

## About The Show

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Hansel and Gretel

Music by Engelbert Humperdinck

Libretto by Adelheid Wette based on the story by the Brothers  
Grimm

Performance Date: July 24  
Act 1 is approximately one hour  
20 Minute Intermission  
Act 2 is approximately 45 minutes

## Hansel and Gretel

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Hansel and Gretel

This timeless fairy tale follows two siblings bravely navigating a mysterious forest, and their perilous encounter with a mischievous witch and her delectable gingerbread house.

Chautauqua's Amphitheater is the perfect setting to bring Engelbert Humperdinck's mesmerizing and lush score to life with the full power of the Chautauqua Symphony Orchestra, sung in English and transporting audiences of all ages into a fantastical realm.

Stage Director: Keturah Stickann

Conductor: Steven Osgood

## Program Note

### Keturah Stickann

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Director of Hansel and Gretel

We all know the basic story of Hansel and Gretel, a tale attributed to the Brothers Grimm from 1810, but made up of pieces from fairy tales through the centuries. Some even say Hansel dropping breadcrumbs hails all the way back to the story of Ariadne giving Theseus a thread to find his way out of the Menos' labyrinth. These tropes of finding one's way in the



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“dark,” and children triumphing over the threat of an ogre or witch are found in many a folktale across cultures, and the trope of the “wicked stepmother” was actually created by the Brothers Grimm for this tale, though that was in later editions of the story. Besides being a children’s cautionary tale, the story in its earliest incarnation took on the very real problem of child abandonment (and sometimes sale) when families didn’t have enough to go around. The idea of a family lacking in food and resources is what Adelheid Wette (the librettist of the opera and Engelbert Humperdinck’s sister) centered her version around in the 1890’s, and I think it’s brought even more to the fore with Kathleen Kelly’s brilliant English translation.

The notion of starvation and the burden of the working poor, a relevant topic for centuries, is what has always drawn me to this opera. Hansel and Gretel’s mom and dad (not stepmother, as in so many tellings) are both trying to bring in money, and despite what they do, they cannot make ends meet. This is not an anomaly in our society, and so we see so many of our citizens mirrored in these characters. Everyone’s tired, everyone’s hungry, and the slightest agitation gets blown up into yelling and aggravation. I fully believe that this family loves one another, but as their characters are drawn, we can absolutely see the strain that poverty has put on each one of them. In such an environment, of course the kids are pulled into danger when the prospect of food is put in front of them. The witch has found the perfect way to find her prey in a region where everyone is struggling. We can certainly assign aspects of the witch to our modern capitalist society as well.

The final “moral” of the story, sung by the cast when the parents finally find their children and the witch is vanquished, “When we feel the worst despair, angels send us love and care,” could certainly point us to divine intervention and the power of prayer, but I also choose to see it as a testament to the kindness around us. Mr. Rogers’ mother always told him, “Look for the helpers. You will always find people who are helping.” With those words, I see the angels as all of us: family, friends, teachers, activists. We all must be kinder to each other and keep our eyes open for those in need and those in trouble. When we feel the worst despair, I still hold out great hope that the kindness in others can help us vanquish the witches and ogres in our lives.

**Cast & Chautauqua Symphony Orchestra**

**Gretel:** Nicole Koh

**Hansel:** Brennan Martinez

**Mother:** Hilary Grace Taylor

**Father:** Joseph Canuto Leon

**Sandman:** Öznur Tülüolu

**Dew Fairy:** Amia Langer

**The Witch:** Ronnita Miller

*In today's performance, Hilary Grace Taylor will play the role of The Witch.*

**Echo 1:** Öznur Tülüolu

**Echo 2:** Hilary Grace Taylor

**Echo 3:** Amia Langer

**Echo 4:** Kelsey Watts

**Echo 5:** Perri di Christina

**Additional Chorus:** Perri di Christina, Amia Langer, Öznur Tülüolu, Kelsey Watts

**Children's Chorus:**

**Athena Anderegg**

**Cleon Clayton**

**Charlotte Dahlie**

Aracelli DiNapoli

Evelina DiNapoli

**Helen Fischer**

Rosemary Fischer

**Eliana Gifter**

Phoebe Powell

Lyra Stephenson

Amelia Wilkinson

Cambria Winslow



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**Chautauqua Symphony Orchestra:**

