



The Lyric Letter

Volume 25, Issue 2, March/April 2025

**PO Box 339, Englewood, CO 80151
www.DenverLyricOperaGuild.org**



Dear DLOG Members –

Spring has sprung! The weather is starting to warm, coats are going back into the closet and spring flowers are starting to peek out. That means that our Competition Season is coming to a close. April 1st will see our 2025 Competition for Colorado Singers Awards Luncheon where we will be treated to a concert by this year's Competition winners. I hope all of you have made your reservations to attend as this will be a real treat!

In March we had forty singers participate in our Competition. Despite a few curve balls, our stalwart group of volunteers once again did a marvelous job, creating a wonderful experience for singers and audience alike.

Our winners cover a wide spectrum of voice type, age, and experience, with singers from the University of Denver, the University of Colorado, Colorado State University, and Opera Colorado. Ages range from the low end of eligibility at 24, to

the upper end of eligibility at 32. They are a highly talented, fun and interesting group.

Many thanks to you, our members, for making this possible. A special thanks to our Competition award donors. With the arts under siege, the efforts of organizations such as Denver Lyric Opera Guild are more essential than ever. I am proud to be part of an organization that offers such critical financial support to these very deserving young singers, helping to keep the art form we love alive!

Karen Bruggenthies

President DLOG 2024-2025

Our Mission

Denver Lyric Opera Guild's mission is to support and encourage young opera singers through grants to University Opera Programs and Young Artist Programs; to provide continuing education for members' appreciation and knowledge of opera; and by sponsoring an annual Competition for Colorado Opera Singers.

Presenting the Finalists of the 2025 DLOG Competition for Colorado Singers

To Watch the 2025 Finals in their entirety click the following link:

[Watch the DLOG 2025 Competition Finals Now](#)

First Place: \$10,000 Galen & Ada Belle Spencer Foundation Award

Claudia de Lourdes Diaz | 27, Soprano



Puerto Rican soprano Claudia de Lourdes Díaz, originally from San Juan, but raised in the city of Caguas, graduated in 2020 from the Conservatory of Music of Puerto Rico with honors and a bachelor's degree in Vocal Performance. She is currently earning a Performance Certificate at the Lamont School of Music under the tutelage of renowned soprano Heidi Melton. She was selected for the Vozarteum Opera Festival in 2019; traveling from San Diego, California to Baja California, Mexico, performing in various venues with a range of diverse repertoire. Afterward, Ms. Díaz was accepted to Houston's Grand Opera, Young Artists Vocal Academy and over the course of the 2021 summer, she acquired a scholarship and placement in the Bologna International Opera Academy. Claudia was a 2025 winner of the Colorado – Wyoming District Metropolitan Opera Laffont Competition. She recently made her debut with the Colorado Symphony performing in Contreras' *Corridos*.

Second Place: \$5000 Kenneth King Foundation Award

Hallie Schmidt | 27, Soprano



American soprano Hallie Schmidt, currently an Artist in Residence with Opera Colorado, has performed with the Opera Theatre of St. Louis, Seattle Opera, Tacoma Opera, Pacific Northwest Opera, and Vashon Opera, to name a few. Recent performances include *The Abduction from the Seraglio* (Blonde) and *The Marriage of Figaro* (Susanna) with Pacific Northwest Opera; *Carmen* (Frasquita) with Tacoma Opera; *Der Rosenkavalier* (Sophie), *Ariadne auf Naxos* (Zerbinetta), and *The Magic Flute* (The Queen of the Night, filmed production) with Opera Theatre of St. Louis. Originally from Olympia, WA, Hallie received her Bachelor of Music from Oklahoma City University and an Artist Diploma from William Jewell College in Kansas City, MO. Hallie received awards from the Metropolitan Opera Laffont Competition, the Lotte Lenya Competition, and the Hawaii Performing Arts Festival, and was the 2023 winner of the Seattle Opera Guild Singer Development Awards. *Seville* (Berta) and *Hansel and Gretel* (Gretel).

