

M Manhattan
School of Music
GRADUATE OPERA THEATRE

Rusalka

APR 24-27

MManhattan School of Music

MANHATTAN SCHOOL OF MUSIC
GRADUATE OPERA THEATRE

Rusalka

MUSIC BY ANTONÍN DVOŘÁK
LIBRETTO BY JAROSLAV KVAPIL

Kelly Kuo (MM '98), Conductor
John de los Santos, Director and Choreographer

THURSDAY, APRIL 24, 2025 | 7:30 PM
FRIDAY, APRIL 25, 2025 | 7:30
SATURDAY, APRIL 26, 2025 | 7:30 PM
SUNDAY, APRIL 27, 2025 | 2 PM
NEIDORFF-KARPATI HALL

This year's performance season has been inspired by a unifying theme: *Humanity in Harmony: Rituals, Resistance, and Resilience*. We hope during this election year, the biggest in human history with over half the world's population having the opportunity to vote in 72 countries, that this theme reflects the power of the arts to unite us even in moments of discord and differences. The collective experience of collaboration – creating together – reminds us that even in our differences we can find common ground, stand up to tyranny and oppression, and elevate our work as artists to fulfill the hope and promise of a better tomorrow.

James Gandre, President

Joyce Griggs, Executive Vice President and Provost

Faculty and Administration of the Artistic Planning Committee

Students in this performance are recipients of the Licia Albanese Scholarship, Gart Family Foundation Scholarship, Alexandra Hunt Vocal Scholarship, International Advisory Board Scholarship, Birgit Nilsson Scholarship, Mae Zenke Orvis Opera Scholarship, and the Dona D. Vaughn Voice Scholarship.



**Council on
the Arts**

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Funded in part by a grant from the New York City Tourism Foundation.

MManhattan School of Music

MANHATTAN SCHOOL OF MUSIC GRADUATE OPERA THEATRE
CARLEEN GRAHAM, DEAN | DIVISION OF VOCAL ARTS &
COLLABORATIVE PIANO

Rusalka

MUSIC BY ANTONÍN DVOŘÁK
LIBRETTO BY JAROSLAV KVAPIL

Kelly Kuo (MM '98), Conductor
John de los Santos, Director and Choreographer
Michael Ruiz-del-Vizo, Scenic Designer
Ashley Soliman, Costume Designer
Ron Collins, Lighting Designer
Loryn Pretorius, Wig, Hair and Makeup Designer
Shawn Duan, Projection Designer
Joshua Larrinaga-Yocom, Props Supervisor
Lauren Linsey, Production Stage Manager
Jackson McKinnon, Assistant Conductor and Chorus Master
Kristen Kemp, Head of Music in Opera for Vocal Arts and Vocal Coach/Pianist
Travis Bloom, Vocal Coach/Pianist
Djordje Nesic, Vocal Coach/Pianist
William Hobbs, Czech Diction Coach
Azalea Fairley, Assistant Costume Designer
Matthew J. Weisgable, Assistant Lighting Designer
Courville Butt, Associate Wig, Hair and Makeup Designer
Jenna Rowell, Assistant Stage Manager
Timothy Cheek, Supertitles Author

There will be one 15-minute intermission.

Performed in Czech.

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DIRECTOR'S NOTE

The core of faerie tales has always been cautionary. Their underbellies of fear, mortality, and longing ring truer the older we get. Antonín Dvořák's faerie masterpiece, based in part on Hans Christian Andersen's *The Little Mermaid*, contains many of these cautionary terrors set to aching lyrical music. So how to stage this thematic juxtaposition while avoiding kitsch?

The property where Manhattan School of Music stands was once part of the Bloomingdale Insane Asylum. Most of these "hospitals" were just overcrowded prisons where individuals, without any diagnoses or agency, were forced to endure an inhumane existence. Women were specific targets of such institutions and could be admitted and segregated for even minorly perceived transgressions. At the time of the opera's composition in 1900, one of the most pervasive practices in the asylum system was hydrotherapy, which was convenient as several of the buildings used were originally erected as spas. These methods of using water as a torturous remedy seemed a sound parallel to the aquatic entrapment Rusalka yearns to escape to join the colorful "human" world.

Our Rusalka is a foundling who knows virtually nothing of society beyond the asylum grounds. Having spent her whole life there, her only respite is envisioning herself in one of the faerie stories read to her and the other patients. She sees the superintendent doctor as her water-goblin father, the surgeon as a bargaining witch, and the other patients as her water-sprite sisters. Such places relied on philanthropists, and our Rusalka notices one such donor who frequents the hospital to visit a family member housed there. This man becomes the heart of her fantasy as she sees him as a handsome prince destined to relieve her of her captivity. But when her delusion crumbles, she chooses to release herself from her confinement and ascend free for the first time.

—John de los Santos

THE CAST

Rusalka

The Foreign Princess

The Prince

Ježibaba

Vodník

Woodsprite 1

Woodsprite 2

Woodsprite 3

Gamekeeper

Turnspit

Hunter

APRIL 24 & 26

Sara Stevens

Su Hyeon Park

Fernando Silva-Gorbea

Qing Liu

Benjamin R. Sokol

Xinran Du

Raine Filbert

Yiqian Heng

Kevin Mann

Jordan Lee Gilbert

Ian Harris

APRIL 25 & 27

Kemeng Zhang

Baylee Kilgore

Wonjin Choi

Xiaowei Fang

Donghoon Kang

Seunghyun Lim

Anya Kosachevich

Morena La Vecchia Galán

COVERS

Rusalka

The Foreign Princess

Gamekeeper

Turnspit

Hunter

Elena Bimbiloska

Sixi Lai

Shengyang Lin

Lindsey Scanio

Xingyu Liu

Ensemble

SOPRANOS

Vaana Zongxi He

Sixi Lai

Sabrina Ontiveros

Emma Ritto

Lindsey Scanio

Laura Woody

MEZZO-SOPRANOS

Mina Azad

Libby Hamilton

Siyuan Li

Zhiyi Mao

TENORS

Ian Harris

Ruo Chen Liu

Xingyu Liu

BASSES

Jon Carr

Bai Chen

Graham Rui Guan

Shengyang Lin

SYNOPSIS

At the dawn of the 20th Century, sanatorium hospitals for women kept thousands of patients against their will. This production retells the story of *Rusalka* through the lens of several patients' first-hand accounts.

