

2025/2026 SEASON

thedallasopera



FEBRUARY 6-14, 2026

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First place-winner Navasard Hakobyan (center) bows at the 2024 TDO National Vocal Competition. c. Karen Almond



## NATIONAL VOCAL COMPETITION

**Friday, March 6, 2026 | 7:30 PM**  
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# FROM THE GENERAL DIRECTOR AND BOARD CHAIR



**IAN DERRER**  
Kern Wildenthal  
General Director and CEO

Welcome back to the Winspear,

I first worked on legendary director Francesca Zambello's stunning production of *THE LITTLE PRINCE* years ago at New York City Opera. I've loved it ever since.

From Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's universal story to Rachel Portman's whimsical music, there's an irreplicable magic and wonder to this production. A huge part of that enchantment comes from the late, great Maria Björnson's colorful costumes and sets. If you don't know Maria's name, you certainly know her work. The theater designer created many iconic stage productions, most notably Andrew Lloyd Webber's *The Phantom of the Opera*. Maria's work on *The Little Prince* is a masterpiece. Her incredible designs really are evocative of what you read and the illustrations you saw in the book. They delight all who see them.

We have an extraordinarily talented cast at the ready for *The Little Prince*. Local favorite Keron Jackson and, from our recent *Carmen*, Diana Newman and Kyle Miller all return. Starring as the Pilot, Kyle has a special connection with this opera—he sang in its chorus as a child. Tessa Fackelmann, Jacob Abrahamse, Christopher A. Leach, Korin Thomas-Smith, and TDO Education Artists Ashley Townsley and Tres Hunter are all making their mainstage debut.

We also have two bright new faces making their TDO debuts: our Little Princes, Everett Baumgarten and Ayden Yang. Please join me in welcoming Everett and Ayden, the rest of the cast, and this beautiful production to The Dallas Opera.



The artwork in *The Little Prince* novella, created by author Antoine de Saint-Exupéry himself, plays an important role in the story. The cover image is a copy of one of Saint-Exupéry's original watercolors from 1942. *The Morgan Library & Museum. MA 2592.34. Purchased on the Elisabeth Ball. c. The Morgan Library & Museum, New York.*



**QUINCY ROBERTS**  
Board Chair

Welcome,

Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's *The Little Prince* is one of the most popular books of all time, printing more than 142 million copies since it published in 1943. It's easy to understand why. This magical children's novella has action, intergalactic adventures, crazy characters, and much more.

However, at its core, this beloved story is filled with lessons about love, friendship, and understanding what matters the most is invisible to the eye. Many of us remember reading and absorbing these themes as children. However, their poignancy may have dulled over the years. One of the most beautiful things about this story is that as you revisit it, as you are doing today, all those forgotten lessons resurface.

As you watch this version of *THE LITTLE PRINCE*, you'll also notice a cinematic quality to the music. The opera was composed by the eminent Rachel Portman. The British composer has written music for many movies, including *The Cider House Rules* (1999), *Grey Gardens* (2009), *The Manchurian Candidate* (2004), *Mona Lisa Smile* (2003), and *Chocolat* (2000). She's been nominated for three Oscars, and she became the first female composer to win the Academy Award for Best Score in 1997 for *Emma*.

After today's performance, I hope you'll walk away appreciating Rachel's acclaimed artistry; humming her nurturing, wonder-filled music; and remembering all the lessons about life and love from your youth.



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## LAND AND PEOPLE ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Welcome to the Winspear Opera House.

We are delighted that you are joining us to experience opera. As an opera company, we are storytellers, and we hope to uplift the stories of those who were here before us.

We acknowledge and honor that we are on the ancestral land of various tribal nations, including the Caddo, Wichita, Comanche, and Apache Nations, who have stewarded this land and cared for its waterways since time immemorial. We also pay respect to the enslaved African people whose stolen labor helped build the beginnings of this city after the forced removal of the original stewards of the land.

This region holds generations of songs and stories of the many people who have, now, and will call this place home. As we harmonize entertainment, education, and artistic quality, we hope you will join us in honoring the stories of our past, present, and future.

We encourage everyone to learn more about its history and the pathways that brought us together.



**Learn More about  
Dallas History**

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THE DALLAS OPERA



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MUSIC BY RACHEL PORTMAN TO A LIBRETTO BY NICHOLAS WRIGHT  
BASED ON THE NOVELLA BY ANTOINE DE SAINT-EXUPÉRY

# THE LITTLE PRINCE

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thedallasopera®

presents

# THE LITTLE PRINCE

Opera in two acts by Rachel Portman | Libretto by Nicholas Wright

Margot and Bill Winspear Opera House at the AT&T Performing Arts Center

Performance dates: February 6,  
8 (matinee), 11, & 14

Sung in English with English  
titles

Approximate duration: 1 hour  
and 40 minutes with one  
intermission

First performance: The  
Wortham Theater Center,  
in Houston, Texas,  
on May 31, 2003

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## CAST IN ORDER OF VOCAL APPEARANCE

<i>The Pilot</i>	KYLE MILLER
<i>The Little Prince (2/6, 2/8, 2/14)</i>	EVERETT BAUMGARTEN*
<i>The Little Prince (2/11)</i>	AYDEN YANG*
<i>The Rose/A Rose</i>	ASHLEY TOWNSLEY*
<i>The King</i>	KERON JACKSON
<i>The Vain Man/The Snake/ Baobab/Hunter</i>	JACOB ABRAHAMSE*
<i>The Drunkard/The Lamplighter/ Baobab/Hunter</i>	CHRISTOPHER A. LEACH*
<i>The Businessman/Baobab/Hunter Baobab/Hunter</i>	KORIN THOMAS-SMITH*
<i>The Fox/A Rose</i>	TESSA FACKELMANN*
<i>The Water/A Rose</i>	DIANA NEWMAN
<i>Conductor</i>	PAOLO BRESSAN
<i>Original Director</i>	FRANCESCA ZAMBELLO
<i>Revival Director &amp; Choreographer</i>	ANNA MARIA BRUZZESE*
<i>Set &amp; Costume Designer</i>	MARIA BJÖRNSON(+)*
<i>Original Lighting Director</i>	RICK FISHER*
<i>Revival Lighting Designer</i>	CHRISTOPHER D. SPRAGUE*
<i>Wig &amp; Makeup Designer</i>	DAVID ZIMMERMAN
<i>Assistant Director</i>	NORA WINSLER
<i>Stage Manager</i>	ANGELA TURNER
<i>Concertmaster</i>	AMI CAMPBELL
<i>Assistant Conductor</i>	ALDEN GATT
<i>Artistic Director, GDCS</i>	KIMBERLEY AHRENS
<i>Music Staff</i>	CHRISTOPHER DEVLIN ALDEN GATT
<i>Projected Titles</i>	MARY DIBBERN, Ph.D.
<i>Assistant Stage Managers</i>	OLIVIA DARLING* LEXI SALMON
<i>Production Assistant</i>	IVY LARIVIERE

\* The Dallas Opera debut  
(+) Deceased

# YOUR GUIDE TO THE LITTLE PRINCE

By Jordan Hammons

“All grownups were children once—although few of them remember it.” Antoine de Saint-Exupéry’s writes in the dedication of his novella *The Little Prince*. Largely based on his own life experiences, Saint-Exupéry uses childlike imagination to speak to the hearts of audiences of all ages, especially the grownups. After all, as the Pilot says in the novella’s prologue, “Grownups never understand anything by themselves.”

## SYNOPSIS IN A SENTENCE

A pilot stranded in the desert meets a boy whose story of intergalactic encounters with absurd adults ultimately reveals that “anything essential is invisible to the eye.”



C. LYNN LANE/HOUSTON GRAND OPERA

“Here’s my secret. It’s quite simple. Listen before you leave. Eyes can’t see what is essential. Eyes deceive...While you’re searching, trust your heart. You’re sure to find your prize. The heart sees far more clearly than the eyes.” –The Fox, Act II

## WINSPEAR OPERA HOUSE HELPFUL HINTS

Restrooms are located on the far east and west sides of every floor. Unisex restrooms are available on the sixth floor and the west side of the first, third, and fourth floors.

