Right Hawaii, Left Hawaii, Everywhere Hawaii!

One can only wonder what three Jewish artists in Berlin were thinking when they decided to write an operetta set in Hawaii. The composer Paul Ábrahám, and the writers Fritz Löhner-Beda and Alfred Grünwald, had never set foot there, but Hawaii inspired them to write one of their best shows. Ábrahám, who had made his mark a year earlier with Viktoria und ihr Husar, was undaunted by the challenge of writing a show that would match Viktoria's success. And what a show he wrote! The Flower of Hawaii spawned a slew of hit records and made Ábrahám a wealthy man. The public could not get enough of songs like My Little Boy, My Golden Baby, and Beautiful Pearl of the South Seas. The music is a unique blend of American jazz and Viennese operetta, while the plot is a healthy serving of old-fashioned operetta hijinks. Several love stories develop simultaneously amid the ever-present complications of mistaken identity and misalliance. This endlessly catchy score is an absolute joy!

This is the second operetta that we are presenting as part of our Reclaimed Voices Series, our look at the Jewish composers and librettists who were persecuted, exiled, or perished at the hands of the Nazis. We were first drawn to Ábrahám, his infectious music, and his remarkable life story when we wrote our Operetta in Exile concert in 2013. In 2014 we gave the American premiere of Ábrahám's 1932 jazz operetta, Ball at the Savoy. We were astonished not only at the richness of his orchestrations, his skillful vocal writing and storytelling, but at the whimsical jazz elements that seemed so distinctly American. We were hooked. And now, five years later, here we are with The Flower of Hawaii. We couldn’t be more thrilled to present this unjustly neglected work. We know that Chicago audiences will appreciate this fantastic show.

Last October, our Forbidden Opera concert included the music of Erich Korngold. With our Korngold Initiative, we are raising money to bring Erich Wolfgang Korngold's last opera, Die Kathrin, to Chicago for its American premiere. Please visit us at folksoperetta.org

We are also performing our Operetta in Exile concert on July 11 at Unity Temple in Oak Park, IL. Find out more by visiting folksoperetta.org.

As our company grows and our mission expands, we rely on the generous support of our patrons to help us continue to bring these neglected works to life. Be part of the Folks Operetta experience and donate by going to folksoperetta.org. Like us on Facebook or follow us on Twitter @folksoperetta.

Gerald Frantzen

MESSAGE FROM THE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR
You cannot undo the injustice of the lost lives. of the cruelty. But in the case of the composers, you can do the one thing that would have meant the most to them, which is to perform their music.”
-James Conlon, conductor and founder of the OREL Foundation

These poignant words resonate very deeply with us here at Folks Operetta. Our mission, to recover, restore, preserve, and present the operas and operettas that were suppressed during the Second World War, is more relevant than ever. In our time, we bear witness to a world that seems to be forgetting the lessons of one of the most tragic episodes of human history. We are breathing new life into operettas and operas that have been dangerously close to disappearing. The work we do is a reminder of what is lost when prejudice gains the upper hand. This is the basis of our Reclaimed Voices Series. The series focuses on reclaiming and restoring the works of the Jewish composers and librettists who were persecuted or exiled during the Second World War.

Their story has become our story.

**RECLAIMED VOICES SERIES**

**DONATE AT FOLKSOPERETTA.ORG**
THE FLOWER OF HAWAII
Operetta by Paul Ábrahám

CAST

Prince Lilo-Taro .............................................................. Rodell Rosel
Princess Laia/Suzanne .................................................. Marisa Buchheit
Captain Reginald Stone ............................................... Nick Pulikowski
Bessie Worthington .................................................... Teaira Burge
John Buffy ........................................................................ William Roberts
Jimmy Fox ......................................................................... Ryan Trent Oldham
Raka ................................................................................ Angela Yu
Governor Lloyd Harrison .............................................. Jerry Miller
Bobby Flipps/Kaluna ...................................................... Benjamin Burney
Sunny Hill/Cameraman/Captain Stone Cover ............... Benjamin Kawsky
Kanako-Hilo/Prince Lilo-Taro Cover .............................. Joachim Luis
Director JB ...................................................................... Gerald Frantzen
Poppy/Dancer ................................................................... Jordan Beyeler
Billy/Sailor/Dancer ....................................................... Ivory Leonard
Okelani/Dancer/Asst. Choro .......................................... Yasaye McKeever
Iris/Dancer ...................................................................... Athena Kopulos
Daisy/Dancer/Bessie Cover .......................................... Sarah Ruth Mikulski
Perroquet/Hattie ............................................................ Rose Guccione
Halia/Dancer ................................................................. Clara Imon Pedtke
Ailani/Dancer ................................................................... Elena Avila
Lily/Dancer ....................................................................... Cydney Washington
Kainoa/Key Grip ............................................................ Julian Lee-Zacheis
Young Princess Laia ..................................................... Olivia Rose Cruz
Young Prince Lilo-Taro ................................................... Henry Gillman

ORCHESTRA

Concert Master .............................................................. Rachel Brown
1st Violin .......................................................................... Maya Shiraiishi
1st Violin .......................................................................... Agnieszka Likos
2nd Violin .......................................................................... Hersh Glagov
2nd Violin .......................................................................... Elisabeth Johnson
Viola .................................................................................. Tracy Newhouse
Cello .................................................................................. Patrycja Likos
Bass ................................................................................... Brett Lewis
Clarinet 1/Sax 1 ............................................................. Daniel Williams
Clarinet 2/Sax 2 ............................................................. Garrett Matlock
Clarinet 3/Sax 3 ............................................................. Richard Zili
Flute .................................................................................. Dalia Chin
Trumpet 1 .......................................................................... Mark Haworth
Trumpet 2 .......................................................................... Sam Veren
Trombone .......................................................................... Matt Martin
**SYNOPSIS**