ACT I

Wood nymphs sing by the lake while the moonlight wakes Vodnik, a water goblin. As he wanders with them through the depths, his daughter, Rusalka, appears. She tells him of her desire to become a human and her love for a prince who visits their home. Vodnik tells her she must consult the witch, Ježibaba, warning her that she will die if claimed by a man.

Rusalka appeals to the moon to tell the Prince she is waiting for him. Ježibaba finds Rusalka who pleads to be granted a human soul. Ježibaba informs her that the ability to speak to humans will cease. If she fails to win love, she will be forever accursed; if he rejects her, the Prince, too, will be eternally damned. Confident of her love, Rusalka agrees.

A hunter visits the lake, followed by the Prince, who sends the other nymphs away when he sees a silent Rusalka before him. Unable to speak, she gazes at him lovingly. He accepts her love, then departs as another nymph is punished for disobedience.

ACT II

Sometime later, the gamekeeper and kitchen boy discuss events. The Prince has brought a silent woman back with him from the lake, and seems likely to marry her; the Gamekeeper hopes this will never occur. This seems possible as the Prince is increasingly attracted to a foreign princess.

The servants disappear as the Prince enters. Though he is still drawn to Rusalka, he complains she is devoid of passion. Watching them as she arrives, the Princess vows to separate them. Vodnik returns to warn her that pursuit will yield eternal damnation. As the Prince embraces the Princess, Rusalka acknowledges that he has betrayed her and a riot ensues. Rusalka throws herself into the Prince's arms, but he rejects her. As Rusalka tearfully watches, the Princess tells the Prince to follow his silent bride to hell.

ACT III

Deserted by the Prince and isolated from her companions, Rusalka longs for death. Ježibaba mocks her, revealing that if she kills the Prince herself, she can return to her former life. Entranced by her sisters' distant song, Rusalka steals Ježibaba's knife.

The gamekeeper and kitchen boy search for Ježibaba, seeking a cure for the Prince's illness, caused by the sorceress Rusalka. The witch intimidates them until Vodnik sends her away. The nymphs return to dance until Vodnik's tale of his daughter's undoing causes them to flee.

The Prince enters, once more seeking Rusalka. She appears, warning him that now she can mean only death to him. The Prince asks her to embrace him, to bring him peace. Rusalka finally agrees and he dies in her arms. She asks for God's mercy on his soul and sinks back into the lake.

-John de los Santos

PROGRAM NOTE

Antonín Leopold Dvořák composed ten operas, but no other has garnered the acclaim of *Rusalka*. In the final nine years of his life, he focused his energy predominantly on composing opera and symphonic poems, fully realizing his affinity for dramatic works. Composed in 1900 and premiering in 1901, *Rusalka* brings together Dvořák's wide-ranging compositional influences. A violist, organist, and composer trained in the German-oriented musical tradition with later musical success in Vienna, Dvořák was born and lived in Bohemia at a time when the expression of Czech national identity flourished, and his oeuvre consistently employed Czech and Slavic themes, history, folklore, and ideals. The Czech national revival both opened up opportunities for Dvořák's musical posts in his home country and deeply informed his compositions, and in time his work became emblematic of the revival of Czech culture and identity.

Dvořák's Bohemia was the product of a long history of Czech cultural subjugation. The exile of Czechs under Ferdinand II's re-catholicization efforts allowed for vacant Bohemian properties to be filled by the Habsburgs with German-speaking soldiers who shared their Catholic faith with the remaining population. The newcomers' faith affected more than just religious life—it ushered in a taste for the Baroque style, influencing art, music, and even the style of Prague's architecture. The overwhelming majority of German-speaking nobility resulted in the establishment of German (in addition to Czech) as an official administrative language, followed by increased taxation on the region's native peasants. After the fall of the Holy Roman Empire in 1806, Bohemia was still under the control of the Habsburgs' Austrian (and later, Austro-Hungarian) Empire. But, following the French Revolution, Czechs would begin a Nationalist Revival to resurrect their own language and unique culture. Written Czech was circulated in language books, and by the mid-nineteenth century, a National Museum and Provisional Theatre (in preparation for the National Theatre) were established and Charles University split into two separate institutions (one teaching in German and one in Czech) by the 1880s. Dvořák was employed by these institutions as a violist for the Czech Provisional Theatre and later would conduct the Czech Philharmonic's inaugural concert.

Leading works of literature from this period were inspired by the folklore of the Bohemian countryside and Czech regional customs, including the works of Karel Jaromír Erben (1811-1870). The author, folklorist, and later archivist of the National Museum composed fairytales, poems, and ballads which Dvořák repeatedly drew on in his compositions, including *Rusalka*. While German Romantic idealism frequently utilized magico-religious references of medieval and gothic origin as a reaction against Enlightenment rationality, particularly in the operatic medium,

Rusalka's use of supernatural tropes held deeper meaning for Bohemians. For Dvořák, this literary return was part of the Czech populist movement to access, distribute, and revive the nation's own heritage and language.

