HAWAII OPERA THEATRE

By Gioacchino Rossini

February 15, 17 & 19, 2008

NEAL S. BLAISDELL CONCERT HALL
One of the first things that struck me in preparing to direct this production is that dramatic literature, from Shakespeare to the 19th century, is haunted by the spirit of *Commedia dell’arte*. Both the original play by Beaumarchais and Rossini’s brilliant operatic adaptation draw directly upon the characters, or *Masks of Commedia*, as well as the situations that were most frequently portrayed. Even the *Lazzi* – the comic interludes inspired by the action but that don’t actually move the plot forward – pop up throughout the opera. The spirit of *Commedia* lives in all opera buffa. In deciding to embrace the *Commedia* roots of *The Barber of Seville*, I decided to challenge our cast to explore the riches of working with the traditional *Commedia* masks. While we are not attempting to recreate an authentic *Commedia* experience (as I think any such attempt would be futile!), working with masks on a piece which many people know so well allows us to explore the opera anew.

When an actor puts on a mask, he or she acquires the face modeled by the mask, and is inspired to explore the physical characteristics that the mask is intended to express. In *Commedia*, ‘Mask’ actually refers to character type and is inclusive of each individual mask. The Lovers (Almaviva and Rosina) are still *Masks* even though they do not wear actual masks. They are ‘fixed types’ that can gain specific significance from the context in which they find themselves, but are not intended to be representations of actual people. The use of these types, and the physical use of masks for most of these types, helps universalize the story being told, as our imagination can pull us in and out of each character in the story. We may see a singer performing Figaro as a fascinating individual, but when Figaro is masked as Brighella, the jack-of-all-trades servant who can find a solution for every problem – the imagination more easily wanders to see the Figaro in ourselves and in other people we know. The use of masks does not eliminate psychological depth. The psychology of each of the masks is irrefutable and consistent. However, the emphasis is on what it is to be human rather than what it is to be a particular person.

In *The Barber of Seville*, Figaro is clearly Brighella, and Rosina and Almaviva are obviously the *Innamorati*, the lovers around whom the action unfolds. Almaviva disguises himself as two of the Masks to try to infiltrate Bartolo’s home: first as a drunk version of Capitano, the self-important, poseur military man who exists to be ‘de-masked’ by the plot; and then as an imitation of Basilio. One might think that Doctor Bartolo would be a version of *Commedia’s* Dottore, but in fact, I believe he has more in common with the *Magnifico Mask* Pantalone, the easily enraged, lecherous, rich old man who tries unsuccessfully to control everything around him. Though not a medical Doctor, Rossini’s Basilio is more the Dottore Mask to me, especially when one considers that this Mask was infamous for being pretentiously verbose, a scholar, and impossible to get off the stage!

The use of masks allows us to feel the universality of each character, rather than focusing on their own ‘personal traits’. I love *The Barber of Seville* because I can relate to the feelings it invokes in me from love to laughter and from admiration to animosity – not because I have ever personally been locked up by my guardian so that he can marry me himself! (Though, I must admit to having occasionally wanted to keep a prospective lover under lock and key.) I hope that in watching this production of *Barber*, you will allow your imagination to bring you to another time and place, and to also allow yourself to wander in and out of the lives of the Masks, many of which probably exist in you.
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World Premiere:
Rome, Italy, 1816

Performed by Hawaii Opera Theatre
at the Neal S. Blaisdell Concert Hall
February 15, 17, 19, 2008

Presented in Italian
with English Supertitles

CAST

Count Almaviva: Zachary Stains
Dr. Bartolo: Jake Gardner
Rosina: Christine Abraham
Figaro: Stephen Powell
Basilio: Jamie Offenbach
Fiorello: Patrick P. McNichols
Berta: Dorothy Byrne
An Officer: Daniel James Kunkel

HOT CHORUS

Chorus Director: Mary Chesnut Hicks
Chorus Coordinator: Phil M. Hidalgo

Tenor
Dan Barnett
Fred Cachola
Phil M. Hidalgo
Kaweo Kanoho*
Les Loo
Julius Mina*

Bass
Keane Ishii*
Jesse King*
Daniel James Kunkel
Andrew R. Maddock*
Stelio
Larry J. Whitson

