



[WWW.LIGHTHOUSEOPERA.ORG](http://WWW.LIGHTHOUSEOPERA.ORG)

**MISSION:**

To establish an opera repertory company that chiefly performs standard operas, in their original languages, in diverse settings throughout the Bronx, and beyond.

**VISION:**

To shine a light on the range, depth, and breadth of talented and diverse, classically trained singers, by providing opportunities to perform the standard opera repertoire. Also, to provide operatic performing experiences to diverse, talented young, emerging, and mid-career singers who are historically underrepresented in the profession, while offering educational outreach to diverse audiences within the Bronx, and beyond. The company presents concert style, semi-staged and fully staged operas in various settings, including intimate venues, with cost effective ticket pricing to encourage attendance by economically, culturally, and racially diverse audiences.

**The Lighthouse Opera exists to help shine a light on classically trained singers of all backgrounds** by performing operas in their original language for new and diverse audiences in the Bronx, New York and beyond.

At Lighthouse Opera Company, we seek to bring in new and diverse audiences from the Bronx and beyond to our opera productions. We offer quality performances for those who love classical music, theater and opera. We also provide an avenue to those who wish to perform in front of a crowd and be part of our operas. Our tickets are priced affordably at \$25.00, unless its a gala performance event.

**BY THE NUMBERS**

**18**

PERFORMANCES  
SINCE 2017

**155**

ARTISTS  
SERVED

**1090**

AUDIENCE  
MEMBERS  
SERVED

**\$37,600**

GRANTS

**\$147,000**

RAISED IN  
DONATIONS



**We are a Bronx-based organization that serves Bronx area musicians and all those who wish to perform with us in the Bronx and beyond.**

Our first performance venue was in the 165-year-old Fordham United Methodist Church. Our performance space was the church's fellowship hall, Hackl Hall. This setting was considered "found space" in the theatrical world. It wasn't a traditional space with a stage and the great distance between the players, the orchestra, and the audience. The setting was more intimate and interactive, which we also found beneficial at the Andrew Freedman Home, as it can be up close and more personal with the audience. Our more site-specific production of La Traviata in 2022 at the Andrew Freedman Home, set during the Spanish Flu of 1918, marked a first full production since 2019.

Bronx neighbors, church members, friends and family members of the artists were thrilled by our productions. One African American patron shared during intermission at our 2018 Susannah, who I happened to know was a singer shared: "It felt safe". As an African American, I get it, as do others. Many patrons and artists left the event raving about the new company in town, the Lighthouse Opera Company! We will continue to enhance our historic settings with lighting English translations and some scenery. We look forward to continued performances at the opulent and newly renovated Andrew Freedman Home of the Grand Concourse-in the Bronx!

You can meet many of our LOC performers, who shared their stories during the pandemic shutdown with our audiences in a series curated by Angela Owens, **Life at the Lighthouse** on our Lighthouse Opera YouTube channel at <https://bit.ly/LOCYoutube>

Our past Lighthouse Opera singers continue to perform and expand their operatic careers in local state, national and international forums. We are proud of them!







**John Carlton Banks, Ed.D**  
**FOUNDER AND GENERAL MANAGER**

**Dr. John Carlton Banks is a professional classical musician and music teacher with over two decades of experience.**

He has worked with the Metropolitan Opera, Washington Opera, Natchez Opera, Ash-Lawn Highland, and Bregenzer Festspiele. Dr. Banks has appeared in concert with Kathleen Battle and Jessye Norman, including recordings and video by Sony.

In addition, Dr. Banks has toured and performed as a feature artist in opera and oratorio in local, regional and international companies. As a choral conductor, AP music theory instructor, church music leader, and career educator, Dr. Banks has also served as a K-12 Performing Arts Director, department leader, and arts coordinator in the Maryland and New York state public schools. He holds permanent New York state certifications in Music and Administration.

Dr. Banks first served as baritone soloist, and later, Director of Music for the Fordham United Methodist Church in the Bronx, New York, for 25 years. Dr. Banks holds a B.M in Music History and Literature from Howard University, with minors in Tuba and Piano, an M.M in Vocal Performance from the Florida State University, and the M.Ed. and Ed.D degrees from Columbia University, Teachers College.