Third Place: \$4500 Myrle F. Hoffman Memorial Award

Alexander Granito | 27, Baritone



Alex Granito is a baritone from Orange County, CA. He is currently with Opera Colorado for a second year as an Artist in Residence for the 2024-25 Season, during which he performed in the *Daughter of the Regiment* mainstage production and *Student Matinee* (Corporal). He also sings in Opera Colorado's touring productions of *The Barber of Seville* (Figaro) and *Hansel and Gretel* (Father). In the summer of 2024, Alex was a Studio Artist at Chautauqua Opera and sang in the world premiere of *Love, Loss, and the Century Upon Us* (Young Man). In the 2023-24 Season with Opera Colorado, Alex sang in the mainstage productions of *Don Giovanni* (Don Giovanni, cover/Student Matinee), *Samson and Delilah* (Second Philistine), *The Flying Dutchman* (Ghost Chorus), and in Opera Colorado's touring productions of *The Elixir of Love* (Belcore) and *Cinderella* (Dandini). In the summer of 2023, Alex was a fellow at Music Academy of the West where he sang in *La bohème* (Schaunard). Alex earned his Bachelor of Music and Master of Music in Vocal Performance at San Francisco Conservatory of Music where he studied under Cesar Ulloa. *Corridos*.

Fourth Place: \$4000 Gary & Gayle Landis Award

Alice Del Simone | 32, Soprano



Alice Del Simone enjoys performing varied operatic repertoire including an upcoming appearance as Clytemnestra in the premiere of Anne Hege's *The Furies* with Stanford Laptop Orchestra. Recent appearances include *The Lady with a Hand Mirror* in *Postcard from Morocco* (Argento) with Eklund Opera, *Gilda* in *Three Feathers* (Laitman) with Opera Steamboat, *La Princesse*, *Le Rosignol*, and *Le Feu* in *L'Enfant et les Sortilèges* (Ravel) with Boulder Opera, *La Feé* in *Cendrillon* (Viardot) with Loveland Opera's Educational Outreach, and *Poppea* in *Agrippina* (Handel) with Eklund Opera. She has also performed as Cis in Britten's *Albert Herring* at the Miami Summer Music Festival, in the Ensemble in Jake Heggie's *Dead Man Walking* with Opera Parallèle. She is currently working on her Doctorate at CU Boulder.

Fifth Place: \$3500 Tom & Mary Conroy Award

Hanyue Zhang | 24, Soprano



Hanyue Zhang began her musical journey at the age of eight, starting with piano lessons and joining the school's children's choir. At fifteen, she pursued formal training in classical voice performance. In 2018 she was accepted into the Tianjon Conservatory of Music, where she majored in voice performance and dedicated herself to the study of opera and Bel Canto. Her passion for vocal arts led her to continue her studies at the Lamont School of Music at the University of Denver in 2023, where she is pursuing a Master of Music degree in Vocal Performance.

Sixth Place: \$3000 Carole Johnson Award

Andrew Konopak | 32, Baritone



Andrew Konopak is working toward his M.M. in vocal performance and pedagogy at the University of Colorado-Boulder. Andrew graduated with a BM from California State University-Long Beach, and then worked professionally around Southern California for seven years where he became known for his "rich clarion baritone" (San Diego Story), singing with both San Diego Opera and Los Angeles Opera Chorus, and performing in concerts around the area. He has worked as a soloist with the San Diego Master Chorale, La Jolla Symphony, San Diego Festival Chorus, and Artes Vocales of Los Angeles. With San Diego Opera, Konopak performed *Il Commisario* in *Madama Butterfly*, Grégorio in *Romeo et Juliette*, and acted as both a soloist and a pitch pipe in *All is Calm*. Since coming to Colorado, Andrew has sung bass solos in both Handel's *Messiah* and Bach's *B minor Mass* with Longmont symphony, Pirate King in Gilbert & Sullivan's *Pirates of Penzance*.

Seventh Place: \$2500 Marcia Ragonetti Bel Canto Fund Award

Sidney Grimm | 23, Soprano



Sidney Grimm received her Bachelor of Arts in Music and Bachelor of Science in Psychology from Central Washington University. She was awarded Central Washington University's College of Arts and Humanities Award for Achievement in Arts or Performance. She is currently working on her Master of Music in Vocal Performance at the University of Colorado Boulder. Roles include Gretel from Engelbert Humperdinck's *Hänsel und Gretel*, Littler Daughter from Missy Mazzoli's *Proving Up*, and Cupid from Jacques Offenbach's *Orpheus in the Underworld*.

