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SYNOPSIS







increase from Season 26

PHOTO: TAYLOR FISER PHOTOGRAPHY

PHOTO: TAYLOR FISER PHOTOGRAPHY

live auditions

heard

Smith Young Artists hired for Cinderella



Dear Friends.

On behalf of all of us at Cedar Rapids Opera, welcome! Opera is the ultimate collaborative art form, where voices, music, storytelling, and design come together to create something truly magical. But the real magic happens when you, our audience, are here. You bring the performance to life, transforming it into a one-of-a-kind experience that exists only in this moment, never to be repeated. That is the enduring power of live opera, and it's why this art form continues to thrive year after year.

We are so fortunate to present Massenet's Cinderella (*Cendrillon*), a stunning French interpretation of the classic tale. While it may differ slightly from the story many of us grew up with, it retains all the enchantment, beauty, and heart that make this story timeless.

Thank you for being here, for supporting Cedar Rapids Opera, and for playing such an essential role in creating the magic of live performance. As one of only two professional opera companies in Iowa, we are deeply honored to share this production with you. Your presence ensures that opera remains a vital, living art form. Thank you for being part of this unforgettable moment. Let the magic begin!

Sincerely,

Thaddeus Ennen GENERAL DIRECTOR

CINDERELLA

JULES MASSENET COMPOSER

HENRI CAIN
LIBRETTIST

BENJAMIN ROBINSON

DANIEL KLEINKNECHT

STAGE DIRECTOR

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR/CONDUCTOR

English Translation by H. Crafton Chapman

ACT I

At the home of Madame de la Haltière

ACT II

At the Palace

15-MINUTE INTERMISSION

ACT III

First Tableau: At the home of Madame de la Haltière Second Tableau: At the Fairy's Home

ACT IV

First Tableau: At the home of Madame de la Haltière Second Tableau: At the Palace

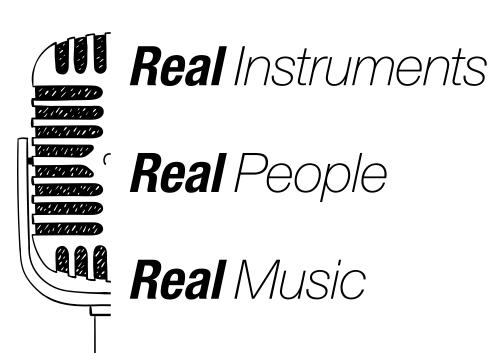
CAST

(in order of appearance)

House Servants	Smith Young Artist Chorus
Pandolfe	Dennis Jesse
Madame de la Haltière	Ema Mitrović
Noémie	Sophia Formella
Dorothée	Zara Zemmels
Lucette/"Cinderella"	Abigail Rethwisch
Fairy Godmother	Kate Johnson
Spirits	Kate O'Connell, Denique Isaac, Katie Stuelke Hayley Fox, Daryn Imani Nowlin, Lauren Leman
Master of Ceremonies	Alex Gushrowski
Dean of the Faculty	Theo Harrah
First Minister	Anthony Anderson
	Josh Morey
Doctor	Caleb Haselhuhn
Prince Charming	Laura Krumm
The King	Evan Fleming
The Nobility	Community Chorus
Voice of the Herald	D1 Kohl



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PROGRAM NOTES BY DR. ANNA BARKER

white stag appeared in the chateau moat . . . Fearful of startling him, yet desperately wanting to take a photo, I slowly reached for my phone — when all of a sudden the stag looked directly at me, slowly turned his exquisite horn-bedecked head towards the moat wall, then in the opposite direction — he was posing!!!

Thus began my introduction to the magical world of Charles Perrault (1628-1703) at the Château de Breteuil, one hour southwest of Paris. Still owned by the family and open to the public, the 17th-century chateau was the home of Louis de Breteuil (1609-1685), government minister to Louis XIV. Charles Perrault, the author of the tale of *Cinderella*, was one of Louis de Breteuil's colleagues and a frequent visitor to the chateau, which has been transformed into an interactive museum dedicated to his imagination.

