

The University of South Carolina School of Music

and

*Opera*  
*at* USC

Present



*As One*

In Cooperation with  
Koger Center for the Arts

Filmed on November 7, 2020

# *As One*

A chamber opera for two voices and String Quartet  
Music & Concept by Laura Kaminsky  
Libretto by Mark Campbell & Kimberly Reed  
Film Projections by Kimberly Reed



## CAST

Hannah before: Greg Pipkin  
Hannah after: Tessa Morris

University of South Carolina New Sounds String Quartet

Coach: Dr. Ari Streisfeld  
Violin I: Kai-Yi Zhang  
Violin II: Emilio Alverson  
Viola: Calvin Green  
Cello: Alberto Pelisier Lopez

# A Message from the Director



In the opening number of the musical *A Chorus Line* the director, Zach, calls out the steps for the auditioners, “...back, step, pivot, step, walk, walk, walk...”. I can’t think of a better way to describe the last 8 months, can you? It’s been a journey, but one the music students at the University of South Carolina have undertaken with determination and poise. We were extremely fortunate to make all the scheduled performances and closed our production of *Carousel* on March 1. So many performing arts programs – academic, professional and amateur – had to end abruptly, with no idea when or if their stages would be home to music, dance, theatre and, yes, opera. The April 2020 Lanny and Sidney Palmer One Act series was cancelled, and the students finished the

semester online, uncertain of the future.

But there is one thing that is certain and that is the collaborative and resilient spirit that is embodied in opera. I knew we were going to do something in the fall, but the “what” haunted my waking and sleeping hours for months until that old showbiz adage worked its way to the forefront – **THE SHOW MUST GO ON**. But how? We were fortunate to have had a few rehearsals with Dr. Lynn Kompass for *As One* last spring and producing it was the logical path to follow. The New Sounds Quartet coached by Dr. Ari Streisfeld had also been working on this most poignant and timely opera. Please take a look at the article written for this program by Dr. Kunio Hara. This piece has been performed all over the world and has become the most performed new opera in North America since its premiere in 2014. Find a moment to visit the website <https://www.asoneopera.com> for a comprehensive history of the piece, its creators and resources. I’d like to thank Bill Holab Music, publisher, for his patience and understanding as we had to “back, step, pivot...”.

Still the news continued to be bleak as the summer wore on. Singers, trained to project their voices, were thought to be potentially “super spreaders” and stringent protocols were set in place by the School of Music. Thirty minutes of singing had to be followed by 30 minutes to clear the space. And even if you could rehearse, where would you put it on and who would see it? Across the country performing artists were coming up with creative ways to utilize technology. We’ve all zoomed, teamed, faceted, our way through these months, but was it the best way for our students perform? Fortunately for Opera at USC, Nate Terracio, Director of the Koger Center, had space available and Dr. Tayloe Harding, Dean of the School of Music gave us the go ahead, and so we decided to video tape our production.

We rehearsed – via Zoom- for many weeks. Computers and phones were set up in the opera room and 040 became a TV studio. Neil Casey led the singers – Tessa Morris and Greg Pipkin, while I tuned in from my diningoffice. Resident costumer, Alexis Doktor worked her magic. Recent graduates of the School of Music, Melissa Starkweather and Maddie Johnston had been slated to stage manage the piece in April and were able to join us this fall. New opera grad assistants, James Allen and Katie Gatch suddenly became camera operators!

With the help of audio guru, Jeff Francis, our intrepid technical director, Michael LaRoche, resident light designer Julie Duro and the Koger Center's Steve Borders, Scott Rickenbaker, Ariel Guinn, we made it to the stage. What a new and unique experience for us all.

As you can see, a lot of names are mentioned. And that's because opera is, at the core, a collaboration and when the chips were down, everyone came together and made this video. We've all learned so much working on this opera. It is, as Opera News reported, "A piece that haunts and challenges its audience with questions about identity, authenticity, compassion and the human desire for self-love and peace."

Finally, I can't help but think about Sidney Palmer, who gives his name to our one act series. As noted on his passing in 2016, Sidney was a pioneer in producing the performing arts for television. In 1979 he joined South Carolina ETV Network as Executive Director for National Programming. It was there that he produced operas, such as *The Consul*, *Vanessa*, and *Willie Stark* for the *Great Performances* series, and *Pilobolus* and *The Paul Taylor Dance Company* for the *Dance in America* series. Mr. Palmer was producer and director for the first series of *The Great American Short Story* for PBS and the American producer of *Così fan tutte* at Glyndebourne. He was producer and director of the world's first live satellite-interconnect, *Christmas Around the World*; in which programming originated simultaneously in seven countries on four continents and was seen live as a single program in over 30 countries throughout the world.

