

WORLD PREMIERE

# STEAL A PENCIL FOR ME

JANUARY 25 | 27 | 28 | 30 | 2018

MUSIC BY GERALD COHEN | LIBRETTO BY DEBORAH BREVOORT

BASED ON THE BOOK BY JAAP AND INA POLAK





**P**erhaps most exciting about the start of a new year is that magnificent feeling of hope—the sense that the days ahead could hold something brighter than those in the past. That is a sentiment all the more powerfully depicted in *Steal a Pencil for Me*, and we are honored you have chosen to join us at Opera Colorado for the world premiere of this new opera.

Composed by Gerald Cohen and with a libretto by Deborah Brevoort, *Steal a Pencil for Me* tells the true story of Jaap Polak and Ina Soep, two Dutch Jews whose love blossomed amidst one of the most horrifying settings imaginable: Bergen-Belsen concentration camp during the final year of World War II. Yet, despite the incredible hardships they endured, they were able to find strength in each other. That strength carried them through the end of the war, and then through nearly 70 more years together.

We feel very fortunate to be able to share their story with you, and we are especially proud that *Steal a Pencil for Me* is Opera Colorado's second world premiere in just three seasons—a feat that underscores our commitment to presenting new works that resonate powerfully

within our communities. It is also a rare treat to work directly with the composer and librettist of an opera, and we could not have asked for a better duo than Gerald and Deborah.

Opera Colorado would also like to gratefully acknowledge all those involved in bringing *Steal a Pencil for Me* to the stage, including heartfelt thanks to Steve Wilson and the Mizel Arts and Culture Center for their enthusiasm in hosting these performances; to Scott Levin and the Anti-Defamation League; to Roz Duman and the Colorado Coalition for Genocide Awareness and Action; and to the many sponsors who made this production possible.

We think you will agree that *Steal a Pencil for Me* is a heartfelt and inspiring work. And whether it's your first Opera Colorado production or you are a longtime patron, we look forward to seeing you again soon. We will close the 2017-2018 season in May with Verdi's brilliant and hilarious *Falstaff*, but there are several can't-miss events between these two productions (see pgs. 7-8 for an upcoming calendar). Plus, check back in early February when we announce our 2018-2019 season!

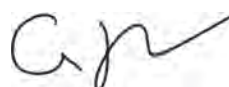
Wishing you and yours a very happy and hopeful new year,



Greg Carpenter  
General Director



Kevin O'Connor  
Chairman of the Board



Ari Pelto  
Music Director







## Sip & Sing at Nocturne

Nocturne | 1330 27th Street, Denver

Join Opera Colorado for an early Valentine's Day celebration at one of Denver's most beloved jazz hotspots. Savor a three-course dinner with wine pairing while the Opera Colorado Young Artists serenade you with romantic bon-bons from opera, musical theater, and popular song.

*Seating is limited!*

► **Thursday, February 8, 2018 | 6 PM**

**GENERAL ADMISSION: \$85**



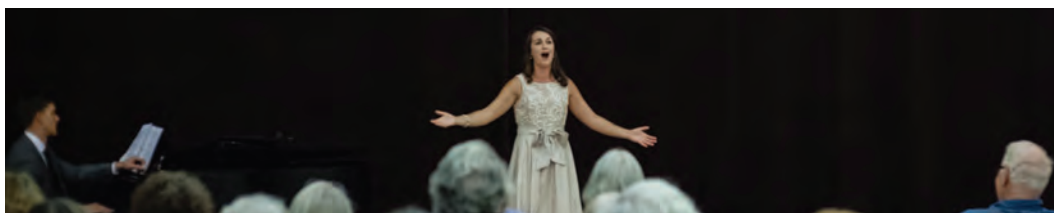
## An Afternoon of American Song

Opera Colorado Opera Center | 4121 S Navajo St, Ste 100, Englewood

The Opera Colorado Young Artists present an intimate and immersive performance of 21st century American gems, spanning musical theater, cabaret, opera, and art song. Plus, enjoy drinks and light hors d'oeuvres at a post-performance reception! **See pg. 29 for additional information.**

► **Sunday, March 4, 2018 | 2 PM**

**GENERAL ADMISSION: \$25**



## Young Artists Celebration

Opera Colorado Opera Center | 4121 S Navajo St, Ste 100, Englewood

Celebrate our Young Artists as their eight-month residency ends, and we send them off in style! Let the exquisite sound of their voices sweep you away as they show off their talent for an Opera Colorado audience one last time before continuing on to their next adventure. Enjoy drinks and light hors d'oeuvres at a post-performance reception.

► **Sunday, May 20, 2018 | 2 PM**

**GENERAL ADMISSION: \$25**



## ENHANCE YOUR OPERA EXPERIENCE@THE ELLIE



### *Falstaff* Opening Night Dinner:

Kevin Taylor's at The Ellie Caulkins Opera House | 14th Street and Curtis Street, Denver

Enjoy an elegant, all-inclusive dinner before the performance of *Falstaff*. Cocktails begin at 5PM followed by a three-course meal in the Chambers Grant Salon. After the opera, join us for a dessert reception.