Appointed chief clerk to Jean-Baptiste Colbert, finance minister to Louis XIV, in 1663, Charles Perrault contrived to maintain a prolific literary career. Elected member of the French Academy and author of "The Age of Louis the Great," Perrault was the quintessence of France's *Grand Siècle* that inspired his most famous composition, the 1697 "Tales and Stories of the Past with Morals," which gained enduring global popularity under the title "Tales of Mother Goose." Reprinted eight times during Perrault's lifetime, the "Tales" laid the foundation for a new literary genre: the modern fairy tale.

The magic of Charles Perrault enchanted many, including his four children, who were the original audience for the "Tales," and countless composers who found inspiration in the whimsical and instructive narratives from France's Golden Age. The most famous musical adaptation by far remains the 1890 ballet *Sleeping Beauty* by Peter Tchaikovsky, which inspired the 1959 Disney animated feature film. Another Russian composer, César Cui, turned the whimsy of Charles Perrault into his children's operas *Little Red Riding Hood* (1911) and *Puss in Boots* (1913). The 1912 orchestral suite by Maurice Ravel, *Ma mère l'Oye*, evolved into a full-length ballet in 1975. *Bluebeard* inspired several opera adaptations, including *Barbe-bleue* (1866) by Jacques Offenbach, *Ariane et Barbe-bleue* (1907) by Paul Dukas, and *Duke Bluebeard's Castle* (1918) by Béla Bartók.

And then there is *Cinderella. La Cenerentola* in the 1817 operatic incarnation by Gioachino Rossini, *Золушка* in Sergei Prokofiev's 1945 ballet version, and of course *Cendrillon*, Jules Massenet's (1842-1912) fairy tale opera in four acts, with a libretto by Henri Caïn (1857-1937), which premiered on May 24, 1899 at the Paris Opéra-Comique.

Forget Disney or Rodgers and Hammerstein — Massenet's *Cendrillion* is a very French Cinderella indeed. It retains the structure of the original tale, the Fairy Godmother and the glass slipper playing a crucial plot-advancing role, but substitutes magic pumpkins and mice with dream sequences worthy of Shakespeare's *Midsummer Night's Dream*.

As Ben Robinson, the stage director of the Cedar Rapids Opera production, suggests: "The Fairy Godmother is an extension of the natural world order — the balance that is coming to right the wrongs against Cinderella. She always travels in a pack of fairies, which I love: while the Fairy Godmother is the focal point (aided by the extraordinary fioritura that Massenet wrote for the role), the other fairies harmonize as they aid Cinderella, showing that it takes a village to make a difference."

France's most prolific opera composer, Massenet was a child prodigy who entered the Paris Conservatory at 11, won France's most prestigious musical prize, *Prix de Rome*, at 21, and proceeded to write hundreds of compositions in all genres, from ballets and lyric dramas to oratorios and orchestral pieces. During the Franco-Prussian War, when France was in peril, he volunteered for army service and was awarded the Legion of Honor in 1876. In 1878, he became the youngest elected member of the Academy of Fine Arts. Less popular in the 20th century, Massenet is currently experiencing a 21st-century revival, highlighted in the 2011 exhibition *The Belle Epoque of Massenet*, displayed at the Paris Opera Garnier.



Massenet is a thoroughly literary composer, with the majority of his most frequently performed operas based on famous literary works: *Manon* (1884) on Abbé Prévost's 1731 *Manon Lescaut*; *Le Cid* (1885) on Pierre Corneille's 1636 version of the tale of Cid; *Werther* (1892) on Goethe's 1774 *The Sorrows of Young Werther*; *Thais* (1894), with its gorgeous *Méditation*, on Anatole France's 1890 novel; and *Don Quichotte* (1910) on Miguel de Cervantes' 17th-century masterpiece — marking another Henri Caïn libretto collaboration. This literarily inspired material suited Massenet, who composed not at the piano but in his imagination, making his orchestrations subtle and lyrical at the same time.