**Violin 1**

Vahn Armstrong

Amanda Gates

Anton Shelepov

Adrienne Finet

Aurelian Oprea

Kyoko Kashiwagi

Mallik Glover

Gabrielle Monachino

**Violin 2**

Simon Lapointe

Karen Lord-Powell

Liana Koteva Kirvan

Leslie Anderegg

Lindi Wang

Jordon Curry

Diego Diaz

**Viola**

Christopher Fischer

Karl Pederson

Jennifer Stahl

Eva Stern

Carrie Fischer

Javier Otalora

**Cello**

Lars Kirvan



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## Hansel and Gretel

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Igor Gefter

Maximiliano Oppeltz

Daniel Kaler

Samuel Pierce-Ruhland

### **Double Bass**

Owen Lee

David Rosi

Caitlyn Kamminga

### **Flute**

Richard Sherman

Luke Fitzpatrick

Kathryn Levy

### **Oboe**

Noah Kay

Adam Dinitz

### **Clarinet**

Daniel Spitzer

Georg Klaas

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Benjamin Atherholt

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Roger Kaza

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Micah Wilkinson  
Peter Lindblom

**Trombone**

Christopher Wolf  
Aidan Chamberlain  
Eric Lindblom

**Tuba**

Brett Stemple

**Timpani**

Matthew Strauss

**Percussion**

Brian Kushmaul  
Tom Blanchard  
Pedro Fernandez

**Harp**

Beth Robinson

**Chautauqua Symphony Orchestra Operations Manager**

Matt Hart

**Creative & Production Teams**

**Creative:**



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**Stage Director:** Keturah Stickann

**Conductor:** Steven Osgood

**Lighting & Video Designer:** Michael Baumgarten

**Production Stage Manager:** Valerie Wheeler

**Assistant Stage Manager:** Hanna Atkinson

**Scenic Designer/Prop Master:** John P. Woodey

**Costume Supervisor:** Cristine Patrick

**Wig & Makeup Supervisor:** Martha Ruskai

**Pianist/Coach:** Carol Rausch, Allison Voth

**Diction/Supertitles:** Allison Voth

### Production:

**Asst. Costume Supervisor & Draper:** Lucia Callender

**Craft Artisan:** Mary Coulter

### Leadership Team & Music Staff

#### Leadership and Staff:

**General & Artistic Director:** Steven Osgood

**Arts Marketing Specialist:** Makayla Santiago-Froebel

**Music Administrator/Chorus Master:** Carol Rausch

**Director of Production:** Michael Baumgarten

**Manager:** Helen Hassinger

**Office Manager:** Vivian Hunt

**Company Scheduler:** Rick Hoffenberg

**Marketing Associate:** Julia Gorske

**Opera Guild Intern:** Michael Burns

**PAVA Intern:** Elliott Borden

### Cast Biographies



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Ronnita Miller

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The Witch

Grammy-nominated mezzo-soprano Ronnita Miller enjoys a richly varied 2023-2024 season. In the fall, Ms. Miller returns to Lyric Opera of Chicago as the Marquise de Birkenfeld in *La fille du régiment*, followed by continued performances of Ella in *X: The Life and Times of Malcolm X* with Seattle Opera. On the concert stage, she joins the Rotterdam Philharmonic on tour for *Die Walküre*, singing Grimgerde under the baton of Yannick Nézet-Séguin. Additionally, she joins the New World Symphony for Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, and the Tucson Symphony for Verdi's Requiem.

In the summer of 2022, Ronnita Miller joined the Los Angeles Philharmonic as Schwertleite in *Die Walküre* at the Hollywood Bowl. That autumn began with a return to San Francisco Opera as Filippjevna in *Eugene Onegin*, before reprising the role of Ella in *X: The Life and Times of Malcolm X* with Opera Omaha. Later in the season, she returned to Atlanta Opera as Erda in *Das Rheingold*. In concert, she appeared twice during the season at Carnegie Hall: with the American Symphony Orchestra as Gaea in Strauss' *Daphne*, and with Oberlin College as the mezzo soloist for Dett's *The Ordering of Moses*. She also sang her first career performance of Handel's *Messiah* with the Indianapolis Symphony.

During the 2021-2022 season, Ms. Miller performed with The Metropolitan Opera as Big Stone in Matthew Aucoin's *Eurydice*, and the Detroit Opera (formerly Michigan Opera Theater) as Ella in a new production of *X: The Life and Times of Malcolm X*, a role she also performed and recorded with Boston Modern Opera Project (2023 Grammy nominee for Best Opera Recording.) She also joined the San Diego Symphony and North Carolina Symphony for Beethoven's 9th Symphony, and appeared in recital with New World Symphony. Ms. Miller's 2020-2021 season saw performances at The Atlanta Opera and Deutsche Oper Berlin, and in the summer of 2021 she



curated a recital titled *What the Heart Desires* with tenor Nicholas Phan for the Merola Festival.