No need to search for a well! In addition to concession stands on floors 1–5, there are water fountains on the west side of the first, third, and fourth floors.

If a younger member of your party is seated behind a grownup, you can request a booster seat from the Concierge located in the East Lobby of the first floor.

## TERM TO KNOW

**Dual role:** when one person plays two or more roles in the same performance

If you look closely, you may notice some performers in more than one costume. *The Little Prince* is filled with a vivid cast of many characters sometimes played by the same actor.

## TRIVIA

The novella *The Little Prince* by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry is the second most-translated publication in the world. It has been translated into 600 languages (and counting).

P. L. Travers (author of *Mary Poppins*) wrote, “*The Little Prince* will shine upon children with a sidewise gleam. It will strike them in some place that is not the mind and glow there until the time comes for them to comprehend it.”

Rachel Portman was both the first female composer to win the Academy Award for Best Original Score (*Emma*, 1996) and a Primetime Emmy Award (*Bessie*, 2015).

Saint-Exupéry survived a plane crash in the Sahara Desert. He and his copilot only had enough to drink for one day, a few grapes, and an orange. Four days later they were saved.

## WHERE ARE WE IN THE GALAXY?

### Asteroid B-612:

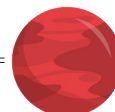
The Rose sends the Little Prince on a journey to learn how to care for her.

### The King’s Planet:

The Little Prince meets a King who wants everyone to know how powerful he is.

### The Vain Man’s Planet:

A man who wants attention asks the Little Prince to admire him.



## SYNOPSIS

By Kelley Rouke

### ACT I

During a terrible sandstorm, a Pilot makes a forced landing in the desert, a thousand miles from the nearest town. His plane is wrecked, and he has just enough water to last eight days. The Little Prince appears and asks the Pilot to draw a sheep. The Pilot, who was discouraged from drawing when he was young, is reluctant, but finally produces a satisfactory image.

The Prince explains that he is from a tiny planet—Asteroid B-612. The planet is home to a singular Rose, which he lovingly tends. The Prince left his home to learn how he might better please the Rose. On the planets he visited previously, he met a King, a Vain Man, a Drunkard, and a Businessman, none of whom had much wisdom to offer. Finally, he met a Lamplighter, who suggested he try the planet Earth.

### INTERMISSION

### ACT II

After landing on Earth, the Prince continues his adventures. He tells of meeting the Snake, who has the power to send anyone back to his home. The Prince then found a rose garden, which was upsetting, because he had believed his Rose was unique. Next, he met a wise Fox, who explained the concept of taming: “Taming means you make a link, a lock, a sort of tie.”

The Pilot interrupts the Prince’s story to remind him they are in desperate need of water. The two set off in search of a well. They find one at sunrise and drink. The Prince tells the Pilot that he fell to Earth one year ago and instructs the Pilot to go back to his plane. The Prince summons the Snake, but the Pilot returns and frightens the Snake away. The Prince insists that he must go.

#### TDO PERFORMANCE HISTORY

This is The Dallas Opera premiere of Rachel Portman’s THE LITTLE PRINCE.

## The Invisible Charm of THE LITTLE PRINCE

By Catherine Wendlandt

The great composers of opera history have drawn inspiration from all over: history, mythology, novels, and plays. Some of the most popular source materials, though, are fairytales and children’s stories, like THE LITTLE PRINCE.

“I think children’s stories are magical because they often speak of deeper truths,” says Kimberley Ahrens, artistic director of Greater Dallas Choral Society, TDO’s official children’s chorus.

Adults may view children’s stories with nostalgia, but these tales present complex lessons about life, love, friendship, morals, and more, says Francesca Zambello, the opera’s original director. Those themes and lessons often become clouded for adults, like the Pilot in *The Little Prince*. But in easily digestible language that’s elevated by the music, these stories have “themes that strike at the heart and mind.”

At first glance, one might assume *The Little Prince* is a journey piece, following the Prince’s galactic adventures. However, if you pay closer attention, Ahrens says, the Prince’s various stops reflect “the many stages of life that you’ll go through and all the different people who come in and out of your life.” The Prince learns cautionary tales from the Drunkard and the Vain Man, about discerning true love from the Rose and the Fox, and mortality from the Snake.

“It’s about life and about joy. But it’s also about understanding death,” Zambello says. “And how everything essential is invisible to the eye.”

In order to truly understand these lessons, we need the innocent, pure wisdom of children—like how the Pilot needs the Prince, Ahrens explains, to find that clarity and “remember what the heart of life is.”

**The Drunkard’s Planet:**  
The Little Prince meets a grownup who is ashamed.



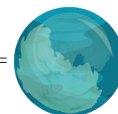
**The Businessman’s Planet:**  
A very busy man names the stars and claims them for his own, but he isn’t very useful to them.



**The Lamplighter’s Planet:**  
On a planet where each day lasts only one minute, the Little Prince meets a tired lamplighter who only has time to work.



**Earth:** On the final planet of his journey, the Little Prince meets a dangerous but enticing Snake, a Fox with an important lesson, and, last of all, the Pilot before returning home.



# ORIGINAL DIRECTOR'S NOTE

## The Genesis of THE LITTLE PRINCE as an Opera

By Francesca Zambello

Twenty-five years ago, Philip Glass encouraged me to meet Rachel Portman, a renowned film composer who had expressed interest in writing an opera. Portman—celebrated for her scores in popular films such as *Emma* (1996), for which she won an Oscar, and *The Cider House Rules*, for which she was Oscar-nominated—visited me while I was working in Paris. Upon greeting her, I was struck by her resemblance to *The Little Prince*. This sentiment was reinforced when she shared her desire to adapt Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's novella into an opera. Portman's presence and music carried an ethereal quality that I found deeply reminiscent of the story's central character.

From a practical perspective, I am always seeking new works that resonate across generations. *The Little Prince*—with its sparse, simple text and beautiful illustrations—looks like a children's picture book. Indeed, many generations of children have been captivated by the story of a planet-hopping young prince who reflects on loneliness, friendship, love, and loss. At the same time, the observations of the Prince, who is wise beyond his years, have profoundly moved adult readers.

After a lengthy process, we managed to obtain the rights for English-speaking regions—a significant achievement given the multitude of annual requests received by the Saint-Exupéry estate. Our journey led us to Houston Grand Opera, renowned for its dedication to new productions. There, I connected Rachel with playwright Nicholas Wright, whose profound understanding of the novella allowed him to successfully adapt its themes for the stage. To enhance the visual storytelling, I enlisted the visionary designer Maria Björnson, famed for her work on *The Phantom of the Opera*. Together, we spent a year collaborating to translate the beloved story into a dramatic, musical, and visual experience.



FRANCESCA ZAMBELLO. C. MARC HOM

We felt strongly about featuring young performers in the production, believing that young people are more engaged when they see their peers on stage. These youth became the thread that wove the opera together, portraying a variety of roles—including stars, sandstorms, and cranes—and guiding the audience on a transformative journey. Working with this talented team remains a career highlight for me, and the opera's enduring appeal has led to more than 20 English-language productions.

The success of creating *The Little Prince* opera furthered a personal quest, inspiring me to develop more works for youth that could achieve lasting popularity. I am grateful that some of these works continue to draw new audiences to the theater. Having cherished the novella since childhood, revisiting its story through this project has only deepened my attachment to it. *The Little Prince* endures as a tale that, if you are fortunate, a parent may have read to you in your youth—and as an adult, you are truly privileged if a child helps you rediscover its magic. Welcome, all of you, on this journey with us!



