Wong**, Student Music Librarian and Assistant

This workshop performance by MSM Opera Theatre presents the Prologue, Scenes 1–4, Interlude, and Scene 7 of the opera.

There will be a Q&A with the creative team and cast immediately following today's performance.

*The development of Seven Sisters received funding from OPERA America's Opera Grants for Female Composers Program, supported by the Virginia B. Toulmin Foundation.*

## PROGRAM NOTE

Composer Justine F. Chen's mother was born in Taiwan, the oldest of seven sisters, daughters of a complicated matriarch, a businesswoman/politician whose power and influence Chen only truly understood upon attending her grandmother's funeral in Taiwan in 2018. Chen's mother and aunts, known in their family by their birth order, are an embattled lot, who came of age in a culture that undermined the agency and self-worth of women, stripping them of their voices. Chen's grandmother raised her daughters for a society that did not value them—controlling them with rivalries and inculcating them with society's rules of wealth and power, and a single directive: marry well. As a second-generation American who barely speaks any Chinese dialect, Chen felt her attempts to understand these dynamics stymied by mistranslation and a communication gap, which became inspiration for *Seven Sisters*—an unflinching, epic, funny exploration of the dysfunctions of family and the fallout of growing up Taiwanese-American and female.

Juxtaposing the intensely personal with the universal, this boldly theatrical new chamber opera—recipient of a 2020 Opera America Discovery Grant for Female Composers and selected for West Edge's Aperture portfolio—veers from the sublime awkwardness of caustic satire to wildly lyrical moments of emotional expansion, weaving together sounds ranging from the glamour of old Hollywood to Taiwanese folk music, to Chinese opera, with a haunting emotional resonance rooted in the timeless struggle for agency and voice. Framed by the ritual of a Taiwanese funeral, and threaded through with the myth of the Pleiades reimagined, *Seven Sisters* looks at the hard truths of a culture that demeans and disempowers women and asks: How does the next generation move beyond this legacy and bridge a cultural chasm that privileges silence?

## CULTURAL MANDATE

Taiwan, a small island of blurry political status, remains a cipher to many; my own understanding of my Taiwanese identity is limited to what's been passed down, embedded in the confusion of family. Giving voice to the story of these seven sisters means creating a work that arises from a complicated and occasionally painful set of expectations and disconnects. Yet I, and librettist Stephanie Fleischmann, feel we have a strong mandate to honor my Taiwanese cultural antecedents—to make a work that resonates with that community as well as with a broader audience. In this particular instance, crafting the universal from the specific poses an intricate and exciting set of cultural challenges.

—Justine F. Chen

## THE CAST

*Maggie*

*Sister #1*

*Sister #2*

*Sister #4*

*Sister #5*

*Sister #6*

*Sister #7*

**Lingxing Zhou**

**Zihan Xiu**

**Riley Bragg**

**Gigi Zhaojun Guo**

**Jingrui Zhang**

**Chiyue Huang**

**Xijia Zhang**

### Covers

*Maggie*

*Sisters #2 and #5*

*Sisters #4 and #6*

*Sisters #1 and #7*

**Gigi Zhaojun Guo**

**Chenxin Wang**

**Tate Erin Chu**

**Cassie Chang**

# SYNOPSIS

In this 90-minute opera, the ritual of a formal Buddhist funeral—as seen from the perspective of Maggie, a second-generation Taiwanese-American—frames a sequence of fractured family memories centering on the fate of Sister #3, who was given away at birth. As the funeral unfolds, and the sisters squabble over largesse and power, Maggie grapples with a feeling of disconnection from her inherited past, a feeling of otherness in the context of the present moment, and her complex relationship with her mother, Sister #1. Recurring through the opera is the refrain, “*Gbin dsao!*” (“Get out!”), which family members yell just before the deceased is cremated, urging their relative’s soul to separate from the body. A raucous liturgy for releasing the spirit from its fetters, *Seven Sisters* evolves to become the means by which the second generation can begin to know itself.

Harnessing sharp humor and a dark lyricism, *Seven Sisters* looks at these uncomfortable dynamics via a boldly theatrical, prismatic form. As the funeral unfolds, Maggie grapples with the static of her aunts’ animosities, struggling to understand what’s expected of her and the idiosyncratic unexpected ways that her family expresses love. Reliving her struggle to connect with her mother, Maggie attempts to move beyond this legacy of disenfranchisement, finding redemption through music. Interspersed between funeral and flashback is the myth of the Pleiades, the constellation known as Seven Sisters, which has given rise to legends across cultures, here reimagined as a flock of birds who touch down to earth to whisk ill-fated Sister #3 away to safety.

## SCENE BY SCENE

This workshop performance by MSM Opera Theatre presents the Prologue, Scenes 1–4, Interlude, and Scene 7 of the opera.