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**Brennan Martinez**

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Hansel

Brennan Martinez has been described as “a mezzo-soprano to be watched” (Opera Lively) and sings with “power, authority, and a most intriguing color to her wide-ranging voice” (Classical Voice of North Carolina).

Recent role credits include Flora Bervoix in *La traviata* and Second Lady in *The Magic Flute* (Quisisana Resort), Marian Paroo in “The Music Man in Concert” and Mother in *Ragtime* (Metropolis Performing Arts Centre), Third Wood Sprite in *Rusalka* (Milwaukee Opera Theatre), and the Woman in the world premiere workshop of *La Jetée* (Chicago Fringe Opera). Other credits include roles at Cedar Rapids Opera, Glimmerglass Festival, Piedmont Opera, Utah Festival Opera and Musical Theatre, and Hawaii Performing Arts Festival.

She trained at the University of North Carolina School of the Arts as a Fletcher Fellow at the A.J. Fletcher Opera Institute and at the Wanda L. Bass School of Music at Oklahoma City University. [www.brennanmartinez.com](http://www.brennanmartinez.com)



**Nicole Koh**

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Gretel

Nicole Koh is a soprano from Daly City, California. She most recently performed the title role in Janáček’s, *The Cunning Little*

Vixen with Chautauqua Opera Conservatory and Winnie (cover) in *Beecher's Sky on Swings* as a young artist at Opera Saratoga. She received the Encouragement Award at the 2023 Colorado District Metropolitan Opera Laffont Competition.

Nicole graduated with a Master of Music at The San Francisco Conservatory of Music under the tutelage of Rhoslyn Jones, where she sang the title role in Monteverdi's *L'incoronazione di Poppea*. She received her Bachelor of Music at the University of British Columbia where she studied under Nancy Hermiston, was a soloist with the Vancouver Symphony Orchestra, and performed the roles of Papagena and Nella (*Gianni Schicchi*).



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**Öznur Tülüolu**

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Sandman/Echo 1/Chorus

Praised for her “ravishing voice” and “compelling” stage presence, Turkish-American soprano Öznur Tülüolu is establishing herself as a young, rising artist “destined for bigger things.”

Öznur’s most recent season showcased her versatility with roles such as Gilda at Mobile Opera, Young Alyce (*Glory Denied*) at Annapolis Opera, Aspasia (*Mitridate*) at Opera Neo, and Barbarina at Annapolis Opera. Additionally, she performed at Washington National Opera to premiere the role of The Pigeon in Carlos Simon’s new children’s operetta, *Don’t Let the Pigeon Sing Up Late!* alongside Renée Fleming and Mo Willems.

In concert, Öznur appeared with Washington Concert Opera and achieved recognition as a finalist in the esteemed competitions: Jensen Foundation, Opera Mississippi, John Alexander National Vocal Competition, and Music International Grand Prix. Notably, she made her international debut as Sandrina (*La finta giardiniera*) at The Hungarian State Opera in collaboration with Opera Neo.



**Hilary Grace Taylor**

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Mother/Echo 2/Cover Witch

Hilary Grace Taylor, mezzo-soprano, is a native of Dallas, TX and has most recently performed with Painted Sky Opera, Opera Las Vegas, Chautauqua Opera, and Pittsburgh Festival Opera. Hilary spent three seasons as an Education Outreach Young Artist with The Dallas Opera and returns to Chautauqua for her second season as an Apprentice Artist.

Hilary was a Semifinalist in the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions and is frequently a finalist or semifinalist in national competitions including the Fort Worth Opera McCammon Voice Competition and the Shreveport Opera Singer of the Year Competition among others. Having a passion for traditional and contemporary repertoire, including Oratorio and Music Theater, her role credits include Carmen (*Carmen*), Mrs. Gross (*Turn of the Screw*), Taller Daughter (*Proving Up*), Sappho (*Lysistrata*), Dorabella (*Così fan tutte*), Desirée Armfeldt (*A Little Night Music*), Marcellina (*Le nozze di Figaro*), Regina (*Regina*) and Gertrude Stein (*After Life* by Tom Cipullo). Hilary is often engaged as a recitalist and enjoys regular performances as the soloist in the Verdi Requiem and Handel's Messiah. She holds degrees from the University of North Texas and the University of Texas at Austin, and currently teaches at Wichita State University.