Dr. Banks is currently serving his second term as the elected President of the David I Martin Music Guild of NANM, Inc.



**Harriett D. Foy**  
**PRESIDENT**

**Harriett D. Foy is an award-winning actress who has performed for audiences from Broadway to Dubai.** Ms. Foy sits on the Board of Directors for the Al D. Rodriguez Liver Foundation, the Advisory Board for A Mile in My Shoes Inc., and is a founding member of Howard University's Divine, Intelligent, Versatile Artists Inc. (The Society for Women in the Arts).

She has appeared on Broadway in "Amazing Grace," "The American Plan", "Mamma Mia," and "Once on This Island," and will be seen in the upcoming new Broadway Musical "Amelie" in Spring 2017. Harriett is the creator and star of My Soul Looks Back in Wonder, a one-woman musical based on Slave Narratives. She made her concert debut at Merkin Hall in "The African American Spiritual" produced by B. Arts Presenter and can be heard on the Original Cast Recordings for Amazing Grace, Lone Star Love, Reunion, and Inside Out. Her film/television credits include: Collateral Beauty, Winter's Tale, Billions, Orange is the New Black, Rescue Me, and Law & Order.

Harriett is a native of New Bern, North Carolina and a proud alumnus of Howard University.



# BOARD OF DIRECTORS



**Willsonia Boyer**  
VICE PRESIENT

**Willsonia Boyer, soprano, performs both as an opera singer and as a concert artist.** Presented by the Hans and Rosy Epstein Memorial Committee, Ms. Boyer made her New York recital debut at Merkin Concert Hall to critical acclaim.

Operatic appearances include engagements with New York City Opera, Bregenzer Festspiele, Virginia Opera, The Bronx Opera and New Jersey Concert Opera, and performance venues include Europe and South America, as well as the United States.

Operatic roles include the title role of *Aida*, Serena in Gershwin's *Porgy and Bess*, Helen in Schubert's *The Conspirators*, the Countess and Sandrina in Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro* and *La Finta Giardiniera*, respectively. In addition, Ms. Boyer has appeared with the New Jersey Concert Opera in the title role of *Tosca* and as Helmwig in *Die Walküre*, in New York City Opera's premier of *Margaret Garner* and in Sherry Boone's and Sean Jeremy Palmer's *Ellen Craft*.

Concert engagements include the inaugural concert of the Harrison Opera House in Norfolk, Virginia, the Petersburg (VA) Symphony Orchestra, Ars Musica Chorale of New Jersey and the Hodie Ensemble of New York.

An active recitalist, Ms. Boyer has made appearances throughout the eastern United States. Recitals include a series of all-Mozart recitals given under the auspices of the Friends of Mozart Society and recitals at Merkin Concert Hall honoring Dorothy Maynor and featuring women composers.

Ms. Boyer, a native Virginian, holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from Hollins University, a Master's degree from Virginia State University, where she studied with Dr. Richard Edwards. She also studied in France at the Conservatoire de Neuilly, specializing in contemporary music under the tutelage of Francois Bernard Mâche, a pupil of Olivier Messiaen and voice with Ginette Guillamat.

Ms. Boyer is currently regular soloist for Seventh Church of Christ, Scientist in New York City and currently studies with retired Metropolitan Opera baritone, John Fiorito. She is also a member of David I. Martin Music Guild of the National Association of Negro Musicians, Inc. (NANM).

# BOARD OF DIRECTORS



**Marcos Solá**  
SECRETARY

**Marcos Solá is an accomplished vocalist with a diverse background** and has appeared with prominent companies like Natchez Festival of Music, Fresno International Grand Opera, New York City Opera and Live From Lincoln Center in classic operatic works such as La Boheme, Madama Butterfly and Porgy and Bess. In 2007 he retired from singing and completed the Theatrical Resources Unlimited (TRU) Producers Bootcamp where he learned the other side of the theatrical equation...what it takes to get a production up and running.