► **Saturday, May 5, 2018 | 5PM**

**\$130 PER PERSON PER DINNER** Hosted prosecco all evening. Hosted wine and beer with dinner, plus a cash bar. Tickets to the performance sold separately.



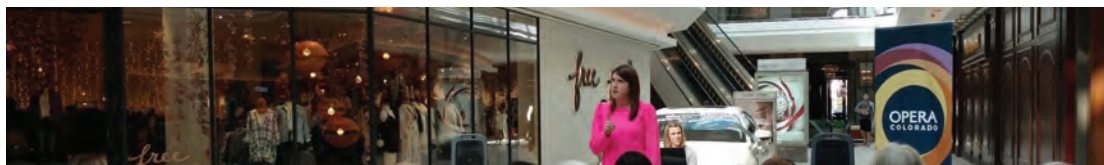
### *Falstaff* Pre-Performance Lectures:

Ellie Caulkins Opera House Lobby | 14th Street at Curtis Street, Denver

Come to the opera house before the performance to attend a free lecture led by music historian and professor Betsy Schwarm.

► **One hour prior to each performance; open to ticket holders**

## FREE EVENTS IN THE COMMUNITY



### Opera at Cherry Creek Shopping Center

Cherry Creek Shopping Center | 3000 East 1st Avenue, Denver

Hear greatest hits from opera and musical theater at these free Opera Colorado Young Artists performances at Cherry Creek Shopping Center.

► **Saturday, March 17, 2018 | 1:30PM**

► **Saturday, April 7, 2018 | 1:30PM**



### Family Day at the Opera

Ellie Caulkins Opera House | 14th Street at Curtis Street, Denver

The Opera Colorado Young Artists perform the company's one-hour touring productions, both sung in English. It's the perfect way to experience the wonders of opera and the Ellie Caulkins Opera House with your whole family! Reserve your free tickets online beginning March 1, 2018.

► **Saturday, March 24, 2018**

*Cinderella* 10AM | *Elixir of Love* 1PM



# OPERA COLORADO'S INSIDE OC

Denver's Premier Arts, Networking  
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Immersive Experiences for Denver's Culturally Curious

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## 2017-2018 SEASON EVENTS

### Friday Night Pre-Show Receptions

Enjoy drinks with fellow Inside OC members before each Friday night performance.

### Members-Only Happy Hours

Join your fellow members at monthly happy hours hosted by the Inside OC Board.

### Exclusive Opera Colorado Events

Access exclusive invitations and pricing for special events throughout the season.



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**FRIDAY, MAY 11, 2018 | 7:30 PM PERFORMANCE**  
ELLIE CAULKINS OPERA HOUSE





VENETIAN CARNIVAL COMES TO DENVER

*Opera Colorado invites you to a*

# MASKED BALL

**SATURDAY, MARCH 10, 2018**

**6:30PM** *at the* MCNICHOLS CIVIC CENTER


*Cocktails, Gaming, Dinner and Dancing*

BLACK TIE | COMPLIMENTARY VALET

*Benefiting Opera Colorado's Young Artists Program*



For information or to purchase tickets,  
please call Jessica Peña at 303.468.2060  
or visit [operacolorado.org/maskedball](http://operacolorado.org/maskedball).





# STEAL A PENCIL FOR ME

JANUARY 25 | 27 | 28 | 30 | 2018

THE WOLF THEATRE AT THE MIZEL ARTS AND CULTURE CENTER

## WORLD PREMIERE

**Opera in Two Acts by Gerald Cohen**

**Libretto by Deborah Brevoort**

*There will be one 20-minute intermission.*

### CAST IN ORDER OF VOCAL APPEARANCE

Lisette	Katherine Beck*^
Manja Polak	Adriana Zabala*
Jaap Polak	Gideon Dabi*
Ina Soep	Inna Dukach
Rudi Acohen	Nathan Ward^
Abraham Soep	Andrew Garland
Nazi / SS Guard #1	Nicholas Kreider^
Nazi / SS Guard #2	Andrew Hiers^
The Commandant	Heath Martin^

Opera Colorado Orchestra

Opera Colorado Chorus

Conductor	Ari Peltó
Stage Director	Omer Ben Seadia*
Chorus Master & Repetiteur	Sahar Nouri
Scenic & Lighting Design	Francois-Pierre Couture*
Projections Design	Hana Kim*
Costume Design	Jessica Jahn*
Wig and Makeup Design	Ronell Oliveri

*\*Opera Colorado Debut*

*^Opera Colorado Young Artist*



# SPONSORS

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**The World Premiere of *Steal a Pencil for Me* is Sponsored by**



**Additional support from**

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## **2017-2018 Season Sponsors**

Music Director Ari Peltó is sponsored by Mike and Julie Bock

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### **Opera Colorado Young Artists Sponsors**

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*Andrew Hiers is sponsored by David & Elizabeth Budd and Martha & Will Tracey*

*Resident Coach/Accompanist Jordan Ortman is sponsored by Gayle & Gary Landis and Chris & Joy Murphy*

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# FROM THE COMPOSER

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*Steal a Pencil for Me* had a very special inspiration: Jaap and Ina Polak, whom I had the honor to know for more than 25 years. The Polaks were active members of the synagogue where I am cantor in Scarsdale, NY. Jaap and Ina spent almost two years in concentration camps during World War II, and emigrated to the United States in 1951. Jaap spoke often and frankly to our community, as well as to civic groups and school children across the country, about his personal experience during the Holocaust, urging us not to discriminate, generalize, or be bystanders; and to work together to strengthen what is good in ourselves and in others.