**Act I**

A Hollywood director is shooting a film on location in Hawaii. The American governor of Hawaii is planning a garden party in honor of the director, cast and crew. Laia, a Hawaiian princess, has been living in exile in Paris since childhood. Lilo-Taro, a Hawaiian prince, has returned after a long absence. Laia and Lilo-Taro were betrothed to each other as children. The governor is hoping to arrange a marriage between his niece, Bessie, and Lilo-Taro. Buffy, the governor’s assistant, is smitten with Bessie and has other ideas. Hawaiian leader Kanako-Hilo tells Lilo-Taro that Laia is returning to Hawaii and that they are planning to make her queen. Lilo-Taro is dubious about the plan. Laia arrives in Hawaii disguised as Suzanne Provence, a French singer. She is accompanied by Suzanne’s boyfriend, Jimmy, an American singer. The real Suzanne Provence is in Monte Carlo. Jimmy explains that he is keeping tabs on Suzanne with a device called an Amoroscope, which will make a noise if Suzanne ever flirts with another man. U.S. Navy Captain Stone tells the governor that he is keeping tabs on Suzanne with a device called an Amoroscope, which will make a noise if Suzanne ever flirts with another man. U.S. Navy Captain Stone tells the governor that he is keeping tabs on Suzanne with a device called an Amoroscope, which will make a noise if Suzanne ever flirts with another man. U.S. Navy Captain Stone tells the governor that he is keeping tabs on Suzanne with a device called an Amoroscope, which will make a noise if Suzanne ever flirts with another man. U.S. Navy Captain Stone tells the governor that he is keeping tabs on Suzanne with a device called an Amoroscope, which will make a noise if Suzanne ever flirts with another man. U.S. Navy Captain Stone tells the governor that he is keeping tabs on Suzanne with a device called an Amoroscope, which will make a noise if Suzanne ever flirts with another man. U.S. Navy Captain Stone tells the governor that he is keeping tabs on Suzanne with a device called an Amoroscope, which will make a noise if Suzanne ever flirts with another man. U.S. Navy Captain Stone tells the governor that he is keeping tabs on Suzanne with a device called an Amoroscope, which will make a noise if Suzanne ever flirts with another man.
The Flower of Hawaii

SYNOPSIS cont.

shows an interest in Lilo-Taro, to Buffy's dismay. Lilo-Taro recognizes that the woman disguised as Suzanne Provence is really Laia. He announces this to Captain Stone and the others. Lilo-Taro realizes that he still loves her. The two of them enter the palace.

Act II

Jimmy flirts with Raka. She reveals to him that the upcoming flower ceremony is actually going to be Laya's coronation as Queen of Hawaii; that the Americans will never allow it; and that Jimmy will be in trouble for having brought Laia back to Hawaii. Kanako-Hilo explains to Laia that she will not only become queen today, but will also marry Lilo-Taro. Laia is having second thoughts. Lilo-Taro tells Laia that she will not be forced to do anything against her will. Captain Stone suspects that there will be an insurrection but orders his men to act natural at the party. Stone is informed that if Laia becomes queen, the sanctuary status of the palace will be revoked and Laia will be under arrest. He warns Laia that he will have to arrest her if she goes through with the coronation. She tells him that she wants to be queen, if only for a minute. Buffy gives Bessie the perfume. She puts some of it on and pretends to fall in love with the next three men she sees. The ceremony begins. Kanako-Hilo places the royal cloak on Laia's shoulders. He asks Laia if she is ready to marry Lilo-Taro. Stone and Lilo-Taro ask Laia to look into her heart to see which one of them she really loves. The governor brings a document for Laia to sign that says she agrees to renounce her claim to the throne. She refuses. Stone announces that he will resign his commission rather than arrest her. Horrified, Laia signs the document. Lilo-Taro sees that Laia has given up her throne because she loves Captain Stone. He summons the boat that will take him out into “the eternal spring,” meaning death at sea. When Laia becomes aware of Lilo-Taro's sacrifice, she is overcome with love for him.

Act III

A hotel bar in Monte Carlo. Bessie is sad about what happened to Lilo-Taro. Jimmy tells her that Stone saved Lilo-Taro's life and that both men are in Monte Carlo. Bessie tells Buffy that she'll marry him if he can get it in writing that neither Stone nor Lilo-Taro want to marry her. Suzanne enters. She reveals that she has met Captain Stone, but that he thought she was Laia. Jimmy tells Perroquet, the waiter, that he and Raka are married, but he fears that Suzanne will be angry when she finds out. The thing to do is to catch Suzanne in a compromising position. Perroquet explains that the private dining rooms with transparent walls will be the best way to do this. Stone signs the document saying he is not interested romantically in Bessie. He and Suzanne go to dinner in a private room. Jimmy and Raka see them there. Buffy gets Lilo-Taro to sign the document regarding Bessie. He then brings Laya and Lilo-Taro back together. Buffy shows the documents to Bessie, and they fall into each other's arms.

PROGRAM NOTES

In Weimar Germany, and especially in Berlin, jazz was all the rage. The post-World War I generation wanted music that was free of the stuffy conventions of the past, and jazz fit the bill perfectly. In 1930, a Hungarian composer named Paul Ábrahám introduced the first jazz operetta, Victoria and her Hussar, and the German public went wild for it. Ábrahám's catchy melodies were scored for an orchestra augmented by a jazz band, including steel guitar, piano, drum set, guitar, and banjo. Within months of his arrival in Berlin, he was a wealthy man. He bought a rococo-style villa in Berlin, where he gave
program notes cont.

frequent, legendary “goulash parties.” At the same time, he continued to work at a frenetic pace, composing and conducting operetta and film scores.