Certificate of Merit: \$1000 Julie Johnston in Memory of Harry Williams Award

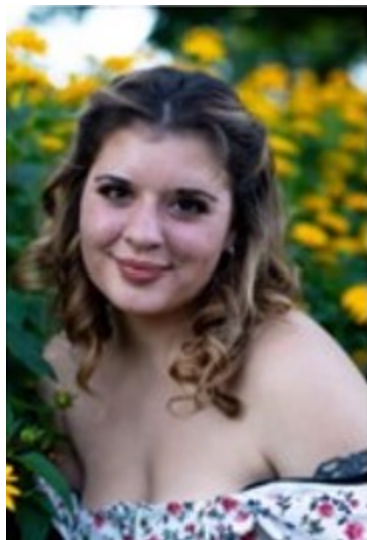
Sibongakonkhe Msibi | 29, Tenor

Sibo, a native of Swaziland, graduated from Westmont in 2023 and is attending graduate school at Lamont School of Music, University of Denver. While attending Westmont, he joined an elite group of 20 Fellows over the summer at the Vocal Institute at the Music Academy of the West in Santa Barbara — the first Westmont student to achieve this honor. He was chosen from an international pool of talented applicants who seek careers in opera to pursue advanced study and performance under the guidance of internationally renowned faculty artists, soloists and guest conductors.



Certificate of Merit: \$1000 Jackie Writz in Honor the Competition Check-in Crew

Mykayla Fitzpatrick | 24, Soprano



Mykayla Fitzpatrick is a recent graduate of Colorado State University with a Bachelor of Music in Voice Performance (minor in Microbiology). At CSU she performed in *Hansel and Gretel* (Gretel), *The Tender Land* (Laurie), *Così fan tutte* (Despina), and *Old Maid and the Thief* (Laetitia). She has directed scenes from Mozart, Verdi, Bernstein, and more. Recently she has performed and assistant sales directed with Boulder Opera Company, assistant stage directed at Quisisana Resort in Maine and for Music on Site in Kansas, and will be making her company debut with Loveland Opera Theater.

Certificate of Merit: \$1000 Karen Ritz in Honor of Jeremy Reger Award

Mackenzie Laun | 32, Soprano



Mackenzie Laun, Soprano, is a Denver native. She holds her Bachelor of Music Education from the University of Northern Colorado, and is currently pursuing her Masters of Music Education with an emphasis in conducting from Colorado State University. She spent nine years as a public high school choir teacher in Jeffco, but now enjoys the life of a stay-at-home mom and freelance singer. Mackenzie sings professionally all over Denver with groups like St. Martin's Chamber Choir, Anima Chamber Ensemble, and Elus Vocal Ensemble. Some of her favorite past engagements include soprano soloist for Mozart's *Requiem* with St. Martin's Chamber Choir, soprano soloist for Bach's Magnificat with Colorado Christian University, Pousette in Massenet's *Manon* with Boulder Opera, and Lisette in Puccini's *La Rondine* at UNC.

Marcia Ragonetti Bel Canto Fund Outstanding Mezzo Award: \$500

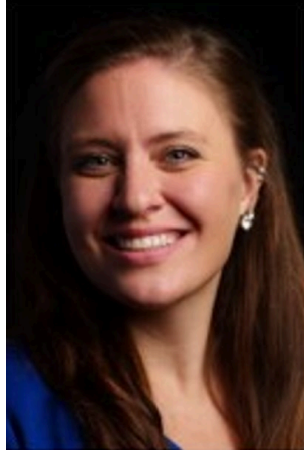
Melanie Dubil | 27, Mezzo-Soprano



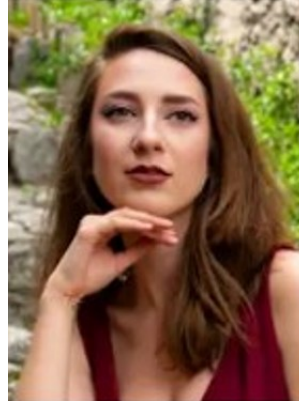
Melanie Dubil returns as an Artist in Residence with Opera Colorado in the 2024-25 Season. Originally from Philadelphia, PA, mezzo-soprano Melanie's most recent operatic credits include *The Pirates of Penzance* (Edith) and *Street Scene* (Second Nursemaid) with Central City Opera. As a Bonfils-Stanton Foundation Apprentice Artist with Central City Opera, Melanie appeared in *Romeo and Juliet* (Stéphano) and *Kiss Me, Kate* (Wardrobe Lady/Chorus). Last spring, Melanie won first place in Art Song Colorado's (ASC) 2024 competition.