* Mae Z. Orvis Opera Studio participant

Supernumeraries

Sandra Brace
Shinogu Sato
Grant Uchida
Geary Udagawa

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Sets designed by Peter Dean Beck for Opera Carolina
Lighting Designer: Peter Dean Beck
Costume Designer: Helen E. Rodgers
Wig and Make-up Designer: Richard Stead
Vocal Coach and Recitative Accompaniment: Mary Dibbern
Stage Manager: Morgan Robinson
English Supertitles: Matthew Lata
Sets/Props owned by Utah Symphony & Opera

by Gioacchino Rossini

World Premiere:
Rome, Italy, 1816

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ACT I

Count Almaviva has fallen in love with Rosina while she was visiting in Madrid. Disguised as a poor student he has pursued her to Seville.

The opera opens as musicians, led by one of the Count’s servants Fiorello, gather below Rosina’s balcony where she lives under the constant watch of her guardian, Don Bartolo. The Count sings to her, but his song fails to rouse her. He pays the musicians who shower him with thanks. Hearing someone coming, the Count hides. Figaro, who knows the town’s secrets and scandals, arrives and describes his busy life. The Count is delighted to see his former servant and explains that he has fallen in love with Rosina, but has chosen to woo her in disguise so he can be sure she loves him for himself and not for his rank. He asks Figaro to help him arrange a visit with Rosina. Figaro responds that as Bartolo’s barber, he has free access to the house. Rosina appears on the balcony and drops a note to her unknown admirer. The Count sings another serenade to her, telling her that his name is Lindoro. Meanwhile, Figaro devises a plan: Almaviva should disguise himself as a drunken soldier and appear with a forged document ordering that he be quartered in Bartolo’s house. The Count is excited about this plan while Figaro looks forward to a nice cash pay-off from the grateful Count.

Locked up and alone, Rosina reflects on the voice that has enchanted her and resolves to use her wiles to meet Lindoro. Figaro arrives, but quickly hides when Bartolo enters. Bartolo is joined by Don Basilio, Rosina’s singing teacher and Bartolo’s conniving ally. Basilio reports that Almaviva, whom they suspect is interested in Rosina, has arrived in Seville. Basilio proposes to discredit him by spreading malicious gossip. Bartolo, however, prefers immediate action, and goes off with Basilio to draw up a marriage contract. Figaro warns Rosina and promises to deliver a letter from her to Lindoro. Figaro arrives to give Bartolo his shave and manages to snatch the key that unlocks the balcony. The shaving is about to begin when Basilio shows up looking perfectly healthy. The Count, Rosina, and Figaro convince Basilio, with repeated assurances and a quick bribe, that he is sick with scarlet fever. Basilio leaves, confused but richer. Figaro begins shaving Bartolo, distracting him from hearing the lovers plotting to elope, but soon realizes that he has been tricked again. The maid Berta complains of having to serve in a mad house where silly old men pursue younger women, even though she clearly has urges of her own.

Determined to marry Rosina at once, Bartolo sends Basilio to get the notary. He calls in Rosina and, using her note, convinces her that Lindoro and Figaro are planning to hand her over to Almaviva. Hurt and betrayed, she agrees to marry Bartolo. He goes for the police, intending to have the conspirators arrested when they come for Rosina.

As a storm rages, Figaro and Almaviva climb into the house through the balcony window. Rosina confronts them, however, once the Count reveals that he and Lindoro are the same person, Rosina joyously agrees to marry him. Basilio arrives with the notary. Bribed and threatened, Basilio agrees to be a witness to the marriage of Rosina and Almaviva. Bartolo arrives with the police, but it is too late. Bartolo decides to accept his fate—a fate made easier by the fact that the Count graciously gives him a purse, the equivalent of a dowry for Rosina. Figaro bestows good wishes on the newlyweds, and all celebrate.
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Rossini’s *Il barbiere di Siviglia* is the oldest opera by an Italian composer that has stayed in the repertory without interruption. Based on the 1775 comedy of intrigue by French playwright Pierre de Beaumarchais, it transposes the rapid pace, wit and linguistic virtuosity of its principal source into a score of rhythmic exhilaration, melodic invention and attractive orchestration. Verdi called *Barbiere* “the finest opera buffa that exists” and credited its abundance of real musical ideas, comic verve and truth in declamation for this status.