### Prologue. The myth

*An otherworldly landscape.*

We hear the cry of a baby. The silhouettes of six young women—linked via their long black hair, braided together—emerge out of the darkness. As disembodied voices sing, the women levitate, pull apart, fly up into the sky. Like migrating birds, like stars. At the end of the scene, we find ourselves in a low-budget hotel room in Taipei, with a disoriented Maggie, freshly flown in from America.

### Scene 1. Ablutions

*Taipei, the present. The night before the funeral.*

We find four of the seven sisters in mourning, watching A-Ma’s body being washed by a pair of funeral attendants. The sisters alternate between mourning, reminiscing, and gossiping about their absent siblings. Maggie’s arrival is greeted with varying degrees of warmth.

### Scene 2. The recital

*The U.S., a memory of some years prior.*

Maggie is having a terrible time, singing in a recital, besieged by the voice of her taskmaster voice teacher. Her mother, Sister #1, offers her own unwelcome brand of encouragement from the sidelines. It is like a bad dream. It *is* a bad dream—Maggie is awakened in her hotel room in Taiwan by Sister #4, who brings Maggie the dress of Sister #3, the sister who died a few years before.

### Scene 3. Lotus A-Ma. Seven sisters

*The funeral, the present—shifting into the remembered past, a scene from Maggie’s mother’s childhood.*

At the sumptuous funeral celebrating A-Ma’s life, Maggie feels lost in all the formalities and struggles to make sense of it. The sisters end up in a verbal brawl. Maggie observes and comments on the various sisters. The sisters assert their identities, and the absence of deceased Sister #3 becomes increasingly apparent. There is a flashback in Chinese opera form to a highly stylized exchange between A-Ma and her husband, from the time of #1’s childhood.

### Scene 4. The former president of Taiwan?

*The funeral, the present, in a kind of relentless replay. The sisters as funeral sound world.*

We are back at the funeral, celebrating A-Ma’s life. Maggie—lost amidst all the unfamiliar formalities—struggles to make sense of it all. Who was A-Ma? At the end of the scene, the former president of Taiwan arrives at the funeral. Maggie is more perplexed than ever.

## Interlude. The myth

*A distant, dimly remembered past. Darkness.*

A female figure, in silhouette, furtive, secretive, holds a tiny child close to her chest. The figure ferrets the child away. We see another figure, a little girl, enter the space where the first figure was, looking around. We hear a fluttering of wings.

*[In Scenes 5 and 6, details of Sister #3's scandalous life are revealed, as well as the intensity of A-Ma's shame and humiliation of bearing only daughters. Sister #1 and Maggie continue to struggle with their relationship, #1 feeling unappreciated by family, all while following the rules. At the funeral, #1 notices that Maggie is wearing #3's double happiness dress, and screams at her to take it off. Maggie tries to defend herself but is publicly humiliated when #1 bursts out laughing, mocking Maggie's terrible Chinese.]*

## Scene 7. Hiding out

*The funeral, the present, in the bathroom.*

Having just had a terrible row with her mother at the funeral, Maggie leaves to gather herself. Sister #2 finds and comforts Maggie with a heartbreaking story from her own past regarding her lost child, and her own disconnect from the family's expectations.

*[STILL TO COME: With further revelations of how as a young girl Sister #1 attempted to save #3 from being taken away, Maggie comes to better understand #1's struggles and the extreme pressures on A-Ma. With the cremation, A-Ma's soul has been released, and Maggie comes to the path that she creates for herself.]*

# CAST BIOGRAPHIES

## Riley Bragg (Sister #2)

Soprano, BM in Vocal Performance ('19), MM in Vocal Performance (antic. '22)  
Jacksonville, Florida

Vocal studies with Shirley Close. Previous credits: *Albert Herring* (Lady Billows), *Martha\** (Nancy), and *Orpheus in the Underworld* (Juno) at Manhattan School of Music. Previous scene work includes *Oberon* (Rezia) and *Die Zauberflöte* (2nd Lady) at Music Theater Bavaria.

## Cassie Cheng (Cover for Sisters #1 and #7)

Soprano, MM in Vocal Performance (antic. '22)  
Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada

Vocal studies with Catherine Malfitano. Previous credits: *Orpheus in the Underworld* (Minerva) at Manhattan School of Music, *Der Freischütz* (Ännchen) at Bayreuth Sommeruniversität, and *Die Passagierin* (Oberaufseherin) at the University of British Columbia. Previous scene work includes *Serse* (Romilda) at Manhattan School of Music; *La Bohème* (Mussetta) and *Viaggio a Reims* (Corinna) at Classic Lyric Arts; and *Die Fledermaus* (Adele) at the University of British Columbia.

BM Opera Performance, University of British Columbia

## Chiyue Huang (Sister #6)

Soprano, MM in Vocal Performance (antic. '23)  
Changchun, China.

Vocal studies with Ashley Putnam. Previous credits: *Così fan tutte* (Fiordiligi) at the Northeast Normal University. Previous scene work includes *L'elisir d'amore* (Female chorus) at Manhattan School of Music.