Honorable Mention Sponsored by Linda Young in Honor of Gene Young, Roger and Nancy Celius, Suzanne Bufton, Lynne and Jon Montague-Clouse, Jackie Writz, Kathy and Peter Van Arsdale, Liverpool Fund: \$500

**Hannah Benson,
Mezzo-Soprano**



**Elizabeth Mirandi,
Soprano**



**Melanie Dubil,
Mezzo-Soprano**



**Katiann Nelson,
Soprano**



Mason O'Brien,

Bass-Baritone



**Congratulations to all the Finalists of the
2025 DLOG Competition for Colorado Singers!**



PRESENTED BY
DENVER LYRIC OPERA GUILD

Thank you DLOG Members for another incredible season of the DLOG Competition for Colorado Singers. Special thanks go to all our judges ([click here for judges' bios](#)) and a huge round of applause for our great accompanists [Jeremy Reger](#) and [Beth Nielsen](#). Finally, thank you to our 2025 Competition Committee for another job well done!

2025 Competition Committee

Kathy Van Arsdale	Competition VP
Karen Bruggenthies	President, DLOG
Gayle Landis	President-Elect, DLOG
Tom Conroy	Finance VP
BJ Ellison	Public Relations VP
Karen Bruggenthies	Candidate Chair
Jackie Writz	Candidate Check-In
Marleen Diamond	Facilities Manager
Norelee Bush	Hospitality Chair
Linda Bjelland	Judges Books
Scott Finlay	Judges Selection
Peter Van Arsdale	Development
Gayle Landis	Judges Event
Rebecca McAlister	April Luncheon
Ian Caiozzi	Communication

A Love-Sonnet to the Denver Lyric Opera Guild

I am the youngest member of the Guild—
a couple years or so seems like the trend.
But it took little time for me to build
a sense that I am welcome as a friend.

I've seldom met a group so full of class
yet honest, mannered, kind, with gentle hearts.
No group so purposeful in helping youth
become my generation of the arts.

As one who dresses with a vintage style,
as one whose grammar peaked within the past,
as one who loves great opera all the while,
our meetings could not be a bigger blast.

The Denver Lyric Opera Guild is such:
a group of friends whom I admire much.
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Ian Hoyman

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## Opera on Tuesday Notes



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### *OPERA ON TUESDAY NOTES....*

Opera on Tuesday will start again this April 1st and will feature the finalists of the 2025 Competition. Congratulations to all 2025 competitors!

Make sure to mark your calendar with the

## 2024-2025 Opera on Tuesday dates:

**September 10, 2024**

**October 1, 2024**

**November 5, 2024**

**December 10, 2024**

**January 21, 2025**

**April 1, 2025**

**May 13, 2025**

All luncheons will be held at Columbine Country Club who continues to be a welcoming venue with staff who graciously works within our budget, reserves our advance dates and cheerfully responds to special requests.

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## **Announcing the Opéra des Landes Opera Academy with Mark Van Arsdale**

The Denver Lyric Opera Guild has sought to add value and opportunities to enhance and develop the growing careers of young Colorado singers. Our Competition for Colorado Singers provides a safe, friendly audition experience with feedback from several experts, and an opportunity for prize money. These experiences are rare in the world of classical singing. In addition to the Competition, our group has recently instituted an opportunity for reasonably priced Head Shots each fall. These have been highly successful and highly sought-after among our singers! Thanks to our donors, the price can be kept at a low cost for our young artists!



This year, we have added another opportunity for Competition participants who choose: an audition for a summer training program at the same time they sing for the Competition! Made available by former Competition winner Mark Van Arsdale, it is the Opéra des Landes Opera Academy in SW France. Mark, as Program Director, has designed a month of memorable and formative activities including:

Daily coachings and vocal work  
French language lessons  
Yoga classes

Acting classes  
Festival opening recital  
Aria concert with orchestra  
French opera scenes performance  
Perform in the chorus of 2 operas  
10+ performance dates over 2 weeks  
Agent audition + feedback  
Masterclass with prestigious professional  
Mental health workshop  
Expats in Europe workshop

The Opera Academy is located in a small town 10 minutes from the sandy French Atlantic Coast. It is the only France-based summer program open to all. The emphasis on physical and mental wellness, and the agent audition with feedback are unique aspects of this growth opportunity. As a Colorado singer who continues to sing regularly in Europe, Mark knows well what young aspiring artists need to succeed! Now, the in-person audition is possible during the Competition for Colorado Singers!

More information and photos are available at Opéra des Landes website [operaacademy.org](http://operaacademy.org).