His next operetta, *The Flower of Hawaii* (1931), was an even bigger success. As he had done in *Victoria and her Hussar*, Ábrahám collaborated with Alfred Grünwald and Fritz Löhner-Beda, the two top librettists of the time. Of course, none of them had ever visited Hawaii. The story was loosely based on the life of Princess Kai‘ulani, who ruled Hawaii from 1891 to 1893. Her reign was cut short after she tried to write a new constitution that would restore the monarchy and the voting rights of poor Hawaiians. In the hands of Ábrahám’s librettists, this episode of Hawaiian history was transformed into an evening of typical operetta froth: A Hawaiian princess, who has been living in exile in Paris, returns to Hawaii, where a group of nationalists wants to restore her to the throne. They also plan for her to marry a Hawaiian prince to whom she was betrothed as a child. However, on the long ocean voyage back to Hawaii, our princess has fallen in love with an American navy captain…

The show parodies the U.S. occupation of Hawaii but does not address the issue of colonialism in any serious way. The plot was a vehicle for ten great musical numbers, all of which had more to do with Weimar-era Berlin than with Hawaii. It was the world that the composer and librettists knew, transposed to an “exotic” setting. Of course, this practice was nothing new to operetta—or to opera, for that matter. The evocative score is peppered with the latest Berlin dancehall trends, as well as the sounds of the South Seas—or at least what Ábrahám imagined the South Seas should sound like. The show was a hit in Berlin, and the record sales made him even wealthier.

At the same time, of course, a storm was brewing. Ábrahám was harassed by Nazis as he went about his work in the film studio. His days in Berlin were numbered.

The premiere of *Ball at the Savoy*, Ábrahám’s third and final Berlin operetta, took place on 23 December 1932. That evening at the Metropol Theater was arguably the last major cultural event of Weimar Germany. It was a triumph, but subsequent performances were disrupted by Nazi thugs.

Barely one month after the premiere of *Ball at the Savoy*, Adolf Hitler became Chancellor of Germany. The show was forced to close, and Ábrahám, along with the stars of the show, had to leave the country in haste. Ábrahám left a number of unpublished song manuscripts in a safe at his villa; his butler, to whom he had given the key, allegedly sold these manuscripts to non-Jewish composers who published them under their own names and were credited with hit songs.

Ábrahám spent the next five years living and composing in Budapest and Vienna. In 1938, with the Anschluss, he was no longer welcome in Vienna; in 1939, with Fascism on the rise in Hungary, he was forced to flee Budapest as well. Ábrahám went first to Paris; then, as the Nazis approached, he fled once again, first to Havana, eventually landing in New York. Ábrahám’s time in New York was marked by professional disappointments. His dreams of success in Hollywood or on Broadway came to naught. For an American public used to a steady diet of Gershwin and Cole Porter, Abraham’s work held no novelty.

At the same time, Ábrahám was showing signs of increasing mental illness. In 1946, he wandered out onto Madison Avenue and—wearing his customary white gloves—began to conduct an imaginary orchestra. As a result of this breakdown, he was taken to Creedmoor Mental Hospital, where he remained for the next ten years.
the war over and Ábrahám’s music once again popular in Germany, the Paul Ábrahám Committee was formed to raise the necessary funds to bring him back to Germany. Arriving in Hamburg, he was reunited with his wife, whom he had not seen since before the war. The two of them lived quietly in Hamburg until the composer’s death in 1960. He still believed he was in New York and wrote to friends of impending premieres of his latest shows.

Ábrahám lived the last 20 years of his life in a sadly diminished state, a far cry from his Berlin days. He had breathed new life into the art form of operetta and pointed it in a new direction. His career was cut short by circumstances beyond his control. But if his genius was extinguished too soon, how fortunate we are that we can still enjoy its remarkable creations.

Hersh Glagov

**CAST BIOGRAPHIES**

**Angela Yu (Raka)** is praised for her “effervescent stage presence” and “sparkling high notes”. She earned her BA in Vocal Performance at Carthage College, where she charmed audiences in *Don Giovanni* (Zerlina) and *The Old Maid and the Thief* (Laetitia). A champion of new works, Ms. Yu collaborated with leading tenor William Lewis and the Franco-American Vocal Academy in one of the first staged productions of Isabelle Aboulker’s *Les Fables Enchantées* (Enfant). She is completing her graduate studies at Roosevelt University’s Chicago College of Performing Arts, studying under Cynthia Clarey. Ms. Yu’s upcoming projects include performing in the 12th season of OperaFest as Olympia in an excerpt of *The Tales of Hoffmann*, and designing a role in Daron Hagen’s newly commissioned opera 9/10.

**Athena Kopulos (Iris/Dancer)** is thrilled to be returning to Folks Operetta after playing Rizzy in “The Csardas Princess.” She just received a BFA from Indiana University, where she was awarded the Catherine Feltus Preston Scholarship for innovation in the arts. Athena has performed with Bloomington Playwrights Project, Cardinal Stage Company, and the Singing Hoosiers. Favorite roles include Flossie (Carner and Gregor’s Toast), Ariel (*The Tempest*), Eurydice (*Jasper In Deadland*), Dogsborough (*The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui*), and Margery (*Vinegar Tom*). In her spare time, Athena works as a choreographer for kids’ show choir. Thanks to her family for their continuous love and support!