BM in Vocal Performance, the Northeast Normal University

### **Tate Erin Chu (Cover for Sisters #4 and #6)**

Soprano, MM in Classical Voice ('21), PS in Vocal Performance (antic. '22)  
San Diego, California

Vocal studies with Ruth Golden. Previous credits: *Orpheus in the Underworld* (Diana) at Manhattan School of Music; *Rusalka* (Rusalka) at Luke Housner's Summer Opera Workshop; *Carmen* (Micaëla) and *La Bohème* (Musetta) at Opera New York; and *The Merry Wives of Windsor* (Alice Ford) at California State University Fullerton School of Music. Previous scene work includes *The Merry Widow* (Hanna Glawari) and *Faust* (Marguerite) at Opera New York; *Le nozze di Figaro* (Susanna) at Manhattan School of Music; and *Rigoletto* (Gilda) and *Roméo et Juliette* (Juliette) at California State University Fullerton School of Music.

BM in Vocal Performance, California State University Fullerton School of Music

Upcoming: *Suor Angelica* (Suor Angelica) with Berlin Opera Academy

### **Gigi Zhaojun Guo (Sister #4, cover for Maggie)**

Soprano, MM in Vocal Performance (antic. '22)  
Shanghai, China

Vocal studies with Maitland Peters. Previous credits: *A Flourish of Green* (Silvana) at Manhattan School of Music, Beethoven's *Choral Fantasy* (Soprano soloist) at Shanghai Oriental Art Center, and *Tang Xianzu* (Ms. Wu) at Liszt Academy of Music. Scene work includes *Die Zauberflöte* (Second lady) at Manhattan School of Music; *La Traviata* (Violetta), *Così fan tutte* (Despina), and *Rigoletto* (Gilda) at Shanghai Conservatory of Music.

BM in Vocal Performance, Shanghai Conservatory of Music

### **Chenxin Wang (Cover for Sisters #2 and #5)**

Mezzo-soprano, MM in Vocal Performance (antic. '23)  
Kaifeng, China

Vocal studies with Ruth Golden. Previous credits: *Goodbye Again, Cambridge* (Xiaoman Lu) at Henan University and *Xiangyu Hao* (Factory worker) at the 6th National College Student Art Exhibition. Previous scene work includes *Le nozze di Figaro* (Cherubino) and *Il barbiere di Siviglia* (Rosina) at Henan University.

BFA in Drama, Henan University

### **Zihan Xiu (Sister #1)**

Soprano, MM in Vocal Performance (antic. '23)  
Qingdao, China

Vocal studies with Catherine Malfitano. Previous credits: *Goodbye Again, Cambridge* (Huiyin Lin), *I Love You, You're Perfect, Now Change* (Bride), and *Ju Qiu* (Ms. Jiang) at China Conservatory of Music; and Soloist for the 2019 & 2020 Los Angeles Chinese New Year Concert with the Chinese Association of Los Angeles and the Learn about Chinese Folk Songs series at Qingdao Grand Theatre. Scene work includes *L'incoronazione di Poppea* (Amor) at Manhattan School of Music and *Yimeng Mountain* (Hai Tang) at the National Center for the Performing Arts in Beijing.

BM in Vocal Performance, China Conservatory of Music

Upcoming: *The King and I* (Tuptim) and *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum* (Philia) with Broadway Babies at Manhattan School of Music

### **Xijia Zhang (Sister #7)**

Soprano, MM in Vocal Performance (antic. '23)  
Zhangxijia, China

Vocal studies with Catherine Malfitano. Previous credits: *Don Giovanni* (Zerlina) at Boya Theater of Hebei North University. Previous scene work includes *The Cunning Little Vixen* (Fox) at Manhattan School of Music.

BM in Musicology, Hebei North University

### **Jingrui Zhang (Sister #5)**

Soprano, MM in Vocal Performance (antic. '23)  
Changsha, China

Vocal studies with Catherine Malfitano.

BM in Educational Piano, Wuhan Conservatory of Music

### **Lingxing Zhou (Maggie)**

Soprano, MM in Vocal Performance (antic. '23)  
Changde, China

Vocal studies with Cynthia Hoffmann. Previous credits: *Dido and Aeneas* (Belinda) at Central Conservatory of Music.

BM in Musicology, Central Conservatory of Music

# CREATIVE BIOGRAPHIES

## Justine F. Chen, Composer

The “propulsive, emotionally resonant” (*New York Times*) music of New York-born composer Justine F. Chen has been commissioned and presented by New York City Opera, New York City Ballet, the Juilliard School, American Lyric Theater, Banff Music Centre, Bowdoin, NYFOS, Tapestry Opera, JACK Quartet, Opera America, American Composers Orchestra, Chicago Opera Theater, WQXR, and Resonance Works. *The Maiden Tower*, her first opera, was presented by Juilliard, NYCO’s VOX 2006 Showcase, and Chants Libres. Her second opera, *Jeanne*, featured in VOX 2008, which “balances despair and humor,” was praised as “lyrical, atmospheric...striking” (*New York Times*).