Rossini would probably have been astonished at the work’s popularity as it approaches its bicentennial. When he conducted the first performance in Rome on 20 February 1816, he witnessed a fiasco. Were the disruptions engineered by Paisiello supporters, whose opera on the same story had flourished in the repertory since 1782? After all, Rossini’s libretto adheres to the general shape of Paisiello’s. Or was the cast simply worn out by only two weeks to learn their music and staging? Such frantic preparations may well have led to stage mishaps.

Rossini knew he would be showcasing the famed Spanish tenor Manuel García (whose fee would be higher than his own). His initial title stressed García’s role: Almaviva, ossia L’inutile precauzione. Presented in the middle of the Roman Carnival, the opera’s themes refer to that season: subversion of a repressive moral order and disguise. In this imagined Spain, Count Almaviva (whose name translates as “lively soul”) provides local color with his serenades and their guitar accompaniments. It surfaces in the sets and costumes. But pure buffoonery, too, shows the influence of Spanish theater on the French farce and the *commedia dell’arte* tradition that informed Beaumarchais’ original conception.

According to his contract with the Teatro Argentina in December 1815, Rossini had to accept whatever libretto the impresario supplied. Librettist Cesare Sterbini delivered a rough outline on 17 January, and promised the first act by the 25th, the second by the 29th. Rossini supposedly wrote the score in just 13 days. Even so, he borrowed relatively little and waited for Sterbini to hand him poetry one piece at a time instead of composing the music in advance. He then poured his ideas into forms he himself had established for arias, ensembles, finales and overture. Collaborators wrote the recitatives.

The opera’s brilliant overture (borrowed from Rossini’s *Aureliano in Palmira*) opens with a slow introduction leading to an Allegro with an E minor theme in the strings and a more lyrical second theme assigned to the woodwinds. Rossini’s trademark crescendo marks the end of major sections. Astutely placed crescendos also enliven other numbers, like Figaro’s showstopping *Largo al factotum* where a crescendo illustrates the increasing demands of his clients and, metaphorically, his amusement as well. This barber is not only someone who conceives intrigues but he also comments ironically on them. Music master Don Basilio’s calumny aria is built as a grand crescendo; so, too, are climactic moments of the hilarious music lesson (arguably one of the funniest opera ensembles ever written).

Arias simultaneously paint and comment on characters. Alto heroine Rosina wears docility as a public mask in her first act showpiece, *Una voce poco fà*, “but” (to a staccato note) we learn she has a hundred vipers’ tricks to get her way. And through one of the most demanding basso buffo arias in the repertory, Rossini lets us know Don Bartolo is indeed an opponent to take seriously.

Imaginative, irrepressible music — with an energy that certain contemporaries once found demonic — elevates Rossini’s farce to the level of a masterpiece. The score’s lively soul (*alma viva*) has secured *Barbiere* a well-deserved place in audiences’ hearts.
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Zachary Stains, Tenor (Count Almaviva)
Hailed internationally for the beauty of his voice and the interpretative power of his characterizations, tenor Zachary Stains is gaining recognition for roles ranging from Monteverdi, Handel and Mozart, to Donizetti, Rossini and Britten. Lauded last summer as Lurcanio in Handel’s Ariodante at the 2007 Festival Dei Due Mondi in Spoleto, Italy (2008 DVD release) he is likewise winning raves for his DVD title role of Vivaldi’s Ercole sul Tormodonte conducted by Alan Curtis and recorded there in a 2006 John Pascoe production. Mr. Stains is also represented on DVD in Les Arts Florissant’s highly praised production of Monteverdi’s Il ritorno d’Ulisse in Patria and on CD as Tiridate alongside Joyce DiDonato in Handel’s Radamisto with Alan Curtis and Il Complesso Barocco (2006 Sadie Handel Award). He is very pleased to be making his HOT debut as Almaviva in this production of Il barbiere di Siviglia.

