

University of Maryland School of Music's  
Maryland Opera Studio Presents

# ORGULLO

Music by Christian De Gré Cárdenas

Libretto by Joseph Reese Anderson & Christian De Gré Cárdenas



February 9, 2024

GILDENHORN RECITAL HALL

AT THE CLARICE SMITH PERFORMING ARTS CENTER



SCHOOL OF  
MUSIC



**MARYLAND OPERA STUDIO**

Corinne Hayes, Interim Director of Maryland Opera Studio  
 Craig Kier, Advisor of Maryland Opera Studio  
 Steven Bailey, Principal Coach | Ashley Pollard, Manager

Welcome to the annual Maryland Opera Studio (MOS) New Work Reading. Commitment to new work has always been an integral part of MOS's identity thanks to MOS founder, Leon Major. We are particularly interested in creating opportunities to foster new work that connect composers and librettists to our singers throughout the creative process and allows our audience to witness and take part in its creation. This past fall, Christian De Gré Cárdenas and Joseph Reese Anderson traveled to our campus to work with the 1<sup>st</sup> year MOS singers, reading through the libretto with our creative team and exploring the work in its earliest stages. This created a foundation that allowed the roles to be written for our specific singers - the result of this creative process is tonight's performance of *Orgullo*.

Maryland Opera Studio's dedication to new work is our own response to the growing need to present works by increasingly more diverse, living composers. We're eager to create opportunities for composers and librettists to explore their creative voices, for our singers to create roles, and for our audiences to experience works for the first time. We're excited to present this work as we continue to introduce new compositional voices to our singers and audience!

**MARYLAND OPERA STUDIO FACULTY AND STAFF**

Teri Bickham, *English Diction* ~ Steven Bailey, *Principal Coach*  
 Corinne Hayes, *Interim Director of MOS* ~ Mark Jaster, *Mime* ~ Naomi Jacobson, *Improvisation*  
 Casey Kaleba, *Stage Combat* ~ Craig Kier, *Advisor to Maryland Opera Studio*  
 David Lefkovich, *Mask* ~ Sarah Oppenheim, *Movement* ~ Ashley Pollard, *Studio Manager*  
 Lori Sen~ *Vocal Pedagogy* ~ Mai-Linh Pham, *Italian Diction*  
 Rita Sloan, *Director of Collaborative Piano* ~ Gran Wilson, *French Diction*  
 Delores Ziegler, *German Diction*

**UMD SCHOOL OF MUSIC VOICE FACULTY**

Diba Alvi, *Diction* ~ Teri Bickham, *Soprano* ~ Jason Max Ferdinand, *Director of Choirs*  
 John Holiday, Jr, *Countertenor*, Kevin Short, *Bass-Baritone*  
 Gran Wilson, *Tenor (Division Coordinator)* ~ Delores Ziegler, *Mezzo-Soprano*

University of Maryland School of Music Presents

**Orgullo**

**Music by Christian De Gré Cárdenas**  
**Libretto by Joseph Reese Anderson & Christian De Gré Cárdenas**

**CAST**

Antonio López de Santa Anna ..... Chris Alfonso  
 María Inés de la Paz García..... Kat Norman  
 Le Limbe ..... Nicole Plummer  
 Manifesto ..... Noah Mond  
 Pueblo..... Lourdes Rodriguez  
 Solomon .....Kevin M. Webb  
 Ximena .....Nuria Shin  
 John O'Riley ..... Wallace Brown

Music Director ..... Rhys Burgess  
 Stage Director ..... Corinne Hayes  
 Asst. Stage Director ..... Jessica Harika

The sun rises over a circus camp in Veracruz, Mexico, 2048. Circus performers are working to set up for a “production” when they stumble upon a buried leg. They trace the origins of this leg, Le Limbe, to Antonio López de Santa Anna and the North American invasion of Mexico two hundred years ago in the 1840’s. They argue over the impact that Santa Anna, *Su Alteza Serenísima* or *the Napoleon of the West*, had over the outcome of the war and their ancestors’ futures.

In the center ring of the circus, one of the ensemble members has assumed the role of Santa Anna. The chorus introduces him, telling the story of his lofty triumphs before the infamous invasion takes place. They sing of how he became the hero of Tampico, the Alamo and the Rio Grande Republic, and the War of Independence. They detail the loss of his leg in the Pastry War, and joke about a massive funeral he held for his severed appendage.

