

Barber of Seville at the Savannah VOICE Festival

Santiago Ballerini (Almaviva) is recognized in the Americas as one of the leading tenors in Bel Canto repertoire. Respected and celebrated by his colleagues, directors and theaters around the world, Ballerini hails from Buenos Aires, Argentina, and has sung in all major opera houses in South and North America. Ballerini covered the roles of Don Ottavio in Mozart's "Don Giovanni" and Count Almaviva in Rossini's "Il Barbiere di Siviglia" at the Metropolitan Opera in New York City in season 2016- 2017. He also returns this season to the Teatro Colon in Buenos Aires as il Tenor Italiano in "Der Rosenkavalier" from Strauss and As Ramiro on Rossini's Cenerentola. This past season, Ballerini made his United States debut at the Caramoor Festival in New York as Fernand in "La Favorite" to rave reviews. He returned to Caramoor in July to sing Gualtiero in Bellini's "Il Pirata." He also sang the role of Tybalt with The Atlanta Opera in its production of "Romeo et Juliette" in 2016, and returns this season to debut Tonio from Donizetti's La Fille du Regiment. In January of 2016, Ballerini was awarded the Grand Prize at the "Laguna Magica" international Vocal Competition in Chile, receiving invitations to sing Cassio in Otello with Teatro Argentino and to sing with Tenerife Opera. Before starting his professional singing career, Ballerini was a pianist for nine years, and also studied Music Therapy at the Universidad de Buenos Aires, specializing in addiction treatment.

Meechot Marrero (Rosina)

Puerto Rican soprano Meechot Marrero, hailed by El Nuevo Día as, "a revelation...a young Puerto Rican star with a great career ahead" is a recent master's degree recipient of the Yale School of Music, and after being awarded the American-Berlin Scholarship from the Opera Foundation, joined the Deutsche Oper Berlin ensemble for the 2016/17 season. At Deutsche Oper Berlin, Ms. Marrero will perform the roles of Frasquita in *Carmen*, Giannetta in *L'Elisir d'Amore*, Papagena in *Die Zauberflöte*, Belinda in Purcell's *Dido* and Aeneas and Bianca and Gabriela in *La Rondine*. She performed at Savannah Voice Festival in 2016 as Juliette in *Roméo et Juliette*. Ms. Marrero began her musical studies with the San Juan Children's Choir, and, after completing a Bachelor of Science in molecular biology at the University of Puerto Rico, received further training from the Puerto Rico Music Conservatory and Yale Opera at the Yale School of Music.

Marco Nisticò (Bartolo)

Italian born baritone Marco Nisticò's impressive combination of beautiful tone, exquisite artistry, and superior stagecraft has delighted audiences throughout North America, South America, and Europe. Praised as a performer of "gravitas, unforced eloquence, and refined vocalism" by the *Classical Review*, Marco Nisticò has become a widely sought-after singing actor for both comedic and dramatic roles. Last season, he sang Tonio in *Pagliacci* with Opera Memphis, Amonasro in *Aïda* with Opera Colorado, and returned to Sarasota Opera in the same role in addition to appearing with Florida Grand Opera as Malatesta in *Don Pasquale*. In 2014-15, Mr. Nisticò was reengaged by Sarasota Opera to sing Tonio in Leoncavallo's *I pagliacci* and Posa in Verdi's *Don Carlos*, and sang Dulcamara with Eugene Opera. He returned again to the roster of the Metropolitan Opera in the 2013-2014 season for the premiere of Nico Muhly's *Two Boys*, sang Dulcamara in *L'elisir d'amore* and Dancaïro in *Carmen* with Teatro dell' Opera in Rome, and returned to Sarasota Opera as Figaro in *Il barbiere di Siviglia*. The 2012-13 season included his return to the Metropolitan Opera as Dancaïre in *Carmen*, the title role of *Rigoletto* with Sarasota Opera, and Montfort in Verdi's *Les vêpres siciliennes* in a

return to the Caramoor Festival. The 2016-2017 season includes Dr. Bartolo in *Il barbiere di Siviglia* with Opera Memphis, the title character in *Don Pasquale* and Manfredo in *L'amore di tre re* with Sarasota Opera, and El Tiempo in *Los Elementos* with New York City Opera. Future seasons include Germont in *La Traviata* with Sarasota Opera, Ping in *Turandot* with San Diego Opera, Ford in *Falstaff* with Opera Colorado, and an appearance with The Dallas Opera.

Jorge Parodi (Conductor)

Reviewed as having “the most expressive conducting hands since Stokowski’s”, Jorge Parodi has conducted at the Teatro Colón and Buenos Aires Lirica, Volgograd Opera, The Banff Centre, Opera in Williamsburg, and the Castleton Festival, where he was assistant conductor to Maestro Lorin Maazel. Maestro Parodi is the Artistic Director of Opera Hispánica, and the Music Director of the Senior Opera Theater at Manhattan School, where he has conducted all its productions to critical acclaim. Mr. Parodi is also a faculty member at The Juilliard School, MSM Summer Voice Festival, International Vocal Arts Institute, NYU and V.O.I.C.Experience, a vocal workshop under the direction of Sherrill Milnes.

