

**WORLD PREMIERE**



**MUSIC BY SHAWN E. OKPEBHOLO**  
**LIBRETTO BY MARK CAMPBELL**

Commissioned by  
Chicago Opera Theater's Vanguard Initiative

*featuring*

**BON APPÉTIT!**

**THE JULIA CHILD OPERA**

**O** NASHVILLE  
**PERA** 24  
25

**THE ANN & FRANK BUMSTEAD SEASON**

# THE COOK-OFF

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Nashville Opera continues to offer innovative programming of new and exciting operas. With this weekend's ninth Nashville Opera world premiere of Shawn E. Okpebholo and Mark Campbell's *THE COOK-OFF*, opera gains a modern work with a tuneful score, comic situations and characters, and a witty libretto.

It makes the perfect entrée to go along with Lee Hoiby's *BON APPÉTIT!*, a delicious appetizer of an opera that sets the legendary American chef Julia Child and her *Le Gâteau au Chocolat L'Éminence Brune* to music.

The wonderful score for *THE COOK-OFF* is composed by Shawn E. Okpebholo and features an incredibly smart, character-driven libretto by Pulitzer Prize winner Mark Campbell. The opera highlights the unifying entry point that food offers to anyone in different and seemingly dissimilar cultures. It is the perfect choice to further Nashville Opera's mission to engage the large, and ever-growing diverse audiences of Nashville, as well as celebrating the important role that specific foods play in the many communities that make our city unique.

Although *THE COOK-OFF* is at heart a comic opera, the show also offers a message about the great contributions diverse cultures have made to the ever changing fabric of the United States.

We are excited to present a comic work to our audience in a time when so many contemporary operas feel unrelentingly grim and heavy. *THE COOK-OFF*, while light, funny, and entertaining, also offers a relevant message between the laughs. With this multilayered approach to storytelling, it's far more pertinent than what may be apparent by a quick glance at the opera's comic façade. The opera's underlying warning of the threat of historic and cultural erasure is presented in such a way as never to become preachy, however it does call out this ongoing danger to representation and unity.

Because of the opera's excellent music, dramatic urgency, comedic set pieces, and the themes of cultural contribution, *THE COOK-OFF* is an opera that should offer great appeal to all of our audience members. As one character in the show states "Food is Love," and food is a language that can transcend and unify our differences.

Thank you for joining us tonight as Nashville Opera presents the world premiere of Shawn E. Okpebholo and Mark Campbell's *THE COOK-OFF*.

JOHN HOOMES  
CEO & ARTISTIC DIRECTOR



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Music by Lee Hoiby  
Libretto by **Julia Child**, Adapted by **Mark Shulgasser**  
Director: **Emily Pulley**  
Pianist: **Jonathan King**

JULIA CHILD..... Emily Pulley

## WORLD PREMIERE

# THE COOK-OFF

Music by **Shawn E. Okpebholo**  
Libretto by **Mark Campbell**

Commissioned by **Chicago Opera Theater's Vanguard Initiative**

Director: **John Hoomes**  
Conductor: **Dean Williamson**

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*This premiere production of **The Cook-Off and Bon Appétit!** is dedicated to legendary Nashville restaurateur **Randy Rayburn**.*



*John Randall "Randy" Rayburn 1950 - 2024*

*Thank you to the **Randy Rayburn School of Culinary Arts, Hospitality & Tourism Management** at **Nashville State Community College** for their assistance with culinary props.*

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1995-Present

### Nashville Opera

*The Lighthouse, Samson and Delilah, Elmer Gantry, Aida, Don Giovanni, Andrea Chénier, The Fall of the House of Usber, The Girl of the Golden West, The Difficulty of Crossing a Field, The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat, Romulus Hunt, Florencia en el Amazonas, Hydrogen Jukebox, Così fan tutte, Glory Denied, Three Way, María de Buenos Aires, Tales of Hoffmann, The Cradle Will Rock, Beach Party Cinderella, Favorite Son, Rigoletto Noir, Das Rheingold, La Bohème, The Medium, Stuck Elevator, The Pirates of Penzance, Pagliacci, The Man Who Mistook His Wife For a Hat, Florencia en el Amazonas, The Magic Flute, Carmen*

### Recent

*La Traviata* - Opera North Carolina  
*Die Fledermaus* - Opera Pensacola  
*Stuck Elevator* - Hawaii Opera Theatre

### Upcoming

*Florencia en el Amazonas* - Opera North Carolina  
*Pagliacci* - Opera Pensacola



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Nashville Opera Music Director  
2015-Present