Jaroslav Kvapil's (1868–1950) fairy tale-inspired *Rusalka* inherited themes from Hans Christian Andersen's *The Little Mermaid* and framed them within the world of Erben and Božena Němcová's folk imagery. The *rusalki* of Pagan origin were not malicious spirits but sprites of fertility, while their nineteenth-century counterparts were reinterpreted as tainted spirits born from women who died of suicide or as virgins, who posed various symbolic threats to men who encountered them. Both the earlier and later *rusalki* were considered soulless beings. Dvořák employs elements of both of these mythic tropes throughout *Rusalka*. The benign nymph Rusalka who appears in Act I is by Act III banished to the depths of her lake as a result of failing to achieve her romantic aims, emerging solely to take the life of her beloved with her kiss.

Dvořák's *Rusalka* is also an amalgamation of the *undine* of Swiss folklore, appearing to the Prince first as only a wave. This wave nymph—also believed to be soulless—could earn an immortal soul through marriage to a human man, painting love as their redemption. The undine, too, could be cursed with exile to the depths if betrayed by her beloved, tying this Pagan spirit to nineteenth-century ideals of Romantic salvation. Undine can be found across Greek, Swiss, and French cultures, from the Middle Ages through Romantic and Symbolist literature, music, and art. As the tale gained popularity in versions continuing down to Disney's own *The Little Mermaid*, striving to attain one's soul became synonymous with the desire for love.

While Dvorak's *Rusalka* is steeped in Czech folkloric imagery, it draws on universal (or at least Pan-European) tropes. Other folkloric figures appearing here include Kvapil's witch, Ježibaba, a portrayal of the elderly wood witch known as *Baba Yaga*, as well as the Water Gnome, originating in folklore not as the Mer-King of recent tellings, but the amphibious *Vodyanoy*—an elderly, male, lazy spirit and the most benevolent of the three stock characters.

Kvapil approached Dvořák to set his *Rusalka* libretto to music in 1900, and Dvořák, already enamored of the source material after having composed four tone poems to ballads from Erben's works (Op. 107, 108, 109, and 110), completed it by that year's end. During his time in the orchestra at the Provisional Theatre, Dvořák became enraptured by the music of Wagner, which inspired his love for dramatic works and influenced his operatic output—*Rusalka* in particular. Composed at the end of his career, *Rusalka* is an expressive masterpiece that manifests a purely Dvořákian style, blending leitmotif, almost impressionistic instrumentation, and contrasting scenes of pure lyricism with abrupt conflict. The contrast employed here is a quintessentially Dvořákian mode of composition,

separating characters' individual styles, expressive and emotional scenes from light dialogue, and the human from the supernatural. This opera is steeped with indexical and semiotic references, ranging from marches, courtly dances, folk idioms, and the nineteenth-century implementation of arpeggiated harp to evoke water. Most saliently, the opera reuses several leitmotifs, allowing for the listener to readily hear the way the work is motivically woven together upon their first listen: from a water motive—employed in a less Wagnerian style and more in line with the style of Dvořák's mentor and friend Brahms's motivic development—to Rusalka's theme, which occurs dozens of times from the overture through the opera's final moments.

The most famous aria from the opera, *Song to the Moon* (*Měsíčku na nebi blubokém*), is not only a breathtaking and lyrical masterpiece, but has been described by musicologist Michael Beckerman as “a microcosm of the opera as a whole, for instead of making us conscious of multiple styles coexisting uneasily, their interaction creates a powerful effect and a unified impression.” *Rusalka* premiered in Prague in 1901 to much acclaim, but it wasn't until recent years that it found its way into the canonical operatic repertory at international houses, premiering at the Metropolitan Opera in 1993.

Right before his opera-centered compositional era, Dvořák taught at the National Conservatory in New York for three years, with the goal of uncovering an American Music. It was during this time he composed his *New World Symphony* (No. 9). While his departure from Manhattan to return to Bohemia was before the opening of the Bloomingdale Insane Asylum that inspired tonight's production, his signature operatic work *Rusalka* mirrors the fate of these women all the same. The Bloomingdale Insane Asylum was not a state-mandated institution like the Lunatic Asylum at Utica but a privately funded institution guided by Quaker beliefs. Oftentimes, the criteria under which women were committed included engaging with the arts and literature, sexual proclivity, and sometimes merely the wishes of husbands who wished to be rid of them. In these instances, just as the for the nineteenth-century *rusalki*, the women's betrayal by men resulted in their banishment. Throughout Dvořák and Kvapil's work, *Rusalka* wrestles with the crisis of her being without a soul—that she is “half a woman: neither woman nor nymph, [she] cannot live and cannot die.” Women institutionalized at this time were profoundly cut off from society and—at least according to the Quaker ideals that framed commitment at Bloomingdale—were detached from rationality itself. The social death represented by such a place is mirrored in *Rusalka*'s punishment within the opera—neither dead nor alive, she is cut off from her sisters and the world she aspired to join, trapped in a perpetual state of longing.

–Rebecca Carroll, *Performance Programs and Publications Manager*
(M.A. Musicology Student at Rutgers University)

CAST BIOGRAPHIES

Mina Azad

Ensemble
MM antic. '26
Houston, Texas
Student of Ruth Golden

Elena Bimbiloska (BM '24)

Cover Rusalka
MM antic. '26
Struga, North Macedonia
Student of Catherine Malfitano

Jon Carr

Ensemble
MM antic. '25
Fredericksburg, Virginia
Student of Sidney Outlaw

Bai Chen

Ensemble
MM antic. '25
Guangdong, China
Student of Mark Schnaible

Wonjin Choi

Prince
PPD antic. '26
Seoul, South Korea
Student of Mark Schnaible
Upcoming: Festival Napa Valley, Napa Valley, Summer 2025

Xinran Du (BM '24)