# ABOUT THE ARTISTS

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## Paolo Bressan CONDUCTOR

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**From:** Varese, Italy  
**Dallas Opera:** *Tosca*, (2015/2016, debut), multiple productions since  
**Career highlights:** Internationally acclaimed conductor Paolo Bressan is a committed musician, educator, and vocal coach. He cofounded the LacMus International Music Festival at Lake Como, Italy (2017-current), and is The Dallas

Opera's Chorus Director and Head of Music (2024-current). He has worked as an assistant with conductors like Christian Thielemann, Emmanuel Villaume, and Valery Gergiev. Bressan studied orchestral and choral conducting, piano, vocal coaching, and composition at the "Giuseppe Verdi" Conservatory of Music in Milan, Italy, and at the University of Music Franz Liszt in Weimar, Germany, and he studied piano with celebrated Canadian pianist Louis Lortie. After launching his career in 2007 at Mecklenburgische Staatstheater in Schwerin, Germany, Bressan has worked worldwide, including at Vienna's Konzerthaus, Paris' Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, and St. Petersburg's Mariinsky Theatre. He has worked with Spanish National Orchestra, the Orchestra Sinfonica di Milano, and the PKF – Prague Philharmonia.

## Nicholas Wright LIBRETTIST

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**From:** London, United Kingdom  
**Dallas Opera:** Debut  
**Career highlights:** Nicholas Wright's plays include *Mrs. Klein*, *Vincent in Brixton*, *The Reporter*, and *Travelling Light* at Royal National Theatre; *Treetops* and *One Fine Day* (Riverside Studios); *The Custom of the Country* and *The Desert Air* (Royal Shakespeare Company); *Cressida* (Almeida Theatre); and *Rattigan's Nijinsky* (Chichester

Festival Theatre). He adapted Caroline Blackwood's *The Last of the Duchess*, Patrick Hamilton's *The Slaves of Solitude*, and Pumla Gobodo-Madikizelas's *A Human Being Died That Night*, all for Hampstead Theatre, and Philip Pullman's *His Dark Materials* for the National Theatre, where his English-language versions of *John Gabriel Borkman* and *Three Sisters* were also produced. Other versions include *Naked* and *Lulu* for the Almeida, *Thérèse Raquin* for Chichester Festival Theatre and Pat Barker's *Regeneration* (Royal and Derngate, Northampton). His opera libretti include *The Little Prince* (composer Rachel Portman) for Houston Grand Opera, *Man on the Moon* (composer Jonathan Dove) for Channel 4 television, and Nico Muhly's *Marnie* for English National Opera and the Metropolitan Opera.

## Rachel Portman COMPOSER

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**From:** Haslemere, Surrey, England  
**Dallas Opera:** Debut  
**Career highlights:** Composer Rachel Portman has written over 100 scores for film, television, and theater. She was the first female composer to win an Academy Award for her original score for *Emma* (1996). She has received two further Academy nominations for *The Cider House Rules* (1999) and *Chocolat* (2000),

and she has won two Emmys. For the stage and concert hall, Portman has written a musical of *Little House on the Prairie*, *The Water Diviner's Tale* (BBC Proms), *Earth Song* (BBC Singers), *Endangered* (National Centre for the Performing Arts, Beijing), *Tipping Points* (violin concerto WDR Symphony Orchestra/NorlandsOperan), "The First Morning of the World" (Joyce Di Donato/*EDEN*), and, most recently, *Another Eve* (song cycle, Joyce Di Donato). Portman has released two piano albums, *ask the river* and *Beyond the Screen*, the latter of which features some of her most cherished film music for solo piano and cello. A third solo album is set for release on Sony Classical.

## Francesca Zambello ORIGINAL DIRECTOR

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**From:** New York City, New York  
**Dallas Opera:** *Faust* (1990/1991, debut), many productions since  
**Career highlights:** Internationally recognized opera and theater director Francesca Zambello is the Glimmerglass Festival's General Director Emerita and currently the Artistic Director of the Washington National Opera. Zambello's work has been seen at the Metropolitan

Opera, Teatro alla Scala, Bolshoi Theatre, Royal Opera House Covent Garden, Bayerische Staatsoper, Paris Opera, New York City Opera, Lyric Opera of Chicago, and English National Opera. She has staged plays and musicals on Broadway, at the Royal National Theatre, Brooklyn Academy of Music, Guthrie Theater, Vienna's Raimund Theater, Bregenzer Festspiele, Sydney Festival, Disneyland, and Berlin's Theater des Westens, amongst others. Her many awards include France's Ordre des Arts et des Lettres (Chevalier) and the Russian Federation's Order "For Merit in Culture and Art" medal. Her theatrical honors include three Olivier Awards, two Evening Standard Theatre Awards, two French Grand Prix des Critiques, a Helpmann Award, a Green Room Award, Germany's Palme d'Or, and Russia's Golden Mask.

Anna Maria Bruzzese  
REVIVAL DIRECTOR & CHOREOGRAPHER

The Ann Stuart  
Stage Director



**From:** Turin, Italy  
**Dallas Opera:** Debut  
**Career highlights:** After working as professional ballet dancer, Anna Maria Bruzzese began her career as a choreographer and opera director in 2004. She revived and staged new productions for such important theaters as Teatro Regio di Torino, Polish National Opera, Royal Opera House Muscat, and

Washington National Opera. Her choreographies include *Il turco in Italia*, *Albert Herring*, *La traviata*, and *Aida*, amongst others. She has directed new productions of *Carmen*, *Rigoletto*, *The Elixir of Love*, *Pagliacci*, *Cavalleria Rusticana*, and more. She has worked with many important directors, including with director Francesca Zambello. Bruzzese made her US debut as Zambello's choreographer for *Carmen* and later her associate director for *Turandot*, both at Washington National Opera, and was the choreographer and revival director for Zambello's *Carmen* at San Francisco Opera. Since 2013, she has directed the groundbreaking project Sipari Sociali, which gathers students from various cultural backgrounds to participate in and create theater.

Rick Fisher  
ORIGINAL LIGHTING DESIGNER



**From:** Philadelphia, Pennsylvania  
**Dallas Opera:** Debut  
**Career highlights:** Born in Philadelphia, Rick Fisher is based in London. He has won two Olivier Awards for Best Lighting Design (1994 and 1998) and two Tony Awards (1994 and 2009). His credits include *Billy Elliot the Musical* (worldwide); *Sunny Afternoon* (Chicago Shakespeare Theater); *Le prophète* and *The Silent Woman* (Fisher Center,

Bard College); *Carmen* (Opera North, United Kingdom); *Don Carlo* and *Madame Butterfly* (LA Opera); *La traviata* (Royal Opera House Muscat); *San Xing Dui* and *Porgy and Bess* (China); *The World of Abdul Hussain* (National Theatre of Kuwait); *The King And I* (Théâtre du Châtelet, Lyric Opera of Chicago); *Sweeney Todd* (Théâtre du Châtelet, Houston Grand Opera, San Francisco Opera); Disney's *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* (Berlin's Theater des Westens); and *Natasha* (Tokyo's New National Theatre). He's done numerous semi-staged operas with Sir John Eliot Gardiner and over 25 operas for Santa Fe Opera. Fisher is President and a Fellow of United Kingdom's Association for Lighting Production and Design.

Maria Björnson  
SET & COSTUME DESIGNER



**From:** Paris, France  
**Dallas Opera:** Debut  
**Career highlights:** The great theatre and opera designer Maria Björnson died in December 2002, aged 53. In a career of over 30 years, Björnson designed for theater, opera, and ballet all over the world. In 1990 her fellow stage designers designated her the "Designer's Designer" for the *London Observer*. Early acclaim

came with 10 productions—all designed during the 1971/1972 heyday of Glasgow's Citizens Theatre. The Welsh National Opera and Scottish Opera 1975–1980 cycle of Janáček operas brought Björnson more recognition and awards. Her greatest fame came with her glamorous and minutely researched sets and costumes for Broadway's *The Phantom of the Opera*. In production for 20 years, the musical has played on stage to over 100 million people in 21 countries. She worked tirelessly, designing over 120 productions in a career which exceeded most of her contemporaries in scope and quality. She was, quite simply, a unique phenomenon.