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*Romeo and Juliet, Samson and Delilah, The Girl of the Golden West, The Difficulty of Crossing a Field, Cinderella, The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat, The Barber of Seville, Romulus Hunt, Florencia en el Amazonas, Hydrogen Jukebox, Three Way, María de Buenos Aires, Madame Butterfly, Beach Party Cinderella, Rigoletto Noir, Das Rheingold, La Bohème, The Medium, Stuck Elevator, The Pirates of Penzance, Pagliacci, The Man Who Mistook His Wife For a Hat, Florencia en el Amazonas, The Magic Flute, Carmen*

### Recent

*Il barbiere di Siviglia* - Opera Saratoga  
*Don Giovanni* - Inland Opera Northwest  
*Stuck Elevator* - Hawaii Opera Theatre

### Upcoming

*H.M.S. Pinafore* - Nashville Opera  
*Lucia: The Bride of Lammermoor* - Nashville Opera



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*Julia Child / Beryl Bennett*

EMILY PULLEY

Mezzo-Soprano

**Nashville Opera**

Ruth in *The Pirates of Penzance*, 2023

Madeline Mitchell in *Three Decembers*, 2018

Despina in *Così fan tutte*, 2016

**Recent**

Witch/Mother in *Hansel and Gretel* - Eugene Opera

Director/Old Lady in *Candide* - Wichita Grand Opera

Ježibaba in *Rusalka* - Opera Orlando

**Upcoming**

Stage Director/Little Buttercup in *H.M.S. Pinafore* - Nashville Opera



*Kenny Kincaid*

CRAIG IRVIN

Baritone

**Nashville Opera**

Private Willis in *Iolanthe*, 2006

**Recent**

Give in *La Callisto* - Glimmerglass Opera

Scarpia in *Tosca* - Madison Opera

Jack Torrance in *The Shining* - Atlanta Opera

**Upcoming**

Maximillian in *Candide* - Opera Tampa

Thalasso in *Pigeon Keeper* - Opera Parallele

Soloist in *Carmina Burana* - Des Moines Symphony



*Ivy Sweet*

AMY OWENS

Soprano

**Nashville Opera**

Debut

**Recent**

Johanna in *Sweeney Todd* - Utah Opera

Soloist in *Exsultate Jubilate* - Tallahassee Symphony

Cunegonde in *Candide* - Wichita Grand Opera

**Upcoming**

Recital - Moab Music Festival

Soloist in *Carmina Burana* - Des Moines Symphony

Recital - Brooklyn Art Song Society

# ARTISTS



*Kendra Smith*

REHANNA THELWELL

Mezzo-Soprano

Nashville Opera

Debut

Recent

Hippolyta in *Midsummer Night's Dream* - Atlanta Opera

Forrester's Wife/Owl in *The Cunning Little Vixen* - Detroit Opera

Angela Rose in *The Listeners* - Opera Philadelphia

Upcoming

Mother Goose in *The Rake's Progress* - Opera Omaha

Mistress Quickly in *Falstaff* - Portland Opera



*Alvaro Mendez*

JEHU OTERO

Tenor

Nashville Opera

Debut

Recent

Soloist in iSing Festival Opera Gala - Chengdu, China

Orfeo (Cover) in *L'Orfeo* - Santa Fe Opera

Rodolfo in *La Bohème* - Borderland Art Foundation

Upcoming

Soloist in *Echoes of Ancient Tang Poems* - Macao Symphony

Soloist in *Echoes of Ancient Tang Poems* - Hubei Symphony



*Floor Manager*

LAUREN BERST

Nashville Opera

Debut

Recent

Harriet in *POTUS: Or, Behind Every Great Dumbass Are Seven Women Trying to Keep Him Alive* - Nashville Repertory Theater

Molly in *Megg the Egg* - The Theater Bug

Elizabeth Luke in *The Welkin* - Nashville Story Garden

Upcoming

*Human Resources* with Nashville Story Garden at OZ Arts



*Assistant Floor Manager*  
**BRIAN RUSSELL**

**Nashville Opera**

Mr. Williamson / Magistrate in *The Difficulty of Crossing a Field* - 2012

Ivan / Frosch in *Die Fledermaus* - 2016

Dr. Specialist in *The Cradle Will Rock* - 2019

Narrator in *Cinderella* - 2021

Temple Priest in *The Magic Flute* - 2024

**Recent**

Verges/Friar Frances in *Much Ado About Nothing* - Nashville Shakespeare Festival