In today's world, we'll continue to find new ways to produce this 500-year-old art form. Enjoy. And keep an eye out for what we do next. Stay safe.

Ellen Douglas Schlaefer  
Director of Opera Studies





## DESIGN TEAM AND CREW

Director: Ellen Douglas Schlaefer

Conductor: Neil Casey

Musical Preparation/Vocal Coach: Dr. Lynn Kompass

Vocal Coach: Emily Urbanek

Lighting Design: Julie Duro

Production Manager/Technical Director: Michael LaRoche

Audio Supervisor: Jeff Francis

Sound Technician: Steven M. Borders

Board Operator: Ariel Guinn

Wardrobe Coordinator: Alexis Doktor

Stage Manager: Melissa Starkweather

Camera Operators: James Allen, Katie Gatch

Koger Center SM: Scott Rickenbacker

Projection Operator: Chloe Madison Johnston

*As One* is a chamber opera in which two voices—Hannah after (mezzo-soprano) and Hannah before (baritone)—share the part of a sole transgender protagonist. Fifteen songs comprise the three-part narrative; with empathy and humor, they trace Hannah's experiences from her youth in a small town to her college years—and finally traveling alone to a different country, where she realizes some truths about herself.

Commissioned by American Opera Projects, *As One* opened on September 4, 2014, at the Brooklyn Academy of Music's Fisher Space. Since its premiere, it has become the most produced new opera in North America, according to Opera America magazine.

-asoneopera.com



# Notes on *As One* by Dr. Kunio Hara

Since its première on September 4, 2014 at the Brooklyn Academy of Music, *As One*, created by Laura Kaminsky (music and concept), Mark Campbell (libretto), and Kimberly Reed (libretto and film), has received over 20 productions throughout the United States and traveled to Spain and Australia. According to the data published by OPERA America Magazine, *As One* has ranked the most frequently produced contemporary opera of the 2016–2017, 2017–2018, and 2018–2019 seasons. The statistics for the 2019–2020 season have not come out yet, but based on its current trajectory, it is most likely that *As One* will continue to enjoy its present status and extend it into the future.

The sustained success of *As One* is remarkable in the world of opera which routinely laments the “end of the tradition” with the passing of Giacomo Puccini and has only tentatively and perhaps begrudgingly admitted works by more recent composers in its core repertory. Yet once you experience *As One*, it immediately becomes apparent why this opera has experienced such a meteoric rise. On a practical level, the restrained performing forces required to produce *As One*—two singers, a string quartet, and a conductor—makes the work accessible to opera companies of all sizes, many working under severe financial constraints. The compact size of the opera consisting of fifteen songs spread over three parts that lasts for about 75 minutes also makes it attractive for today’s audience members, whose time has become increasingly precious especially under the present pandemic condition.

However, it is the strength of the work itself to reach out and move the audience that shines through when witnessing *As One*. Campbell’s compassionate and sensitive libretto captures ordinary moments in Hannah’s life with surprising humor and sudden, unexpected poetic flights. It compels the audience to pay attention and become invested in her journey of self-discovery and self-realization. Kaminsky’s score, composed in a familiar tonal idiom, augments the sentiments expressed in Campbell’s texts without sensationalizing, alienating, or trivializing them. Rather than marking Hannah’s experiences as something unusual, the score invites us to accompany Hannah’s journey and experience with her the moments in her daily life that turn extraordinary. Reed’s film, a study in contrast between motion and stillness, contributes to creating the alternating atmospheres of excitement and introspection. The presentation of ordinary physical environments also helps the audience to share the spaces Hannah occupies throughout the narrative.

In addition to being an appealing work, *As One* is a timely opera that came into being at a particular moment in history, the mid 2010s, when the visibility of transgender individuals in the United States have increased exponentially through the community’s robust political activism and the increased representation of trans people in mainstream media. More recently, opera companies around the country too have embraced and featured transgender singers such as Lucia Lucas in the role of Don Giovanni in Mozart’s opera (Tulsa Opera) and Adrian Angelico in the role of the Marquise de Merteuil in Luca Francesconi’s *Quartett* (Spoleto Festival USA). At the same time, the long litany of recently murdered trans people in Act II reminds the audience of the cruelty and indifference that confront transgender community.