My own parents fled Europe before war began. My mother left Germany at the age of 15 immediately after Kristallnacht; my father left Poland in 1935, but his mother and other relatives were killed by the Nazis. Jaap and Ina did not speak much about their war experiences until their daughter Margrit uncovered their love letters written during their incarceration; this opened a window to an intimate love story told against horrendous times. Their story gave us all the chance to learn first-hand that “epic horrors don’t erase private dramas” (as stated in *The New York Times* review of the documentary film *Steal a Pencil for Me*), and that we can best find a way to respond emotionally to large and terrible historical events by experiencing the stories of imperfect people, in intimate and complicated personal situations, that happen in the throes of these events.

In 2010 I told Ina and Jaap that I was thinking of writing an opera based on their story, and after their initial surprise, Jaap told me, “Write it quickly!” He was 97 years old at the time, and Ina was 87. Both Jaap and Ina were deeply involved with the opera’s creation, fleshing out personal details, including, “What were birthday parties like in Amsterdam during the occupation?” and, “What were the roll-calls like at Bergen-Belsen, and how were the prisoners lined up?” I am so grateful for the time we spent together talking about their lives.

There have been so many other people who have been involved in making this project a reality.

Thanks to Opera Colorado for its dedication to performing new opera, and for its enthusiasm and excellence in all the phases of creating this production—with special thanks to Greg Carpenter and Ari Peltó for their leadership, and Omer Ben Seadia for her inspiring direction.

In 2013, assisted by my congregation, Shaarei Tikvah, and by the Jewish Theological Seminary, we were able to workshop the opera in time for Jaap’s 100<sup>th</sup> and Ina’s 90<sup>th</sup> birthdays, and to have them present at the performances. The chance for the Polaks and the cast to meet each other, and for them to see the opera, was an unforgettable and moving experience for all. The wonderful cast included Ilana Davidson, Robert Balonek, Toby Newman, Nils Neubert, Cherry Duke, Ricardo Rivera, Matthew Singer, Miloslav Antonov, and Enrico Lagasca. The key artistic personnel were dramaturg Cori Ellison, conductor Ari Peltó, stage director Beth Greenberg, and vocal coach Lynn Baker.

There are four people that I would like to thank who have given me the courage to embark and stay the course on a project of this dimension. First, my wife Caroline, who says that challenges are opportunities—and means it. Cori Ellison, the inspiring dramaturg and expert of everything operatic, has been a central mentor for this project and my career as an opera composer; Cori knew exactly who would be the right collaborators and made those connections happen. One of the most fundamental was her introducing me to librettist Deborah Brevoort through our shared residencies at American Lyric Theater. Deborah has been a superb partner as we worked together to bring this real-life story to the stage; her great skills as a dramatist and storyteller, and her inspired and practical approach to the process, made it a pleasure to collaborate on creating this opera. Cori also introduced me to Ari Peltó, whom I first met in the 2013 workshop; Ari has championed the work and been a central part of its development since then, bringing it to this world premiere production.

The story of Ina and Jaap is a great and poignant one that has become an opera thanks to the generosity and commitment of all those above.

One last thought from Jaap: In his talks he always closed with, “Enjoy the simple things in life. We are living in a wonderful country and we all need to work together to make this a better world—but this can only be achieved if people learn the lessons of the Holocaust.”

**Gerald Cohen**

# FROM THE LIBRETTIST

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The first thing that struck me about the letters that Jaap and Ina passed back and forth during their internment by the Nazis was how ordinary they were. There were occasional bursts of poetic sentiment, to be sure—they were love letters after all—but for the most part, their missives were quotidian, concerned with everyday matters and the need to simply keep up their spirits in order to survive. It was this *ordinariness* that was most moving—and oddly powerful—to me.

There is a tendency in stories like this to turn the characters into larger-than-life heroes and to make them somehow nobler or better than everyone else. But Jaap and Ina were neither heroic nor noble; they were utterly human, with flaws and foibles that all of us possess. They were ordinary people caught in an extraordinary situation; lacking any super human qualities beyond basic kindness and decency, they were nevertheless able to triumph. This is what makes their story so powerful and meaningful. It tells us that we, too—ordinary people all—possess the ability to survive and thrive when the tides of history turn against us.

*Steal a Pencil for Me* is an uplifting story about many things, most notably the enduring power of love and the imagination to help people survive horrors like the Holocaust. One of the things that stood out to me in this beautiful tale was how important stories were to Ina and Jaap’s survival. Every day they would meet behind the barracks to imagine what their future life could be. Those imaginings formed a story that sustained them. It was a simple story—of ordinary breakfasts, and butter for the bread—but it nevertheless held great power and ultimately enabled them to survive. *Steal a Pencil for Me* shows us what is essential: love, stories with meaning and the utter necessity of the imagination, which, once it has envisioned something, then has the power to make that vision real.