Woodsprite 1
MM antic. '26
Beijing, China
Student of Joan Patenaude-Yarnell

Xiaowei Fang

Jezibaba
MM antic. '25
Shandong, China
Student of Catherine Malfitano

Raine Filbert

Woodsprite 2
MM antic. '25
Bellevue, Idaho
Student of Susan Quittmeyer

Morena La Vecchia Galán

Woodsprite 3
MM antic. '25
Buenos Aires, Argentina
Student of Mary Dunleavy

Jordan Lee Gilbert (BM '23)

Turnspit
MM antic. '26
New York, New York
Student of Edith Bers
Upcoming: *Le nozze di Figaro* (Susanna),
The Little Prince (Water), OperaNorth

Graham Rui Guan

Ensemble
MM antic. '25
Qingdao, China
Student of Mark Schnaible

Libby Hamilton

Ensemble
MM antic. '26
Summerville, South Carolina
Student of Mary Dunleavy

Ian Harris

Hunter, Ensemble
MM antic. '26
San Jose, California
Student of Dimitri Pittas
Upcoming: Taos Opera Institute, New Mexico, Summer 2025
Così fan tutte (Ferrando),
Vienna Opera Academy

Vaana Zongxi He

Ensemble

MM antic. '26

Singapore, Singapore

Student of Catherine Malfitano

Yiqian Heng

Woodsprite 3

PPD antic. '26

Anhui, China

Student of Mark Schnaible

Baylee Kilgore

The Foreign Princess

MM antic. '26

Houston, Texas

Student of Joan Patenaude-Yarnell

Donghoon Kang

Vodnik

PPD antic. '25

Seoul, South Korea

Student of Mark Schnaible

Upcoming: Glimmerglass, Summer 2025

Anya Kosachevich

Woodsprite 2

MM antic. '25

Parsippany, New Jersey

Student of Susan Quittmeyer

Sixi Lai

Ensemble, cover The Foreign Princess

MM antic. '25

Shenzhen, China

Student of Mary Dunleavy

Upcoming: *Falstaff*, International Lyric Academy**Siyuan Li**

Ensemble

MM antic. '26

ShanDong, China

Student of Susan Quittmeyer

Seunghyun Lim

Woodsprite 1

MM antic. '25

Seoul, South Korea

Student of Edith Bers

Shengyang Lin

Ensemble, cover Gamekeeper

MM antic. '26

Wenzhou, China

Student of James Morris

Qing Liu

Jezibaba

MM antic. '25

An Hui, China

Student of Cynthia Hoffman

Ruochen Liu

Ensemble

MM antic. '26

Beijing, China

Student of Mark Schnaible

Xingyu Liu

Ensemble, cover Hunter

MM antic. '26

Chongqing, China

Student of Joan Patenaude-Yarnell

Zhiyi Mao

Ensemble

MM antic. '26

Sichuan, China

Student of Joan Patenaude-Yarnell

Kevin Mann

MM antic. '25

Alexandria, Virginia

Student of Sidney Outlaw

Upcoming: *Cendrillon* (Pandolfe), Berlin Opera Academy

Sabrina Ontiveros

Ensemble
MM antic. '26
Mentone, California
Student of Joan Patenaude-Yarnell

Su Hyeon Park

The Foreign Princess
PPD antic. '26
Jeonju, South Korea
Student of Mark Schnaible

Emma Ritto (BM '23)

Ensemble
MM antic. '25
Rancho Santa Fe, California
Student of Ruth Golden

Lindsey Scanio

Ensemble, cover Turnspit
MM antic. '25
Buffalo, New York
Student of Ruth Golden

Fernando Silva-Gorbea (MM '24)

Prince
PS antic. '25
Trujillo Alto, Puerto Rico
Student of James Morris

Benjamin R. Sokol (BM '22, MM '24)

Vodnik
PS antic. '25
Westbury, New York
Student of James Morris
Upcoming: Young Artist, Ryan Opera
Center Ensemble, 2025

Sara Stevens (BM '23)

Rusalka
MM antic. '25
Kennesaw, Georgia
Student of Cynthia Hoffmann
Upcoming: Kenneth Merrill's seminar
concert

Laura Woody

Ensemble
MM antic. '25
Greeneville, Tennessee
Student of Susan Quittmeyer
Upcoming: Vocal Fellow, Spoleto
Festival USA