About this production, Robinson adds: "Massenet has a great capacity for infusing beauty and lightness into his scores. This setting of *Cendrillon* seeks to amplify this aesthetic while focusing on the passage of time. Of course, we think about Cinderella's strict curfew, but this opera also explores the seasons of life and hope. The tree at the center of the scenic concept is meant to anchor that perception: it is a constant presence, but it is always changing. The fairies and (super) natural elements that alter Cinderella's trajectory are branches of this fantasy. Cinderella has her feet in both worlds; while we have great empathy for her, her goodness never wavers. When her hope does, the world jumps in to save her."

The cast of the Cedar Rapids Opera production is full of magical surprises, the greatest being the childhood friendship between our Cinderella, Abigail Rethwisch, and Prince Charming, Laura Krumm, who attended City High School in Iowa City. They last performed together in 2005 when Abby played French horn in the pit band and Laura was singing in 4th Avenue Jazz Co. (City High's Show Choir).

As Ben points out: "Cinderella and Prince Charming are voiced in this production by a soprano and mezzo-soprano, respectively. This is what Massenet intended and how the opera premiered. Musically, it creates wonderful moments of tight harmony."

And now, let us abandon ourselves to "a familiar, well-trod story awash in the wonder of Massenet's sparkling music and Henri Caïn's witty, wordy, and wonderful libretto" (Ben Robinson) and transport ourselves into a world where white deer roam in chateau moats, slippers determine fates, and true love triumphs in the end. *Photos by Anna Barker*.

CRST and Cedar Rapids:

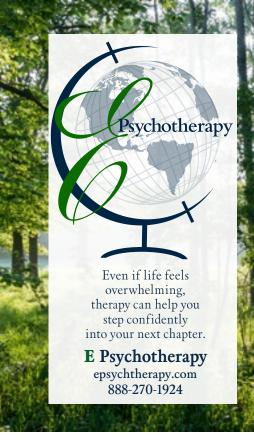
The perfect fit

For 70 years, CRST and Cedar Rapids have been the perfect fit – just like a certain glass slipper we all know. We're honored to help bring enchanting performances like Cinderella to life.

Together, we're celebrating the arts and the incredible talent in our community. Enjoy the show, and thank you for being a part of this magical evening!







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RECENT ROLES
Juliette, Roméo et Juliette
Title Role,
Lucia di Lammermoor

ABIGAIL RETHWISCH

Soprano | Cedar Rapids, IA

Lucette/"Cinderella"

Soprano Abigail Rethwisch is garnering recognition for "her command of bel canto technique and riveting dramatic talent" (*Opera News*). She comes to Cedar Rapids after singing the title role in *Lucia di Lammermoor* with Pensacola Opera, singing Berta in *The Barber of Seville* at Des Moines Metro Opera, and covering Juliette in *Roméo et Juliette* with LA Opera. Other highlights include covering Papagena in *Die Zauberflöte*, Yvette in *La rondine*, Barbara/Mrs. Latch in *The Hours*, and Meretaten in *Akhnaten* (Metropolitan Opera); and singing the Controller in *Flight* (Utah Opera, Dallas Opera); Anna Sørensen in *Silent Night*, Erste Dame in *Die Zauberflöte*, Adele in *Die Fledermaus*, and Lucia in *Lucia di Lammermoor* (Utah Opera).