**Deborah Brevoort**



# SYNOPSIS *STEAL A PENCIL FOR ME*

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## CHARACTERS

Lisette – mezzo soprano  
Manja Polak – mezzo soprano  
Jaap Polak, Manja's husband - baritone  
Ina Soep - soprano  
Rudi Acohen, Ina's fiancé - tenor  
Abraham Soep, Ina's father - baritone  
Nazi / SS Guard #1 - baritone  
Nazi / SS Guard #2 - bass  
The Commandant - baritone

### Act One – June 1943 to February 1944

In Nazi-occupied Amsterdam, friends and family gather to celebrate Lisette's birthday. Amongst the guests are Manja and Jaap Polak, unhappily married, but having agreed to stay together until the war ends. Jaap is immediately drawn to another party guest: Ina Soep, attending with her parents and her fiancé Rudi. Festivities are interrupted by a troop of Nazis who arrest several of the guests, including Rudi.

Manja, Jaap, his parents, and Lisette arrive at Holland's Westerbork Transit Camp. They are warned about so-called Tuesday Transports, at which time prisoners are regularly dispatched to crueler camps in the east. Ina and her parents also arrive, Ina fearful of the fate of Rudi, who has been delivered to another camp. Jaap advises her that imagining a better future is the only way to survive their present horror.

The Commandant announces that it is time for Tuesday Transport. Jaap's parents are amongst those selected, but Jaap manages to pocket the Commandant's pencil. He writes a love note to Ina, and Lisette passes it onward. She also brings back Ina's reply.

Word of the budding romance spreads. Manja, humiliated, insists

it must stop. Now the Commandant reads the list of names for the next Tuesday Transport: both Jaap and Manja are amongst those to be sent to Bergen-Belsen.

### Act Two – May 1944 to June 1945

Ina, too, arrives at Bergen-Belsen. She and Jaap meet behind the barracks, dreaming of the simple joys they intend to share someday. Manja, and Ina's father Abraham, both declare the romance must end. Jaap and Ina agree, though they pledge to continue writing letters. Ina, who works in the Commandant's office, is asked to steal for Jaap another pencil. Hearing word of grim events at Auschwitz, she fears for the survival of Rudi.

On Passover, the guards are counting the prisoners. Ina slips off to steal a pencil for Jaap. Word comes that the camp is to be evacuated. As the prisoners are dispatched to other camps, Ina and Jaap find themselves heading in opposite directions. Seriously ill, he collapses unconscious.

Back in Amsterdam, everyone in the neighborhood searches for word of loved ones...

## ABOUT *STEAL A PENCIL FOR ME*

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In times of trouble, the greatest joys may come from the smallest experiences. Possessing a pencil or sharing a simple breakfast might not be noteworthy in everyday life. However, as Dutch Jews caught up in the Holocaust, Jaap and Ina were living lives far removed from the everyday variety. Nonetheless, it was real life for them and for millions of others, more real than one might be accustomed to finding in opera. It is one thing to talk about *verismo* opera, in which down-to-earth characters and believable occurrences are given musical form. It is entirely another when those characters are actual people personally known to the composer. Such is the world of Gerald Cohen's new opera *Steal a Pencil for Me*.

Jaap Polak and Ina Soep had only just met one another in Amsterdam in 1943 when they were separately arrested by the Germans and sent to concentration camps. The odds would have been strongly against them ending up at the same camp, but they did. Romance blossomed and both survived the war. Ultimately, they married and made their way to Scarsdale, New York, where they joined the congregation of the Shaarei Tikvah synagogue. In later years, Cohen became the synagogue's cantor. Coming to know them and their story, and imagining what a powerful opera could be made of those real-life events, he set to work on an opera – with the Polaks' full approval.

Cohen and his librettist Deborah Brevoort met frequently with the Polaks to hear their stories anew and browse letters written

with those stolen pencils of long ago: just because the pencils are in the Commandant's office does not mean one might not manage to procure one for one's own use. Gradually, a singable tale took shape around the basic facts, and in 2013, an initial version of *Steal a Pencil for Me* was performed in New York with the Polaks in the audience.

The opera's existence came to the attention of Opera Colorado, which expressed a strong interest in giving the premiere of a final version of the work—once it was fully ready for the public. After looking over the opera in its embryonic form, Opera Colorado General Director Greg Carpenter and Music Director Ari Peltó began suggesting ways in which it could be made bigger and better. Details of the story were re-arranged for more effective dramatic flow; scenes were designed to allow more insight into personalities. Furthermore, secondary characters were expanded so as to make more of the tale than just “boy meets girl – boy loses girl – boy gets girl back.” Admittedly, that tiny nutshell summary suggests the basic shape of many operas, most prominently including *La Bohème*, but most stage works benefit from having more than just two voices. In its final form, *Steal a Pencil for Me* becomes a true ensemble piece, and ultimately a life-affirming tale.