Christopher D. Sprague  
REVIVAL LIGHTING DESIGNER



**From:** Chicago, Illinois  
**Dallas Opera:** Debut  
**Career highlights:** Lighting designer Christopher D. Sprague is a Principal Theatre Consultant with Schuler Shook in Chicago. His significant projects with Schuler Shook include Sarasota Opera House, the David H. Koch Theater at Lincoln Center, Black Ensemble Theater, Northwestern University's Bienen School of Music's Ryan Center

for the Musical Arts, Powell Hall for St. Louis Symphony Orchestra, and TimeLine Theatre Company's new home in Uptown Chicago. Sprague serves on the Board of Directors for and is a member of the American Society of Theatre Consultants. He has also been the resident Lighting and Sound Designer for John Hersey High School in suburban Chicago since 2019. Sprague was Rick Fisher's Associate Lighting Designer for the world premiere of *The Little Prince*, and he has re-created Fisher's lighting for the Lithuanian National Opera and Ballet Theatre, Boston Lyric Opera, Skylight Music Theatre, HGO's 2004 revival, New York City Opera, and Tulsa Opera (2007 and 2019).



David Zimmerman  
WIG & MAKEUP DESIGNER



**From:** Dallas, Texas  
**Dallas Opera:** *The Barber of Seville* (2006/2007, debut), more than 50 productions since  
**Career highlights:** David Zimmerman has worked with numerous opera companies around the world, including the Metropolitan Opera and the companies of St. Louis, Santa Fe, Paris, Philadelphia, Chicago, Minnesota, Santa Barbara, Amsterdam, and

more. His career extends to Broadway, where he has worked with such shows as *Wicked*, *The Rocky Horror Show*, *Show Boat*, *South Pacific*, and *Evita*. Some of his personal clients include Renée Fleming, Joyce DiDonato, Susan Graham, Patricia Racette, Martha Stewart, and Ricky Martin. Zimmerman has also worked with DIFFA Fashion Runway, Dallas Fashion and Art, and *Yelp.com Fashion Magazine*. His credits include spreads in *Opera News*, *Vanity Fair*, and *The New Yorker*. TV and film credits are *Glamour Magazine's Women of the Year*, *Margaret* (starring Anna Paquin), and *Hostiles* (starring Christian Bale and Rosamund Pike).

Everett Baumgarten  
THE LITTLE PRINCE



**From:** Houston, Texas  
**Dallas Opera:** Debut  
**Career highlights:** Everett Baumgarten is 13 years old and in 8th grade at Houston's Wharton K-8 Dual Language Academy. He has been acting and singing professionally since age 9. After getting his start at A.D. Players Houston in *The Sound of Music* (Kurt), he toured internationally with Broadway Asia in *The Sound of Music* (Kurt/

Fredrich) and took the stage close to home at TUTS Houston in *Newsies* (Les) and *Mary Poppins* (Michael). In the summer of 2025, he performed the role of Miles in *The Turn of the Screw* at Santa Fe Opera and also at Spoleto Festival USA in Charleston, South Carolina. Everett is thrilled to be making his Dallas Opera debut in *The Little Prince*. This is a reprise role for him after being the Little Prince at Houston's Opera in the Heights in December 2024. When not on stage, Everett loves to read, play the piano, travel with his family, and play soccer.



Ayden Yang  
THE LITTLE PRINCE



**From:** San Jose, California  
**Dallas Opera:** Debut  
**Career highlights:** Ayden Yang is a classically trained treble singer from the Greater Dallas Choral Society and an 8th grader at St. Mark's School of Texas. His theatre credits include *Sky* (*Guys and Dolls*), *Marco* (*The Gondoliers*), and the Baker (*Into the Woods*). Ayden has appeared as a featured soloist with the St. Mark's Choir of

Men and Boys, Ragazzi Boys Chorus, California Choral Directors Association All-State Honor Choir, and in the international documentary *Lighten Our Darkness*. The First Place-winner in the 2025 American Protégé Vocal Competition, he has also performed with the San Francisco Symphony and at the Sydney Opera House. In addition to classical repertoire, Ayden enjoys contemporary music and performs as a singer-instrumentalist with his band. In his free time, he loves tinkering with robotics and leading his school's Ecology Club.

Kyle Miller  
THE PILOT



**From:** San Francisco, California  
**Dallas Opera:** CARMEN (2025/2026, debut)  
**Career highlights:** Known for his electric stage presence and warm resonant timbre, American baritone Kyle Miller makes major house and role debuts this season, singing Papageno (*The Magic Flute*) at LA Opera, Don Giovanni (*Don Giovanni*) at Komische Oper Berlin, and The Pilot

(THE LITTLE PRINCE) and Dancaïre (*Carmen*) with The Dallas Opera. In his second Stipendiat year at Deutsche Oper Berlin, Miller sang Schounard (*La bohème*), Angelotti (*Tosca*), and Chou En-Lai (*Nixon in China*), amongst other appearances. He has appeared at Opera Philadelphia, Washington National Opera, the Metropolitan Opera, and Cleveland Orchestra. He's a former Opera Theatre of Saint Louis and Santa Fe Opera Young Artist and a Ravinia Steams Institute Vocal Fellow, and he was named an Opera Philadelphia Emerging Artist. His accolades include a 2022 encouragement award in the Metropolitan Opera's Eric and Dominique Laffont Competition, New England Region; Opera Theatre of Saint Louis' Richard Gaddes Career Award; and The Juilliard School's Toulmin Scholarship and Novick Career Advancement Grant.

Tessa Fackelmann  
THE FOX/A ROSE

The Charron and Peter Denker  
Rising Stars Endowment Fund



**From:** Ottawa, Canada  
**Dallas Opera:** Debut  
**Career highlights:** Praised as “hilarious” and “vocally charming,” mezzo-soprano Tessa Fackelmann is making a name for herself as a vibrant and versatile performer on the operatic stage. In 2025, she made her role debut as Cherubino in *The Marriage of Figaro* with Sarasota Opera, earning acclaim for her magnetic stage presence and expressive vocalism. That same year, she was a finalist in the prestigious Hans Gabor Belvedere Singing Competition held in Bern, Switzerland. In 2024, she was named a national semifinalist in the Metropolitan Opera’s Eric and Dominique Laffont Competition, won Edmonton Opera’s Rumbold Vocal Prize, and received Opéra de Montréal’s Grand Jury Prize. A 2023 and 2024 Apprentice Singer at the Santa Fe Opera, she made her debut as the Kitchen Girl in *Rusalka* and later premiered the role of Ruth in *The Righteous*.

Ashley Townsley  
THE ROSE/A ROSE



**From:** Houston, Texas  
**Dallas Opera:** Mainstage Debut  
**Career highlights:** Soprano Ashley Townsley is a native of Houston, Texas. She made her professional debut with Houston Grand Opera in the world premiere of Jake Heggie’s *Pieces of 9/11: Memories from Houston*. Other operatic credits include Despina (*The Three Little Pigs*), Pamina (*The Magic Flute*), Susanna (*The Marriage of Figaro*), Stella (*A Streetcar Named Desire*), La Fée (*Cendrillon*), Amore (*Orpheus and Eurydice*), and Despina (*Così fan tutte*). In addition to her mainstage work, she performs frequently as an outreach artist for The Dallas Opera at private and community events. Townsley has appeared as a soprano soloist in Handel’s *Messiah*, Haydn’s “Lord Nelson Mass,” and Mozart’s “Coronation Mass” with such ensembles as the University of North Texas Symphony Orchestra, Lake Charles Messiah Chorus, and Louisiana Choral Foundation.