In 2013 Mr. Sola refocused his efforts to create a boutique design/build firm in New York City, Urban Design Group, LLC, that specializes in residential and commercial interiors.



# BOARD OF DIRECTORS



**Patrick A. Bradford, Esq**  
**TREASURER**

**Mr. Bradford is an accomplished attorney and arts producer. As an attorney, he has worked in the private sector and for city, state, and federal government.**

In 2009, he founded the arts firm, B. Arts Presenter, which provides highly talented visual and performing artists with the opportunity to work professionally. Through B. Arts, Mr. Bradford was instrumental in bringing the African American painter and sculptor James B. McMillian (1925-) to a larger audience, including co-producing exhibitions of his works across the county.

B. Arts has also produced theater and concerts, including tributes to Paul Robeson and Dorothy Maynor. In 2012, Mr. Bradford produced an original work titled “The African American Spiritual” at Merkin Hall in New York City, featuring Sherry Boone, Harriett D. Foy, Brandie Sutton, and Darius Frowner, with text by Marcus Gardley.

Since 2003, Mr. Bradford has served as a trustee for the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund. He has also served as a trustee for the Public Theater/New York Shakespeare Festival, Negro Ensemble Company, Shakespeare Society, New Professional Theater, Theater Development Fund, and Theater Communications Group. Mr. Bradford provides pro bono legal counsel to the Classical Theater of Harlem and ProjectVoice. His writings on the arts have appeared in Black Masks magazine. He is a graduate of Harvard College and the New York University School of Law.



# PAST SEASONS

THE LIGHTHOUSE OPERA COMPANY



PRESENTS GIUSEPPE VERDI'S  
**LA TRAVIATA**  
(THE FALLEN WOMAN)  
LIBRETTO BY FRANCESCO MARIA PIAVE  
BASED ON LA DAME AUX CAMÉLIAS,  
A PLAY BY ALEXANDRE DUMAS  
WITH THE ENSEMBLE SÉPIA ORCHESTRA  
JUNE 8 @ 7:00PM • JUNE 5 @ 2:00PM • JUNE 7 @ 2:00PM  
THE ANDREW FREEDMAN HOME  
1125 GRAND CONCOURSE BRONX, NY 10452  
\$25 FOR TICKETS: WWW.LIGHTHOUSEOPERA.ORG  
LIMITED SEATING IN THIS HISTORIC VENUE  
THE HALL OPENS 30 MINUTES BEFORE THE PERFORMANCE.  
ALL ATTENDEES MUST WEAR A MASK FOR THE DURATION OF THE PERFORMANCE.

NYC Cultural Affairs  
NYC Arts

The Lighthouse Opera Company  
presents  
**RIGOLETTO**  
*in Black & White*



Join Lighthouse Opera for final performances of the season! Featuring Giuseppe Verdi's thrilling masterpiece, presented in Black Tie concert version for two performances only.

November 15, 2018 7:30pm, National Opera Center  
330 7th Avenue, 7th Floor, New York, NY 10001

November 17, 2018 8:30pm, Fordham United Methodist Church  
2543 Marion Avenue, Bronx, NY 10458

For tickets and more information, visit [www.lighthouseopera.org](http://www.lighthouseopera.org)

NYC Cultural Affairs  
NYC Arts

FEATURING...  
conductor  
**Stephen Francis Vasta**  
director  
**John Tedeschi**

The Lighthouse Opera  
presents  
**"La Serva Padrona"**  
*The Servant Turned Mistress*  
An opera buffa by  
Giovanni Battista Pergolesi  
sung in Italian with English translation

Performed with members of the  
**Ensemble Sèpia Chamber Orchestra  
and Harpsichord**

November 1st at 7:30pm  
*reduced ticket event*

November 2nd at 3:30pm  
*gala presentation, performance and  
reception to follow in the lobby*

Performances take place at  
**OPERA America,  
330 7th Avenue, 7th Floor,  
New York, NY 10001**

Marc A. Scorea Hall

soprano  
**Pamela Jones as Serpina**

bass-baritone  
**Daniel Klein as Uberto**

please visit our website for ticket information  
[www.lighthouseopera.org](http://www.lighthouseopera.org)