**Benjamin Burney (Kaluna/Bobby Flip)** is a first-year graduate student at Chicago College of Performing Arts. He is pursuing a M.M. Classical Voice Performance degree under the study of Mark Crayton. Benjamin earned a B.M. in Vocal Performance from Anderson University. This is Benjamin’s first production with Folks Operetta. In past years, he has appeared in Gilbert and Sullivan Opera Company’s *Merrie England*, Indianapolis Opera’s productions of *La Traviata* and *South Pacific*, Il Coro Sinfonico di Milano Giuseppe Verdi concerts of *Porgy e Bess* and **PROGRAM NOTES cont.**

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Hersh Glagov
Verdi’s Requiem, and Opera Western Reserve’s La Bohème and Il Barbiere di Siviglia. Benjamin would like to thank his friends, family, and Clare Lillig for their unconditional love and support.

Tenor, Benjamin Kawsy is excited to return to Folks Operetta where he performed the role of Mero in The Csàrdas Princess last summer. Benjamin has been a young artist with Cedar Rapids for the past two years and performed roles such as Farmhand and covered Grant Wood in the Grant Wood Operas (world premiere), Walt Dreary in The Threepenny Opera, Jeff Douglas in Brigadoon, and covered the role of Pong in Turandot. Other roles include: Donald Hopewell in Gallantry, Camillo in In Search of Desdemona, Joe Hardy in Damn Yankees, Cléon in L’Ivrogne Corrigé, Soldate in L’inconzione di Poppea, Armored Man and Priest in Die Zauberflöte, Reuben in Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat, and Peter in The Lion the Witch and the Wardrobe.

Clara Imon Pedtke (Halia/Dancer) is a soprano based in Chicago. Upcoming engagements include singing Bagatelle in Offenbach’s Bagatelle with the Chicago Summer Opera. She is an Oratorio soloist, recently singing in Bach’s St. Matthew Passion with the Niles Metropolitan Chorus and Musica Lumina Orchestra. Recent operatic performances includes singing the roles of Cat Lady and Dancer in Michael Ching’s Speed Dating, Tonight! with Savannah Voice Festival and Zweite Knabe in Mozart’s Die Zauberflöte with Chicago Summer Opera. Clara holds a Bachelor of Music in vocal performance and music education from Lawrence University.

Cydney Washington (Lilly/Dancer) is pursuing her Undergraduate at Millikin University where she is majoring in Vocal Performance. Some of her recent credits include Ronny (Hair) at Millikin University, Young Artists Program (Hawaii Performing Arts Festival), Little Inez (Hairspray) at Brightside Theatre, Women’s Choir Honors Performance Series at Carnegie Hall, Mrs. Fezziwig/Charwomen/Caroler (A Christmas Carol), Lovely Lady (Les Miserables), and Granny (Into the Woods) at Spotlight Youth Theatre. She feels very Blessed and excited to take part in this opportunity and would like to thank God, her mother, and her Family for always believing in her dreams.

Elena Avila (Ailani/Dancer) is absolutely thrilled to be making her Folks Operetta debut! Elena has previously performed in Luisa Miller, Giovanna D’Arco, and Manon Lescaut with Berkeley Chamber Opera in the San Francisco Bay Area. Additionally, Elena has been featured in various shows at Columbia College Chicago, Berkeley Playhouse, and the East Bay Center for the Performing Arts.

Gerald Frantzen (Director JB) is the Artistic Director of Folks Operetta. He is beginning his 10th season with the Lyric Opera of Chicago chorus, where he made his solo debut in the opera Eugene Onegin (2008). Roles include Giove (Il Ritorno d’Ulisse in Patria–NPR broadcast), Damon (Acis and Galatea), 2nd Nazarene (Salome) with the Glimmerglass Opera; Ernesto (Don Pasquale) with Natchez Opera; Prunier (La Rondine) with Sarasota Opera; and Der Kellner (Arabella) with Santa Fe Opera. As a concert
CAST BIOGRAPHIES CONT.

soloist, Frantzen has performed two Messiahs, Handel’s Rodelinda, Acis in Acis and Galatea, Bach’s Magnificat, and Mozart’s Requiem with Handel Week. Since 2006 he has translated over 18 different operettas with Folks Operetta dramaturge Hersh Glagov; presenting 15 American premieres. His operetta roles with FO include Arizona Lady, The Circus Princess, Ball at the Savoy, The Girl in the Train, Springtime, Peter and Paul in the Land of Nod, and Johnny Johnson. Other operetta roles include leads in Thespis (World premiere), Gypsy Love, Yeomen of the Guard, Duchess of Chicago, Pirates of Penzance, The Student Prince, The Merry Widow, The Gondoliers, and Song of Norway. In 2013 Frantzen wrote the critically-acclaimed concert “Operetta in Exile” with Hersh Glagov. His international musical theater credits include Jekyll & Hyde in Bremen, Germany; the role of Piangi (The Phantom of the Opera-Hal Prince, director) in Hamburg, Germany and The Russian (Chess) in Bergen, Norway. Regional credits include Dorsey and the Young Confederate Soldier (Parade—which won 8 Jeff Citations), Sir Harry (Once Upon a Mattress), Tony (West Side Story), Baron (Grand Hotel) and Charlie (Brigadoon). Recordings include The Rose of Stambul by Leo Fall on the Naxos Recording Label.

Henry Gillman (Young Prince Lilo-Taro) will be attending 7th grade at Julian Middle School in Oak Park in the Fall. He loves history, sports and playing the guitar. He has been goalie for Franklin Park’s Panthers and Park Ridge’s Northern Express hockey teams.