Jake Gardner, Baritone (Dr. Bartolo)
Jake Gardner has appeared with major opera companies and orchestras throughout the world. Known for the diversity of his repertoire, Mr. Gardner was for many seasons principal baritone with the Cologne Opera in Germany. In America, he has appeared with the New Orleans Opera in the world premiere of Thea Musgrave’s Pontalba; the Glimmerglass Opera; the New York City Opera in Little Women and Dialogues of the Carmelites; at Lyric Opera of Chicago in the world premiere of William Balcomb’s A Wedding; and with Cleveland Opera as Sharpless in Madama Butterfly. Mr. Gardner has also appeared with other major companies in America and Europe, and has sung under the baton of Jeffrey Tate in Billy Budd at the Chatelet in Paris and with Sir Simon Rattle in concert and in the Trevor Nunn production of Così fan tutte at the Glyndebourne Festival. He appears this summer in HOT’s production of A Little Night Music.
Christine Abraham, Mezzo-soprano (Rosina)

Christine Abraham’s 2007-08 season includes her return to the Pacific Symphony to perform Handel’s Messiah, performances of Bach’s St. Matthew Passion and Cantata #130 with the Baldwin-Wallace Bach Festival, and a recital for the Maestro Foundation in Santa Monica, California. Ms. Abraham created the role of Dolly in Carlson’s Anna Karenina (Florida Grand Opera and Opera Theatre of Saint Louis), appeared as Isabella in L’italiana in Algeri (Arizona Opera), Stephano in Roméo et Juliette (Spoleto Festival USA), Sesto in Giulio Cesare (Utah Opera), and as the title role in La Cenerentola (Santa Barbara Grand Opera). With Glimmerglass Opera she has performed Lazuli in L’Étoile, Minerva in Il ritorno d’Ulisse in Patria, Diana in Cavalli’s Calisto, and Mme. Carré-Lamadon in Hartke’s The Greater Good, or The Passion of Boule de Suif (world premiere). Ms. Abraham has appeared multiple times on New York City Opera’s stage and made her Metropolitan Opera debut as Ida in Die Fledermaus.

Stephen Powell, Baritone (Figaro)

Stephen Powell makes his San Francisco Opera debut in the 2007-08 season singing Sharpless in Madama Butterfly; appears with Washington Concert Opera as Riccardo in I Puritani; with North Carolina Symphony as Count in Le nozze di Figaro conducted by Grant Llewellyn; and performs Germont in La Traviata with Arizona Opera. He recently sang Carmina Burana with both the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Robert Spano, and at the Aspen Music Festival, conducted by David Zinman; and Beethoven’s Symphony No. 9 with the Philadelphia Orchestra under conductor Rossen Milanov. Recent operatic highlights include Sharpless (Aspen Music Festival), Camoëns in Dom Sébastien (Opera Orchestra of New York), Germont in La Traviata (Utah Opera), Jochanaan in Salomé (Cleveland Opera), Zurga in Les Pêcheurs de perles (Kentucky Opera and New York City Opera), and Marcello in La Bohème (Lyric Opera of Chicago).

Jamie Offenbach, Bass-baritone (Basilio)

Jamie Offenbach’s defining character portrayals and vocal strength in both buffo and dramatic repertoire earn the bass-baritone rave reviews with journalists, companies and audiences around the country. He has performed signature roles at companies that include Los Angeles Opera, Santa Fe Opera, San Diego Opera, Opera Pacific, Hawaii Opera Theatre, Arizona Opera, Opera Carolina, Florentine Opera of Milwaukee, Opera Colorado, Pittsburgh Opera, Kentucky Opera, and Savonlinna Finland Music Festival. In the current season, he performs Bogdanovich in Merry Widow with Dallas Opera; Capellio in I Capuletti ed i Montecchi with Florentine Opera of Milwaukee; Old Hebrew in Samson et Dalila with Nashville Opera; and Basilio in Barber of Seville with Hawaii Opera Theatre.
Patrick P. McNichols, Baritone (Fiorello)
Originally from Laguna Beach, California, Mr. McNichols has been raised, educated, and employed in Hawai‘i since 1970. He has performed locally throughout the years in various venues including the Hawaii Vocal Arts Ensemble, Kawaiolaonapukanileo, Kona Association for the Performing Arts, the Honolulu Symphony and Chorus and many HOT performances. Mr. McNichols joined the Hawaii Opera Theatre Chorus in 1998 and made his comprimario debut as the Imperial Commissioner in HOT’s production of Madama Butterfly, 2000 season. He has been a HOT Mae Z. Orvis Opera Studio Scholarship recipient since the year 2000 and has performed as a soloist in the following HOT productions: L’Enfant et les Sortileges, La Traviata, Amahl and the Night Visitors, The Magic Flute, La Bohème, Otello, The Merry Widow and Susannah.