Despite these challenges, however, Hannah persists in her quest for self-discovery and peace. By attending closely to Hannah’s personal journey, the opera moves us to imagine and work toward realizing a world that empowers rather than inhibits Hannah to explore who she is. Yet, in the final analysis, it is the opera’s commitment to celebrating the mundane and magical moments in Hannah’s life through intimate words, heartfelt music, and evocative images that will ensure the longevity of *As One*.

# LAURA KAMINSKY BIO

Cited in *The Washington Post* as “one of the top 35 female composers in classical music,” Laura Kaminsky frequently addresses critical social and political issues in her work, including sustainability, war, and human rights. She possesses “an ear for the new and interesting” (*The New York Times*) and “her music is full of fire as well as ice, contrasting dissonance and violence with tonal beauty and meditative reflection. It is strong stuff.” (*American Record Guide*).

Her first opera, *As One*, (2014; co-librettists Mark Campbell & Kimberly Reed) is the most produced contemporary opera in North America since the 2016-17 season, with close to 40 productions to its credit. “*As One* is a piece that haunts and challenges its audience with questions about identity, authenticity, compassion, and the human desire for self-love and peace” (*Opera News*). The original cast recording on the BSS label was named one of the best new opera recordings of 2019 by *Opera News*. The *As One* team has since been commissioned twice—by Houston Grand Opera for *Some Light Emerges* (2017) and Opera Parallèle/American Opera Projects for *Today It Rains* (2019).

With Reed, she has created *Hometown to the World*, inspired by the devastating Immigration and Customs Enforcement raid in Postville, IA in 2008, commissioned by the Opera For All Voices Consortium, led by Santa Fe and San Francisco Operas, for a fall 2020 Santa Fe premiere. New operas include *Finding Wright* (librettist Andrea Fellows Walters) for Dayton Opera (2021) and *February* (co-librettist with novelist Lisa Moore) for Newfoundland’s Opera on the Avalon (2023).

Kaminsky is currently writing for the New York Festival of Song’s Suffrage-themed concert and a solo piano work for the American Pianists Association 2021 competition. An upcoming cd for Cedille Records features iconic pianist Ursula Oppens performing Kaminsky’s Piano Concerto with the ASU Symphony Orchestra (Jeffery Meyer, music director), her Piano Quintet with the Cassatt String Quartet, the solo Fantasy, and *Reckoning: Five Miniatures for America* for piano four-hands, where Oppens is joined by Jerome Lowenthal.

Grants, awards and fellowships include those from the National Endowment for the Arts, Koussevitzky Music Foundation, Opera America, Chamber Music America, BAM/Kennedy Center De Vos Institute, William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, Aaron Copland Fund, Virgil Thomson Foundation, Newburgh Institute for Art and Ideas, Roger Shapiro Fund for New Music, American Music Center, USArtists International, CEC ArtsLink International Partnerships, Likhachev-Russkiy Mir Foundation Cultural Fellowship, Kenan Institute for the Arts, Artist Trust, New York State Council on the Arts, Bronx Arts Council, Arts Westchester, North Carolina Arts Council, Seattle Arts Commission, and Meet the Composer. She has received six ASCAP-Chamber Music America Awards for Adventure-some Programming, a citation from the Office of the President of the Borough of Manhattan, the 2016 Polish Gold Cross of Merit (Złoty Krzyż Zasługi RP, a decoration awarded by the President of Poland for exemplary public service or humanitarian work), and the Polish Ministry of Culture National Heritage 2010 Chopin Award. She has been a fellow at the Hermitage Artist Retreat, Virginia Center for the Creative Arts, Centrum Foundation, Dorland Mountain Arts Colony, Millay Colony for the Arts, and the Camargo Foundation (France).

The 2019-2020 Composer Mentor for Washington National Opera’s American Opera Initiative, she is head of composition at the Conservatory of Music Purchase College/SUNY. Kaminsky serves on the boards of Opera America and the Hermitage Artist Retreat.

[-laurakaminsky.com](http://laurakaminsky.com)

## MARK CAMPBELL BIO

Mark Campbell's work as a librettist is at the forefront of the contemporary opera scene in this country. A prolific writer, Mark has created 36 opera librettos, lyrics for 7 musicals, and the text for 5 song cycles and 2 oratorios. His works for the stage have been performed at more than 80 musical venues around the world and the names of his collaborators comprise a roster of the most eminent composers in classical music and include three Pulitzer Prize winners.