Jacob Abrahamse  
THE VAIN MAN/THE SNAKE/BAOBAB/HUNTER



**From:** Toronto, Canada  
**Dallas Opera:** Debut  
**Career highlights:** Critically acclaimed tenor Jacob Abrahamse has performed across North America. As a Santa Fe Opera Apprentice Singer, he sang Count Almaviva (*The Barber of Seville*) and Street Vendor (*La bohème*), and he covered Don Curzio (*The Marriage of Figaro*) and Faninal’s Major-Domo and First Lackey (*Der*

*Rosenkavalier*). Other notable roles include Alfredo (*La traviata*, BrottOpera), Frederic (*The Pirates of Penzance*, COSA Canada), Ralph Rackstraw (*H.M.S. Pinafore*, Saugeen Opera Festival), and Broddess/Overseer Pitts (Nkeiru Okoye’s *Harriet Tubman: When I Crossed that Line to Freedom*, Nathaniel Dett Chorale). Recent concert highlights include Mozart’s *Requiem* (Mississauga Chamber Singers) and Handel’s *Messiah* (St. James Cathedral Choir and Orchestra and Choral Connection). Abrahamse has performed with the Toronto Symphony Orchestra, Toronto Mendelssohn Choir, Peterborough Singers, and Georgian Bay Concert Choir, amongst others. Abrahamse studied at Trent University and University of Toronto. He received a Province of Ontario Lieutenant Governor’s Award and two Civic Awards from the City of Peterborough.

Keron Jackson  
THE KING



**From:** Fort Worth, Texas  
**Dallas Opera:** *Porgy and Bess* (2007/2008, debut), multiple productions since  
**Career highlights:** Bass Keron Jackson has been hailed by *The Dallas Morning News* as “a powerhouse bass voice who takes command of the stage.” His professional highlights include Daggoo in the TDO world premiere of *Moby-Dick*. He thrilled

audiences with his impassioned rendition of “Ol’ Man River,” playing Joe in the revival of Jerome Kern and Oscar Hammerstein II’s *Show Boat* (Lyric Stage, Irving). Jackson has performed at Carnegie Hall, singing the Voice of God in the modern oratorio *Saviour*. He has also starred opposite playwright and actor Tom Key in *Cotton Patch Gospel* (Dallas Theater Center); he played Jim in *Big River* and the Ghost of Christmas Present in Alan Menken’s *A Christmas Carol* (Bass Performance Hall). Jackson made his professional operatic stage debut as Lawyer Frazier in TDO’s *Porgy and Bess*, and later as Nottingham’s Servant in *Roberto Devereux*. He has been invited worldwide as a motivational speaker and author.

Diana Newman  
THE WATER/A ROSE



**From:** Malibu, California  
**Dallas Opera:** *The Magic Flute* (2019/2020, debut), multiple productions since  
**Career highlights:** American soprano Diana Newman brings “fresh and intense” performances to opera houses and concert stages across the world. She has performed with the Metropolitan Opera, Los Angeles Philharmonic, Palm Beach Opera, and

Glyndebourne Festival. On the concert stage, Newman has sung with the Lucerne Festival, Eastern Sierra Symphony Summer Festival, USC Alumni Orchestra, Whittier Bach Festival, and the American Youth Symphony. In 2019, she was a soloist at Los Angeles Philharmonic’s “America in Space” Hollywood Bowl concert celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Apollo 11 moon landing. She graduated from Lyric Opera of Chicago’s Ryan Opera Center, where she performed as Frasquita (*Carmen*), Pedro (*Don Quixote*), and Clorinda (*La Cenerentola*), amongst other roles. Committed to art song and new works, Newman has attended numerous programs including the Ravinia Festival Steans Music Institute, SongFest, and the Fall Island Vocal Arts Seminar. She’s also performed with the Marilyn Horne, The Song Continues series; Music Academy of the West; and UT New Music Ensemble.

Korin Thomas-Smith  
THE BUSINESSMAN



**From:** Toronto, Canada  
**Dallas Opera:** Debut  
**Career highlights:** Named one of CBC Music’s “30 hot Canadian classical musicians under 30” in 2021, emerging Canadian baritone Korin Thomas-Smith has performed across North America. Last year saw Thomas-Smith joining the Santa Fe Opera as an Apprentice Artist, where he performed as Count Ceprano in *Rigoletto*,

Schaunard in *La bohème*, and covered Count Almaviva in *The Marriage of Figaro*. Thomas-Smith is an alumnus of the Ensemble Studio at the Canadian Opera Company—his highlights there include Dr. Malatesta in *Don Pasquale* and Wagner in *Faust*. Thomas-Smith placed regionally in the Metropolitan Opera’s Eric and Dominique Laffont Competition in 2023, 2024, and 2025, and he has performed with companies including the Glimmerglass Festival, singing Argante in *Rinaldo*; Des Moines Metro Opera; and the Ravinia Festival Steans Institute, amongst others. Thomas-Smith holds degrees from the University of Toronto Opera and Yale University.

Christopher A. Leach  
THE DRUNKARD/THE LAMPLIGHTER/BAOBAB/HUNTER



**From:** Kingsville, Texas  
**Dallas Opera:** Mainstage Debut  
**Career highlights:** Tenor Christopher A. Leach is celebrated for his dynamic performances both on stage and in concert. Recently, he premiered Jared Schwartz’s *Schiele in Prison* in New York City and performed a concert in Paris, France. He has also been a soloist in TDO’s Hart

Institute for Women Conductors Showcase Concert. With Fort Worth Opera, Leach premiered the role of Senator Ralph Yarborough in David T. Little’s *JFK* (2016). His repertoire includes roles like Don Basilio (*The Marriage of Figaro*), Donald (*Gallantry*), Don Hilarión (*La verbena de la Paloma*), Rinuccio (*Gianni Schicchi*), and Nemorino (*The Elixir of Love*), amongst others. Leach can also be heard on the album *Mary Howe: Songs and Duets* (Toccata Classics, 2022) and in the *Borderlands 4* video game. Additionally, Leach recently made his conducting debut at Opera Arlington with the production of Humperdinck’s *Hansel and Gretel*.

Tres Hunter  
BAOBAB/HUNTER



**From:** Burkburnett, Texas  
**Dallas Opera:** Mainstage Debut  
**Career highlights:** Praised for his expressive and captivating musical storytelling, bass Tres Hunter enjoys a thriving career in opera and oratorio across the US and internationally. Recently, Hunter was heard as the bass soloist in Handel’s *Messiah* on Texas Public Radio on Christmas Eve with the San

Antonio Philharmonic and the San Antonio Mastersingers. This summer, Hunter will make his mainstage debut with Central City Opera as Antonio (*The Marriage of Figaro*) as an Apprentice Artist. Additionally, Hunter was a second-place winner in the professional division of the Texas Camerata Baroque Aria Competition. He will perform a concert with this ensemble this coming April at Fort Worth’s Kimbell Art Museum. Hunter has performed with TDO’s Education Outreach Programs, Hart Institute for Women Conductors, and Chorus since 2022.





## ★ Writing THE LITTLE PRINCE

★ ★ Oscar-winning composer Rachel Portman on how she brought Antoine de Saint-Exupéry’s beloved characters to life.

**G**rowing up, I learned to play the piano and violin. I started writing my first piano pieces when I was 13 or 14, and I knew music was going to be my life. By the time I was headed to university, I was even more set on the idea that that was going to be my path. I was going to be a composer.

When I studied music at Oxford, my classmates made a film all about Oxford students. It was, in some respects, quite amateurish. But I loved writing the music for it so much. I thought, *This is what I want to do. I want to write music for stories. I want to tell stories with music.* And that led me to a strong desire to write music

for film, which is what I’ve done, which I love and have loved and still love.

However, when I had my own children in the 1990s, I started yearning to write music outside of film. *The Little Prince* was a perfect subject to go back more to my classical roots, but also to have the freedom to do what I really wanted to do.

★ If you’re writing music for a film, you’re there to serve the film. You’re not there to do your own thing. I had the freedom in writing *The Little Prince* to write whatever music I wanted. I could do anything. I could fly when I wanted to. I could decide when the story needed to accelerate or slow down.

I also thought with my three

young daughters, wouldn’t it be nice to write an opera that you could take a child to that they’d really like? I didn’t really appreciate opera until I was in my mid-20s. I thought, *Well, wouldn’t it be great if I could write something that would invite my whole family to enjoy opera?*

At the beginning, there were discussions with the director, Francesca Zambello, about needing to have a diminutive soprano singing the Little Prince. I believe that it’s magical for a child to see a child on stage singing, so we decided on a young boy. Accordingly, when writing, I was very careful to keep the part that the Little Prince has to sing quite light.