**Kathy Van Arsdale**

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## Matching Ankles







Rob Natelson and Peter Van Arsdale

Injuries didn't keep these men from enjoying the fun at the DLOG "*Competition for Colorado Singers*" Finals!

Becky Gantner

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## **An Update on Tessa McQueen**



If any of you happened to be listening to the radio broadcast of *Rigoletto* from the Met this year, I caught a little of it and heard that Tessa McQueen sang Countess Ceprano. She placed third in our competition in 2022 and is now in the Lindemann Young Artists program at the Met. A real success story for one of our singers!

[Click Here to See Tessa's Lindemann Profile Page](#)

Tessa McQueen

Linda Bjelland

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## A Chauffer Offer

Calling all Denver Lyric Opera Guild members in the Highlands Ranch, Lone Tree, Littleton, and western (of I-25) Centennial areas! Ian Hoyman is offering to drive anyone with transportation difficulty to public Denver Lyric Opera Guild events, including luncheons, the competition and judges' dinner, masterclasses, Encore Circle gatherings, and special concerts. No compensation is expected. If this offer receives particular interest, priority will be given first to those who cannot attend events without help and second to those who live closer to his home. Multiple passengers are welcome.

Please call or send a text to 720-626-6197, or send an email to [ianhoyman@gmail.com](mailto:ianhoyman@gmail.com) if you're interested.

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## Join the Liverpool Card Group

The Liverpool card group meets at the Riverpoint Panera once a month on the 4th Tuesday to have lunch and play cards. We have lots of fun and are always happy to be joined by new members. Each meeting we donate \$10 toward the Competition, and the winner gets a small prize. Think about becoming part of this group.



Front row: Marleen Diamond, Helen Santilli, Phylis Wicklund, Deanna Leino  
Top row: Linda Young , Marcia Hoehler, Jeannie Davis, Karen Bruggentheis

**Linda Young**

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## **VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!**

Denver Lyric Opera Guild relies on volunteers to run the organization. A Nominating Committee is formed in the Fall to identify candidates for Board and Committee positions for the following year. Volunteers are needed to fill Board positions, to assist with the Competition for Colorado Singers, the Summer Party and Special Events such as Head Shot Day and the recent Cynthia Lawrence Concert. Volunteering provides the opportunity to forge new friendships, become familiar with the governance of the organization and most importantly to learn and appreciate the value of our mission to support aspiring professional singers through our collegiate grants, the annual Louise Conter Masterclass, and the Competition for Colorado Singers.

If you have a particular area of interest, please email Gayle Landis, [giple@comcast.net](mailto:giple@comcast.net)  
The Nominating Committee members will soon begin making calls, please consider volunteering!

**Gayle Landis**

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## **DLOG Directory**

To access Denver Lyric Opera Guild's current online directory, simply go the DLOG website at:  
[denverlyricoperaguild.org/directory](http://denverlyricoperaguild.org/directory).

Please note this is a password protected area of the site so as to only be accessed by DLOG members. Please do not share the password or use the directory for any business or marketing purposes. The password is "Opera!". That's capital O, "Opera" followed by an exclamation point.

To inform us of corrections to the directory, please email [admin@denverlyricoperaguild.org](mailto:admin@denverlyricoperaguild.org) .

## Opera Around Colorado



### *The Pirates of Penzance*

April 4, 6, Griffin Concert Hall, CSU Fort Collins

Presented by the Ralph Opera Program

Gilbert and Sullivan's comic opera in two acts is packed with tender-hearted pirates, bungling police officers, absurd adventures, and implausible paradoxes. Join CSU's Ralph Opera Program for a romping good time with this classic that boasts one of the most famous patter songs in history!

[Tickets Here](#)



### **Opera on Tap at New Image Brewing Company: Singers Choice!**

April 12, New Image Brewing Company, Wheat Ridge

Have you ever wondered why singers choose their rep? On April 12th, they're going to tell you why!

[Click to Register](#)

### **2025 Art Song Colorado Competition**

April 17 Deadline, Competition May 17

Are you a classical singer, or do you know someone who is? If so, we are delighted to share that our 2025 Art



Song Colorado Competition is now accepting applications! This competition gives singers of all experience levels an opportunity to share their passion for art song and their performance skill for the chance of winning cash prizes. We would love to see you there!

Application deadline is April 17th, competition takes place on May 17th in Denver.