Mark's best-known work is *Silent Night*, which received a Pulitzer Prize in Music and is one of the most frequently produced operas in recent history. *The (R)evolution of Steve Jobs*, an audience favorite, received a 2018 Grammy Award for Best Opera Recording. Mark's other successful operas include *The Shining*, *Stonewall*, *Later the Same Evening*, *The Nefarious*, *Immoral but Highly Profitable Enterprise of Mr. Burke & Mr. Hare*, *The Manchurian Candidate*, *As One*, *The Other Room*, *Memory Boy*, *Empty the House*, *The Inspector*, *Approaching Ali*, *A Letter to East 11th Street*, *Dinner at Eight*, *Volpone*, and *Bastianello/Lucrezia*. His musicals include *Songs from an Unmade Bed*, *The Audience* and *Splendor*. Mark has received many other prestigious prizes for his work, including the first Kleban Foundation Award for Lyricist, a Grammy nomination for Best Classical Recording, two Richard Rodgers Awards from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, three Drama Desk nominations, a Jonathan Larson Foundation Award, a New York Foundation for the Arts Playwriting Fellowship, the first Dominic J. Pellicciotti Award, and a grant from the New York State Council of the Arts.

Recordings of his works include: *The (R)evolution of Steve Jobs* (Pentatone), *Sanctuary Road* (Naxos), *As One* (Bright Shiny Things), *Volpone* (Wolf Trap Records), *Bastianello/Lucrezia* (Bridge), *Rappahannock County* (Naxos), *Later the Same Evening* (Albany) and *Songs from an Unmade Bed* (Ghostlight).

Mark is also an advocate for contemporary American opera and serves as a mentor for future generations of writers through such organizations as American Opera Projects, American Lyric Theatre, and Washington National Opera's American Opera Initiative.

Upcoming premieres include *Edward Tulane* for Minnesota Opera (Paola Prestini, composer); *The Secret River* for Opera Orlando (Stella Sung, composer); *Supermax* for Saratoga Opera (Stewart Wallace, composer); a new version of *Stravinsky/Ramuz's L'Histoire du Soldat* for the Moab Festival, *A Nation of Others* for the Oratorio Society of New York (Paul Moravec, composer) and the book for the musical *Les Girls* (Cole Porter, composer).

[-markcampbellwords.com](http://-markcampbellwords.com)

## KIMBERLY REED BIO

Kimberly Reed designed projections for and wrote *As One* with co-librettist Mark Campbell, composed by Laura Kaminsky. The team then collaborated for *Some Light Emerges* (Houston Grand Opera) and *Today It Rains* (Opera Parallèle). A consortium of opera companies led by Santa Fe and San Francisco Opera commissioned her to create *Postville*, again with Kaminsky. Her written work is published in "The Moth," a New York Times best-seller. Her documentary film *Prodigal Sons* premiered at the Telluride Film Festival, won 14 awards, and was released in theaters and broadcast worldwide. Her Sundance award-winning documentary *Dark Money* was released in 2018 by PBS-Distribution. It was promptly named by Vogue magazine as one of the 66 Best Documentaries of All Time and short-listed for the Academy Awards.

[-operacolumbus.org](http://-operacolumbus.org)



**Greg Pipkin** (Hannah before) from Goose Creek, SC, is a second-year graduate student pursuing a M.M. in Opera Theatre at USC. He studies voice with Professor Jacob Will and is a graduate assistant for Opera at USC. Greg has appeared in Opera at USC's productions of *Susannah* as Elder McLean, and *Carousel* as David Bascombe. Greg has also appeared with Opera Carolina's Opera Express in *A Busy Bee* as Miguel.



**Tessa Morris** (Hannah after) from Savannah, GA, is a second-year graduate student pursuing a M.M. in Vocal Performance at USC. She studies voice with Dr. Tina Stallard and is a member of Graduate Vocal Ensemble. She is the administrative graduate assistant and teacher for Carolina Music Studios. This is Tessa's first production with Opera at USC. Tessa has also appeared as a soloist for the Long Bay Symphony and was cast in The Savannah Voice Festival's production of Michael Ching's new opera *A Royal Feast* that was postponed due to the Coronavirus pandemic.

# ENSEMBLE, CREW, AND STAFF BIOS

**James Allen** (Camera Operator) is from Savannah, GA and is a first-year graduate student pursuing a M.M in Vocal Performance at USC. He studies with Prof. Dominic Armstrong and is an Opera Graduate Assistant for the 2020-21 school year. This is his first production collaborating with Opera at USC! Some of his previous roles include Don Ottavio (*Don Giovanni*), Sam Kaplan (*Street Scene*), Orfeo (*L'Orfeo*), and Prunier (*La Rondine*) with Georgia Southern Opera.