RECENT ROLES Stéphano, *Roméo et Juliette* Eliza, *Omar*

LAURA KRUMM

Mezzo-Soprano | San Francisco, CA

Prince Charming

Praised for her "exceptionally beautiful mezzo" by San Francisco Classical Voice, mezzo-soprano Laura Krumm most recently returned to The Metropolitan Opera to cover Stéphano in *Roméo et Juliette*, sang Eliza in *Omar* with San Francisco Opera, and traveled to Hong Kong to sing Jane Seymour in *Anna Bolena* with Musica. Additional recent highlights include her début with LA Philharmonic as Siegrune in Act III of Die Walküre at the Hollywood Bowl under the baton of Gustavo Dudamel; her celebrated Rosina with San Francisco Opera, Mendocino Music Festival, and Sacramento Philharmonic and Opera; and Beethoven's 9th Symphony with Reno Philharmonic and Auburn Symphony. In the 2024-2025 season Laura will make her Los Angeles Opera début as Stéphano in Roméo et Juliette, appear with Orchestra Iowa as a soloist in Mozart's Requiem, and return to San Francisco Opera for their production of *Idomeneo*. The Iowa native earned a Master of Music from the University of North Texas and is a graduate of Luther College in Decorah, Iowa.



RECENT ROLESPamina, *The Magic Flute*Susanna, *Le nozze di Figaro*

KATE JOHNSON

Soprano | Omaha, NE

Fairy Godmother

Kate Johnson recently debuted at Opera
Roanoke as Susanna in *Le nozze di Figaro* and
as Pamina in *The Magic Flute* at Tri-Cities Opera, where she sings
Gilda in *Rigoletto* this April. She has created leading roles in world
premieres of *Anne Frank* (Ran/Kondek; Indiana University Opera
Theater) and *Two Corners* (Boykin/Lee; Finger Lakes Opera); and
in workshops of *Tevye's Daughters* (Weiser/Fleischmann; American
Lyric Theater), and *Zheng* (Eshima/Asaro; Opera San José).
She was a 2023 Studio Artist with Central City Opera; a 2021
Apprentice Artist with Des Moines Metro Opera; and was based
in Vienna as a 2021-22 Fulbright Austria grantee. She appears by
special arrangement with Tri-Cities Opera Company, Inc., where
she is a Resident Artist for the 24/25 Season.



RECENT ROLESGermont, *La traviata*Don Alfonso, *Così fan tutte*

DENNIS JESSE

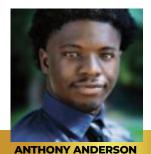
Baritone | Baton Rouge, LA

Pandolfe

Dennis Jesse is the Galante Professor of Voice at Louisiana State University. A distinguished baritone, he has excelled in operatic roles from *Rigoletto*, *Don Giovanni*, *Nabucco*, *La traviata*, *Les contes d'Hoffman*, *Madama Butterfly*, and *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, alongside performances in over 40 operettas. He is also a sought-after concert soloist and recitalist, performing works such as Handel's *Messiah*, Verdi's *Requiem*, Beethoven's 9th Symphony, and Orff's *Carmina Burana*. A dedicated educator, he teaches at LSU and international programs, recently winning the American Prize in Directing for LSU's *Orson Rehearsed*. Upcoming roles; Alfio and Tonio in *Cavalleria rusticana* and *I Pagliacci*.



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RECENT ROLES John Proctor. The Crucible Alvarò, Florencia en el Amazonas



CHRISTINE BODDICKER

MEZZO-SOPRANO Hinsdale, IL

Chorus RECENT ROLES

Stéphano, Roméo et Juliette Lola, Cavalleria rusticana



SADIE CHESLAK

MEZZO-SOPRANO Duluth, MN

Chorus RECENT ROLES

Olga Olsen, Street Scene Florence Pike, Albert Herring



JOHN DRAKE

BARITONE Gainesville, GA

Chorus RECENT ROLES

Pandolfe, Cendrillon Tarquinius, Lucretia



EVAN FLEMING

BARITONE Cinnaminson, NJ

The King RECENT ROLES

Harry Houdini, Ragtime Gregorio, Roméo et Juliette



SOPHIA FORMELLA

SOPRANO Dallas, TX

Noémie RECENT ROLES

Title Role. Cendrillon Title Role, Alice



SOPRANO

Philadelphia, PA Spirit IV RECENT ROLES

Colette, Le devin du village Title Role, Leonora



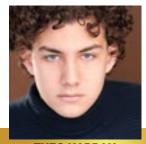
ALEX GUSHROWSKI

TENOR La Porte, IN

Master of Ceremonies

RECENT ROLES

Lt. Stone, Lincoln in the Bardo Chaplain, Dialogues of the Carmelites



THEO HARRAH

BASS Louisville, KY

Dean of the Faculty RECENT ROLES

Frère Laurent, Romeo et Julliet Anapol, The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier & Clay