[Info and Application Here](#)



### Vinyl Listening Party & Season Announcement

April 23, Creede, CO

BYO vinyl & potluck vibes! We'll have some records and snacks to share, but bring your faves and feast to your heart's content.

We'll drop our summer season lineup between spins—don't miss it!

[Info Here](#)



**Lamont School of Music**  
UNIVERSITY OF DENVER

Puccini's *Gianni Schicchi* and *Suor Angelica*

April 24-27, Gates Concert Hall Newman Center

Lamont Opera Theatre presents two of Giacomo Puccini's one-act operas, *Suor Angelica* and *Gianni Schicchi*. Set in a serene convent, *Suor Angelica* tells the story of the secret heartbreak of Sister Angelica as she confronts devastating news about her past. Delight in the comic brilliance of *Gianni Schicchi*, filled with wit, charm, and unforgettable music. This hilarious tale of family scheming and deception unfolds as a crafty outsider turns the tables on a greedy inheritance plot.

The production team includes Artistic Director Matthew Plenk and Music Director Sahar Nouri. Matthew S. Crane is the Set Designer and Emily Maddox is the Lighting Designer.

[Details and Tickets Here](#)



***Il trovatore* in Concert**

April 26, May 4, Ellie Caulkins Opera House

Join us for two semi-staged performances of Verdi's revenge thriller, *Il trovatore*. When a woman is wrongfully executed, her daughter Azucena swears vengeance, igniting a deadly rivalry between two unknowing brothers. Slightly shortened to a dramatic ninety minutes, this performance delivers all of Verdi's most powerful music and iconic moments, heightened with narration to guide you through every twist and turn.

Experience the famous "Anvil Chorus" and Verdi's fiery score as Maestro Ari Pelto leads a cast of extraordinary singers alongside the Opera Colorado Orchestra and Chorus in this gripping tale of mistaken identity and retribution..

[Get Tickets Here](#)



***Echoes from Abroad with Soprano Amy Maples***

April 26, Union Colony Civic Center, Greeley

The Greeley Philharmonic Orchestra joins forces with the University of Northern Colorado combined chorus to embark on an adventure across Europe. Experience wit, tragedy, and joy from Massenet's Overture for the Greek tragedy *Phèdre* to Jacques Ibert's honeymoon-inspired *Ports of Call* and Ravel's only unaccompanied choral piece, *Trois Chansons*, a cleverly original collection of three fairy tale-like songs. The concert closes with Francis Poulenc's *Gloria*, which is described as "borderline sacrilegious" for its mischievous setting of the Catholic Mass texts.

[Click for Details](#)



**Wer sich selbst erhöhet, BWV 47**

April 27, Wellshie Presbyterian, Denver

As exultant as its title suggests, Wer sich selbst erhöhet (“Whoever exalts himself”), BWV 47 premiered on October 13, 1726 as part of Bach’s third cantata cycle. The 5-part work has a neatly symmetrical form. A soprano aria follows the opening chorus, with a bass recitative holding the center, and an alto aria and chorale tune cementing the end of the work. Typically elaborate, the oboes foreshadow the vocal theme in an extended orchestral opening. Playing with arrogance and modesty, the chorale struggles with the two angels of our nature before settling into tranquil humility in the final cantata.

[Get Tickets](#)



**Fire and Fiesta with La Diva Dia**

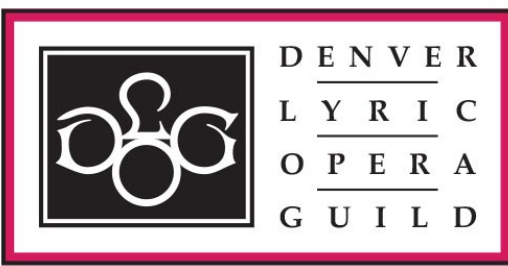
May 9, Roots Music Project, Boulder

Join mezzo-soprano Dianela Acosta and friends for an unforgettable evening of sizzling rhythms and passionate melodies, all while supporting the future of Boulder Opera! Featuring vocal music by Lecuona, Guastavino, De Falla, and an exciting selection from zarzuela and opera’s, this concert will ignite the stage with fiery passion and Latin flair. Accompanied by the brilliant pianist Fernanda Nieto, the performance promises to be a celebration of rhythm, culture, and music that will leave you craving more.

This special event is a fundraiser to support Boulder Opera's plans for acquiring an Opera House.

[Click for Details](#)

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DENVER LYRIC OPERA  
GUILD

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Englewood, CO 80151



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