★ “It’s an opera for all,  
not just for children.” ★

He doesn’t have long arias—he sings in short verse to make it easier for him to perform.

I also worked closely with Nicholas Wright, who’s just the most wonderful playwright and librettist. I found I could write music for his words very naturally and easily, and it just works. We came up with a plan to have a children’s chorus to sing as the stars, which seemed like an obvious thing to have the stars comment on what’s happening because it’s taking place in this world of planets and stars. The children also sing the cranes and the rose garden.

And then there are all these characters on the planets, which are so colorful. It was a real chance for me to be able to engage the audience with these sometimes-ridiculous characters utilizing different musical styles for them.

The first person the Prince meets in the story is the King, who’s very rigid, bossy, and used to giving orders. So, the music is slightly poking fun at him, although he takes himself very seriously.

Then the Vain Man is just absurd, so I wrote a little dance for him, and he has a kazoo that he plays. He’s got a hat that he tips on and off. I wanted to have that little dance in there so he could tip his hat and wait for people to clap.

Next, the Drunkard is terribly sad, and it’s very short. I used quite a lot of sliding strings to evoke the stupor that he’s in from drinking. The Businessman has a typewriter and he’s only just calculating numbers. Because the Drunkard was so

depressing, I decided to make the Businessman fast up-tempo, singing flat out, and quite enjoyable.

On the last planet he visits, the Little Prince meets the Lamplighter, which is where the real message is. The Lamplighter has his own aria that he sings, which the Little Prince sings with him. And it’s more emotional and moving. Because that is where Antoine de Saint-Exupéry is telling us, “Listen to this man, not the others.”

In Act II, the Snake is characterized and colored very differently as well. The Snake’s frightening—sinister and sinewy, like a snake. And then we have the hunters, who are, again, ridiculous. Act II, by its very nature, is more serious than Act I because there isn’t this big cast of characters and the Prince is desperate about his Rose and worried about going back to his planet. The hunters gave a good way for me to pick up the tempo and inject a bit of fun and enjoyment into Act II.

After the hunters comes the Fox, which is the centerpiece of

the whole opera, with the Fox’s message. It’s where the Little Prince learns everything that he needs to know. He learns about the secret of love. The words are very moving, and we stay with that. And then, of course, the end and the Prince goes back to his planet.

There were so many wonderful ingredients in the book. My strong desire was to tell the story as I feel it as it reads. So not to try and do anything different, but to try and evoke the emotion as purely as I know how to from the text. What was extraordinary was being with this material for the year that I was writing it because it taught me so much about life itself.

I think that’s the reason the story’s so famous: because grownups read it to their children, but the grownups are moved by it.

It’s a wonderful, moving, magical opera for all, full of wisdom and charm, with an important message.

*This oral essay, as told to Catherine Wendlandt, has been edited for length and clarity.*

This image of a baobab taking over the Prince’s planet is a copy of one of Saint-Exupéry’s original watercolors from 1942. *The Morgan Library & Museum, MA 2592.19. Purchased on the Elisabeth Ball c. The Morgan Library & Museum, New York*





## Growing Up Opera

How TDO's youngest performers train to sing on the Winspear Opera House stage.

By Catherine Wendlandt

GDCS members rehearse on Monday nights. courtesy of Greater Dallas Choral Society

During Acts II and III of The Dallas Opera's *Carmen* last fall, a group of 20 ragamuffins sat inside the Winspear's Nancy B. Hamon Hall. The kids all wrapped robes around their carefully constructed costumes. They ate snacks, filmed a "6 7" video in French for social media, and did their homework. Finally, it was time to re-warm up their voices, run back out onto the Winspear stage, and sing.

Many operas call for a children's chorus, like *Carmen*, *La bohème*, and *Tosca*. Some, like *Hansel and Gretel* and *THE LITTLE PRINCE*, forgo adults altogether and fill its chorus entirely with kids. Anytime TDO needs a choir of youngsters to fill out a roster of street urchins, pageboys, or, in *The Little Prince's* case, stars, cranes, and roses, we turn to the Greater Dallas Choral Society.

Established in 2022, GDCS

consists of five youth choirs with kids in grades 4 – 12. The children perform concerts at the Meyerson Symphony Center and with arts organizations all over the city, including TDO.

GDCS Artistic Director Kimberley Ahrens says training kids to sing in TDO performances begins with their curriculum, which "teaches them how to be a professional musician." Students learn how to behave in a music rehearsal, mark music, follow instruction, and concert etiquette. Of course, they also learn vocal technique. "We teach bel canto singing, which extends perfectly to The Dallas Opera," Ahrens says.

When an opera production requires a children's chorus, Ahrens gets a list of how many kids TDO needs—how many boys, how many girls, and how tall. She invites GDCS singers to join the chorus. Although the ages range, many of the

children are in seventh and eighth grades.

"In general, their voices are just a little bit bigger because they physically are bigger," Ahrens explains. "But that's not a hard and fast rule. There's a lot of teeny tinies that have a big voice."

There are 26 kids in *The Little Prince* chorus, ranging from the fifth to eighth grades.

GDCS began rehearsing the opera's music with them in early December. They memorized the libretto, practiced the harmonies, and learned basic theater staging and terms.

On January 11, official TDO rehearsals began. These took place after school at the Karayanis Rehearsal Production Center (KRPC). At this point in a rehearsal timeline, TDO Head of Music and Chorus Director Paolo Bressan starts working with the children—although he sometimes come to an earlier GDCS rehearsal to help with language pronunciation. The kids love working with Bressan, Ahrens says.

Bressan enjoys working with them, too. While he doesn't change the techniques he

### Becoming the Little Prince

"I played the Little Prince at Houston's Opera in the Heights," says Houstonian Everett Baumgarten, who stars in this production's titular role. "For Dallas, I re-learned the score with my voice teachers, focusing on the tricky rhythms. It's been fun to revisit this role and try new things!"

uses, Bressan says he is more expressive and gentler with the kids than with the adult choruses, and he focuses more on themes and ideas than technical control.

emphasize responsibility—the kids must go to bed early, eat their vegetables, wear coats in the cold, and do what they can to stay healthy so they can perform.

**“It sends an important message that children are worthy to perform on a world-class stage ...”**

— Kimberley Ahrens

The biggest challenge, he explains, is that unlike the adult choruses, the children’s voices are in constant flux. They may all be sopranos now, but their voices will continue to mature and change for years.

After three weeks at the KRPC, rehearsals moved to the Winspear in late January. The children sang with the orchestra and had to relearn their staging on the actual sets. All this “really stretches their brains and learning styles,” Ahrens says.

Finally, it’s time for Opening Night. Generally, on these days, the energy is palpable amongst the chorus, Ahrens says. For performance weeks, the GDCS team works hard with the kids on consistency—they have to give the same performance on Wednesday night as they did on Friday. They also

In all, the children love being in the opera, Ahrens says. They’re obsessed with *The Little Prince* music, and they have fun playing the different characters.

More importantly, being involved in such a sophisticated production can be life changing. They learn about all the different future roles available to them, from singing the lead to designing the costumes sets. And they’re treated by the entire cast and crew like professional musicians.

“It sends an important message that children are worthy to perform on a world-class stage in a world-class production,” Ahrens says, “that they have something important to share and offer and say.”



### Bit by the Opera Bug

The kids may not realize the magnitude of it right now but performing in an opera can change the course of their lives, Ahrens says. Baritone Kyle Miller, who plays the Pilot in this production of *THE LITTLE PRINCE*, can attest firsthand. As a child, he sang in the Boys Chorus for San Francisco Opera Association’s 2008 production of *The Little Prince*.

“The children’s chorus in that production was the most substantial role I ever had as a kid, and I remember it as such a special bonding experience for all of us,” he recalls. “I still have my little autograph notebook that we all carried around, collecting signatures from everyone in the cast.”

He continues, “The baritone who sang the Pilot in that production later became my private voice teacher and has been instrumental in my vocal development. Now, singing the role of the Pilot myself feels like a full-circle moment, and I hope to make this as special an experience for this group of children at The Dallas Opera.”