**Emilio Alverson** (New Sounds Quartet) is a first-year graduate student pursuing a M.M. in Violin Pedagogy. Before coming to USC, he attended Furman University to pursue a B.M. in Violin Performance where he graduated cum laude. He currently studies the violin with Ari Streisfeld. As a performer, Emilio has performed with the Furman University Gladden Scholarship String Quartet, the Greenville Symphony Orchestra, the Hendersonville Symphony Orchestra, and the Piedmont Chamber Orchestra. During the summers, Emilio has attended various music festivals and institutes, including the Green Mountain Chamber Music Festival, the Brevard Music Center Summer Institute and Festival, and Sewanee Summer Music Festival. Emilio was previously the string instructor at the NoteAbility Music School and the KJ Music Academy in Greer, South Carolina where he gave private instruction for over four years. Currently, Emilio teaches violin at the Columbia Arts Academy.

**Steven M. Borders** (Koger Center Sound Designer/Technical Director) is a sound designer, producer and an in demand live and recording sound engineer. Born in Columbus, OH, he was raised in Quebec, Canada, Massachusetts, and finally settled in Columbia SC where he graduated from the University of South Carolina with a BA in Media arts. Known primarily as the Technical Director for the Koger Center for the Arts at the University of South Carolina (USC), Steve also does sound design for live events, movies and TV commercials around the country. Several shows he has designed in the Columbia area include *The Ballet Tara*, and *Dracula Ballet with a Bite* for the Columbia City Ballet, and *The Illusion* for the USC Theater dept. Steve also wrote the music and produced the soundtrack for the animated short film “*Key To The Future*” an African AIDS awareness film that won three awards: the 2005 CINE Golden Eagle, the 2005 Platinum Best in Show Aurora International Award and the Bronze achievement in Media Excellence from the Media Communications Association-International. In 2009 Steve helped with the creation and did the final mixdown of a NCAA commercial “Signing Day” for the University of South Carolina that ran nationally for two years during televised sporting events in which USC participated. One of Steve’s enduring creations is the “Rooster Crow” that is heard throughout USC’s campus and during all sporting events. In his spare time Steve continues creating by indulging his passion for cooking and enjoying time with his family and friends. Since the arrival of the pandemic Steve has worked tirelessly to install the live stream set up that was used to film this performance.

**Neil Casey** (Conductor) is the Assistant Director of Orchestras at the University of South Carolina, as well as the Music Director of the South Carolina Philharmonic Youth Orchestras. At USC, he teaches conducting, violin, chamber music, and conducts Opera at USC and the USC Campus Orchestra, an ensemble that he created. Previously, Mr. Casey was the Assistant Conductor of the Augusta, GA Symphony, conductor of the Armstrong Atlantic Youth Orchestra in Savannah, GA, and a faculty member at the Conductors’ Institute in Columbia and the Opera Master Classes in Charleston, SC as part of Piccolo Spoleto. An active guest conductor, Maestro Casey has appeared with the former Savannah Symphony, Oregon Symphony, Indianapolis Symphony, Knoxville Symphony, Savannah Sinfonietta, South Carolina Philharmonic, Karelian Philharmonic Orchestra (Petrazovodsk, Russia), Charleston Symphony, and several national and international tours with the Hollywood Concert Orchestra. For the past few years, Neil has been the conductor for the Columbia Festival Orchestra’s Nutcracker Ballets, as well.

Passionate for opera, Neil has appeared with the Augusta Opera and conducted Claflin University's Celebration of Black Pioneers in the field of opera featuring renowned soprano, Leona Mitchell. In his post as conductor of Opera at USC, Maestro Casey has led performances of over 30 different productions. In January of 2002, he was appointed to the position of Assistant Conductor of the American Music Theatre for a television production of Robert Ward's *Roman Fever*.

Committed to education, this year marks Neil's sixth season as Music Director/Conductor of the South Carolina Philharmonic Youth Orchestras. Neil earned both his B.M. in Music Education and Violin Performance, and his M.M. in Orchestral Conducting from the University of South Carolina where he was the recipient of the 1997 Van Doren Award.