Recent projects: *The Life and Death(s) of Alan Turing*, a full-scale opera (librettist David Simpatico); *Shallow Breath and Stealth*, an oratorio (text from Jena Osman’s *Motion Studies*) for The Crossing; a song cycle for acclaimed soprano Karen Slack and virtuoso pianist Michelle Cann; *Seven Sisters*, a chamber opera (librettist Stephanie Fleischmann); *Splintered*, a boundary-breaking opera (librettist Lila Palmer, composer Jorge Sosa). Recent honors: grants from the Jerome Fund for New Music, Frances Goelet Charitable Lead Trust, Opera America’s Female Discovery Grant. Residencies: Chicago Opera Theater’s Vanguard Initiative; Maryland Opera Studio and the University of Maryland; Artist Scholar at Manhattan School of Music. Broadcasts: WNYC’s Studio 360, WBAI, WQXR, WRTI, I Care if You Listen, Indie Opera Podcast, and Cincinnati Song Initiative.

*The Life and Death(s) of Alan Turing* will have its world premiere in March 2023, and *Shallow Breath and Stealth* will be released on CD by The Crossing in November 2022.

Justine F. Chen received her DMA in composition from Juilliard, where she also earned her Bachelor’s and Master’s degrees in violin and composition. Dedicated to education, Chen designed and teaches the music curriculum at Pierrepont School and teaches composition at NYC’s Third Street Music School Settlement. For more information, please visit [www.justinefchen.com](http://www.justinefchen.com)

## Stephanie Fleischmann, Librettist

Stephanie Fleischmann is a librettist and playwright whose “lyrical monologues” (*New York Times*), “smart” opera libretti (*Opera News*), plays, and music theater works have been performed internationally and across the United States.

Upcoming libretti: *The Pigeon Keeper* (David Hanlon, Santa Fe Opera); *Arkipov* (Peter Knell, Seattle Opera/Jacaranda). Operas premiered: *In a Grove* (Christopher Cerrone, Pittsburgh and LA Opera); *Poppaea* (Michael Hersch, Wien Modern, Vienna, and the ZeitRäume Basel Festival); *Dido* (Melinda Wagner, for Dawn Upshaw and the Brentano Quartet, commissioned by 92nd Street Y, Hopkins Center for the Arts); *The Long Walk* (Opera Saratoga, Utah Opera); *After the Storm* (Houston Grand Opera); *The Property* (Chicago Lyric Unlimited). Current collaborations: Matthew Recio (Chicago Opera Theater; West Edge/Aperture); Christina Campanella (*The Visitation*, Opera America); Julia Adolphe (*Barrel of Laughs*, Opera America/National Sawdust). Texts for voice: Anna Clyne (Scottish National Chamber Orchestra), Chris Cerrone (Yale/Northeastern), Gity Razaz (Brooklyn Youth Chorus), Olga Neuwirth (Aldeburgh, Basel, Berlin). Selected plays/music theater works: *Dio* (Daniel Kluger); *Sound House* (the Flea/New Georges); *The Visitation*, a sound walk (HERE), and *Red Fly/Blue Bottle* (HERE; EMPAC, Noorderzon Festival, the Netherlands), both with Christina Campanella and Mallory Catlett; *Niagara* (Bobby Previte/Daniel Fish; Hudson Opera House); *The Secret Lives of Coats* (Red Eye, Minneapolis); *The Sweetest Life* (New Victory Lab Works); *Eloise & Ray* (New Georges); *Orpheus* (HERE). Works also performed/developed via Roundhouse Studio (London), Exit Festival (France), MASS MoCA, Birmingham Rep (U.K.), Synchronicity, Roadworks, Soho Rep, Mabou Mines/SUITE, and the Public Theater.

Grants and fellowships: Café Royal Cultural Foundation, Toulmin Foundation, Venturous Theater Fund, Howard Foundation Fellowship, 3 New York State Council on the Arts Individual Artist Commissions, NEA Opera/Musical Theater grants, 3 New York Foundation for the Arts Fellowships, Tennessee Williams Fellowship, Frederick Loewe Award, MAP Fund, Opera America, NY State Music Fund, Greenwall Foundation, Mid-Atlantic Fund, MacDowell Fellowship, and Hedgebrook. Stephanie Fleischmann is an alumna of New Dramatists; New Georges Audrey Residency; American Lyric Theater; HERE Artist Residency Program; and Playwrights’ Center Core Writer. She taught playwriting at Skidmore College for nine years.