Ivory Leonard IV (Billy/Dancer) is elated to make his Folks Operetta debut! Ivory recently performed at Chicago Opera Theatre in Moby Dick (Chicago Premier); Paramount Theatre in The Producers; Drury Lane in Beauty and the Beast; Capital City Theatre in On the Town; Metropolis Theatre in A Chorus Line (Broadway World Award: Best Actor in a Musical); Porchlight Music Theatre in Memphis (Jeff Nominated); Music Theatre Works in Peter Pan. Leonard also performed with Danco II, toured with Invincible: A Tribute to Michael Jackson, and holds a BA in Theatre Performance from Florida A&M University. (Instagram: @ivoryleonard)

Jerry Miller (Governor) is an actor, playwright, author, producer, and director. Recent roles include Colonel Doctor (Grand Hotel the Musical) for Kokandy Productions, Howard’s Father (Mystery of Love and Sex) at Writers Theater and Scrooge (A Christmas Carol) at Metropolis Performing Arts. Other roles include Mr. Lunde (Brigadoon), the Rabbi (Fiddler on the Roof), and Ben (Secret Garden) for Light Opera Works. Jerry wrote, directed and produced the play The Long Walk for Water about the Lost Boys of South Sudan. Jerry is a member of SAG and appeared as the Gothic Man in I Heart Shakey. Jerry dedicates his performance to his husband Alden Vasquez.

Joachim Luis (Kanako-Hilo/Lilo-Taro cover) is originally from the San Francisco Bay Area, and has enjoyed performing in Chicago since 2007. In April 2019, He made his Chicago Opera Theater debut as Tashtego.
in Moby Dick. Past roles include: Ernesto (Don Pasquale), Ferrando (Così fan tutte), Count Almaviva (Il barbiere di Siviglia), Don Basilio/Don Curzio (Le nozze di Figaro), Prince Ramiro (Cenerentola), Jack (Into the Woods), and Big Deal (West Side Story). Joachim received a Bachelor of Music Education from San Francisco State University in 2009, and a Master of Music in Classical Voice at the Chicago College of Performing Arts at Roosevelt University in 2009.

**Jordan Beyeler (Poppy/Dancer)** is a Chicago based dancer. Her professional performance credits include Norwegian Cruise Lines, Metropolis Performing Arts Centre (A Chorus Line), Cerqua Rivera Dance Theatre, Deeply Rooted Dance Theater, and Visceral Dance Chicago. Recently, she made her opera debut as a principal dancer in La Traviata for The Lyric Opera Chicago. She graduated from Columbia College Chicago with a BFA in dance. Connect with her at @jbeyeler or www.jordanbeyeler.com

**Julian Lee-Zacheis (Kainoa/Key Grip)** is delighted to make their debut with Folks Operetta. They are a recent graduate of the Latin School of Chicago, where they were active in the music and theatre communities. Stage credits include Sweeney Todd and Singin’ in the Rain, and earlier this year they directed the show Her Requiem by Greg Pierce. They will be attending Swarthmore College in the fall. They would like to thank their parents for their endless support.

**Marisa Buchheit (Princess Laia/Suzanne)** is thrilled to be making her debut with Folks Operetta! Recent highlights of her singing engagements include Queen of the Night (The Magic Flute) with the Southern Illinois Music Festival and soloist with the Elgin and Peoria Symphony Orchestras, as well as National Anthem performances for the Chicago Cubs, Chicago Bulls, and the Chicago Air & Water Show. Other roles include Susanna (Le nozze di Figaro), Zerlina (Don Giovanni), the Page/Gilda understudy (Rigoletto), Venus (L'incoronazione di Poppea), Julie (Carousel), Maria (West Side Story), and Liesl (The Sound of Music) with Wichita Grand Opera, Tuscia Opera Festival in Italy, American Chamber Opera, DePaul Opera Theatre, and CIM Opera Theatre. Marisa was proud to represent her state at Miss America as Miss Illinois 2014. Marisa earned her M.M. in Opera from DePaul University and her Bachelor's Degree from Cleveland Institute of Music. She is also a co-founder of soprano trio “Très Belle”.

**Nicholas Pulikowski (Captain Stone)** has performed Sou-Chong (Land of Smiles), Rene (Madame Pompadour), Karel (The Girl in the Train) and The Stranger (The Cousin from Nowhere) with Folks Operetta. Other roles include Edgardo (Lucia di Lammermoor), Rinuccio (Gianni Schicchi), Bardolfo (Falstaff), Cassio (Otello), Robert (Hin und zurück), Young Gypsy (Aleko), Tenor (Trouble in Tahiti), Candide (Candide), and Leader in Nielsen’s Maskarade with Vox3. As a concert soloist, he has appeared with the Apollo Chorus of Chicago, Niles Metropolitan Chorus, Northwest Choral Society, and Sinfonietta bel canto. Pulikowski enjoyed a three-season tour
with Opera for the Young in Cinderella, The Barber of Seville, and Beauty and the Beast. He is an active teacher of singing of all ages throughout Chicagoland, a supplemental member of the Grant Park Symphony Chorus, and a regular member of the Chicago Symphony Orchestra Chorus.

Olivia Rose Cruz (Young Princess Laia) is very excited to be performing in this production of Flower of Hawaii! Olivia stepped onto the stage at 6 years old with her first role as “Chip” in Disney’s Beauty and the Beast. Immediately, she fell in love with the theater. She is now ten years old and has performed in many regional productions such as Junie B. Jones, Frozen Jr. and You’re a Good Man Charlie Brown. She enjoys crafts, singing, playing soccer, and cooking in her free time.