**Joseph Canuto Leon**

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Father

Praised for his “Outstanding Singing” and “Big, bass-y baritone” by The Dallas Morning News, baritone Joseph Canuto Leon is an emerging artist beginning to make strides in the classical



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voice world. Originally from Des Moines, Joseph has been featured with Florida Grand Opera, The Dallas Opera, Charlottesville Opera, American Baroque Opera Company, Painted Sky Opera, and Opera on the James. Major roles in Joseph's repertoire include Giorgio Germont (*La traviata*), Tonio and Silvio (*I Pagliacci*), Ford (*Falstaff*), Onegin (*Eugene Onegin*), Marcello and Schaunard (*La bohème*), Il conte d'Almaviva (*Le nozze di Figaro*) The Four Villains (*Les contes d'Hoffmann*), Donner (*Das Rheingold*), The Father (*Hansel and Gretel*), Baron Zeta (*The Merry Widow*), and Belcore (The Dallas Opera's abridged production of *The Elixir of Love*). Joseph is a graduate of the University of North Texas (MM 2017) and Iowa State University (BM 2013) and is a voice student of baritone Michael Chioldi.



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**Amia Langer**

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Dew Fairy/Echo 3/Chorus/Cover Gretel

Amia Langer, soprano, is a recent graduate of the University of Houston, where she studied with Melanie Sonnenberg. Most recently, she was a soloist with Ars Lyrica Houston. Previous roles include Margarita Xirgu (Osvaldo Golijov's *Ainadamar*), Adele (*Die Fledermaus*), Cleopatra (*Giulio Cesare*), and Anne (*A Little Night Music*). Past awards include the Encouragement Award at the Upper Midwest Region, and North Dakota-Manitoba District Winner in the 2023 Metropolitan Opera Laffont Competition, finalist in the inaugural Duncan Williams Voice Competition, semi-finalist in the 2023 Houston Saengerbund Vocal Competition. Previous young artists programs include Festival Napa Valley Opera Program, Brevard Music Festival, and the Houston Grand Opera Young Artist Vocal Academy. Upcoming events include being a part of Houston Grand Opera's 2023-2024 Opera to Go! season, as a supernumerary/Melissa (Cover) in Ars Lyrica Houston's production of *Amadigi di Gaula*.



**Kelsey Watts**

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Echo 4/Chorus/Cover Sandman & Dew Fairy

Filipina-American soprano Kelsey Watts is a Binghamton University graduate with degrees in Opera, Vocal Performance, and Chemistry. She has performed with Tri-Cities Opera, Syracuse Opera, Delaware Valley Opera, and the BU Opera Ensemble in roles including Clorinda (Rossini's *La Cenerentola*), Pamina (Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte*), Gilda (Verdi's *Rigoletto*), and Gretel (Humperdinck's *Hansel and Gretel*). Her penchant for contemporary works has led to her performances in Jorge Sosa's *I Am A Dreamer Who No Longer Dreams* and Leif Haley's *Prunella*, though her fondest experience was in self-producing a performance of Jake Heggie's *Another Sunrise* paired with a collection of songs written during, in response to, and by victims of the Holocaust.

Kelsey has performed as a soloist with ensembles including the Philadelphia Chorus and the Binghamton Philharmonic and has placed 1st in the 2021 Civic Morning Musicals Competition and in three consecutive Eastern Regional NATS competitions from 2017 to 2019. Currently, Kelsey works as a Scientific Writer in the corner of the world where art and science collide.



**Perri di Christina**

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Echo 5/Chorus/Cover Hansel & Mother

Praised for her 'rich, surprisingly dark' sound (Parterre Box) and 'precise coloratura' (Cleveland Classical), mezzo-soprano Perri di Christina is a versatile artist based in New Jersey.

This season's highlights include the alto soloist in Handel's *Dixit Dominus* with the Manhattan Choral Ensemble, the role of



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Ruggiero (*Alcina*) with Immersion Repertory, a featured soloist in St. Patrick's Cathedral's Midnight Mass, and "FUSE: Collaborations in Song with Catalyst New Music."

2022-2023 season highlights include the role of The Dragon in the world premiere of the opera *Iceland* at La MaMa Experimental Theater Club, the alto soloist in Dvoák's *Stabat Mater* with The Greenwich Choral Society, and the role of Liza Elliott (*Lady in the Dark*) with Bronx Opera.

In addition to her singing career, Perri is an opera cultural observer. She has written about the opera industry for *Van Music Magazine*, and she is the co-creator of *Thrilled to Announce*, an esoteric opera podcast and collective. TTA's mission is to foster solidarity within the classical singer community by opening dialogues about our souls, our shadows, and our futures.