Kemeng Zhang

Rusalka
MM antic. '25
Tongren, China
Student of Cynthia Hoffmann

ORCHESTRA

JT Kane, Dean of Instrumental Studies and Orchestral Performance

VIOLIN 1

Tristan Siegel,
concertmaster
Tenafly, New Jersey

Christophe Koenig
East Aurora, New York

Maja Uzarska
Warsaw, Poland

Shih Chen Ting
Taipei, Taiwan

Jingyi Huang
Shanghai, China

Jennifer Ahn
New York, New York

VIOLIN 2

Coco Sun, principal
New York, New York

Sohyun Ko
Atlanta, Georgia

Xenia Bergmann
Murnau, Germany

Hosokawa Tomohiko
Tokyo, Japan

Shengbo Tu
Shanghai, China

VIOLA

Linnea Marchie,
principal
Summit, New Jersey

Hayley Lau
Sydney, Australia

Anna Huang
Zhubei City, Taiwan

Man Chun Li
Hong Kong, Hong Kong

CELLO

Haeun Chung,
principal
Finju, South Korea

Aidan Pan
Ithaca, New Jersey

August Schwob
Oak Park, Illinois

DOUBLE BASS

Riley Schultz,
principal
Bayville, New York

Lauren Seery
Bethpage, New York

FLUTE

Lucy Rubin*
Highland Park, Illinois

Zofia Los Leznicka
Warsaw, Poland

Can Xu
Nanjing, China

OBOE

Zane Lowry*
San Diego, California

Janice Wu
Arcadia, California

Megan Strait
Greenwood, Indiana

CLARINET

I-han Chen*
Kaohsiung, Taiwan

Ivan Morozov
New York, New York

Sakira Fujimoto
Shiga, Japan

BASSOON

Austin Wegener*
*Rancho Santa Margarita,
California*

Nadia Ingalls
Fredericton, Canada

HORN**Vera Romero****Caracas, Venezuela***Keegan McCardell***Ellicott City, Maryland***Nicholas Ochoa***Brownsville, Texas***Sarah Bell***Winnipeg, Canada***TRUMPET****Bryce Grier****Vernon, New Jersey***Marcus Gonzales***Southbridge, Massachusetts***Sam Atlas***Westport, Connecticut***Themba Pieterse***Albany, New York***TROMBONE****Matteo Paoli****Livorno, Italy***Andrei Lipoczi***Toronto, Canada***BASS TROMBONE****Ryan Parichuk***Budd Lake, New Jersey***TUBA****Fumiya Miyata****Osaka, Japan***TIMPANI****Gabriel Levy***Toronto, Canada***PERCUSSION****Hwanee Pak***Columbia, Maryland***Mischa Gerbrecht***Vancouver, Canada***HARP****Isabel Cardenes***Pittsburgh, PA*

CREATIVE TEAM

Kelly Kuo, Conductor

Currently Music Director of the Reno Chamber Orchestra and Associate Artistic Director of American Lyric Theater, Kelly Kuo has consistently championed the development of the next generation of musical talent and demonstrated a commitment to innovative programming, creative initiatives, and advocacy of underrepresented voices in the concert hall.

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 Kuo brings a dynamic versatility and nuance to a diverse repertoire. Highlights of recent seasons included productions with the Lyric Opera of Chicago, Seattle Opera, Minnesota Opera, Des Moines Metro Opera, Glimmerglass Opera, and concerts with the Memphis Symphony Orchestra, Sunriver Music Festival, Indianapolis Chamber Orchestra, Walla Walla Symphony, Olympia Symphony Orchestra, and Ballet Fantastique.

Maestro Kuo is the first conductor of Asian descent to lead a performance at the Lyric Opera of Chicago. He was also named Emeritus Artistic Director of the Oregon Mozart Players after serving the longest tenure in the organization’s history. Kuo continues to concertize as a keyboardist as the only pianist to have studied with two pupils of the Russian virtuoso Vladimir Horowitz.

John de los Santos, Director and Choreographer

John de los Santos’ productions include *Sweet Potato Kicks the Sun* (world premiere, Santa Fe Opera), *Ghosts* (world premiere, San Diego Opera), *Mary Poppins* (Watertown Theater), *Don Giovanni* (Wolf Trap Opera), *Before Night Falls* (Opera Southwest), *L'heure Espagnol* (New Camerata Opera), *Frida* (Opera Orlando), *Maria de Buenos Aires* (Fort Worth Opera), and *La fille du Regiment* (Minnesota Opera). His MSM productions include *Angelique*, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, and *Der Kaiser von Atlantis*. He has also directed at The Julliard School and The Yale School of Music. As a librettist, John’s collaborations with composer Clint Borzoni include *When Adonis Calls* (Asheville Lyric Opera), *The Copper Queen* (Arizona Opera), and *The Christmas Spider* (Opera Louisiana). His commission by Washington National Opera’s American Opera Initiative, with composer Christopher Weiss, *Service Provider*, premiered at the Kennedy Center and has since had over a dozen productions across the country. In 2020, John and Marc Migó were commissioned by UrbanArias to write an operatic film for the Decameron Opera Project. Their

piece, *The Roost*, was directed by John and was subsequently included in the archives of the Library of Congress. He is currently a librettist with Minnesota Opera's New Works Initiative, where he and Kamala Sankaram are creating an opera of Stephen King's *Misery*. johndelossantos.com

Michael Ruiz-del-Vizo, Scenic Designer

Michael Ruiz-del-Vizo is a Queer, Hispanic, scenic designer and associate based in New York and Miami. Michael earned their BFA in production design at the Savannah College of Art and Design. Selected Credits: *The Fairy Queen* (Manhattan School of Music); *Laughs in Spanish* (Kitchen Theatre Company); *Randy's Dandy Coaster Castle* (Egg & Spoon Theatre Collective); *Empanada Loca* (Savannah Repertory Theatre); *The Bluest Eye, Little Women* (Theatreworks). Selected Associate Credits: *CLUE: A New Comedy* (National Tour); *Bye Bye Birdie* (The Kennedy Center); *A Knock on the Roof*(NYTW, The Royal Court); *Walden* (Second Stage); *FLEX* (LCT); *MISTY* (TheShed). Michael is an avid fan of drag, comedy, and podcasts and is an all-around nice person. michaelruizdelvizo.com; @mikyle91

Ashley Soliman, Costume Designer

Ashley Soliman is a costume designer and visual artist based in NYC, selected as one of Broadway Women's Fund 2023 "Women to Watch on Broadway." Previous MSM productions include *Roméo et Juliette, A Midsummer Night's Dream, and Le portrait de Manon / Pavane / Angélique*. Upcoming: *Fantastic Mr. Fox* (Opera Omaha), *Bonnie & Clyde* (Bay Street Theater), *Carmen* (Wolftrap). Selected credits: *The Trojans* (Loading Dock Theatre), *I AM* (Camille A. Brown & Dancers), *REDEEMED* (59E59), *Tornado Tastes Like Aluminum Sting* (CATF), *David: A New Musical* (AMT Theater), *The Cunning Little Vixen* (The Curtis Institute), *Angel Island* (BAM & Beth Morrison Projects), *Double Helix* (Bay Street Theater), *The Rake's Progress* (Juilliard), *Sweet Potato Kicks The Sun* (Santa Fe Opera). *ACD: Coal Country* (The Public, des. Jessica Jahn). USA Local 829.