Rodell Rosel (Prince Lilo-Taro) Following his debut at the Lyric Opera of Chicago as Remendado (Carmen), he has appeared on that stage in numerous roles, including the Four Servants (The Tales of Hoffmann), Monastatos (The Magic Flute) and Valzacchi (Der Rosenkavalier). For the Metropolitan Opera, he has appeared as Valzacchi and as Nathaniel and Frantz in a new production of The Tales of Hoffmann. He made his LA Opera debut in 2012 as Goro (Madama Butterfly), and has returned as Spoletta (Tosca), Bardolph (Falstaff), Monostatos (The Magic Flute), the First Jew (Salome) and Spalanzani (The Tales of Hoffmann). Elsewhere, he has appeared with Pittsburgh Opera and Tulsa Opera as Goro (Madama Butterfly); Houston Grand Opera as Squeak (Billy Budd), the Dancing Master (Ariadne auf Naxos) and Goro; Wolf Trap Opera as the Governor (Candide) and the Dancing Master; the Florentine Opera as Monastatos (The Magic Flute), Little Bat (Susannah) and in the title role of Albert Herring; Santa Fe Opera in the world premiere of The Letter; the Ravinia Festival as Don Curzio (The Marriage of Figaro), Spoletta (Tosca) and Arbace (Idomeneo); the Dallas Opera as Anthony Candolino in the world premiere of Jake Heggie’s Great Scott; and the Cleveland Orchestra as the First Jew (Salome). In recent seasons, he has also appeared with Houston Grand Opera as Mime in both Das Rheingold and Siegfried, returned to Chicago as Mime and Monostatos, and made debut appearances with Seattle Opera as Monostatos and Goro. The 2017/18 season included returns to the Lyric Opera of Chicago as Pang in Turandot, Florentine Opera of Milwaukee as Njegus in The Merry Widow, and debuts with Kentucky Opera as the Dancing Master and Arizona Opera as Loge in Das Rheingold. For the 2018/19 season, he sang Mime in Taiwan and returned to the Metropolitan Opera for this role. Future engagements include the Metropolitan Opera as Monostatos in Die Zauberflöte, Lyric Opera of Chicago as Goro in Madama Butterfly, and as Guillot in Manon, Los Angeles Opera as Curzio in LeNozze di Figaro and the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden as Monostatos and, the following season, as the Four Servants in Les Contes d’Hoffman.

Rose Guccione (Hattie/Perroquet) is a singer, actress, professor, webmaven, and entrepreneur. Rose was last seen as Wimpel in CFO’s production of The Cousin from Nowhere. The Windy City Times review of that performance (which involves her scene with a banana) is her current chosen epitaph. Recent performance credits include The Dinner Detective (ongoing), the alto soloist in Purcell’s Ode on St. Cecilia’s Day 1692 (NEIU Orchestra), La Zia...
Principessa in Puccini’s *Suor Angelica* (NEIU Opera), and Carmen in *Cambalache* and Paloma in *Feathers* (Tango 21 Dance Theater). In May, she appeared as a guest on the WiNTV (24.5) program *Global Leaders Network*. She is the owner of singing telegram company OperaGram.com®. Because she’s been around a while, read more about her at www.RoseGuccione.com. *The Flower of Hawaii* joyously marks her tenth production with CFO!

**Ryan Trent Oldham (Jimmy Fox),** hails from South Mississippi and has been performing within the Chicago Theatre and Dance community for the past 9 years. Past credits include Tango 21 Dance Theater (Sombras: A Tango Cabaret, El Tango Cafe, Cambalache) where he serves as company member, Folks Operetta (*Ball at the Savoy, Cousin from Nowhere, The Land of Nod*) pH Comedy Theater (*The Rocky Horror Show, Same Sex, Different Gays*). Theatre and Dance training at the University of Southern Mississippi. He currently studies at Joel Hall Dance Company, Tango 21 Dance Theater, and is a former Ballroom Dance Competitor that teaches at Chicago Dance Center.

**Sarah Ruth Mikulski (Bessie Cover/Daisy/Dancer)** is excited to join Folks Operetta for *The Flower of Hawaii*! Sarah has performed with the Cedar Rapids Opera Theatre, The Gilbert & Sullivan Opera Company, White Plains Performing Arts Center, College Light Opera Company, Shoreline Theatrical Arts, and Opera Grand Rapids. Favorite roles include Carrie Pipperidge (*Carousel*), Lucy Brown (*The Threepeeny Opera*), Elizaveta Grushinskaya (*Grand Hotel*), Angelina (*Trial By Jury*), Niki Harris (*Curtains*), and Lady Ella (*Patience*). Sarah is from Traverse City, Michigan and has a Master of Music from Manhattan School of Music and a Bachelor of Music from Western Michigan University.

**Teaira Burge (Bessie)** is delighted to join Chicago Folks Operetta for another season! Teaira previously appeared as the French Nurse in their 2017 production of Johnny Johnson. Teaira has also participated in productions with Transgressive Theatre-Opera, Music Theater Works, Thompson Street, Petite Opera Productions, The Floating Opera Company, and New Moon Opera.

**Bass Baritone, William Roberts (Buffy)** made his professional debut as Basilio in Opera Carolina’s 2009 production of *Il barbiere di Siviglia*. Since then he has performed with Tri Cities Opera, Lake George Opera, Chautauqua Opera, Sarasota Opera, Opera Circle Cleveland and St. Petersburg Opera. Favorite roles include The Four Villains in *Les contes d’Hoffmann* (St. Pete), Gandalf/Smaug in *The Hobbit* and General Polkan in *The Golden Cockerel* (Sarasota Opera). Locally, Mr. Roberts has performed as Boni in *The Csardaś Princess* (Folks Operetta), Tony in *The Most Happy Fella* (Theo Ubique) for which he was nominated for a Jeff Award, and Dr. Falke in *Die Fledermause* (Light Opera Works). He is a supplemental chorister with Lyric Opera of Chicago, Grant Park Music Festival and a member of Church of the Atonement’s Schola ensemble.
CAST BIOGRAPHIES cont.