Dorothy Byrne, Mezzo-soprano (Berta)
Grammy-nominated mezzo-soprano Dorothy Byrne has appeared with Lyric Opera of Chicago as Mrs. MacLean/ Susannah, Mrs. Olsen/ Street Scene and Gertrude/Romeo et Juliet. She has performed with Houston Grand Opera (Marcellina/Le nozze di Figaro), Glimmerglass Opera (Ruth/The Pirates of Penzance, Leda/Mrs. Traxell/The Mines of Sulphur, Clementine/Bluebeard), Minnesota Opera, Boston Lyric Opera, Hawaii Opera Theatre, Lyric Opera of Kansas City, and Chicago Opera Theater in such roles as, Larina/Eugene Onegin, Gertrude/Hamlet, Venus/Arianna, Cecilia March/Little Women, Orlofsky/Die Fledermaus, Katisha/The Mikado, Ma Moss/The Tender Land, and Zita in Gianni Schicchi/Buoso’s Ghost. Her Broadway credits include Parade and The Phantom of the Opera. Upcoming engagements include her international debut with The Wexford Festival as Leda/The Mines of Sulfur; this season for HOT she appears as Gertrude/Romeo et Juliette and Berta/Il barbiere di Siviglia; Opera Theatre of St. Louis as Susanna/The Ghosts of Versailles; Minnesota Opera/Jezibaba in Rusalka; and Florida Grand Opera as Duigne/Cyrano and Marcellina/Le nozze di Figaro.

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Jörg Pitschmann, Conductor
Born and educated in Germany, Maestro Pitschmann holds a degree in Church-music (organ and conducting) at States University of Music Freiburg. He has conducted at States-Theatre Salzburg, Austria, in concerts and operas (also in the Festival Hall, Salzburg) with the Mozarteum Orchestra Salzburg from 1998-2001. His vast repertoire includes the operas of Handel (Alcina); Mozart (Magic Flute, Abduction from the Seraglio, Le nozze di Figaro, Don Giovanni, Cosi fan tutte); Beethoven (Fidelio); Rossini (Barber); Donizetti (Lucia di Lammermoor, L’elisir d’amore); Verdi (Don Carlo, Rigoletto, La Traviata, Otello); Puccini (La bohème, Madama Butterfly, Tosca, Turandot); Dvorak (Rusalka): Strauss (Daphne); Liebermann (Die Schule der Frauen) among others. Throughout the 2005-2007 seasons, Maestro Pitschmann conducted concerts at the International Bodensee Festival with the SWR-Broadcasting-Orchestra Freiburg, Baden-Baden and the States-Chorus of Riga, Latvia. Conductor and later Music Director at States-Theatre Schwerin from 2001-2004, he is currently the conductor at States-Theatre Detmold.

Lawrence Edelson, Director
Lawrence Edelson received his Degree in Stage Direction from New York University and is a guest member on the directing staff of New York City Opera where he has restaged Little Women twice: for the work’s Lincoln Center premiere, and for NYCO’s recent tour to Japan. Lawrence’s original productions include La voix humaine at New York’s Maison Francaise; the world premieres of Salome’s Flea Circus and Travels with Gulliver at Symphony Space; the American Premiere of Telemann’s Orpheus for Wolf Trap Opera; and Carmen for Toledo Opera. Lawrence also completed his Masters in Performing Arts Administration at NYU. He currently serves as the Producing Artistic Director of American Lyric Theater in New York City. In this capacity, Lawrence coordinates the diverse artistic programs of ALT, including the commissioning of new works and an innovative mentorship program for emerging opera composers and librettists.
Peter Dean Beck,
Scenic & Lighting Designer
Beck has designed scenery and/or lighting for over 250 productions around the country. During his twenty-plus previous seasons with Hawaii Opera Theatre, he has designed the sets for 38 productions and the lighting for 63, among them: La Bohème, Eugene Onegin, The Tales of Hoffmann, Tristan and Isolde, Electra, Macbeth, L’italiana in Algeri, and Samson and Dalila. Among his other opera credits are Falstaff, Turandot, Manon, Madama Butterfly, Hansel and Gretel, A Midsummer Night’s Dream, and Romeo et Juliette for such companies as Atlanta Opera, Florida Grand Opera, Glimmerglass Opera, Virginia Opera and Chautauqua Opera. His musical theater credits include West Side Story, Guys and Dolls, Candide, The King and I, and Fiddler on the Roof. He recently did a double bill of le Rossignol and Cavalleria Rusticana for Sakai City Opera in Japan (built and painted by HOT Scene Shop) and lit Cavalleria Rusticana/I Pagliacci in Macao, China.