Ron Collins, Lighting Designer

Ron Collins is thrilled to be joining Manhattan School of Music for this production of *Rusalka*. Predominantly working in experiential events, festivals, and fashion, he is delighted to make his New York opera design debut here with MSM. He earned his MFA from The University of Texas at Austin where his graduate school research focused on installation design creating a bar telling the history of gay bar nightlife. His design highlights are *The Little Mermaid, Love and Information, Der Kaiser von Atlantis, Hero Twins: Blood Race*, and Kafka's *Metamorphosis*. @rclightingdesign

Loryn Pretorius, Wig, Hair, and Makeup Designer

Loryn Pretorius's wig and makeup work has been seen on Broadway, at the Metropolitan Opera, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and in theatres all over the world. She holds an MFA in wig and makeup design from UNC School of the Arts and was professionally mentored by Paul Huntley. Her most recent design credits include *Romeo et Juliette*, *La Rondine*, *Nine*, *Bye Bye Birdie*, *The Cunning Little Vixen*, *Paperboy*, *She Loves Me*, *Sunday in the Park with George*, and *Sweeney Todd* (Manhattan School of Music); *La Traviata*, *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, and *The Garden of the Finzi-Continis* (NYC Opera); *Tootsie* (1st National Tour); *Cullud Wattab* (The Public Theater); and *Gilbert vs. Sullivan* (Opera Tampa). You can currently catch her at Sunset Boulevard on Broadway as the hair and makeup supervisor. She thanks her incredible build and run crew for making her *Rusalka* dreams a reality—as well as the ghosts of MSM who are letting us tell their story—this show would be impossible without them. IG: @loryn_pretorius

Shawn Duan, Projection Designer

Shawn Duan is a New York-based Projection and Media Designer. Previous design at MSM: *Paperboy*, *Sunday in the Park with George*. Recently in NYC: *Dakar 2000* (MTC), *Mother Play* (Hayes Theater), *Between Two Knees* (Perelman WTC). 2022 Lortel Award for Rajiv Joseph's *Letters of Suresh*. Other NYC Design: MET Museum, The Public, Second Stage. Regional Design: Arena Stage, the Alliance, Berkeley Rep, Dallas Theater Center, Ford's Theatre, Goodspeed, The Guthrie, McCarter Theatre Center, the MUNY, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Seattle Repertory, Yale Rep. Opera: New York City Opera, Seattle Opera. Commercial entertainment work includes numerous US/International tours, concerts, and the recent 2024 Big Apple Circus. Consultant work includes corporate events, activations, and film post-production.

Joshua Larrinaga-Yocom, Props Supervisor

Joshua Larrinaga-Yocom is excited to be working at MSM. Some of his memorable New York premieres include *The Humans* (Roundabout and Broadway), *The Sound Inside* (Studio 54), *Hangmen* (Atlantic Theater Co. and the Golden), *The Bedwetter*, *Days of Wine and Roses*, *Halfway Bitches Go Straight to Heaven*, *Secret Life of Bees*, *Between Riverside and Crazy*, *Guards at the Taj*, *Marie and Rosetta* (Atlantic Theater Co.), *Letters for Max* (Signature Theatre), *Heroes of 18 the Fourth Turning*, *Corsicana*, *Tambo and Bones* (Playwrights Horizons), *Evanston* (The New Group), *Collective Rage* (MCC), *Do You Feel Anger?* (Vineyard Theatre), *Lazarus* (New York Theatre Workshop), *Mary Paige Marlow* (Second Stage), *For All the Women Who Thought They Were Mad* (SoHo Rep), *Epiphany* (Lincoln Center Theater), and Sarah Ruhl's *Passion Play* (Epic). He is eternally grateful for the continued love and support of his husband Roberto.

Lauren Linsey, Production Stage Manager

Lauren Linsey is a director, dramaturg, and stage manager based in New York City with roots in Houston, Texas and Norman, Oklahoma. She is a co-producer with Co.llective Arts Productions, an Oklahoma-based theater company creating work for and by young artists. She's just happy to be here! Stage Management: *{in} tangible* (Theatre Row); *Nine, Forget Me Not, The Secret Life of the American Musical* (Manhattan School of Music); *An Autopsy of a Night at a Bar* (The Tank), *A New Brain* (University of Oklahoma). Alum, *The 24 Hour Plays*: Nationals.

Jackson McKinnon, Assistant Conductor and Chorus Master

Jackson McKinnon (he/him) serves as Music Director for the Undergraduate Opera Theatre Program's mainstage productions and as Chorus Master and Assistant Conductor for the Graduate Opera Theatre at Manhattan School of Music. Mr. McKinnon has worked with orchestras and companies across the globe including the International Contemporary Ensemble, American Symphony Orchestra, Grafenegg Academy Orchestra, The Orchestra Now, Vienna State Opera, Linz Landestheater Opera, and Palaver Strings. Mr. McKinnon has spent four seasons as Music Director for Opera Maine's Studio Artist Program and Cover Conductor for Opera Maine's mainstage productions. Mr. McKinnon was the Resident Music Director with City Lyric Opera in New York for multiple seasons and has spent five seasons as conductor/musicological consultant with Bard Summerscape and Music Festival. An adamant proponent for new music, Mr. McKinnon has collaborated, performed, and premiered numerous works by composers such as Ricky Ian Gordon, Ana Sokolović, Lori Laitman, Pauline Oliveros, Natalie Joachim, Philip Glass, and Laura Kaminsky among many others.