Ysaye McKeever (Okelani/Dancer/Assistant Choreographer) is a dancer, choreographer and teaching artist from Chicago, IL. She graduated magna cum laude from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign with a BFA in Dance and Minor in Philosophy in 2013. She has also had the honor of studying dance at the Taipei National University of the Arts. Since 2014 Ysaye has been the choreographer for Teatro Luna and a performer with Aloha Chicago Entertainment. In 2018 Ysaye became a certified Dunham Technique Instructor candidate and completed her first level of training at Tupuna Kultur, a Tahitian culture school, in Moorea, Tahiti.

PRODUCTION STAFF BIOGRAPHIES

Amy Hutchison has served on the directing staffs of Lyric Opera of Chicago and Houston Grand Opera and on the faculties of The Bienen School of Music at Northwestern University and Westminster Choir College in Princeton. Her production of Donizetti’s Il Pigmalione and Rita for Chicago Opera Theater wowed audiences and critics alike. As part of COT’s Vanguard Initiative, she staged Grand Illusion. She also helmed critically-acclaimed Chicago premiere productions of As One and Song from the Uproar: The Lives and Deaths of Isabelle Eberhardt for Chicago Fringe Opera. Hutchison frequently collaborates with South Shore Opera Company, where her work includes The Violet Hour, The Poet, The March: A Civil Rights Opera Project, Dream Lovers and African Romances, and Troubled Island, named the number one classical music event of 2013 by the Chicago Sun-Times. Other Chicago area productions include Madame Pompadour for Folks Operetta, Music by the Lake’s Brigadoon, DuPage Opera’s Faust, and Our Town and Transformations for DePaul Opera Theatre. Beyond Chicago, Hutchison’s work includes productions of As One in San Antonio; Il Matrimonio Segreto in Boston; Carmen in Kansas City, Milwaukee, and Columbus; Turandot in Orlando; Don Pasquale for Indianapolis Opera; La Traviata in Costa Mesa and Menotti’s Help! Help! The Globolinks! for Madison Opera. She served as revival director for A View from the Bridge (Teatro dell’Opera di Roma, Washington National Opera and Portland Opera); the Maurice Sendak production of Hänsel und Gretel (Opernhaus Zürich, Canada, San Diego, Indianapolis and televised for PBS: Live from the Lincoln Center); and the international tour of Houston Grand Opera’s Porgy and Bess (Milan’s Teatro alla Scala, L’Opéra National de Paris, Teatro La Fenice, and more).

Anthony Barrese (Conductor/Music Director) is the recipient of the 2007 Georg Solti Foundation U.S. award for young conductors. He made his operatic conducting debut in Milan with La bohème and recorded Roberto Andreoni’s quattro luci sul lago with “I Solisti della Scala” (a chamber group made up of the first chair musicians of the La Scala Philharmonic) for broadcast on Italian National Radio. He has led several productions with Sarasota Opera (Lakmé, Le nozze di Figaro, Hansel and Gretel) and Opera Southwest (Lohengrin, Le nozze di Figaro, Die Fledermaus, La Cenerentola, Rossini’s Otello)
with the American staged premiere of the finale lieto and the new World Premiere of Amleto, not heard anywhere since 1871) where he is Artistic Director and Principal Conductor. He has conducted Tosca and La Wally at Dallas Opera; a new production of Turandot in Ascoli Piceno’s Teatro Ventidio Basso, with a cast that included Nicola Martinucci as Calaf; Turandot at Opéra de Massy, Les pêcheurs de perles and Norma with Florida Grand Opera, The Kiss at Opera Theatre of St. Louis, Lelisir d’amoore at Opera North, Don Giovanni at Boston Lyric Opera, The Merry Widow at Opera Saratoga and a “Return of Rossini” festival at OSW. As Music Director of Opera Delaware he conducted the west coast premiere of Amleto and Rossini’s Semiramide. Mr. Barrese is also the recipient of numerous composition awards including a N.E.C. Contemporary Ensemble Composition Competition Award for his Madrigale a 3 voci femminili, and two B.M.I. Student Composers Awards. As a musicologist, Mr. Barrese rediscovered, prepared, and edited the critical edition of Franco Faccio’s opera Amleto, in conjunction with Casa Ricordi.

August Tye (Choreographer)
The American dancer-choreographer’s operatic credits include remounting the choreography of Lyric’s Iphigénie en Tauride at San Francisco Opera and the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden and the remounting of Lyrics Salome at the Saito Kinen Festival in Matsumoto, Japan. Tye has either performed, choreographed or acted as Ballet Mistress at Lyric Opera of Chicago for over 38 productions since 1993. Tye is thrilled to be a part of the choreographic team in Chicago Folks Operetta’s production of Flower of Hawaii. Other CFO credits include Arizona Lady, Peter and Paul in the Land of Nod and Rose of Stambul. Tye recently completed a two-year training program with the Royal Academy of Dance, London to become a Registered Teacher of the RAD. Ms. Tye teaches ballet exclusively at the Hyde Park School of Dance, Chicago, a school she founded in 1993.