A Holocaust story with a happy ending? Indeed, Jaap and Ina genuinely did enjoy another half century of life and love together, allowing the opera to be far more than just a sequence of grim

*Continued on page 8*



# THE ARTISTS



## GERALD COHEN | Composer

Gerald Cohen has been praised for his “linguistic fluidity and melodic gift,” creating music that “reveals a very personal modernism that...offers great emotional rewards” (*Gramophone*). His deeply affecting compositions have been recognized with numerous awards and critical accolades. The music on his recently released CD, *Sea of Reeds*, “is

filled with vibrant melody, rhythmic clarity, drive and compositional construction...a sheer delight to hear” (*GappleGate Music Review*). Cohen is a noted synagogue cantor and baritone; his experience as a singer informs his dramatic, lyrical compositions. Cohen’s best-known work, his “shimmering setting” (*Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*) of Psalm 23, has received thousands of performances from synagogues and churches to Carnegie Hall and the Vatican. Recent instrumental compositions include *Voyagers*, a celebration of the 40th anniversary of the Voyager spacecraft, which had its premiere at New York’s Hayden Planetarium; and *Playing for our lives*, a tribute to the music and musicians of the WWII Terezin concentration camp near Prague. Recognition of Cohen’s body of work includes the Copland House Borromeo String Quartet Award and Hoff-Barthelson/Copland House commission, Westchester Prize for New Work, American Composers Forum Faith Partners and American Lyric Theater residencies, and commissioning grants from Meet the Composer, National Endowment for the Arts, New York State Council on the Arts, and Westchester Arts Council. Cohen received a BA in music from Yale University and a DMA in composition from Columbia University. He is cantor at Shaarei Tikvah, Scarsdale, NY, and is on the faculties of The Jewish Theological Seminary and Hebrew Union College. [www.geraldcohenmusic.com](http://www.geraldcohenmusic.com)



## DEBORAH BREVOORT | Librettist

Deborah Brevoort is an award-winning playwright and librettist from Alaska who started writing for the opera after participating in American Lyric Theater’s Composer Librettist Development program. She is best known for her play *The Women of Lockerbie*, which is performed throughout the United States and internationally. Her opera librettos include *Embedded* with

composer Patrick Soluri, which premiered at Fargo Moorhead and Ft. Worth Operas and new adaptations of Mozart’s *Impresario* and Johann Strauss’s *Die Fledermaus* for the Anchorage Opera. She is currently writing *Albert Nobbs*, with Patrick Soluri, which was a finalist for the 2018 Pellicciotti Prize in Opera Composition; selections were presented earlier this month in the New Works Forum at Opera America. A two-time winner of the Frederick Loewe award in musical theatre for *Coyote Goes Salmon Fishing* (composer Scott Richards) and *King Island Christmas* (composer David Friedman), Brevoort also wrote the book and lyrics for *Crossing Over*, an Amish Hip Hop musical with composer/lyricist Stephanie Salzman that will be presented at NYC’s Theatre Barn and York Theatre in 2018. *Blue Moon Over Memphis*, her Noh Drama about Elvis, is touring internationally in a traditional Noh production by Theatre Nohgaku. Her plays, which have been produced at theatres around the US, include *The Poetry of Pizza*, *The Blue-Sky Boys*, *The Comfort Team* and *My Lord, What a Night*. Brevoort teaches

in NYU’s Graduate Musical Theatre writing program, and the MFA dramatic writing programs at Columbia University and Goddard College. Her plays are published by Dramatists Play Service, Samuel French, Applause Books and No Passport Press. [www.deborahbrevoort.com](http://www.deborahbrevoort.com)



## KATHERINE BECK \*^ | Lisette

Katherine Beck, originally from Bennington, VT, received her MM in Vocal Arts at USC Thornton and her BM in Vocal Performance at the Crane School of Music in upstate New York. Last June, Beck made her debut at Symphony Hall with the Boston Pops Orchestra in the World Premiere of James Lapine’s *Sondheim on Sondheim*. She spent the remainder of the summer

in Lenox, MA, as a Vocal Fellow at the Tanglewood Music Center. Following Tanglewood, she returned to Los Angeles to perform the role of Mercedes in *Carmen*. Favorite opera credits include the title role in Berlioz’s *Béatrice et Bénédicte* and Sesto in Mozart’s *La clemenza di Tito*, both at USC Thornton. Beck also sang Sesto in Handel’s *Giulio Cesare in Egitto* with Pittsburgh Festival Opera in 2016. She is thrilled to be a member of Opera Colorado’s Young Artist Program. This season she will sing the role of Angelina in the touring production of *Cinderella* as well the role of Meg Page, which she will cover in the mainstage production and sing in the Student Matinee of *Falstaff*.



## FRANÇOIS-PIERRE COUTURE\* Scenic & Lighting Design

Originally from Montreal, François-Pierre Couture has had the privilege of working in Los Angeles and the United States for the last decade as a scenic, lighting and projection designer. Some of his designs include *Bars and Measures* and *Everything you Touch*, Boston Court Theatre; *Destiny of Desire*, Arena Stage

Theatre, SCR and the Goodman Theatre; *James and the Giant Peach*, *Pinocchio* and *The Light Princess*, South Coast Repertory; *The Mexican Trilogy*, an *American History*, Los Angeles Theatre Center; *Metamorphoses* and *Woyzeck*, Ensemble Theatre Company; *Médée* and *Teseo*, Chicago Opera Theatre; and *A Picasso*, Geffen Playhouse.