Helen E. Rodgers,
Costume Designer
Helen Rodgers has designed costumes for HOT for several major productions including The King and I, Susannah, La Bohème and Così fan tutte in addition to her work as Costumer for the company. Recent work at other companies includes costume design for Good Evening at Florida Studio Theatre, Magic Flute for Mannes Opera, Stiffelio and Susannah for Chautauqua Opera, and La Bohème for Opera Memphis, Chautauqua Opera and Mannes Opera.

Richard Stead,
Wig & Make-up Designer
This season, Mr. Stead celebrates his 26th consecutive season with HOT. He has been Wigmaster at The San Francisco Opera where he won an Emmy Nomination. He has worked with Netherlands Opera, Royal Shakespeare Company, Central City Opera, Utah Opera, Boston Opera, Minnesota Opera, American Conservatory Theatre, Spoleto Festival USA, Bolshoi Ballet, San Francisco Ballet, Ballet Hawaii, films and television. He was on the faculty of San Francisco State University and University of California. Mr. Stead operates his own wig and make-up company.
Mary Dibbern, Vocal Coach and Recitative Accompaniment. Mary Dibbern works internationally as a freelance collaborative pianist. Trained as an opera coach at SMU with Maestro Paul Vellucci. After study in Paris with Nadia Boulanger and Pierre Bernac, her career has taken her to all of the major operas in France and many venues in Europe, China and the U.S. Recent operatic engagements include Salzburg, Riga, Vilnius, Minneapolis, Forth Worth, Cincinnati, Kentucky and Honolulu and recitals with Kurt Ollmann, David Pittman-Jennings, Kristina Zmailaité and Edmundas Seilius. Recordings for Harmonia Mundi and Claves earned her the 34 BARBER OF SEVILLE Jennings, Kristina Zmailaité Vilnius, Minneapolis, Forth Worth, Cincinnati, Kentucky and France and many venues in Europe, China and the U.S. Recent operatic engagements include Salzburg, Riga, Vilnius, Minneapolis, Forth Worth, Cincinnati, Kentucky and Honolulu and recitals with Kurt Ollmann, David Pittman-Jennings, Kristina Zmailaité and Edmundas Seilius. Recordings for Harmonia Mundi and Claves earned her the Grand Prix du Disque. She is editorial consultant for Musik Fabrik (Paris), currently published all of the works of Jacques Leguerney. She is the author of the Performance Guide series for Pendragon Press including The Tales of Hoffmann, Carmen, Faust/Roméo et Juliette, and Interpreting the Songs of Jacques Leguerney: A Guide for Study and Performance.

Morgan Robinson, Stage Manager. Morgan Deveaux Robinson worked on her first professional show here at HOT. She has come back to work on many shows since then, including Susannah and The Mikado. For the past two years she has been based in San Francisco where she is on the stage management staff at San Francisco Opera.

Mary Chesnut Hicks, Chorus Director. Mary Chesnut Hicks was last seen on the HOT stage as Zerlina in Don Giovanni. Prior HOT credits include Peep Bo in Mikado, First Lady (Magic Flute) and Frasquita (Carmen). Mary is known for her work in musical theater venues as well; favorite roles include Mother (Ragtime), Alice Beane (Titanic), Lily Secret Garden, Eva Peron (Evita) and Carotta in Phantom. She has appeared as a soloist with the Honolulu and Maui Symphonies locally, and with Commonwealth Opera and Valley Light Opera in Massachusetts. In addition, she spent 2 seasons singing with Opera Pacific in Orange County, CA. Mary holds degrees in Voice Performance and is an affiliate member of the Orvis Opera Studio. By day, Mary teaches music at Iolani School, and conducts the choir at First Presbyterian Church. She resides in Mililani, with her husband Kalani Hicks.

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