David Acevedo (Hawaiian Choreographer), a lifelong Chicago resident, has dedicated the past 20 years of his life to researching and perpetuating the lifestyles and cultural arts of Polynesia. David’s love for theater began as a child starring in several musicals throughout elementary and high school. Studying music and dance at Columbia College Chicago, David discovered the arts and cultures of the Pacific islands and was quickly submerged in its beauty and lure. On one of many trips to the islands, David met his wife, Ale, and in 2010 the two founded Hōkūle’a Academy of Polynesian Arts in Chicago. Since then, their main mission has been to share Pacific island arts and cultures with their students and audiences by staying true and respectful to the people of Polynesia. David is a fire dancer, cultural practitioner, and an award winning Tahitian dancer. When he is not busy producing events and teaching his students, he enjoys cooking, gardening and most of all, traveling. David is thrilled to be a consultant on Hawaiian culture and choreography for Flower of Hawai’i and is excited for the beauty of Hawai’i to be displayed in such a creative, fun and energetic way.

Eleanor Kahn (Set Designer) is a freelance designer in Chicago. Recent design credits include: EthiopianAmerica (Definition Theatre); I Call My Brothers (Interrobang Theatre);
Radio Culture (TUTA); Borealis (House Theatre of Chicago); The Fly Honey Show (The Inconvenience); and 33 to Nothing (A Red Orchid Theatre). Other scenic work includes: Machinal (Greenhouse Theatre); Hairy Ape, The Mother, The Jungle and Waiting for Lefty (Oracle Productions); 9 to 5 and LIZZIE: The Musical (Firebrand Theatre); Into the Empty Sky (Trap Door); and The Way She Spoke (Greenhouse Solo Celebration). She also did properties/set dressing for Southern Gothic at Windy City Playhouse for which she received a 2018 Jeff Award in Artistic Specialization. Additionally, Eleanor works outside of theater as an installation and experience designer, fabricator and painter. She received her MFA in Scenic Design from Boston University. Eleanor also has a public art installation in Millennium Park up through October to celebrate 2019: The Year of Chicago Theatre. Her full resume and portfolio can be seen at www.eleanorkahn.com

Enneressa “Reesie” Davis (Choreographer) is a professional dancer and artist. She has been head choreographer/coordinator for several ministries and organizations throughout Northwest Indiana and Chicago. Enneressa studied under Kim Tyler, Larry Brewer, and Dionne Champion. She also studied at Joel Hall Dance Center in Chicago under the leadership and direction of the legendary jazz master, Joel Hall, where she was a dancer with JHD for over three seasons. Davis has graced the stages of the Auditorium Theater, Harris Theater for Music & Dance, DuSable Museum of African-American History, Arie Crown Theater, and Reva & David Logan Center of the Arts. Davis has written, produced, and choreographed eight full-length productions. Her productions, Back 2 Black, Generation Black: An American Renaissance, The Issues of Women and Revival: The Answer were awarded the coveted Black Excellence Award by the African-American Arts Alliance of Chicago for “Best Overall Dance Production” in 2014, 2016, 2017 and 2018. She is a multi-award winning choreographer and her work has been highlighted on national television outlets. She was named the “Innovator for Social Change” in the arts by the CMS Merit Gala in 2017 and presented the keynote address for Loyola University of Chicago's Black Lives Matter Conference in 2018. Davis was most recently became the recipient of the America’s Big Sisters Award for her work with teen girls and young women via the arts.

Eric Watkins (Lighting Designer) is a lighting designer for theatre, opera, and dance based in Chicago. Past opera design work includes The Property (A world premiere with Lyric Opera of Chicago’s Lyric Unlimited); Show Boat and Falstaff (The Dallas Opera); Don Pasquale (Fort Worth Opera); Cenerentola (Merola Opera in San Francisco); Alcina (Boston Conservatory); A Streetcar Named Desire (Opera Santa Barbara and Kentucky Opera); Marriage of Figaro (Merola Opera); and Barber of Seville (Lithuanian National Opera and Ballet Theatre). Other recent Chicago designs include Ethiopian America (Definition Theatre); The Man Who Was Thursday (Lifeline Theatre); Machinal (Greenhouse Theater Jeff award nomination); Shakin’ the Mess Outta Misery (Pegasus Theatre); A Swell in the Ground (The Gift Theatre); Punk (New Colony); 42 Stories and Psmith, Journalist (City Lit); Porcelain (Prologue Theatre, Jeff award nomination); Deer and the Lovers (First Floor Theater); and Fallen (Mozawa). He received his M.F.A. in Lighting Design from Boston University and is a proud member of
PRODUCTION STAFF BIOGRAPHIES cont.

United Scenic Artists local 829.
www.ericwatkins.com

Hersh Glagov (Translator) studied German at the Goethe Institut, Germany. This is, by his reckoning, his thirteenth translation for Folks Operetta. He looks forward to many more.

Patti Roeder (Costume Designer) is delighted to return to Chicago Folks Operetta where she designed The Csardas Princess last summer. She has designed for City Lit (The Tempest), The Dead Writers Theatre Collective (The Importance of Being Earnest, Oh Coward!, Emma and Lady Windemere’s Fan), Victory Gardens (Bourbon at the Border) and many other Chicago area theatres. Her design for Pendulum Theatre Company’s Abundance was nominated for a Joseph Jefferson Citation Award. Love always to John, and welcome to Jones Aloysius!

SPECIAL THANKS

Fair Oaks Presbyterian Church in Oak Park, IL, Bubbles Academy, and Hyde Park School of Dance for rehearsal space, House Theater, DePaul University Theatre, Columbia College, Ed Koizumi for his amazing hand made props: Amorascope, Film Camera and Film Clapboard, Lois R. and Maurice J. Beznos for their counsel and advice.

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