

SEATTLE OPERA.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: June 20, 2024

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Seattle Opera's season opener, *Pagliacci*, takes unflinching look at gendered violence

**August 3–17, 2024
McCaw Hall**

SEATTLE—Seattle Opera opens its 2024/25 season with the "clown prince" of Italian *verismo*, *Pagliacci*. Ruggero Leoncavallo's gritty tale of jealousy and unbridled rage holds a mirror up to a violent society, and features one of opera's most iconic arias, the tenor's "Vesti la giubba."

Stage director **Dan Wallace Miller**'s take on the popular opera offers an unflinching look at domestic abuse and the societal structures that enable it. "The typical image of *Pagliacci* is the sad clown applying his makeup, sobbing over his broken heart. But not here," said Miller, whose acerbic style will be familiar to Seattle Opera audiences from his *Il trovatore* ('19) and filmed version of *Tosca* ('21). "Canio is not a sympathetic figure; he is a violent man who is driven to murder. I want to explore how his actions affect those around him and what kind of society creates a man like that. How does his violence manifest in his marriage to Nedda, who had no choice in the matter? What does she have to do to survive her situation?"

Set in Italy in the years following World War II, Miller's production highlights the harsh realities of a country ravaged by war. Miller takes inspiration from Italian neorealist cinema of the 1950s, including films like Vittorio De Sica's *Bicycle Thieves* (1948) and *Umberto D.* (1952), to examine the ways everyday people deal with grim circumstances.

Cuban American soprano **Monica Conesa** is interested in how such circumstances affect women in particular. "Nedda is the only woman in this travelling troupe—she's surrounded by men at all times. But she holds her own and can fight back when she needs to," said Conesa, who makes a triple debut with this production, making her role, company, and US debuts. "I think this opera has a lot to say about what women have to do to survive and how we, as women, can break out of cycles of abuse. I hope it encourages us to reflect on how we raise our own children as we strive to foster a new generation of strong young women."

For Mexican Australian tenor **Diego Torre**, who makes his Seattle Opera debut as Canio, performing *Pagliacci* is a homecoming of sorts. "*Pagliacci* was the first opera I ever sang in my life, and for many years it was my favorite opera," said Torre. "I find that every performance is an opportunity to compare my past experiences to the ideal I have in my head, always trying to get closer to that sound."

Rounding out the cast are **Michael Chioldi** (Donner, *Das Rheingold* '23) as Tonio, Seattle Opera Resident Artist **Michael J. Hawk** (Fiorello, *The Barber of Seville* '24) as Silvio, and **John Marzano** (Oronte, *Alcina* '23) as Beppe.

At the helm is Conductor **Carlo Montanaro**, whose long and fruitful relationship with Seattle Opera stretches back to *Don Quichotte* ('11). His recent appearances have focused on core Italian repertoire, including last year's *La traviata*, which garnered him praise for his musical values and "impeccable" timing (*The Seattle Times*).

Chorus Master **Michaella Calzaretta** will prepare the 36-member Seattle Opera Chorus, and Youth Chorus Master **Julia Meyering** will lead a 16-member youth chorus made up of young singers ages 9–17.

The rest of the creative team includes **Cynthia Savage**, former Costume Director and Director of Production at Seattle Opera, and, in his Seattle Opera debut, **Steven C. Kemp**, whose scenery and props were originally designed for Lyric Opera of Kansas City. Lighting Designer **Abigail Hoke-Brady** also makes her Seattle Opera debut, while Fight Director **Geoffrey Alm** (*A Thousand Splendid Suns* '23) and Wigs, Hair, and Makeup Designer **Ashlee Naegle** (*The Barber of Seville* '24) both return.

Although *Pagliacci* is often presented together with fellow *verismo* favorite *Cavalleria rusticana*, this season's production will be staged by itself, a practice Seattle Opera began in 2008. "It is certainly not new to do it this way, but I actually think *Pagliacci* stands better on its own," said Seattle Opera General Director

Christina Scheppelmann. "You get to savor the story this way. The dramatic irony is felt more intensely and the music really has a chance to shine, making for a potent evening of theater. Even those who have seen *Pagliacci* several times before will find something new in this standalone production."

About Seattle Opera

Established in 1963, Seattle Opera is committed to serving the people of the Pacific Northwest through music, storytelling, and programs for people of all ages. Each year, more than 50,000 people attend the company's performances, and more than 100,000 people are served through school performances, radio broadcasts, and more. The organization brings opera to life in a number of different ways, offering artistic excellence through national and international collaborations. Seattle Opera strives to create an environment where artists, staff, behind-the-scenes workers, and members of the community feel a strong connection to the company, and to the art of opera. Follow Seattle Opera on Facebook, Twitter, SoundCloud, and on Classical KING.

Performance Information

- Music and libretto by Ruggero Leoncavallo
- Sung in Italian with English subtitles
- Run time 2 hours including one intermission
- Tickets start at \$35

McCaw Hall (321 Mercer Street, Seattle, WA 98109)

Saturday, August 3, at 7:30 PM

Sunday, August 4, at 2:00 PM

Saturday, August 10, at 7:30 PM

Sunday, August 11, at 2:00 PM

Wednesday, August 14, at 7:30 PM

Friday, August 16, at 7:30 PM

Saturday, August 17, at 7:30 PM

Conductor:	Carlo Montanaro
Director:	Dan Wallace Miller
Scenery & Props Designer:	Steven C. Kemp
Costume Designer:	Cynthia Savage
Lighting Designer:	Abigail Hoke-Brady
Fight Director:	Geoffrey Alm
Wigs, Hair, & Makeup Designer:	Ashlee Naegle
Chorus Master:	Michaela Calzaretta
Youth Chorus Master:	Julia Meyering

Canio:	Diego Torret†
Nedda:	Monica Conesa†
Tonio:	Michael Chioldi
Silvio:	Michael J. Hawk
Beppe:	John Marzano

†=Seattle Opera debut

Tickets and information at seattleopera.org/pagliacci.

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