## GIDEON DABI\* | Jaap Polak

Baritone Gideon Dabi continues to receive great acclaim delivering “powerfully felt, beautifully performed and articulated” performances across a wide array of genres and styles. His “earnest interpretations” have thrilled audiences from his home State Theater in New Brunswick, NJ, through the Music Festival of the Hamptons working with Norman Dello Joio, to Israel, Italy, and back

again. He recently joined Sarasota Opera as Schaunard in *La Bohème* and Ash Lawn Opera for *Amahl and the Night Visitors*. In 2016, he returned to Sarasota Opera for a role debut of Dr. Malatesta in *Don Pasquale* and to Ash Lawn Opera to sing the role of Sir James in the east coast premiere of *Middlemarch in Spring*. He was also recently invited to perform on American Lyric Theater’s Alumni Celebration



# THE ARTISTS

Concert, in which he was heard singing the music of Gerald Cohen and Clint Borzoni.



## **INNA DUKACH | Ina Soep**

This season, Ms. Dukach joins the roster of the Metropolitan Opera for their production of *Madama Butterfly* and sings Mimi in *La bohème* with the Kaohsiung Symphony Orchestra in Kaohsiung, Taiwan. Last season, she appeared with NYCO as Zemfira in *Aleko*, the Russian Chamber Art Society, and joined both the Lubbock Symphony and Rochester Philharmonic as

Mimi in *La bohème*. Previous seasons include performances of Musetta in *La bohème* with Royal Opera House, Covent Garden, Cio-Cio San in *Madama Butterfly* with Anchorage Opera and Atlanta Opera, Amelia in *Simon Boccanegra* with Kentucky Opera, Violetta in *La traviata* with Opera Omaha and the Croatian National Opera, Rosalba in *Florencia en el Amazonas* with Opera Colorado, Donna Anna in *Don Giovanni* with Toledo Opera, Rosalinde in *Die Fledermaus* with Florentine Opera, the Countess in *Le nozze di Figaro* with Hawaii Opera Theater, Mimi in *La bohème* with New York City Opera and Pensacola Opera, Xenia in *Boris Godunov* with San Diego Opera, Tatiana in *Eugene Onegin* with Opéra Lyra Ottawa, and Pamina in *Die Zauberflöte* with Opera Hong Kong.



## **ANDREW GARLAND | Abraham Soep**

Andrew Garland has been praised for his "coloratura [which] bordered on the phenomenal as he dashed through the music's intricacies with his warm baritone, offering plenty of elegance and glamour in his smooth acting." His latest recording, *American Portraits*, debuted at #1 on Amazon.com. Recent highlights include his Carnegie

Hall recital with Warren Jones, performances with Seattle Opera and Atlanta Opera as Schaunard in *La bohème*, Boston Lyric Opera as Papageno in *The Magic Flute*, Cincinnati Opera as Galileo in *Galileo Galilei* and Mercurio in *La Calisto*, and Arizona Opera as Ping in *Turandot*. He sang Harlekin in *Ariadne auf Naxos* with Seattle Opera, Dandini in *La Cenerentola* with Opera Company of Philadelphia and Fort Worth Opera, Dr. Talbot in William Bolcom's *Dinner at Eight* with Minnesota Opera (world premiere) and Prior Walter in the New York premiere of *Angels in America* with New York City Opera.



## **ANDREW HIERS^ | Nazi/SS Guard #2**

Andrew Hiers earned his undergraduate degree from Florida State University where he studied with David Okerlund. He is a recent graduate of SUNY Binghamton. While pursuing his Master's degree in opera, he had the opportunity to perform several roles with Tri-Cities Opera. Prior to his graduate studies, he performed with several

companies in New York City including Loft Opera, Venture Opera, and Dell'Arte Opera Ensemble. This past summer he was a participant of

the Merola Opera Program. As an Opera Colorado Young Artists this season, Andrew will sing the roles of Dulcamara in *The Elixir of Love* and Don Magnifico in *Cinderella*, the company's touring productions. In addition to this production, will sing the role of Pistola and cover the role of Falstaff in *Falstaff*, which he will sing for the Student Matinee.



## **JESSICA JAHN\* | Costume Design**

Graduating with degrees in both dance and psychology, Jessica Jahn danced professionally in NYC before beginning a career in design. She has had the opportunity to work with directors such as Tina Landau, Tommy Kail, Francesca Zambello, Charles Randolph Wright, Kevin Newbury, Michael Cavanaugh, and

artist Michael Counts; as well as writers/composers Charles Fuller, Eisa Davis, Norah Ephron, Kevin Puts, Jake Heggie, Mark Campbell, and Charles Busch. Some of the projects she has collaborated on include: *Life Is A Dream* (World Premiere) at Santa Fe Opera, *Monodramas* and *Mose in Egitto* at New York City Opera, *Carousel* at Glimmerglass Festival, *Anna Bolena* at Lyric Opera of Chicago, *The Manchurian Candidate* (World Premiere) and *Carmen* at Minnesota Opera, *Maria Stuarda* at Seattle Opera, *Norma* at The Grand Theatre de Liceu, *Dead Man Walking* at Washington National Opera, *Norma* at Canadian Opera Company and Lyric Opera of Chicago, and *Moby Dick* at Utah Opera. Jessica is also an Adjunct Costume Design Professor with Brandeis University's Theatre Arts Department.