NYC Cultural Affairs  
NYC Arts

THE LIGHTHOUSE OPERA COMPANY  
PRESENTS  
**LA TRAVIATA**  
RESERVATIONS REQUIRED IN OUR  
SOCIALLY DISTANCED SETTING  
For tickets: [www.lighthouseopera.org](http://www.lighthouseopera.org)  
Tickets \$25  
May 27, May 29, and June 1  
7:30-8:30pm



Shaina Martinez  
Lisa Eden  
Michael Celentano  
Joe Gansert  
Charles Carter  
Ema Mitrovic  
Matteo Adams

THE LIGHTHOUSE OPERA COMPANY



Stephen Francis Vasta - Planner/Conductor  
John Tedeschi - Director  
Dr. J. Carlton Banks - Founder and General Manager

This November 2020 presentation is free online to the general public.  
For more information, visit [www.lighthouseopera.org](http://www.lighthouseopera.org)

NYC Cultural Affairs  
NYC Arts

THE LIGHTHOUSE OPERA COMPANY


PRESENTS MOZART'S  
**DON GIOVANNI**

*The Lighthouse Opera exists to help shine a light on classically trained singers of all backgrounds by performing operas in their original language for new and diverse audiences.*

Orchestra provided by Ensemble Sèpia: A Musical Network  
Conducted by: Stephen Francis Vasta

Directed by:  
John Tedeschi  
Harpsichord:  
Jason Wirth

Performances are on June 15<sup>th</sup> at 6:30pm,  
June 17<sup>th</sup> at 1pm and June 20<sup>th</sup> at 6:30pm.  
in Hackl Hall, 2543 Marion Avenue,  
Bronx, NY 10458.  
**Limited Seating!**



Cast

All Tickets are \$25  
Performance to take place at 2543 Marion Avenue, Bronx, NY 10458  
For more information or to purchase tickets go to <http://www.lighthouseopera.org/>  
Limited seating with some tickets available at the door  
Donations are also accepted through our website

THE LIGHTHOUSE OPERA COMPANY

PRESENTS CARLOSLE PLOTTO'S  
**Gusannah**  
AN AMERICAN OPERA WRITTEN IN ENGLISH

PERFORMANCES ON:  
SEPT. 13<sup>th</sup> AT 6:30 PM  
SEPT. 25<sup>th</sup> AT 1:30 PM  
SEPT. 28<sup>th</sup> AT 6:30 PM  
TICKETS \$35

THE FORDHAM UNITED METHODIST CHURCH'S  
**HACKL HALL** 2543 MARION AVENUE, BRONX, NY 10458  
FOR OTHER TICKET INFORMATION: [WWW.LIGHTHOUSEOPERA.ORG](http://WWW.LIGHTHOUSEOPERA.ORG) OR CALL: 917.342.0098

NYC Cultural Affairs  
NYC Arts

THE LIGHTHOUSE OPERA COMPANY  
PRESENTS  
**OPERA AMERICA**

**TWICE UPON A BIRTHDAY!**

A PUBLIC READING OF SCENES FROM A CHILDREN'S  
OPERA BY FRANK SCHIRO

THURSDAY, 29<sup>th</sup> of DECEMBER 2022, at 7:30pm  
Opera America, 330 Seventh Avenue, NY, NY, 10001  
Join us with composer Frank Schiro and four superb singers...  
Pamela Jones, Perri Sussman, Omar Boweiy and Marcus King  
with Chris Cooley, piano

Free event! (A contribution to the Lighthouse Opera Company is welcomed!)  
DOORS OPEN AT 7:15PM FOR THIS 45-MINUTE EVENT

For more information: [info@lighthouseopera.org](mailto:info@lighthouseopera.org)  
To give: [www.lighthouseopera.org](http://www.lighthouseopera.org)  
P.O. Box 622491, Bronx, NY 10462  
The Lighthouse Opera Company is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization.



# DON GIOVANNI

## FIRST PRODUCTION, 2017

After our venue was approved, later than we had planned, we began the process of announcing our two upcoming auditions for our Inaugural performance in June 2017.