DENIQUE ISAAC
SOPRANO
Baltimore, MD
Spirit I
RECENT ROLES
Gianetta, Elixir of Love

Mrs. Jessel, Turn of the Screw



MEZZO-SOPRANO Cedar Falls, IA Spirit VI RECENT ROLES Angelina, La Cenerentola La Ciesca, Gianni Schicchi



SOPRANO
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Queen of the Night, Magic Flute
Giunone, La Calisto



North Bergen, NJ **Madame de la Haltière RECENT ROLES** La Frugola, I*l Tabarro* Annabella, *The Doctor & the Devils*



Spirit V
RECENT ROLES
Angelina, La Cenerentola
The Witch, Hansel and Gretel

MEZZO-SOPRANO

Lamoni, IA



SOPRANO
Cedar Rapids, IA
Spirit III
RECENT ROLES
Fiordiligi, Così fan tutte
Rumer, Fierce



Chorus
RECENT ROLES
Henry Snibblesworth, The Classical Style
Adolfo Pirelli, Sweeney Todd

Iowa Citv. IA



MEZZO-SOPRANO
New Orleans, LA
Dorothée
RECENT ROLES
Adolfo Pirelli, Sweeney Todd
Dr. Fiddle, The Night Fiona
Flawless Went Mad





Davenport, IA

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SONG of the NIGHTINGALE

Music by Lisa Despain Libretto by Melisa Tien

March 22, 2025 | 7:30 pm

Ballantyne Auditorium at Kirkwood

March 23, 2025 | 2 pm

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A contemporary fairy tale, this operatic adaptation of Hans Christian Andersen's *The Nightingale* premiered in September of 2023 and tells the story of a collector who hopes to accumulate the world's most beautiful objects — including the beautiful song of the deceptively plain nightingale.

Cedar Rapids Opera is proud to partner with Orchestra Iowa for this production.



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11th CRO Production



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3rd CRO Production



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Bryce Christensen
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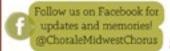
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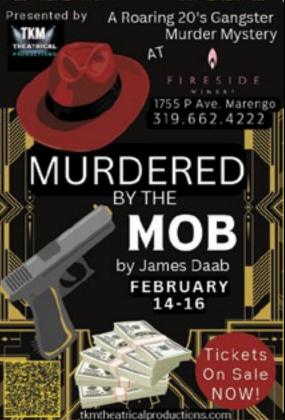
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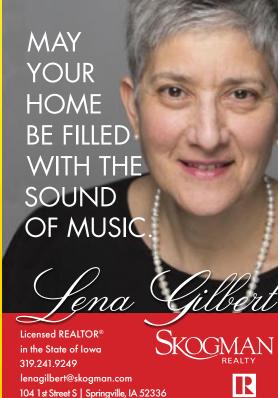
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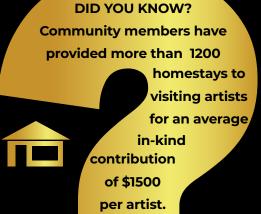
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2025 FESTIVAL SEASON JUNE 27-JULY 20

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JANÁČEK THE CUNNING LITTLE VIXEN

with **Hera Hyesang Park** as the Vixen and **Sun-Ly Pierce** as the Fox

STRAVINSKY THE RAKE'S PROGRESS

with **Jonas Hacker** as Tom Rakewell, **Joélle Harvey** as Anne Trulove, **Sam Carl** as Nick Shadow



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