Kristen Kemp, Head of Music in Opera for Vocal Arts and Vocal Coach/Pianist

Vocal coach and pianist Kristen Kemp, a Florida native, has worked with numerous opera companies throughout the United States, including Cincinnati Opera, Michigan Opera Theater, Sarasota Opera, Indianapolis Opera, Utah Festival Opera, Martina Arroyo's Prelude to Performance Program, and Opera North, as well as the Opera Theatre of Lucca, Italy, in association with the University of Cincinnati Conservatory. Kristen served on the music staff of Sarasota Opera from 2003 to 2015, where she was also the Studio Artist Director for five seasons. As a member of the coaching staff for Sherrill Milnes's VOICEexperience, Kristen has worked with the programs in New York, Florida,

and Savannah since 2010. Since moving to New York City in 2013, she has been a frequent performer and collaborator in numerous concerts of choral works with piano and orchestra at Carnegie Hall and David Geffen Hall. Kristen Kemp joined Manhattan School of Music as an Opera Theatre coach in 2018 and was named Head of Music in Opera for Vocal Arts in 2021. She received her Master of Music degree in collaborative piano and her Artist Diploma in opera coaching from the University of Cincinnati College Conservatory of Music, where she studied with Kenneth Griffiths and Donna Loewy.

Travis Bloom, Vocal Coach

Travis Bloom is a sought-after vocal coach and collaborative pianist in New York City. He has served as an artistic staff member at the Manhattan School of Music since 2017. Last summer Travis served as a guest pianist/coach for the JAM on the Marsh composers' residency in the UK with guest clinician, Jonathan Dove. In August '24 Travis served as the principal coach/pianist for the Berkshire Opera Festival's production of *Faust* under the artistic direction of Brian Garman and Jonathon Loy. In 2020–22 he served on the music staff for the highly anticipated return of Ricky Ian Gordon and Lynn Nottage's *Intimate Apparel* at Lincoln Center. From 2019–2021 he worked as a faculty coach with the Chautauqua Institute Voice Program under the direction of Marlena Malas. During his time at Chautauqua, he worked closely with composers Ricky Ian Gordon and Ben Moore, presenting recitals of their music. Since 2018, he has worked with the Metropolitan Opera Guild as a pianist for their master class series. He has accompanied master classes with Renée Fleming, Susan Graham, Craig Rutenberg, Thomas Hampson, Isabel Leonard, Anthony Roth Costanzo, Harolyn Blackwell, and Piotr Beczala. Since moving to NYC in 2016, Mr. Bloom has been a staff pianist/coach for the International Vocal Arts Institute under the direction of Joan Dornemann and Paul Nadler. Upcoming engagements include principal pianist/coach for the Berkshire Opera Festival's production of *La Traviata*.

Djordje Nesic, Vocal Coach

Djordje Stevan Nesic's performances have been described as artful, assertive, sensitive, and quietly virtuosic, and his career is highlighted by recital, concerto, chamber, and collaborative performances, both in the U.S. and internationally. He strives to promote music addressing contemporary social justice and human rights issues. At Manhattan School of Music, he conducted and music directed Jack Perla/Jessica Murphy Moo's *An American Dream*, Ana Sokolovic's *Svadba* (also guest conducted at Peabody), Mozart's *La finta giardiniera*, and Ullmann/Kien's *Der*

Kaiser von Atlantis. Upcoming: recitals in Belgrade, Serbia, and a return to Opera Saratoga. Previously, he appeared as the collaborative pianist for the Joyce DiDonato masterclasses at Carnegie Hall, the Berkshire Opera Festival, Carnegie Hall in NYC, Kolarac Hall in Belgrade, the Prototype Festival in NYC, the KotorArt Festival in Montenegro, the Serbian Cultural Center in Paris, and the Caixa Cultural in Brasilia. Recordings include Marc Blitzstein's *The Cradle Will Rock* on Bridge Records, Ricky Ian Gordon's *Ellen West* on Bright Shiny Things, and *The Opera America Songbook*. Other venues include the United Nations General Assembly Hall, the Mann Performing Arts Center in Philadelphia, FUJI TV in Japan, the Aspen Music Festival, Tanglewood Festival, Glimmerglass Opera, Houston Grand Opera.

William Hobbs, Czech Diction

William Hobbs received his Bachelor's in Piano Performance summa cum laude from the University of Colorado at Boulder and his Master's from the Eastman School. Active as a soloist, collaborator, and chamber musician, he has performed in the U.S., England, Korea, France, Greece, Italy, Spain, Malta, and Poland. He has collaborated with performers including Sir James Galway, Yo-Yo Ma, and Monica Ellis. He works at opera houses worldwide, including the Opéra National de Paris, the Salzburg Festival, San Francisco Opera, Chicago Lyric Opera, Washington Opera, and the Opéra de Monte-Carlo.

Following appointments at Juilliard, Mannes, CUNY, and Westminster Choir College, Mr. Hobbs currently serves on the faculty of Montclair State University. He also serves at the Peabody Institute, teaching Comparative Slavic Diction in Czech, Polish, Ukrainian, and Russian. Summer 2025 will see the release of his debut solo piano CD, *Orbiting Garden: Music of Hatzis and Sorabji*, on the Blue Griffin label.

Azalea Fairley, Associate Costume Designer

Azalea Fairley (she/they) is a New Orleans-born NYC-based costume designer and is thrilled to work with MSM! Broadway: Associate designer *A Strange Loop*; Assistant Designer *Hamilton*. Off-Broadway: *Shadow/Land* (The Public); *TJ Loves Sally 4Ever* (Jack Theater); *What Lies Beneath* (On Site Opera NYC). Regional: *King James*, *Clyde's* (George Street Playhouse NJ); *Fabulations* (Chautauqua Theater Company); *After Midnight* (Paper Mill Playhouse); *Eternal Life Pt1* (Wilma Theater, PA); *Detroit '67*, *Schoolgirls* (TheaterSquared AR), *Blood Knot* (Flat Rock Playhouse NC), *By the Way, Meet Vera Stark* (Colorado Fine Arts Ctr), *10x10 Play Fest* (Barrington Stage MA), Film: *Murderer* and *The Rainbow Experiment*. Awards: Nominations for Outstanding Costume Design for the Audelco Awards, the Barrymore Awards, and The Henry Awards. Member USA 829 Azalea-Fairley.com