## **HANA KIM\* | Projections Design**

Hana Kim is a Los Angeles-based set and projection designer for live performances and events. She is a member of United Scenic Artists Local 829 and recipient of Princess Grace Award in Theater Design. Her designs have won Helen Hayes Award, Stage Raw Awards, StageSceneLA Awards and Bay Area Theater Critics Circle Awards. Upcoming projects include *Weightless*

(Z Space), and *Little Black Shadows* (South Coast Rep).



## **NICHOLAS KREIDER^ | Nazi/SS Guard #1**

Baritone Nicholas Kreider obtained both a Master and Bachelor of Music from Michigan State University. During his studies, Nicholas had the opportunity to perform a great variety of roles for MSU Opera Theatre. These include Colline in *La bohème*, Guglielmo in *Così fan tutte*, George Emerson in *A Room With a View*,

Belcore in *L'elisir d'amore*, and Count Almaviva in *Le Nozze di Figaro*. Nicholas also performed the role of Chou Hu in *The Savage Land* at the Peking National Opera House in Beijing, China. During the summer of 2017, Nicholas attended Bel Canto at Caramoor as an apprentice artist. As an Opera Colorado Young Artist this season he will perform the role of Dandini in the touring production of *Cinderella*. He will also perform in *Falstaff*.



# THE ARTISTS



## **HEATH MARTIN<sup>^</sup> | The Commandant**

Heath Martin obtained his BM from Sam Houston State University and his MM in vocal performance from the University of Houston. Professional performance experience includes the role of Ernie in *It's a Wonderful Life* with Houston Grand Opera, Baron Douphol in *La Traviata* with Chautauqua Opera, Gasparo in *Rita* with Lone Star Lyric Festival, Dr. Gregg

in *Gallantry* with Alamo City Opera and Slook in *La cambiale di matrimonio* with Operativo Houston. His college performances include Papageno in *The Magic Flute*, Count Almaviva in *The Marriage of Figaro* and Gianni Schicchi in *Gianni Schicchi* among others. This season as an Opera Colorado Young Artist he will perform Belcore in the company's touring production of *The Elixir of Love* and and cover the role of Ford in *Falstaff* which he will perform at the Student Matinee.



## **SAHAR NOURI**

### **Chorus Master & Repetiteur**

Iranian pianist and conductor Sahar Nouri has been a member of the music staff at Houston Grand Opera, Dallas Opera, Opera North Carolina, Glimmerglass Festival, Opera in the Heights, Utah Opera, Aspen Opera Center, Opera Steam Boat, and Merola Opera. Earlier this season, Ms. Nouri returned to Opera Colorado for *La bohème*;

her first collaboration with the company was Puccini's *La fanciulla del west* in 2016. Ms. Nouri worked extensively with Houston Grand Opera where she was a member of the prestigious HGO Studio. At HGO, she worked on the world premieres of *Prince of Players* (Carlisle Floyd), *O Columbia!* (Gregory Spears), and many classic operas including: *Eugene Onegin*, *Rusalka*, *Così fan tutte*, and *Madama Butterfly*. A multi-lingual, Ms. Nouri has done studies in the Czech Republic, Italy, and Austria, and is frequently in demand as a language coach.

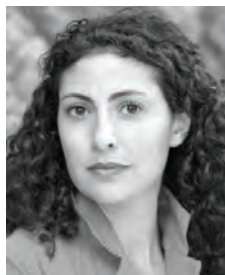


## **ARI PELTO**

### **Opera Colorado Music Director and Conductor**

Widely known for performances which have been called poetic, earthy, vigorous and highly individual, Ari Pelto is in demand in opera houses and concert halls throughout the US. At the age of 24 Pelto was appointed Assistant Conductor at the Spoleto Festival and has gone on to

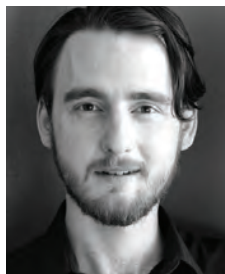
conduct worldwide. International engagements include performances with Bochumer Philharmoniker and opera productions at New National Theatre of Tokyo and the Teatro Nacional Sucre in Quito, Ecuador. In 2004 he made his highly-praised debut with New York City Opera after which he became a regular, returning for productions of *Madama Butterfly*, *La bohème* and *Carmen*. Recent successes include *Eugene Onegin* at Lyric Opera of Kansas City, upcoming he conducts *Lucia de Lammermoor* for Virginia Opera. Here in Denver, he has driven many acclaimed performances; in addition to this production, Pelto will lead *Falstaff* in 2018.