## **Kelly Kuo (MM '98), Conductor**

In 2021, Maestro Kelly Kuo was named Associate Artistic Director of American Lyric Theatre and Music Director of the Reno Chamber Orchestra while continuing his duties as Artistic Director of the Oregon Mozart Players. Praised by the *Cincinnati Enquirer* as “a leader of exceptional musical gifts, who has a clear technique on the podium and an impressive rapport with audiences,” Maestro Kelly Kuo brings a dynamic versatility and nuance to a diverse repertoire, which includes nearly 100 operas and an expansive symphonic repertoire as well. Recent engagements include productions with Lyric Opera of Chicago, Seattle Opera, Cincinnati Opera, Indianapolis Opera, Opera Orlando, Opera Columbus, Wolf Trap Opera, the Brevard Music Center, and concerts with the Memphis Symphony Orchestra, Malta Philharmonic Orchestra, Olympia Symphony Orchestra, Sunriver Music Festival, Indianapolis Chamber Orchestra, and Ballet Fantastique. Maestro Kuo has served on the conducting staff of Los Angeles Opera, Santa Fe Opera, Opera Pacific, Atlanta Symphony, and Cincinnati Symphony.

In 2008, Maestro Kuo became the first conductor of Asian descent to lead a performance at the Lyric Opera of Chicago, making his company debut with *Porgy and Bess*. He has since returned to lead the Chicago premiere of Charlie Parker’s *Yarbird* and performances featuring artists of the Ryan Opera Center. Upcoming engagements include a return to Opera Columbus and his debut with the Merola Opera Program and Minnesota Opera.

An Oregon native and the recipient of a Solti Foundation U.S. Career Assistant Award, Kuo continues to concertize as a keyboardist, the only pianist to have studied with two pupils of the Russian virtuoso Vladimir Horowitz. Maestro Kuo is a distinguished graduate of the University of Oregon, holds a Master of Music degree in piano performance from Manhattan School of Music, and is an alumnus of the Houston Grand Opera Studio. [www.kellykuo.com](http://www.kellykuo.com), [www.marvelartsmanagement.com](http://www.marvelartsmanagement.com)

## **Aya Ogawa, Director**

Aya Ogawa is a Tokyo-born, Brooklyn-based playwright, director, performer, and translator whose work reflects an international viewpoint, using the stage as a space to explore cultural identity, displacement, and other facets of the immigrant experience. Cumulatively, all aspects of their artistic practice synthesize their work as an artistic and cultural ambassador, building bridges across cultures to create meaningful exchange amongst artists, theaters, and audiences, both in the U.S. and in Asia.

They have written and directed many plays, including *A Girl of 16*, *oph3lia* (HERE), and *Ludic Proxy* (The Play Company). Most recently they wrote, directed, and performed in *The Nosebleed*, which was presented at the 2019 Incoming! Series at the Public Theater’s Under the Radar Festival and premiered at the Japan Society, co-presented by the Chocolate Factory.

As a director they directed Haruna Lee’s *Suicide Forest* for the Bushwick Starr and Ma-Yi Theater Company and Maiko Kikuchi and Spencer Lott’s *9000 Paper Balloons* at HERE. They have translated numerous Japanese plays into English, including work by Satoko Ichihara, Yudai Kamisato, and over a dozen plays by Toshiaki Okada; many of these translations have been published and produced in the U.S. and U.K.

Currently a resident playwright at New Dramatists and a Usual Suspect at NYTW, they were recently a member of the Devised Theater Working Group at the Public Theater and Artist-in-Residence at BAX. They were the recipient of the President’s Award in Performing Arts from the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council and a recent finalist for the SDCF’s 2021 inaugural Barbara Whitman Award. [ayaogawa.com](http://ayaogawa.com)

## **Jeremy Chan, Vocal Coach**

Jeremy Chan is an Australian pianist and vocal coach based in New York City. He has been praised as “superb” and for “summoning about as much color as can possibly be coaxed out” (*New York Classical Review*). Recently appointed to the Manhattan School of Music opera coaching faculty, Jeremy is also on staff at Juilliard and serves as Director of Music at Advent Lutheran Church.

A passionate activist for diversity in the arts, Jeremy serves on the Board of the Asian Opera Alliance and is an executive team member of Wear Yellow Proudly. His writing on Asian representation in opera was recently published in *Opera America* magazine. Recent engagements include productions of *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* and *L’elisir d’amore* (Juilliard) and performances at Wigmore Hall, Lincoln Center, Carnegie Hall, and St. John’s in the Village. Together with mezzo soprano Kristin Gornstein, Jeremy established the Vertex Duo in 2020, which was in residence at Yellow Barn for fall 2021 and is returning for spring 2022. Jeremy also moonlights as a cover pianist for popular music from Adele to Korean drama songs under the pseudonym Nangman Pianist. [www.jeremychanpiano.com](http://www.jeremychanpiano.com)