We used Facebook, word of mouth and the opera singer's app Yap Tracker to spread the word about our venture. Our young but enthusiastic start-up was a new player in the local opera game. Thus, we didn't anticipate too much interest – but some.

To our surprise, our fledgling company received over 112 responses and applicant inquiries in a short period. We soon discovered that we needed to add two additional audition dates. We set about the task of locating audition sites, hearing singers, reviewing materials and choosing a wonderful cast. Interestingly, there was a great thirst and significant need for opportunities in the opera world.

Young and emerging artists seek out new experiences and exposures. This is especially true for singers of color. For our selected and wonderfully gifted singers, the fit and timing were perfect. In our first venture, we met our mission statement's goal of engaging and shining a light on talented and diverse classically trained singers. What great fortune! Interestingly, there was (and still is) an outsized need of opportunities for opera performance.





# SUSANNAH

## PERFORMANCES IN SEPTEMBER 2018 AT THE FORDHAM UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

Led by Jason Wirth from the piano, this great American tragic opera by Carlisle Floyd held our largest cast to date. In the title role, Susannah Polk, Shaina Martinez was accompanied by Michael Celentano/Daniel Fitz-Morrison as her brother Sam Polk, and tempted and seduced by the town preacher man, Olin Blitch, played by bass-baritone Daniel Klein. Our riveted audience members vocally reacted to the seductions and hypocrisy of the Rev. Olin Blitch. This dynamic strongly resonated with our Bronx audience in the fellowship hall of the Fordham Methodist Church. Some audience members audibly heckled the seducer and hypocrite preacher!





# RIGOLETTO

**Our *Rigoletto* in Black & White featured singers Jonathan Green, Richard Hobson, Holly Flack, Gerardo Gaytan, and Laura Reaper who were led by Jason Wirth on the piano and performed in the Hackl Hall of the Fordham Church.**

The chorus of courtiers were Jose Vazquez, Omar Bowey, Theodore Shulmann, Edward Washington and Benjamin Herman. Our production of *Rigoletto* was the final of three operas depicting “Bad Boys in Opera”

First, in 2017, we met the Don in *Don Giovanni*. Next, in 2018 we saw both the lustful and hypocritical preacher *Olin Blitch* in *Susannah* and, finally, the Duke (or maybe the cursed dad?) in Verdi’s *Rigoletto*.





# LA SERVA PADRONA

## PERFORMANCES AT OPERA AMERICA IN NOVEMBER 2019

The Maid Turned Mistress, by Giovanni Pergolesi (1710-1736) along with members of Ensemble Sepia Chamber Network. Fabrizio Doria (carrying tray) plays the hilarious role of Vespone, the mute servant, along with fellow servant Serpina played by Pamela Jones, soprano. The comic (and frustrated) old gentleman and master of the house, Uberto, is played by bass-baritone Daniel Klein.

## “LA SERVA PADRONA” BY VOCE DI MECHE, NOV 6, 2019

“The audience at the National Opera Center, on Sunday afternoon, was treated to a delightful performance of the 18th century comic opera La Serva Padrona, presented by the Lighthouse Opera Company. The founder and director of the company, which was started two years ago, is Dr. John Banks, a classical musician and a high school music teacher...”

[READ FULL REVIEW](#)



*LIGHTHOUSE OPERA COMPANY*

# A DISTANT FLUTE

**Born out of the 2020 pandemic, we produced and presented our first virtual production.**

Many opera groups stopped producing or shifted to virtual productions. After some discussion, the Lighthouse Board decided to go forward with a truncated digital production of our intended Die Zauberfloete, sung in German. Narrated by our illustrious Board President, Harriett D. Foy, this 45-minute presentation was spun together via individual recordings from homes, remotely recorded piano accompaniment by principal conductor Steve Vasta, an intrepid Tech leader (Peter Caballero) and an audio visual company that edits and helps create these kinds of digital productions. None of the artists were ever in the same room with the accompanist or another singer. It was a new feat for all. And, amazingly, we were able to keep artists and audiences engaged, motivated and entertained a bit during one of the most challenging periods in our lifetimes. With whatever clothing and “costumes” they had access to, singers Markel Reed, Omar Bowey, Pamela Jones, Holly Flack, Ema Mitrovic, Silvana Chu, Rebecca Kidnie, Charles Carter, Joseph Gansert and Matteo Adams prevailed-under the remote direction of our creative Director John Tedeschi. Again, all from a Distance!



strengthen them with patience when they are in danger



She shall be yours forever

"This project is made possible with funds from the Decentralization Program, a re-grant program of the New York State Council on the Arts, with the support of Governor Andrew Cuomo and the New York State Legislature, and administered by the Bronx Council on the Arts."