The *Carmen* children’s chorus. c. Kyle Flubacker

# Opera Off the Stage

Every fall and spring, crowds throng to the Winspear Opera House for *Carmen*, *La traviata*, and more. But whether the mainstage curtains are open or closed, TDO's Perot Foundation Education & Community Outreach Programs are offsite, bringing opera into Dallas through innovative community programs like the OperaTruck, Opera in a Suitcase, Touring Opera, and engaging student curriculums for all grade levels. Here's a week in the life of the Education Outreach team.

## MONDAY

### 2 + 2 = 4

Each season, TDO has two family operas in rotation for family matinees, school performances, and community events. To accommodate all appearances, each opera has two separate casts, making four total casts in the department.

### 4:30 PM: Opera in a Suitcase Workshop

TDO provides free after-school arts programming through Opera in a Suitcase. In this one-hour interactive workshop, TDO Teaching Artists lead elementary students through the opera basics. "We want them to know that there is more than one way to be involved in opera theater as a career," Director of Education Kristian Roberts says.

## TUESDAY

### 10:30 AM: Touring Opera – *The Little Prince*

Teachers book TDO to come to their schools and perform one of the company's family operas.



*The Three Little Pigs* Outreach artists perform for a school. "Children are the audience of today and, particularly, the audience of tomorrow," says Ian Derrer, TDO's Kern Wildenthal General Director and CEO. c. DeCourtneyous Miller

### 4:30 PM: *The Three Little Pigs* Performance

After Monday's Opera in a Suitcase workshop, TDO returns to the same after-school program on Tuesday to perform the opera the kids just learned about, like *The Three Little Pigs*.

## WEDNESDAY

### 4:30 PM: Opera in a Suitcase Workshop

The Education Outreach team often takes its programs to multiple schools in any given week. During the 2024/2025 academic year, Opera in a Suitcase visited 31 schools.

### What else do the Education Outreach Artists do?

Many Education Outreach Artists are students at schools like SMU and UNT. Some compete in TDO's Vocal Competition or train with other companies' young artist programs. Quite a few, too, sing in TDO's chorus or—like Ashley Townsley and Tres Hunter in *THE LITTLE PRINCE*—get cast for a mainstage role!

## THURSDAY

### 10:30 AM: Touring Opera – *The Little Prince*

During the 2024/2025 academic year, Touring Opera visited 27 schools. Education Outreach has performed many child-friendly versions of beloved operas over the years, including *Pépito*, *Doctor Miracle*, *The Elixir of Love*, and more!

### 4:30 PM: *The Three Little Pigs* Opera in a Suitcase Performance

### 7 PM: Gala

Many organizations across DFW request TDO singers to perform at their events, like charity galas, luncheons, and more. TDO's Outreach artists fulfill these requests, dazzling ballrooms across Dallas.

## FRIDAY

### 10 AM: Opera Boot Camp Planning Meeting

“If you think that it’s over when the school year’s over, think again,” Roberts says. Each summer, TDO hosts the Opera Boot Camp. In this free, 3-hour workshop, Education staff and artists teach children the ins and outs of putting on an opera performance, like stage movement and costuming. In 2025, Opera Boot Camp hosted 330 attendees in six sessions.

#### What does Education Outreach do at the Winspear?

- **Family matinee performances:** See TDO’s family operas on select Saturdays—tickets just \$5!
- **Student matinees:** A week of fun with school groups from all over the metroplex. The morning includes a performance and 20-minute behind-the-scenes talk. Tickets \$4 per person.
- **Dress rehearsals:** Student groups in 6th grade and older can reserve free tickets to attend mainstage productions’ final dress rehearsals, making four total casts in the department.

## SATURDAY



Since 2021, TDO’s mobile pop-up productions have been performed on the OperaTruck. c. Kristian Roberts

### 11 AM: OperaTruck

On weekends, TDO hits the road on the OperaTruck. Donated by TDO Board Chair Quincy Roberts, this 18-wheel “big rig” mobile stage brings free, fun, and family-friendly pop-up performances to the community centers like libraries, parks, and retirement homes.

#### Spring 2026 OperaTruck Dates

- March 14: Grand Prairie Memorial Library
- March 28: White Rock Hills Branch Library
- April 25: Park Forest Branch Library
- May 2: Pleasant Grove Branch Library



## A TALE OF TWO PRINCES

This season, TDO presents *THE LITTLE PRINCE* both on the mainstage and as a family opera. But what are the differences between these two productions? Paolo Bressan, the conductor for each, explains.

C. AMY O'NEIL

#### What is the biggest difference between the mainstage and family productions?

The biggest difference is the family version is just shorter. The family version is around 50 minutes, and the mainstage is a little over an hour and a half.

#### So musically, what’s different?

Some scenes were cut, and some aria entrances are different. There’s also some dialogue. But it is literally the same music. We have the same orchestra we have on the mainstage—we have the same players. Although we opted to have a little bit less strings to accommodate the smaller cast.

#### How small is the family version cast?

We don’t have the children’s chorus. We just have five principal roles that sing and act. There’s the Pilot and the Prince, who’s played by a soprano here. We combined the rest of the principals. The Fox, the Rose, and the Water are put together as a soprano. The Vain Man, the Drunkard, the Lamplighter, and Snake is one tenor, and the Businessman and the King is a bass.

#### The family version has different costumes, too, right?

Yes, TDO’s Tommy Bourgeois created the family version’s costumes and sets. I’ve never seen such wonderful costumes. They’re very well done, and the stage also. Everything is very colorful.

#### With all these cuts, has the plot changed at all?

In general, the plot reflects *The Little Prince’s* story. The most important moments are there, like the ideas that *everything essentially is invisible to our eyes and your heart can see more than your eyes.*

A rendering of DON CARLO.  
c. Louis Désiré

# Inside DON CARLO

By Catherine Wendlandt



The designers for TDO's upcoming production discuss how they're adapting Verdi's classic story.

Verdi's dark masterpiece DON CARLO, which The Dallas Opera presents in just a few weeks, has faced a long journey to the Winspear stage. TDO initially planned a semi-staged production for March 2020, which, due to Covid-19, never happened. Five years later, TDO is finally ready to present *Don Carlo*, this time as a fully realized, new production.

All that remains from that early plan is a large cross across the stage floor, says French director Louis Désiré, who designed this production's concept. The wooden set piece breaks apart and shifts around the stage, he explains.

"To transform this cross, I imagined that it was a cross that fell down and broke," says Diego Méndez-Casariego, Désiré's creative partner and the production's set and costume designer. The opera occurs during Spain's infamous Inquisition, which brutally ousted anyone seen as a threat to the ruling powers. The corrupt,

Catholic Church-run Inquisition was more powerful than the Crown—as seen in *Don Carlo* Act III when the Grand Inquisitor manipulates King Philip II into ordering his own son's execution. This is the main idea of the broken cross, Méndez-Casariego says. It is "a symbol of this interpretation of the word of Jesus, which is not respected by the Church."

**"You can find something very actual in *Don Carlo*, because we feel its themes all over the world."**

— Diego Méndez-Casariego

This struggling power dynamic is also at the core of Désiré's interpretation of *Don Carlo*. While some productions lean into the love triangle between Philip, his queen, and his son, Carlo, "it's not a romantic opera," Désiré says. "The love story is not the most interesting part." Instead, he's focused on the political tension between the

Church and the Crown, as well as the characters' intrapersonal tumult and Rodrigo and Carlo's desperate efforts to end Spain's tyrannical rule of Flanders.

To do so, he's designed a more abstract *Don Carlo*, which places the audience directly inside the mental turmoil of the characters instead of a physical representation of Renaissance Spain. The costumes reflect 16th-century shapes rather than the fashions themselves, and the sets and projections transport you inside the characters' heads, Désiré says, "where you feel that you don't belong to any country or city."

This speaks to *Don Carlo*'s universality. Audiences will be able to find something in the story they can identify with, Méndez-Casariego says. Its themes repeat over and over throughout time.