## **Cori Ellison, Dramaturg**

Cori Ellison, a leading creative figure in the opera world, has served as staff dramaturg at Santa Fe Opera, the Glyndebourne Festival, and New York City Opera. Active in developing contemporary opera, she leads Opera Lab, a unique practical training program for composers, librettists, and performers at the Juilliard School, where she serves on the Vocal Arts faculty. She is a founding faculty member of American Lyric Theater's Composer Librettist Development Program and has developed new operatic works for companies including Glyndebourne, Canadian Opera, Opera Philadelphia, Chicago Opera Theater, Icelandic Opera, Arizona Opera, Opera Birmingham, Pittsburgh Opera, Beth Morrison Projects, the Miller Theater, Indiana University, and Crane School of Music. She is a faculty member at the Ravinia Steans Music Institute Program for Singers and has coached and taught master classes for singers at institutions including Glyndebourne, Santa Fe Opera, Indiana University, Cincinnati College–Conservatory, Mannes College, University of Toronto, University of Texas at Austin, Boston University, Boston Conservatory, Montclair State University, and Michigan State University. She regularly serves as a judge for the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions and many other competitions. She creates supertitles for opera companies across the English-speaking world and helped launch Met Titles, the Met's simultaneous translation system. Her English singing translations include *Hansel and Gretel* (NYCO), *La vestale* (English National Opera), and Shostakovich's *Cherry Tree Towers* (Bard Summerscape). She has often written for the *New York Times* and has contributed to *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera* and *The Complete Mozart*, among other books. She received MSM's Distinguished Alumni Award in 2019.

## **Chun-Wei Kang, Diction Coach & Supertitles Author and Operator**

Chun-Wei Kang has performed in concerts both as soloist and ensemble performer throughout the United States, Canada, and East Asia. She has appeared on national Taiwanese television in recitals with violinist Long-Long Kang, was broadcast in Japan with soprano Monique McDonald, and appeared on PBS SundayArts in a showcase for rising young opera singers. She has won several awards and scholarships, including the Gwendolyn Koldofsky Memorial Award for "a musician who demonstrated outstanding professionalism in collaborative piano."

Ms. Kang has served as staff pianist in the National Music Competition in Taiwan, the Canadian Provincial Festival, the Centro Studi Italiani Opera Festival, and the International Vocal Arts Institute (New York, Virginia,

Puerto Rico, and Montreal). A graduate of the Cleveland Institute of Music with a Master's degree, Ms. Kang is a faculty member at Manhattan School of Music, OperaWorks, BridgeMusik, and the Manhattan International Music Festival and has been the Assistant Music Director for the New Choral Society since 2008. At MSM, she served as Music Director for the Opera Role Preparation Workshop directed by legendary mezzo-soprano Mignon Dunn from 2010 to 2017 and was Assistant Music Director for *The Tailor of Gloucester*. In addition, she was Artistic Director for Creative Voice Institute (Taiwan) and Vocal Coach Asia (Singapore) from 2016 to 2019.

Ms. Kang has appeared on many stages, including David Geffen Hall and Carnegie Hall, and has worked with internationally acclaimed masters such as Anne Epperson, Warren Jones, Nico Castel, Marilyn Horne, Paul Nadler, and Joan Dornemann.

## **Gabriel Costache, Percussionist**

Gabriel Costache is currently pursuing a Bachelor of Music degree in classical percussion performance at Manhattan School of Music. A recipient of the Sabian/Robert Zildjian Memorial Scholarship, Gabriel studies with Christopher Lamb, She-e Wu, Duncan Patton, and Kyle Zerna. During his time at MSM, Gabriel has performed in the various MSM symphony orchestras, opera orchestra, the MSM Percussion Ensemble, Musical Theatre pit, and the Afro-Cuban Ensemble, among others. He has attended Eastern Music Festival and National Orchestral Institute, and also enjoys teaching middle school and high school beginner students privately via Zoom. He also is an avid learner of world percussion, most notably studying tabla and North Indian music with Samir Chatterjee.

## **Stephanie Foster (MM '20, PS '21), Stage Manager**

Boston/New York based soprano Stephanie Foster has begun a vibrant artistic career as a musician and teacher, most recently competing in the Boston district of the Metropolitan Opera Laffont Competition and appearing in *La Bobème* (Musetta) with the Vienna Summer Music Festival in St. Petersburg, Florida and *Alcina* (Morgana) with the Saluzzo Opera Academy in Saluzzo, Italy. This spring she is serving as assistant director for MSM's production of *Le nozze di Figaro* then in June will return to St. Petersburg to perform as Donna Elvira in the Vienna Summer Music Festival's production of *Don Giovanni*. Stephanie is also an active private music tutor, specializing in music theory, ear training, and voice.