*LIGHTHOUSE OPERA COMPANY*



# LA TRAVIATA - 2021

## PERFORMANCES IN NYC IN MAY – JUNE 2021

On the heels of the pandemic re-openings, we presented Highlights from *La Traviata* at the Seventh Church of Christ Scientist in NYC. Due to required social distancing, you see our two Violettas played by Lisa Eden and Shaina Martinez, extending hands to the also distant father of Violetta's lover, Giorgio Germont, played by baritone Joseph Gansert. Steve Vasta plays and leads our wonderful singers from the piano.



## "A NEW LOOK AT VIOLETTA" BY VOCE DI MECHE, MAY 28, 2021

"...Let us begin by thanking The Lighthouse Opera Company for this live performance of Verdi's masterpiece *La Traviata*. We can think of no other opera that has such a profound effect."

[READ FULL REVIEW](#)



# LA TRAVIATA - 2022

## LA TRAVIATA PHOTOS-IN REHEARSAL AND IN PERFORMANCE, OUR LARGEST PRODUCTION YET!

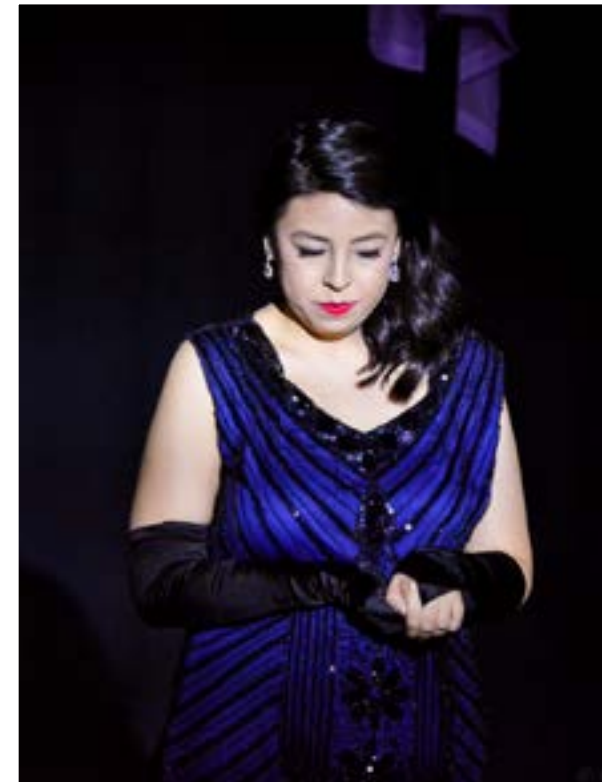
Singers Shaina Martinez, Lisa Eden, Michael Celentano, Ema Mitrovic, Joseph Gansert, Scott La Marca, Phillip Bullock round out this wonderful cast of dynamic principals and exhilarating choristers, amid a 22-piece orchestra led by principal conductor Steve Vast and directed by John Tedeschi. Our performances took place at the historic Andrew Freedman Home in the Bronx, in May and June 2022. Our director set our story during the 1918 Spanish Flu pandemic, and opened with a gripping video of what the world was like during that pandemic. Despite ongoing 2022 covid interruptions and challenges, Lighthouse Opera Company presented this beloved favorite to enthusiastic audiences!

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### “THE FALLEN WOMAN” BY VOCE DI MECHE, JUNE 5, 2022

“There are rare occasions when the confluence of story, music, libretto, and performances conspires to produce a state of total immersion. One loses awareness of the identity of the artists and gets immersed in the lives of the characters....”