The war begins. Manifesto and Pueblo, physical manifestations of Manifest Destiny and the victims of war respectively, lead us through a retelling of the invasion and the beginnings of the Mexican response. We learn how Solomon, Ximena, and John O’Riley, immigrants in both camps, came to Mexico. Santa Anna is exiled to Cuba. Together he and Manifesto share a duet as they consider the nature of destiny and their role in making their destinies come to pass. The American Navy agrees to grant Santa Anna safe passage back to Mexico from Cuba, if he relinquishes Texas. He betrays them. The war effort fails and the treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo is signed, granting half of Mexico to the invading forces.

On his deathbed, Santa Anna and his wife Maria share an intimate moment of reflection. He speaks in grand delusion, while she only exacerbates his fantasy with the paid mourners she has placed outside of their home to fan his ego through the window. Le Limbe floats in and out of the room, challenging Santa Anna with what could have been. He dies only after a heartfelt declaration that he did all he could, and he had nothing left to give.

The circus is ready for their evening performance. The tight ropes are taut, the lions sufficiently antagonized, and the clowns have donned their regal ruffles and noble noses. The sun begins to set as the entire company shares a 200 year old dream with Santa Anna, that of a green green moon, La Luna Verde, over a Mexican empire, one that could have been, but never was, could it ever be?

We are beyond honored to be working with the wonderful faculty and students of Maryland Opera Studio as we develop *Orgullo*. This piece has been decades in ideation but was written solely for the incredible artists in this program. As a biracial team of Mexican and Black artists we have been meticulously researching the idea of “shared history” and who gets to frame its ultimate narrative in perpetuity. In Mexico, we don’t openly talk about the American Invasion of 1846-48, whose outcome left Mexico with less than half of its territory because it brings about a great deal of pain. That said, we speak of legends surrounding it as a semblance of passive grieving. The Niños Héroes, Santa Anna’s invention of bubble gum, the siege of Veracruz, these half-myths/half-facts fill our storybooks and folk songs. The same can be said about the mythologized but potently palpable omission in American history of the black southern American soldiers who were “volunteered” for the war in exchange for freedom. *Orgullo* is a work in progress seeking to bring light to both these mythos and untold stories. It’s a work centered around “pride” that fuses facts and illusions from 7 different perspectives of that fateful invasion. We are deeply grateful for giving us the space to tell our story from an alternate point of view.

--Christian De Gré Cárdenas & Joseph Reese Anderson



Mexican Artist **Christian De Gré Cárdenas** has emerged as one of the most influential contemporary voices in the development of new works in New York City. He has spearheaded numerous international projects in film, theater, television, music, publishing, web-media, fine-art and radio such as *Fatty Fatty No Friends* (FringeNYC Excellence Award Winner, Innovative Theater Award Nominations for Best Music and Best Musical, New York Musical Festival Best of Fest, Showscore Critic's Pick, Time Out New York Critic's Pick), *Beware The Chupacabra* (FringeFAVE, FRINGE ENCORES), *Whiskey Pants: The Mayor of Williamsburg* (Audience Favorite at FRIGID New York, Showscore Critic's Pick, off-broadway premiere at HERE), *Ampathy* (Excellence Award winner at FRIGID) and *Broken Crayons* (Golden Palm at the Mexico International Film Festival). Most recently, his work was seen at Joe's Pub in Twisted Operettas, and in Acedia at the Brick. This season, his work will be seen at Feinstein's/54 Below.

A self-taught composer, De Gré Cárdenas has written and produced 28 original award-winning plays, musicals, operettas, operas, and song-cycles in New York City at world renowned organizations like Joe's Pub at The Public Theater, Feinstein's/54 Below, HERE Arts Center, and La Mama E.T.C. He has been commissioned to write music for The Discovery Channel, Drama Desk Awards, The United Nations, and The Mexican Cultural Institute of New York. De Gré Cárdenas has trained activists in Eastern Europe, Northern Africa and the Americas as the Theater for Social Change Partner of the United Nations International Y-Peer Network. Other projects include fine art exhibitor at the 69th Regiment Armory (Time-Out New York: Photo of the Week) and published poet in *Story Time with Mr. Buttermen: Fables for Adults Living in a Modern World* (available on Amazon).

He is an alumnus of the American Academy of Dramatic Arts and The Broadway League's Commercial Theater Institute and is currently enrolled in the BMI Lehman Engel Musical Theater Workshop. This season, he has been appointed Executive Director of Heartbeat Opera. Having served as the General Manager and Director of Operations at The New York International Fringe Festival for five years and as Artistic Director of Mind The Art Entertainment for over a decade, De Gré Cárdenas has overseen the opening of over 1,000 new theatrical productions in New York City.