Matthew J. Weisgable, Assistant Lighting Designer

Matthew J. Weisgable (he/him) is a NYC-based lighting designer and associate/assistant for theater, opera, and dance. Select design credits include *Big: The Musical* (Bristol Riverside Theatre), *A Gentleman's Guide to Love and Murder*, *Much Ado About Nothing*, *A Child's Christmas in Wales*, *The Rainmaker*, *Tartuffe* (The Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey), *Natasha, Pierre & The Great Comet of 1812*, *Power/Trip*, (Carnegie Mellon University). Select associate design credits include *Ajijaak on Turtle Island* (Gerald Lynch Theatre). Current lighting supervisor of Les Ballets Trockadero de Monte Carlo. MFA: Carnegie Mellon University, BA: Marymount Manhattan College. Website: mattjweisgabledesigns.com

Courville Butt, Associate Wig, Hair, and Makeup Designer

Courville comes from a strong theater background, even as far back as childhood styling for their family's theater productions. They work part-time on Broadway shows such as *The Great Gatsby*, *Moulin Rouge*, and *The Mj Musical*, and debuted as a designer this season for a high school production of *Legally Blonde!* Courville takes great pride in educational outreach, and they're honored to be able to bring their expertise to this production and to work with this year's opera students.

Jenna Rowell, Assistant Stage Manager

Jenna Rowell is a stage manager and dramaturg from Arlington, Texas. Recent SM credits include *The Thanksgiving Play* (OKC Rep); *Shakespeare in Love*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Born With Teeth*, *Jane Austen's Christmas Cracker*, and *Hamlet* (Okla. Shakespeare); and *Shrek The Musical* (Craft Productions of Okla.). Her recent ASM & PA credits include *Vietgone*, *The Antelope Party*, *The Brothers Size*, *Superstitions*, and *The Great Leap* (OKC Rep); *Man of La Mancha* (Asolo Repertory Theatre); and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (Okla. Shakespeare). She holds a BFA in Dramaturgy and Stage Management and a BA in Journalism from The University of Oklahoma.

RUSALKA PERSONNEL

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Courtney Kupferschmidt, Assistant Technical Director

Junior Diaz, Production Supervisor

Pam Pangaro, Production Electrician

Tyler Siegel, Assistant Production Electrician

Gabriel Hrin, Lighting Programmer

Don Cieslik, Projections Programmer

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Chloe Levy, Assistant Wardrobe Supervisor

Aubrey Hess, Wardrobe Supervisor

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Dianela Gil, Aryn Murphy, John Polles, Stichers

Elisa Abend-Goldfarb, Wig, Hair, and Makeup Lead

Sharone Malka, Kyle Pearson, Stephanie Fisher, Jacky Sanger, and
Ashley Trujillo, Camille Labarre, Costume Builders

Kim Manning, Costume Dyer

Brian Donaghue, Supertitles Operator

Run Crew

Mikey Stevens, Lead Deck Hand

Daisy Taysom, Caleb Bearden, Run Crew

Phil Manzi, Board Operator

Rook Shaw, Amanda Langhaus, Followspot Operators

Caleb Bearden, John Murphy, Gunnar Rorholm, Ser Konvalin,
Lamont Concepcion, Andres Ayola, Ava Cintron, Carpenters/Stagehands

David Philyaw, Sebastian Fazio, Aaron Conover, Rook Shaw,

Chad Williams, Electricians

Caroline Barber, Courville Butt, and **Blair Waters**, Wig, Hair, and
Makeup Run Crew

Film Crew

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Shawn Duan, Director of Photography & Camera Operator

Lauren Linsey, 1st Assistant Director

Morena La Vecchia Galán, Script Supervisor

Mariel Sanchez, 2nd Assistant Camera

David Philyaw, Gaffer

Zach Parisella, Electrician

Dash Lea, Key Grip & Set Decorator

Kyr Siegel, Grip & Stunt Coordinator

Loryn Pretorious, Key Makeup Artist

Elisa Abend-Goldfarb, Courville Butt, Tressa Cottone, Hair and
Makeup Stylists

Ashley Solimon, Costume Designer

Chloe Levy, Set Costumer

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OPERA AT MANHATTAN SCHOOL OF MUSIC

Manhattan School of Music opera productions have been praised as a significant contribution to operatic life in New York City, and numerous performances have been released as commercial recordings. Opera is a significant feature of the vocal performance experience at MSM. All voice students participate in ensembles, and opera experience is available through a rich variety of opera-related programs and courses.

Graduate students develop their artistry under the guidance of eminent artist teachers, while gaining exposure before New York City audiences through the many performance opportunities MSM offers. Productions each year include two full operas with orchestra on the Neidorff-Karpati Hall stage; a new fall opera scenes series; a new fall chamber opera-level production; a fall Opera Workshop to hone audition and professional skills; a new spring Opera in Concert collaboration with the MSM Symphony Orchestra; a workshop of a new work or a workshop performance of a one-act opera; and a Musical Theatre Lab.

Juniors and seniors participate in a fall opera scenes program that explores a wide variety of styles and languages while developing important artistic and collaborative skills. In the spring, they audition to appear in a fully staged production with chamber orchestra, or in a one-act opera or cabaret-style performance with piano.

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ABOUT MANHATTAN SCHOOL OF MUSIC

Founded as a community music school by Janet Daniels Schenck in 1918, today MSM is recognized for its 1,025 superbly talented undergraduate and graduate students who come from 54 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 Division is a professionally oriented Saturday music program dedicated to the musical and personal growth of talented young musicians ages 8 to 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.

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