## **Foo Jeng Wong, Student Music Librarian and Assistant**

Foo Jeng is a Malaysian pianist and composer. It is the craft of storytelling that informs his musical character, and his work often finds itself between the spaces of jazz and classical music. He is both a finalist for the American Prize in Composition and winner of the El Paso Original Music/New Ideas Competition. He has also performed and composed music for several festivals: the St. Petersburg New Music Festival, São Paulo Contemporary Composers Festival, Borneo Jazz Festival, and Malaysian Jazz Piano Festival (Kuala Lumpur Performing Arts Center). Foo Jeng holds a degree in music performance from Berklee College of Music and is currently pursuing his Master's degree at MSM. His goal is to create stories from his art, and to uncover beauty in the tradition and evolution of music.

## **SEVEN SISTERS WORKSHOP PERSONNEL**

### **OPERA AND MUSICAL THEATRE PRODUCTIONS**

Christina Teichroew, Managing Director  
Kathryn Miller, Assistant Managing Director  
Josi Petersen Brown, Associate

### **PRODUCTION STAFF**

Elizabeth Ramsay, Production Manager  
Keri Bush, Production Coordinator  
Cynthia Gray, Run Crew

## **MSM PERFORMANCE AND PRODUCTION OPERATIONS**

Madeline Lucas Tolliver, Dean of Performance and Production Operations

### **INSTRUMENTAL ENSEMBLES**

Matthew Ward, Manager of Percussion Operations and the Contemporary Performance Program

Edward Gavitt, Small Ensembles Manager

Julia Bravo, Instrumental Ensembles Associate

Hannah Marks, Instrumental Ensembles Associate

### **OPERA AND MUSICAL THEATRE**

Christina Teichroew, Managing Director

Kathryn Miller, Assistant Managing Director

Josi Petersen Brown, Associate

### **PERFORMANCE LIBRARY**

Manly Romero, Performance Librarian

### **PIANO TECHNICAL SERVICES**

Israel Schossev, Director

Agim Kola, Shop Manager

Victor Madorsky, Performance Tuner/Technician

Hide Onishi, Chief Concert Technician

Richard Short, Maintenance Manager

## PRODUCTION

**Brianna Poh**, Director

**Elizabeth Ramsay**, Production Manager, Concerts and Events

**Britni Serrano**, Production Manager, Opera and Musical Theatre

**Chanel Byas**, Associate Production Manager, Opera and Musical Theatre

**Andres Diaz Jr.**, Production Supervisor

**Keri Bush**, Production Coordinator

**Tyler Donahue**, Production Coordinator

**Dash Lea**, Production Coordinator

**Pamela Pangaro**, Lead Technician

**Cassandra Deveau**, Costume and Wardrobe Supervisor

## SCHEDULING AND PATRON SERVICES

**Devon Kelly**, Manager

**Clayton Matthews**, Associate

**Ramon Tenefrancia**, Associate

## THE ORTO CENTER FOR DISTANCE LEARNING AND RECORDING ARTS

**Chris Shade**, Director

**David Marsh**, Program Manager

**Caitlin Duffy**, PhD, Digital Education Specialist

**Mohit Diskalkar**, Network Systems Engineer

**Dan Rorke**, Chief Recording Engineer

**Kevin Bourassa**, Recording Engineer

**Johnathan Smith**, Recording Engineer

**Mie Hirschfield**, Recording Engineer

**Roan Ma**, Recording Services Coordinator

**Graceon Challenger**, Chief Maintenance Technician

## ABOUT THE ARTIST SCHOLARS PROGRAM

The Artist Scholars Program, part of MSM's Cultural Inclusion Initiative to foster diversity, equity, and inclusive practices throughout the School, explores and addresses questions of racial equity, representation, and inclusion within the performing arts and society. The roster of Artist Scholars is an accomplished and influential group of artists, activists, educators, and leaders in the arts, who communicate their experiences and insights with the MSM community in a variety of forums, including panels, seminars, discussion groups, special performances, musical collaborations, and mentorship. Spearheaded by MSM Chief of Staff and Assistant Vice President for Special Initiatives Alexa Smith, the program offers MSM students, faculty, and staff opportunities to engage with the Artist Scholars in a range of topics around artistry, creativity, and careers.

### 2021–22 MSM Artist Scholars

**Justine F. Chen**, Composer, violinist, educator

**Khori Dastoor**, General Director and CEO of Houston Grand Opera

**Ras Dia**, Multidisciplinary arts programmer with a focus on youth engagement

**Hannah L. Drake**, Blogger, activist, public speaker, poet and author

**Aldo López-Gavilán**, Pianist and composer

**Ilmar Gavilán**, Violinist

**Marc Bamuthi Joseph (“Bamuthi”)**, Vice President and Artistic Director of Social Impact at the Kennedy Center, 2017 TED Global Fellow

**Lucia Lucas**, Baritone, activist

**Britton Smith**, Actor, President of the Broadway Advocacy Coalition

**Ed Yim**, Chief Content Officer and Senior Vice President of WQXR, New York's Classical Music Radio Station

# OPERA AT MANHATTAN SCHOOL OF MUSIC

Recognized as one of the foremost opera training programs in the world, Manhattan School of Music's opera program attracts some of the most talented young singers from the United States and more than forty other countries. Students in the program refine their technique and develop their artistry under the guidance of a faculty of eminent artist-teachers while gaining exposure before New York City audiences through performances in opera scenes, community outreach concerts, and two full-length productions each year.