**JOSEPH REESE ANDERSON**, has created projects around the globe using poetic language to promote the ideas of awareness, tolerance, and empathy in ways that combine beauty with accessibility. After attending East Carolina University (double BFA Programs: Professional Acting and Musical Theatre), he moved to New York and was introduced to the world of spoken word and performance poetry. Recent works include *Fatty Fatty No Friends* (FringeNYC Excellence Award Winner, Innovative Theater Award Nomination, New York Musical Festival Best of Fest Concert, Time Out New York Critic's Pick), *Whiskey Pants: The Mayor of Williamsburg* (Audience Favorite at FRIGID New York, Showscore Critic's Pick, off-broadway premiere at HERE), *Cadence: Home*, and *Red Sky the Musical*. As a writer and lyricist, Anderson's work has been featured in New York City at world renowned organizations like Joe's Pub at The Public Theater, Feinstein's/54 Below, HERE Arts Center, Intersections International, The Stonewall Inn, and La Mama E.T.C. Anderson is an advocate, ally, and activist and enjoys embracing the themes of inclusion in his work. As an outreach coordinator for St Luke's Roosevelt Hospital in NYC, he was able to spread awareness and information to others in concrete and meaningful ways, and even more so when he founded Social Socials: Social Events for Social Causes, which was a direct microfinancing event planning organization that benefited many lives, both domestic and international. Most recently he has founded an artist collective in Raleigh, NC called Capital Moments, where artists are offered a space for workshopping and honing their work, and the opportunity to present their work on stage.



**CORINNE HAYES**, is a stage director, dramaturg and educator, and has recently been named Interim Director of the Maryland Opera Studio at the University of Maryland, where she also serves as Director of Acting. In the 23-24 season, Hayes leads new productions of *Die Zauberflöte* (Annapolis Opera) and *Florencia en el Amazonas* (Maryland Opera Studio). Highlights of the 22-23 season included a new production of *Don Giovanni* with the Maryland Opera Studio, a staged reading of a new work by composer Justine F. Chen and playwright Jacqueline Goldfinger (*TWA*, based on a 17th-century murder ballad), a new staging of *Le nozze di Figaro* for Annapolis Opera, and a return to Miami Music Festival for *L'incoronazione di Poppea*. In addition to her role at UMD, Hayes serves as Artistic Advisor for DC-based opera theater company IN Series, where she works closely with Artistic Director Timothy Nelson; with IN Series, Hayes conceived and directed a virtual production of Melissa Dunphy's *The Gonzales Cantata*, directed the world premiere of *ZAVALA-ZAVALA*, and has served as Creative Producer on *Black Flute*, *BOHEME in the Heights*, and *OTHELLO/DESDEMONA*. Hayes's long association with Washington National Opera includes serving as Assistant Director to Francesca Zambello (*Candide*, *The Little Prince*) and E. Loren Meeker (*Don Giovanni*). In recent seasons, Hayes has created new productions for Miami Music Festival, Opera Mississippi, and Winter Opera St. Louis; beyond the rehearsal hall, Hayes has presented courses and lectures at the University of Maryland, Temple University, University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, and Webster University.



**RHYS BURGESS** (Troy, MI), is a DMA candidate at the University of Maryland studying with Rita Sloan. This summer he will join the Janiec Opera Company at Brevard Music Center as a staff pianist and coach. Last season he was an inaugural member of the UdeM-McGill Piano-Vocal Accompaniment Residency in Montréal, Québec along with five other international pianists, as well as a vocal piano fellow at the Aspen Summer Music Festival. Burgess has accompanied the Maryland Opera Studio in their recent production of *Albert Herring* and is thrilled to do the same for the upcoming *Florenzia en el Amazonas*. Passionate about French music, his DMA dissertation research will highlight the mélodies of Jacques Leguerney and include the world premiere recording of eleven previously unpublished songs.



**JESSICA HARIKA** (Richmond, VA) is a DMA candidate/graduate assistant, and recently Assistant Directed *TWA & Don Giovanni* with the Maryland Opera Studio. She currently serves as Artistic & Co-Executive Director of River City Opera, a company she co-founded in 2019 in her hometown. Apart from directing opera and theater ranging from the traditional to the experimental, Harika has also produced comedy and cabaret shows at The Pit NYC and The Duplex Cabaret Theater. These include *The Wagner Project*, a genre crossing re-imagination of Wagner's *Wesendonck Lieder* with soprano/guitarist Lacey Jo Benter and pianist Brent Funderburk, and *Rita Libretto is: The Ring Cycle*, a one-woman sock puppet musical comedy show with soprano/comedienne Rebecca Kidnie. Recent operas directed include: *Il ritorno d'Ulisse in Patria* with dell'Arte Opera Ensemble, *La bohème* with Capitol Opera Richmond, and with City Lyric Opera: *L'elisir d'amore*, *Roméo et Juliette: an Opera[ish]*, and *Gianni Schicchi*.