## **OMER BEN SEADIA<sup>^</sup> | Stage Director**

Native Israeli stage director Omer Ben Seadia has quickly established herself as one of the fresh new voices in opera to watch. With a varied repertoire spanning from theater to opera, and classic to modern repertoire, her work is continuously committed to telling human stories with a social and critical perspective. Recently she has directed Gounod's *Faust* at Tulsa Opera

and made her debut at Santa Fe Opera. Ms. Ben Seadia's various directing credits include a revival production of *Tosca* at Houston Grand Opera; an original production of *L'italiana in Algeri* and a revival production of *A Streetcar Named Desire* at Opera Santa Barbara; the regional premier of *Considering Matthew Shepard*, a fusion oratorio by Grammy nominee Craig Hella Johnson, produced by Cincinnati Opera and The Cincinnati Vocal Arts Ensemble; *Pursuing the Dream* and *Let's Cook Up an Opera* at Cincinnati Opera; *Surviving the Amazing Opera Race* at Dayton Opera; and *Così fan Tutte* at The University of Michigan.



## **NATHAN WARD<sup>^</sup> | Rudi Acohen**

Nathan Ward comes from an eclectic musical background, drawing on study of piano, cello, and composition to inform his singing. He received his master's degree at the Northwestern University Bienen School of Music. Some of his roles there included Carlisle Floyd's *Susannah* and Howard Boucher in Jake Heggie's *Dead Man Walking*. Other highlights include Lysander

in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* with Chicago Summer Opera and Peter Quint in *The Turn of the Screw* with Chicago Fringe Opera. This summer he returned to Central City Opera as an apprentice, singing Remendado in *Carmen*. In addition to this role as an Opera Colorado Young Artist, Nathan will sing Bardolfo in *Falstaff*, as well as Fenton in the Student Matinee. He will also sing the roles of Nemorino in *The Elixir of Love* and Ramiro in *Cinderella*, the company's touring productions.



## **ADRIANA ZABALA<sup>^</sup> | Manja Polak**

Ms. Zabala enjoys a vibrant career that includes opera, song repertoire, new works, concert and oratorio with such companies as Seattle Opera, Florentine Opera, Minnesota Opera, Wolf Trap Opera, Arizona Opera, Opera Saratoga, Minnesota Orchestra, the Mormon Tabernacle Choir, the Jacksonville Symphony, the Virginia Symphony, the Madison Symphony, the New York Festival of

Song, and at the Caramoor International Music Festival among others. In the 2016-2017 season, Zabala sang the title role in *Sister Carrie* with Florentine Opera, Amore in *L'obere di Diana* and Lucy Talbot in *Dinner at Eight* with Minnesota Opera, the Komponist in *Ariadne auf Naxos* with Berkshire Opera Festival, Handel's Messiah with the Charlotte Symphony, and Bach's St. Matthew Passion with Quad City Symphony and the Colorado Symphony. This season also includes appearances as Cherubino in *Le nozze di Figaro* with Minnesota Opera, Beethoven's Ninth Symphony with the Handel & Haydn Society, and Paula in *Florencia en el Amazonas* with San Diego Opera and Madison Opera.



# STEAL A PENCIL FOR ME

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## ABOUT ...continued from page 4

assemblies for Roll Call at Bergen-Belsen. We meet Jaap and Ina and their friends and family at a party before their arrests, giving us familiarity with the participants before their lives are turned upside-down. Moreover, that opening scene sets up the potential for a complementary quartet later in the opera, when the two sweethearts, along with Jaap's then-wife Manja and the ghost of Ina's late fiancé Rudi raise their voices together, with plenty of tender woodwinds to add richness. The musical colors allow us to feel their fears, but also their joys, as Manja and Rudi, rather than left sadly behind, give their blessing to the new couple. It is not a case of winners vs. losers; it is life going forward.

As for the libretto, with most operas, librettists have a certain amount of leeway in word selection, as long as the phrases are singable and suit the composer's vision of the tale. Yet in this case, the characters are based upon real people and real events, and librettist Brevoort has observed that she found it uplifting to "actually spend time with them." Those experiences led her to craft her text in a fashion that would reflect the actual persons whose experiences were being evoked. So Ina, youngest of the four principal characters, tends to be given less assertive phrases: ingénues simply don't speak out as firmly as college professors. Manja, on the other hand, is already growing apart from her husband

Jaap even before Ina arrives on the scene, and generally expresses herself in more restless statements, indicative, one imagines, of her discontent. Set such differences to music, and the contrast of personalities becomes even clearer, yet the words may be the root of the matter. After all, music expresses feelings, but words carry more specific meaning.

A regrettably small percentage of modern operas find a lasting place in the repertoire. Some contain music that may be hard to embrace; others have characters that fail to entirely reach the listeners' hearts. *Steal a Pencil for Me* is too new for one to be really sure of its future. However, that it is a focused tale revolving around a small set of persons caught up in events that, whether or not they happened the better part of a century ago, yet hold a firm place in the public eye, may help the opera to succeed in the long run. Certainly, its affecting music and compelling text should smooth the path to success. Opera Colorado audiences can revel in the satisfaction of having been with the opera from near its beginning.

*Notes by Betsy Schwarm, author of the Classical Music Insights series. Synopsis by Schwarm, derived from one by composer Gerald Cohen and librettist Deborah Brevoort.*



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*For ticket information and additional details, see pg. 7*



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