The Manhattan School of Music opera program has a long and proud tradition of producing some of the finest operatic artists in America and abroad. Manhattan School of Music's opera productions have been praised as a significant contribution to operatic life in New York City, and many students have gone on to major careers. Among notable alumnae are sopranos Dawn Upshaw, Catherine Malfitano, Alexandra Deshorties, Kathleen Kim, and Tonna Miller and mezzo-sopranos Susan Graham, Dolora Zajick, Jennifer Dudley, and Kate Aldrich of the Metropolitan Opera. Alumni who have appeared at the Metropolitan Opera and the New York City Opera are sopranos Lauren Flanigan, Pamela Armstrong, Lori Guilbeau, and Amy Johnson; mezzo-sopranos Beth Clayton and Heather Johnson; countertenor Anthony Roth Costanzo; tenors Matthew Chellis and Brandon Jovanovich; and baritone Scott Altman. Another noted alumnus is Maestro George Manahan, Music Director of the American Composers Orchestra and Director of Orchestral Activities at MSM.

Manhattan School of Music has issued CDs of Ned Rorem's *Miss Julie*, Benjamin Britten's *Albert Herring*, Gaetano Donizetti's *Il campanello di notte*, Leonard Bernstein's *Trouble in Tahiti*, Gustav Holst's *Savitri*, Ludwig Spohr's *Beauty and the Beast*, the world premiere recordings of Daniel Catán's *Rappaccini's Daughter*, William Mayer's *A Death in the Family*, Scott Eyerly's *The House of the Seven Gables*, Robert Ward's *Roman Fever*, Thomas Pasatieri's *The Seagull*, Lee Hoiby's *A Month in the Country*, John Musto's *Later the Same Evening*, Lee Hoiby's *Summer and Smoke*, Virgil Thomson's *The Mother of Us All*, Conrad Susa's *The Dangerous Liaisons*, and Nicolas Isouard's *Cendrillon*.

# UPCOMING MSM OPERA THEATRE EVENTS

Thursday, April 28–Saturday, April 30, 2022 | 7:30 PM  
Sunday, May 1, 2022 | 2:30 PM  
Neidorff-Karpati Hall

GRADUATE OPERA THEATRE

## *Le nozze di Figaro*

Saturday, April 30, 2022 | 8:30 PM  
Sunday, May 1, 2022 | 8:30PM  
Gordon K. and Harriet Greenfield Hall

## Junior Opera Theatre

Wednesday, May 4 & Thursday, May 5, 2022 | 7:30 PM  
Alan M. and Joan Taub Ades Performance Space

## Contemporary Opera Ensemble

Friday, May 6 & Saturday, May 7, 2022 | 7:30 PM  
The Riverside Theatre at Riverside Church

SENIOR OPERA THEATRE

## *Die Zauberflöte*

Visit [msmnyc.edu/performances](http://msmnyc.edu/performances) for more information!

# ABOUT MANHATTAN SCHOOL OF MUSIC

Founded as a community music school by Janet Daniels Schenck in 1918, today MSM is recognized for its 985 superbly talented undergraduate and graduate students who come from more than 50 countries and nearly all 50 states; its innovative curricula and world-renowned artist-teacher faculty that includes musicians from the New York Philharmonic, the Met Orchestra, and the top ranks of the jazz and Broadway communities; and a distinguished community of accomplished, award-winning alumni working at the highest levels of the musical, educational, cultural, and professional worlds.

The School is dedicated to the personal, artistic, and intellectual development of aspiring musicians, from its Precollege students through those pursuing doctoral studies. Offering classical, jazz, and musical theatre training, MSM grants a range of undergraduate and graduate degrees. True to MSM's origins as a music school for children, the Precollege program continues to offer superior music instruction to 475 young musicians between the ages of 5 and 18. The School also serves some 2,000 New York City schoolchildren through its Arts-in-Education Program, and another 2,000 students through its critically acclaimed Distance Learning Program.

## **Your gift helps a young artist reach for the stars!**

To enable Manhattan School of Music to continue educating and inspiring generations of talented students and audiences alike, please consider making a charitable contribution today.

*Contact the Advancement Office at 917-493-4434 or visit [msmnyc.edu/support](https://msmnyc.edu/support)*

## **Land Acknowledgment**

We want to acknowledge that we gather as Manhattan School of Music on the traditional land of the Lenape and Wappinger past and present, and honor with gratitude the land itself and the people who have stewarded it throughout the generations.

This calls us to commit to continuing to learn how to be better stewards of the land we inhabit as well.