Scott Russell (Basilio), bass, is from Roanoke, Va. and currently lives in New York City. Scott is enjoying a career ranging from opera and music theater to oratorio and church music at home and abroad. He is the recipient of many awards including the NYC district and regional winner of the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions. Some recent credits include: *Gianni Schicchi* (Simone) with the Savannah Music Festival; *La bohème* (Colline) with Savannah Philharmonic and V.O.I.C.Experience, *Don Giovanni* (Il Commendatore), Schwabacher Summer Concerts, and 2 Grand Finale concerts with Merola Opera program of San Francisco Opera; *Mother of us all* (Daniel Webster), *La bohème* (Colline), *Die Zauberflöte* (Sprecher) with Manhattan School of Music; *La Péricole* (cover of Don Andrés, Vice-Roi) with New York City Opera; world premiere of *Jack and the Beanstalk* (The Giant) with Nevada Opera, the world premiere of *Quartet* (Bear) at Carnegie Hall with RTB, *Don Giovanni* (Masetto) with Nevada Opera, *Susannah* (Rev. Olin Blitch) with the International Vocal Arts Institute in Israel and Virginia, *Oliver!* (Bill Sykes) with Utah Festival Opera and MT, and the musical revue *It's a Grand Night for Singing* (“Leading Man”) with Washington D.C. Savoyards. Mr. Russell is a regular soloist at churches up and down the east coast.

Joachim Schamberger (Stage Director) works internationally as a Stage Director and Virtual Theater Designer. He has worked throughout the United States, Germany, Italy, France, Brazil, Norway, Israel, Japan and China. Productions include *Die Zauberflöte*, *Don Giovanni Così fan tutte*, *Idomeneo*, *La Finta Giardiniera*, *La Bohème*, *Tosca*, *La Rondine*, *Suor Angelica*, and *Gianni Schicchi*, *Aida*, *La Traviata*, *Rigoletto*, *Falstaff*, *The Flying Dutchman*, *Das Rheingold*, *Carmen*, *Faust*, *Lucia di Lammermoor*, *Ariadne auf Naxos*, *Martha*, *Amahl and the night visitors*, *The Rake's Progress*, *Albert Herring*, *Die Fledermaus*, *Sweeney Todd*, *The Wizard of Oz* as well as several modern operas. In addition to directing, he is a Visiting Professor of Opera at DePauw University and works frequently at music festivals and conservatories throughout the world. A graduate of the Musikhochschule in Würzburg, and the Merola Opera Program of the San Francisco Opera, Mr. Schamberger studied digital film production and 3-D animation at the New York Film Academy. For more information please visit: joachimschamberger.com

Kristin Schwecke (Berta)

Ms. Schwecke has recently appeared as La Contessa in *Le nozze di Figaro* with Hubbard Hall Opera Theater, First Lady in *The Magic Flute* with Piedmont Opera, Magda in *La Rondine* with the AJ Fletcher Opera Institute, Abigail in Robert Ward's *The Crucible* with Piedmont Opera, and 2nd Sprite in *Rusalka* with North Carolina Opera. As a Young Artist, Kristin has been engaged as a Festival Artist with The Savannah Voice Festival for several summers. She was an Apprentice Artist with Chautauqua Opera where she performed in Benjamin Britten's *Peter Grimes* and Verdi's *Falstaff* and was a featured soloist with the Chautauqua Symphony Orchestra. In concert, Kristin has most recently sung Verdi's *Requiem* with the University of North Carolina School of the Arts Symphony Orchestra and Mozart's *Requiem* with the Valdosta Symphony Orchestra. Ms Schwecke has received honors in the Heafner Williams Vocal Competition, the Fritz and Lavinia Jensen Foundation Competition, Charlotte Opera Guild Competition, Rosen-Schaffel Young Artist Competition, Schubert Club Bruce P Carlson Scholarship Competition and internationally from the Czech and Slovak International Singing Competition. A native to Wisconsin, Kristin graduated from the University of Wisconsin Madison with a Masters degree in Voice. She also holds a Performing Artist Certificate from the AJ Fletcher Opera Institute at the University of North Carolina School of the Arts. Currently, Kristin is a student of world renowned mezzo-soprano, Victoria Livengood. Ms Schwecke is currently Voice faculty at Salem College in Winston-Salem, North Carolina.

James Wright (Figaro)

Described by critics as "tremendous," "entertaining" and "talented," baritone James Wright is a favorite among audiences for his charismatic presence and warm tone. His recent operatic roles include the Sacristan in *Tosca*, Rev. Gruffydd in Roger Ames' *How Green was My Valley* with El Paso Opera, Angelotti in *Tosca* with Nickel City Opera and Papageno in *The Magic Flute* with Undercroft Opera of Pittsburgh. This season James will be appearing as Count Almaviva in *Le Nozze di Figaro* and Bob in *The Old Maid* and the Thief with Nickel City Opera and Richard White in Michael Ching's *Alice Ryley* with The Savannah VOICE Festival.

Other operatic roles include The Pilot in Portman's *The Little Prince*, John Sorel in *The Consul*, Valentin in Gounod's *Faust*, Dr. Malatesta in *Don Pasquale*, Schaunard in *La Bohème* and King Melchior in Menotti's *Amahl and the Night Visitors*.

Nicholas Yaquinto (Fiorello)

Baritone Nicholas Giovanni Yaquinto is an active member of the Atlanta music scene, and a native of Savannah, Georgia. Mr. Yaquinto recently made his professional debut at the Atlanta Opera as Paris in their production of *Roméo et Juliette*. In the 2016 summer season he performed the title role of Roscoe Conway in Seagle Music Colony's world premiere production of *Roscoe* by Evan Mack. Since receiving his BMA from Georgia State University in May of 2015, he was a winner of the Atlanta District Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions, received both the Casa Italia Vocal Scholarship and the FAVA Excellence in French Repertoire award at the 2015 CS Classical Singer Competition in Chicago, and premiered at the Atlanta Symphony as Papagano in their production of *My Family Valentine*. Mr. Yaquinto has been seen performing several roles across the United States including Figaro in *Il Barbiere di Siviglia*, Schaunard in *La Bohème*, Demetrius in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Guglielmo in *Così fan tutte*, Marullo in *Rigoletto*, and Count Almaviva in *Le Nozze di Figaro*.