**CHRIS ALFONSO** (Miami, FL) *Antonio López de Santa Anna*, tenor, is a 1st-year student in the Maryland Opera Studio studying with Professor Gran Wilson. Alfonso received his Bachelor of Music in Vocal Performance at the University of Miami's Frost School of Music, studying with Dr. Frank Ragsdale. Undergraduate credits include the role of Adam in a partial concert performance of Anthony Davis' *Lilith* with the composer and Ensemble Ibis, as well as the roles of Basilio and Don Curzio in Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro*. Concurrently, he sang with Seraphic Fire on their concert tour "First | Last"; performed the tenor solo in *Carmina Burana* with the Frost Symphony Orchestra, and sang the role of Sam in Joe Illick's *Stone Soup* with Florida Grand Opera. This past Fall, Alfonso made his Maryland Opera Studio debut in their Fall production of Benjamin Britten's *Albert Herring* as Mayor Upfold.



**WALLACE BROWN** (Vienna, VA) *John O'Riley*, baritone, is a first-year Masters student in the Maryland Opera Studio at the University of Maryland. He received his Bachelor of Music in Vocal Performance from the Hayes School of Music at Appalachian State University where he studied with Dr. Joseph Amaya. Notable roles include Top (*The Tender Land*) and The Sorcerer (*Dido and Aeneas*) with Appalachian Opera Theatre (Appalachian State University), Perichaud (*La Rondine*) with Opera in the Ozarks, and The Speaker/Second Armored Man (*Die Zauberflöte*). He has also performed as the baritone soloist in Faure's *Requiem*. He was a finalist for Appalachian State University's Hayes School of Music 2022 Orchestra Concerto Competition. Brown recently placed first in the TBB Advanced Classical category at the Maryland/DC chapter NATS National Student Auditions. He is a student of John Holiday.



**KAT NORMAN** (Albuquerque, NM) *María Inés de la Paz García*, soprano, graduated with her B.M. in Vocal Performance from the University of New Mexico and went on to attend the University of Texas, San Antonio, where she graduated with a M.M. in Vocal Performance and Pedagogy. She is currently pursuing a M.M. at the University of Maryland with the Maryland Opera Studio. A lyric soprano, Norman sang Susannah from Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro* in the UNM Opera Theatre Scenes Program, Dorabella in Mozart's *Così fan tutte*, First Witch in Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas* and Clara in Pasatieri's *Signor Deluso*. Norman made her UTSA debut with *Aunt Helen*, a Monodrama by Monica Pierce, which had its American premiere in 2021. She has gone on to sing Pamina in Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte*, Lucette/Cendrillon in Massenet's *Cendrillon*, and Desiree Armfeldt in Sondheim's *A Little Night Music*. She currently studies voice with Dr. Teri Bickham.



**NICOLE PLUMMER** (Brookline, NH) *Le Limbe*, mezzo soprano, is a first year Master's student in the Maryland Opera Studio, studying with Delores Ziegler. This past summer she was a 2023 Emerging Artist at the Seagle Festival where she performed Maria Luisa (*With Blood, With Ink*) and Chorus/Stephano cover (*Roméo et Juliette*). She received her Bachelor of Music in Vocal Performance and French from the Frost School of Music at the University of Miami where she studied with Robynne Redmon. At Frost, Plummer performed as Cherubino (*Le nozze di Figaro*), La Soeur Cadette (*Les Malheurs d'Orphée*), and was featured in numerous scenes and concert programs. As a winner of the Mirabell Competition, she was seen in recital at the Schloss Mirabell in Salzburg, Austria in 2022. Plummer was selected for Seraphic Fire's Ensemble Artist apprenticeship program and has performed as the mezzo-soprano soloist in Saint-Saëns' *Oratorio de Noel* and Vivaldi's *Magnificat*.



**LOURDES RODRIGUEZ** (Hyattsville, MD) *Pueblo, soprano*, is a first-year Master's student at the Maryland Opera Studio, where she studies with Dr. Teri Bickham. Rodriguez is a recent graduate of Shenandoah Conservatory, where she studied with Dr. Fotina Naumenko. At the Vienna Summer Music Festival in 2022, she covered Zerlina in Mozart's *Don Giovanni* and appeared in the world premieres of *Pluto* by Michael J. Polo and *Mondo Novo* by Paul Richards as Venus and Bird Peddler. At Shenandoah Conservatory, Rodriguez sang Cobweb in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* by Benjamin Britten, Angelina in *Trial by Jury* by Gilbert and Sullivan, Titine in *Le Pauvre Eugénie* by Germaine Tailleferre, Susanna in a scene from *Le nozze di Figaro*, Dorinda in a scene from *Orlando* by Handel, and the Soprano role in *Hydrogen Jukebox* by Phillip Glass.