Launce in *Two Gentlemen of Verona* - Conasauga Shakespeare Coalition

Friar Laurence in *Romeo and Juliet* - Conasauga Shakespeare Coalition

**Upcoming**

Jacob Marley in *A Christmas Carol* - Nashville Repertory Theatre

## NASHVILLE OPERA ORCHESTRA

Dean Williamson, Conductor

Anne Dickson Rogers, Contractor

**FIRST VIOLIN**

Christina McGann

**VIOLA**

Elizabeth Lamb

**CELLO**

Sari Reist

**BASS**

Craig E. Nelson

**FLUTE/PICCOLO**

Deanna Little

**SOPRANO, ALTO, BARITONE SAXOPHONE**

Matthew Younglove

**PERCUSSION**

Scot Corey

**PIANO**

Jonathan King



## *Production Stage Manager*

SARAH ACKERMAN

### **Nashville Opera**

*Susannah*, 2017; *Amahl and the Night Visitors/Pepito*, 2019; *Favorite Son*, 2022; *Stuck Elevator*, 2023; *Pagliacci*, 2023; *The Man Who Mistook His Wife For a Hat*, 2023.

### **Recent**

*Fat Ham* – Detroit Public Theatre

*It Happened in Key West* – Fulton Theatre

*Detroit '67* – Detroit Public Theatre



## *Lighting Design*

BARRY STEELE

### **Nashville Opera**

*Der Rosenkavalier*, *Salome*, *The Lighthouse*, *La Voix Humaine*, *Lucia di Lammermoor*, *Faust*, *Surrender Road*, *Turandot* (2006, 2015), *Romeo and Juliet*, *Madame Butterfly*, *Samson and Delilah*, *The Fall of the House of Usber*, *Andrea Chénier*, *The Girl of the Golden West*, *The Difficulty of Crossing a Field*, *The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat* (2013, 2023), *Otello*, *La Bobème* (2014, 2022), *Romulus Hunt*, *Florencia en el Amazonas* (2015, 2024), *Hydrogen Jukebox*, *Don Giovanni*, *Glory Denied*, *Three Way*, *Carmen* (2017, 2024), *María de Buenos Aires*, *Susannah*, *Tales of Hoffmann*, *The Cradle Will Rock*, *Rigoletto Noir*, *Das Rheingold*, *The Medium*, *Stuck Elevator*, *The Pirates of Penzance*, *Pagliacci*

### **Recent Designs**

*The Barber of Seville* - Arizona Opera

*La Bobème* - Florida Grand Opera

*Romeo et Juliette* - Arizona Opera

### **Upcoming Designs**

*Florencia en el Amazonas* - North Carolina Opera

*Don Giovanni* - Madison Opera





*Costume Designer*  
**PAM LISENBY**

**Nashville Opera**

*Susannah, The Pearl Fishers, Salome, Amabl and the Night Visitors, Hansel and Gretel, The Difficulty of Crossing a Field, The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat (2013), Romulus Hunt, Hydrogren Jukebox, Maria de Buenos Aires.*

**Recent**

*Carolyn Dawn Johnson - Canadian Tour (2024), PostModern Jukebox - USA Tour (2024), Dollar General Convention Show (2024), Russell Dickerson - Good Morning America (2024), Jackson Dean - CMA Fest (2024), Taylor Swift Eras Tour (2023), Brandy Clark - Americana Awards (2023), Brenda Lee & Trisha Yearwood - ABC Opry Christmas Special (2023)*



*Wig & Makeup Designer*  
**SONDRA NOTTINGHAM**

**Nashville Opera**

*La Bobème, Florencia en el Amazonas, Salome, Elmer Gantry, Il Trovatore, The Student Prince, The Fall of the House of Usber, Rigoletto, The Girl of the Golden West, Madama Butterfly, The Difficulty of Crossing a Field, The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat, Romulus Hunt, Glory Denied, Tales of Hoffmann, The Cradle Will Rock, Madama Butterfly, Pepito, Amabl and the Night Visitors, Turn of the Screw, Beach Party Cinderella, One Vote Won, Favorite Son, Rigoletto Noir, Das Rheingold, La Bobème, The Medium, Stuck Elevator, The Pirates of Penzance, Pagliacci, The Pearl Fishers, Salome, Amabl and the Night Visitors, Hansel and Gretel, The Difficulty of Crossing a Field, The Man Who Mistook His Wife for a Hat (2013), Romulus Hunt, Hydrogren Jukebox, Maria de Buenos Aires.*

**Recent**

*Abduction from the Seraglio, Ariadne auf Naxos - St. Petersburg Opera  
Das Rheingold, La Traviata - North Carolina Opera  
Turandot, Dead Man Walking - Shreveport Opera*



# COMING SOON



**JANUARY 24 - 26  
TPAC POLK**



**APRIL 3 + 5  
TPAC JACKSON**

## *Goldie B. Locks*

**& THE THREE SINGING BEARS**

OFFENBACH/DAVIES  
DIRECTED BY  
MEGAN MURPHY CHAMBERS

**NASHVILLE  
OPERA**  
ON TOUR  
2025