[READ FULL REVIEW](#)





# TWICE UPON A BIRTHDAY

## A PUBLIC READING...OUR FIRST 21ST CENTURY WORK BY A NEW YORK CITY-BASED COMPOSER, FRANK SCHIRO

This public reading of this delightful Children's opera was a new kind of treat for us. "New" music is always a challenge, especially when there aren't many references for singers and pianists. But we were lucky to have access to the composer, Frank Schiro! He attended a rehearsal before our presentation and was pleased with the ultimate outcome of our performance at Scorca Hall of Opera America. Our fantastic singers, including Pamela Jones, Omar Bowey, Perri Sussman and Marcus King, were led by the Founder and General Manager, John Banks. All were supported at the piano by Christopher Cooley, pianist extraordinaire! This enchanting story of a mother with two twin children and a magician is melodious and fun! We still look forward to presenting a fully staged.

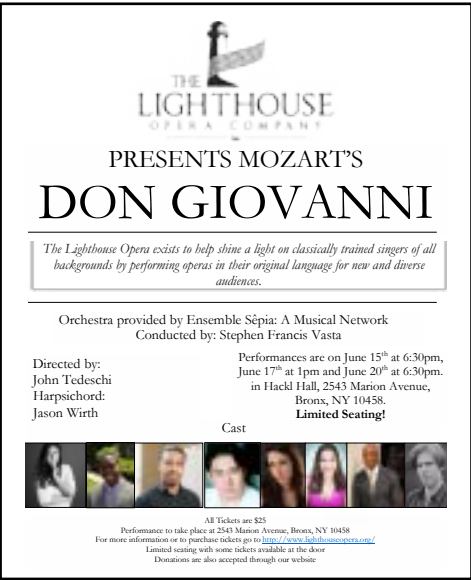
We still look forward to presenting a fully staged production of this delightful work.



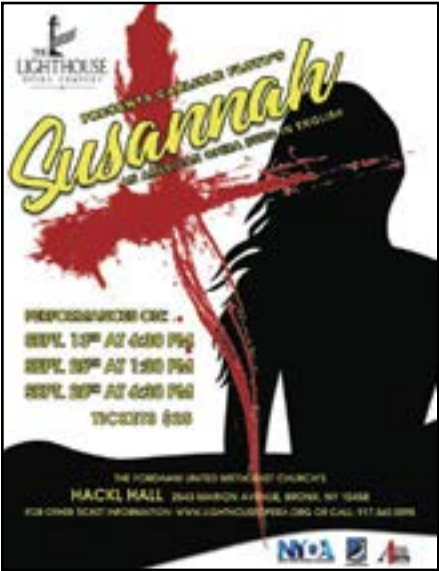


# FULL MEDIA LINKS

Click on the flyer to view show



Don Giovanni  
2017



Susannah  
2018



Rigoletto  
2018



La Serva Padrona  
2019



A Distant Flute  
2020



La Traviata  
2021



La Traviata  
2022



Twice Upon a Birthday  
2022



### **Photography Credits:**

Serena Tausz - Don Giovanni, Susannah and Rigoletto in 2018

Angela Owens - La Serva Padrona in 2019

A Distant Flute - screenshots from virtual presentation 2020

Nan Melville - Highlights from La Traviata 2021

Heather Boebeck - La Traviata 2022

Board President camera shots - Twice Upon a Birthday 2022



The Lighthouse Opera Company is a Professional Member of Opera America  
The Lighthouse Opera Company is a member of The New York Opera Alliance

**The Lighthouse Opera Company has received community, local and city Grant support funding:**

The Bronx Council on the Arts - Community Engagement Grant

The Puffin Foundation

New York City Cultural Affairs Cultural Development Fund

Many Facebook friends and family members!

Our many wonderful Donors!

## **The Lighthouse Opera Company**

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Bronx, NY 10462  
917. 769. 4321 phone  
212. 918.1574 fax

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Email: [info@lighthouseopera.org](mailto:info@lighthouseopera.org)

Youtube: <https://bit.ly/LOCYoutube>

A charitable non-profit organization-EIN: 81-4729519