**NURIA SHIN** (Cary, NC) *Ximena, soprano*, is a first-year Master's student at the Maryland Opera Studio. She received her Bachelor of Music in Voice Performance from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill where she studied with Dr. Marc Callahan and Dr. Melissa Martin. During her time at UNC, she's performed in roles that include Countess (*Le nozze di Figaro*), Mother (*Hansel and Gretel*), Ottavia (*L'incoronazione di Poppea*), Humility (*Ordo Virtutum*), and Girl's Grandma (*Atlas*). Other roles include Titania (*The Loathly Lady*) and Mimi cover (*La bohème*). As a concert soloist, Shin has performed with the Greensboro Symphony, NC Triangle Wind Ensemble, and UNC Baroque Ensemble. Additionally, she actively competes in competitions. Most recently, Shin placed first in the Advanced Classical-Treble Voices category at the Maryland/DC Chapter NATS competition. She currently studies with Dr. Teri Bickham.



**NOAH MOND** (Stony Brook, NY) *Manifesto, bass*, is a first-year Master's student at the Maryland Opera Studio at the University of Maryland. He received his Bachelor of Musical Arts in Voice Performance with a minor in Computer Science from Vanderbilt University's Blair School of Music, where he studied with Amy Jarman. His notable roles include the Vicar (*Albert Herring*) with the Maryland Opera Studio, Guglielmo (*Così fan Tutte*) at Vanderbilt University, Seneca (*L'Incoronazione di Poppea*) with the Trentino Music Festival and Marco (*Gianni Schicchi*) at the Chautauqua Opera Conservatory. This year he won the Encouragement Award at the Metropolitan Opera Laffont Competition DMV District. He has worked on multiple opera world premieres, including his operatic directorial debut this past April. His performance of Juliana Hall's AHAB, a monodrama, was commended by Hall for his "stellar singing and such wonderful dramatic portrayal of the character."



**KEVIN M. WEBB** (Detroit, MI) *Solomon, tenor*, is a first year Master's Student in the Maryland Opera Studio where he studies with Kevin Short. Webb is a recent graduate of Morgan State University where he studied with American soprano Marquita Lister. In recital, he has performed works by Poulenc, Bizet, Handel, Mozart, Vivaldi, Puccini, Burleigh, Hogan, Smith-Moore, and Grant-Still. At Opera at Morgan State, Webb performed the role of King Kaspar in *Amahl and the Night Visitors*, Billy in *There Was a Boy*, and excerpts from *Carmen* and *Madama Butterfly*. In the spring of 2020, Webb was selected to go on tour with The American Spiritual Ensemble as a chorister and soloist however the tour was cut short due to the Covid 19 pandemic. In February of 2023, Webb was invited to perform on Good Morning America as a representative of The Shared Voices program under The Denyce Graves Foundation.

# UPCOMING MOS PERFORMANCES

## **FLORENCIA EN EL AMAZONAS**

**SATURDAY, APRIL 13–SUNDAY, APRIL 21 • Various Times**

Journey down the Amazon River aboard the steamboat El Dorado in Daniel Catán's opera that explores themes of longing, self-discovery and the connection between art and the natural world. Inspired by the magical realism found in the works of Gabriel Garcia Márquez, *Florencia en el Amazonas* follows the story of Florencia Grimaldi, a famous soprano returning home to sing at the opera house in Manaus with hopes that the performance will attract her love Cristóbal, a butterfly hunter who has gone missing in the jungle.

## **OPERA AL FRESCO**

**THURSDAY, APRIL 25, 2024 • 12:30PM**

***NO TICKETS REQUIRED***

Drop in for some light opera in The Clarice's expansive indoor Grand Pavilion. This afternoon audience favorite offers a casual preview of the Maryland Opera Studio's scene study performances scheduled for the following week.

## **OPERA SCENE STUDY**

**THURSDAY, MAY 2, 2024 • 7:30PM**

**FRIDAY, MAY 3, 2024 • 7:30PM**

***NO TICKETS REQUIRED***

After a year of deconstructing their craft and sculpting it from the ground up, Maryland Opera Studio first-year students are paired in operatic scenes from a wide variety of repertory. Accompanied only by piano and minimal props, these performances give our young artists a chance to shine in the purest of forms.