"I deeply think that the stories are all the same in different moments of history," he explains. "To love is the same. The drama, the hope, death, the fear—they're all the same."

# GREATER DALLAS CHORAL SOCIETY



Kimberley Ahrens, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR AND CONDUCTOR  
 Claire Worrall, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR  
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The Greater Dallas Choral Society (GDSC) is the premier choral organization for singers in grades 4–12 throughout Dallas-Fort Worth. GDSC proudly carries forward the 25-year-old legacy and mission of the Children’s Chorus of Greater Dallas, which is to give children and youth a choral artistry experience in a group that reflects the diversity of Dallas. Its five ensembles and Summer Singing Camp engage more than 350 singers from 35 communities. More than 3,500 patrons annually attend its concert season at the Morton H. Meyerson Symphony Center.



The GDSC children’s chorus during TDO’s 2025 production of CARMEN.  
 c. Kyle Flubacker

Kimberley Ahrens  
 ARTISTIC DIRECTOR AND CONDUCTOR



**From:** McKinney, Texas  
**Dallas Opera:** *Hansel and Gretel*, debut (2022/2023); multiple productions since  
**Career highlights:** Kimberley Ahrens is a nationally recognized choral conductor, educator, and clinician with more than 20 years’ experience enriching youth through the choral arts. The recipient of the 2022 Choral Director of Distinction Award from the Texas Choral Directors Association,

Ahrens is the founding Artistic Director of the Greater Dallas Choral Society for Children and Youth (GDSC), The Dallas Opera’s official children’s chorus. For 18 years, Ahrens taught choir in Texas public schools, leading ensembles to national awards and performances at major statewide and national conferences. In 2009, she received the Texas Choral Directors Association’s Distinguished Young Director Award. An expert in adolescent voice, Ahrens is regularly engaged as a clinician and guest conductor for elementary- and middle-school honor choirs throughout the US. She has also taught and guest-lectured at Southern Methodist University, Abilene Christian University, Texas Tech University, and Florida State University. She holds music education degrees from Texas Christian University and University of North Texas.

## THE LITTLE PRINCE CHILDREN’S CHORUS

- |                  |                |                |
|------------------|----------------|----------------|
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| Rebekah Aldis    | Olivia Foster  | Jack Silber    |
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**In Memorium:**  
Steve Brown

The Dallas Opera Orchestra is saddened by the loss of our friend and colleague, Stephen "Steve" Brown (1960 – 2025).

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The Dallas Opera mourns the recent passing of these extraordinarily generous and committed supporters. Each one filled a special place at the Opera and in our hearts. Their loss is deeply felt.

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<b>Ruth Bison</b> 1942 – 2025	<b>Rosemary Enrico</b> 1944 – 2025	<b>Mary Ann Eschrich</b> 1932 – 2022	<b>Betty Muns</b> 1931 – 2024		

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<b>Lawrence "Larry" Rosales</b> 1956 – 2025	<b>Paris L. Gutierrez</b> 1960 – 2024	<b>Mark Wagenhurst</b> 1962 – 2023
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Visit [dallasopera.org/archive](https://dallasopera.org/archive)



Dame Gwyneth Jones before her Dallas Opera debut as Lady MacBeth in 1966.

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### THE LITTLE PRINCE

**Cast Party**  
February 8, 2026  
Hamon Hall



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**Artistic Salon\***  
February 10, 2026  
Meadows Museum of Art

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**Opera Insights**  
February 25, 2026  
Hamon Hall

**Final Dress Rehearsal**  
February 25, 2026  
Winspear Opera House

**Cast Party**  
March 1, 2026  
Hamon Hall

\*Salons are exclusive to \$5,000 and above Inner Circle members.

# Scenes from Our Fall Block

Between sellout operas, artistic salons, a hologram concert, and a surprise trip to Greece, The Dallas Opera had a busy autumn. Take a trip with us down memory lane.



**1.** On Sept 26, TDO staffers greet members of Crescendo, the company's young professionals group, during a Season Kick-Off Party at the home of Trustee Sarah Titus and Tilda Morris.  
c. Emily Sitton

**2.** TDO Board Chair Quincy Roberts hosts donors, staff, artists, and musicians at his home for a Season Opening Party on Sept 27. He even gave a brief operatic performance for the crowd.  
c. Amy O'Neil

**3.** (L to R) Kyle Miller, Diana Newman, Marina Viotti, Kristen Choi, and Matthew Goodheart star in TDO's People's Choice Concert on Oct 4.  
c. Amy O'Neil

**4.** Inner Circle patrons gather for an artistic salon celebrating TDO's groundbreaking CARMEN production at the Meadows Museum on Oct 7.  
c. Samuel F. Stiles

**5.** Donors celebrate TDO's 2025/2026 Season Opening Night with an exclusive dinner inside the Nancy B. Hamon Hall on Oct 17.  
c. Kyle Flubacker

**6.** Crescendo members enjoy CARMEN's Opening Night party at the Winspear Opera House on Oct 17.  
c. Kyle Flubacker

**7.** Grammy winner Marina Viotti makes her American opera debut as Carmen with The Dallas Opera.  
c. Kyle Flubacker

**8.** TDO's Mrs. Eugene McDermott Music Director Emmanuel Villaume celebrates CARMEN during bows on Opening Night.  
c. Kyle Flubacker



9



10



11



12



13



14

**9.** TDO's Education Artists perform **THE THREE LITTLE PIGS** to an eager crowd at NorthPark Center on Oct 25.  
c. Kristian Roberts

**10.** Kern Wildenthal General Director and CEO Ian Derrer gives a toast before a Maria Callas hologram concert celebrating the Music Hall at Fair Park's centennial on Oct 31.  
c. Angela Whitehead

**11.** The cast of TDO's November production of Francis Poulenc's **DIALOGUES OF THE CARMELITES**.  
c. Lynn Lane

**12.** On Nov 13, TDO board chair Quincy Roberts and David Lomelí accept the 2025 International Opera Award for Equal Opportunities and Impact on behalf of The Hart Institute for Women Conductors in Athens.  
c. Akriviadis Charis

**13.** TDO Education artists Jordan Hammons (left) and Julia Rose Arduino perform in a student matinee performance of **THE LITTLE PRINCE FAMILY** on Nov 12.  
c. Amy O'Neil

**14.** 2024/2025 Season Maria Callas Debut Artist of the Year winner Sylvia D'Eramo performs during TDO's Dec 13 Holiday Concert at the National Shrine Cathedral of Our Lady of Guadalupe.  
c. Nathan Bassett

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# Reaching the Peak

By Catherine Wendlandt



"It was an amazing experience all around, and everyone on the team was incredibly kind, passionate, and supportive," Peak Fellow Jingqi Zhu says of working as Music Director Emmanuel Villaume's assistant conductor on CARMEN. "From assisting Maestro Villaume and observing him work in different settings to playing piano in rehearsals, covering staging rehearsals when needed, and conducting the offstage chorus and banda, every aspect of the process offered me valuable opportunities to grow." c. Amy O'Neil

*This season TDO celebrates a decade of the Hart Institute for Women Conductors. Learn more about the Institute's history in each 2025/2026 mainstage program.*

For a decade now, the Hart Institute has trained female conductors through fall virtual classes and a nine-day residency in January. Conductors work with master teachers and The Dallas Opera's professional chorus and orchestra, and they begin building community with their fellow conductors.

To further support that community, the Institute in 2025 launched the Martha R. and Preston A. Peak Fellowship, a new music staff position given to one HIWC alum each season. "My Peak Fellowship experience was even more dense and expansive than my HIWC experience," says Jingqi Zhu, class of 2023.

As the inaugural Peak Fellow, Zhu served as the assistant conductor and pianist for TDO's recent CARMEN. She played piano during rehearsals, provided vocal coaching, and conducted the banda and off-stage chorus.

She also assisted with THE LITTLE PRINCE family production. The experience was immersive and comprehensive, she says, and gave her stronger leadership skills.

Says Zhu, "I now feel far more confident stepping into these roles when opportunities arise in my professional career."

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