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## Creative & Production Biographies



**Keturah Stickann**

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Stage Director

Keturah Stickann's directing and choreographic work has been seen in countless opera houses across the United States and Canada, as well as in Chile, Japan, France, Germany, Hungary, and Australia. A champion of new American opera, she has directed and choreographed multiple works by Jake Heggie & Gene Scheer, as well as works by Robert Aldridge, Anthony Davis, Ricky Ian Gordon, Jennifer Higdon, Laura Kaminsky, and Jose "Pepe" Martinez. Recent productions by Ms. Stickann include *Don Giovanni* (Minnesota Opera), *Candide* (Michigan Opera Theatre), *Salome* (Madison Opera), *Pelléas et Mélisande* (West Edge Opera), *Orfeo ed Euridice* (Florida Grand Opera), *Turandot* (Palm Beach Opera), *The Mother of Us All* (Chautauqua Opera), and *Carmen* (Opera Colorado). Before becoming a director, Ms. Stickann was a classically trained dancer, performing in opera and concert dance around the country.



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**Steven Osgood**

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Conductor

**Chautauqua Opera Company since 2009; General and Artistic Director since 2016**

Recent:

- *Dead Man Walking*, The Metropolitan Opera, October 2023
- *Intimate Apparel*, World Premiere, Lincoln Center Theater
- Founder and Artistic Director, Composers and the Voice Fellowship, The American Opera Project



**Michael Baumgarten**

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Lighting & Video Designer

**Chautauqua Opera Company since 1995**

Recent:

- Director of Production/Lighting and Video Designer, Chautauqua Opera Company
- Director of Production/Resident Lighting and Video Designer since 2005, Opera Carolina

- Designed lighting for over 450 regional and international productions



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**John P. Woodey**

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Scenic Designer/Prop Master

**Chautauqua Opera Production Staff since 2007; Technical Director since 2016**

Recent:

- Lighting Designer, *Next to Normal*, Theatre Charlotte
- Lighting Designer, *Rouge*, Caroline Calouche and Company
- Assistant Professor of Theatre, Winthrop University



**Valerie Wheeler**

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Production Stage Manager

**Chautauqua Opera Production Stage Manager since 2019**

Recent:

- Production Stage Manager, *Sweeney Todd / La Tragedie de Carmen*, Chautauqua Opera Company
- Production Stage Manager, *Madama Butterfly*, Opera Carolina



- Production Stage Manager, *Cavalleria Rusticana / Pagliacci*, Opera Carolina



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**Hanna Atkinson**

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Assistant Stage Manager

**Previous Chautauqua: Chautauqua Opera Company Assistant Stage Manager since 2022.**

Recent:

- Assistant Stage Manager, *Turandot*
- Assistant Stage Manager, *The Marriage of Figaro*
- Production Stage Manager, *The Passion of Mary Cardwell Dawson*



**Cristine Patrick**

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Costume Supervisor

**Chautauqua Opera Company Stitcher, 2008 and 2009; Firsthand, 2010-2016; Assistant to Mr. Fitzgerald since 2017**

Recent:

- Costume Supervisor, *Sweeney Todd* and *La Tragédie de Carmen*, Chautauqua Opera Company
- Stitcher/Overhire Firsthand, *The Cleveland Playhouse*
- Overhire Costumer for *Black Nativity*, Karamu House



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**Martha Ruskai**

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Wig & Makeup Supervisor

### Chautauqua Opera Company since 2002

Recent:

- *Ragtime*, Piedmont Opera
- *Sanctuary Road*, Opera Carolina
- *The Life and Times of Malcom X*, Opera Omaha



**Lucia Callender**

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Assistant Costume Supervisor & Draper

Recent:

- Firsthand, Chautauqua Opera
- Draper, University of Texas at Austin



**Mary Coulter**

Craft Artisan

Recent:

- Milliner/Stitcher, Case Western Reserve University Theatre Department
- Shelby Holcomb, *John Proctor Is The Villain*
- Treasurer, Players Theater Group, Case Western Reserve University



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As a member of the Opera Guild, you will:

- Provide critical funding for future staged productions and opera budgets
- Be part of the vibrant opera community at Chautauqua, meeting others from across the country who appreciate this magnificent art form
- Make a difference in the lives of young opera singers
- Learn more about opera and have an inside view into one of the most respected opera companies in the country

[Become a member today!](#)

### **Opera Guild Endowment Raise**

On behalf of the Chautauqua Opera Guild and Chautauqua Institution, I am excited to announce a new and exciting endowment campaign. We'd like to invite you to join us in our efforts!

The Opera Guild Endowment Fund has a lofty goal of raising \$3 million to provide perpetual support of opera programming at Chautauqua. Your targeted support will enable our Opera Company to continue engaging generations of Chautauquans through this beautiful art form.

[Learn more and give to the Opera Guild Endowment!](#)



### **Hansel and Gretel**

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July 24, 2024