**Alexis Doktor**, (Costume Designer/Coordinator) from New York, NY, holds a degree in fashion design from the Fashion Institute of Technology in New York. Her career began in professional ballet and led her into costume design, where she has worked under designers such as Oscar de la Renta and Vera Wang. She designs for many of the local theater companies including Trustus Theater and FBN Productions, Inc. *Opera for Kids*. For Opera at USC, Ms. Doktor has designed costumes for *L'elisir d'amore*, *Das Barbecü*, *Don Giovanni*, *The Tender Land*, *Bambino*, *Candide*, *MASS*, *Così fan tutte*, *La Finta Giardiniera*, and *Susannah*.

**Julie Duro** (Resident Lighting Designer) has designed for opera companies including the Santa Fe Opera, the Connecticut Opera, Palm Beach Opera, Opera International, Lyric Opera of Kansas City, Opera Illinois, Dayton Opera, the Indiana University Jacobs School of Music, Florida State Opera, and the Green Mountain Opera Festival. She has worked extensively at the Westport Country Playhouse where she designed the lighting for *The Member of the Wedding*, directed by Joanne Woodward, and she has also worked with the Paper Mill Playhouse, Walnut Street Theatre, and Riverside Theatre. Her work in dance encompasses designs for North Carolina Dance Theatre, the Australian Ballet, Southern Ballet Theatre, Dances Patrelle, and Mark Stuart Dance Theatre. She was the resident lighting designer for the critically acclaimed Ohio Ballet from 1996 to 1999. She also works frequently with Tulsa Ballet and with Pittsburgh Ballet, where her designs can be seen each year in their productions of *The Nutcracker*.

**Calvin Green** (New Sounds Quartet) is a violist currently pursuing a DMA at the University of South Carolina studying Viola Performance with Dr. Daniel Sweaney and studying string quartet performance with Dr. Ari Streisfeld as a member of the UofSC New Sounds String Quartet (a quartet devoted to modern/contemporary repertoire for string quartet). Prior to studying at the UofSC, Calvin was Principal Viola of the Pueblo Symphony Orchestra in Pueblo, CO and a member the Nebula Ensemble (a commission-exclusive ensemble in Denver, CO). Calvin received a BM at the University of Denver's Lamont School of Music studying with Basil Vendryes, and a MM at the Longy School of Music studying with Mark Lakirovich. When not performing, Calvin enjoys hiking, backpacking, home-brewing, and no-dig gardening.

**Ariel Guinn** (Board Operator) was born and raised in Columbia and graduated from Denison University in Granville, Ohio. She spent a semester abroad studying art and culture in Ghana, West Africa, one month of which was devoted to living and studying with a youth dance troupe. This is her 7th year at Koger where she works as their head electrician. Ariel loves designing lighting for dance, and regularly works for Columbia Classical Ballet; last year she designed the College of Charleston Dance Department's fall faculty concert.

**Chloe Madison Johnston** (Projection Operator) is a recent graduate of the University of South Carolina with a degree in Music Performance and is originally from Clover, SC. She participated in many Opera at USC productions including Rodgers and Hammerstein's *Carousel* as Julie Jordan and Louise, Janaček's *The Cunning Little Vixen* as the dragonfly, Menotti's *Amelia al Ballo* as Amelia, and Mozart's *La Finta Giardiniera* as a supernumerary. She also served as stage manager in Floyd's *Susannah* in 2019. Some of her many other accomplishments at USC include winning the annual Honors Recital in both 2016 and 2017, touring internationally with the USC Concert Choir, and performing with the USC Symphony in the Concerto and Aria Concert in 2020. She is currently working as the Music Director at Main Street UMC Columbia and an administrative assistant for FBN Productions, Inc., in Columbia.

**Lynn Kompass** (Vocal Coach) has been in charge of musical preparation (coaching all roles) for all of Opera at USC's productions over the last sixteen years. To date, she has coached roughly 40 productions. Along with her work in the opera department, she also teaches courses in Song Literature and French, German, Italian, and Russian diction for singers. As a coach/répétiteur, Dr. Kompass has worked at the Festival de Musique de St-Barthélemy in the French West Indies, as well as Chicago Opera Theater, Aspen Opera Theater, Charleston Chamber Opera, Greenville Light Opera Works (GLOW), and Opera Brasil in São Luis, Brazil. She has also given masterclasses and clinics at the Collaborative Arts Institute of Chicago, SUNY Potsdam, Florida State University, Charleston Southern University, Western Michigan University, Winthrop University, and Emory University. For five summers she was engaged as a pianist for the prestigious Steans Vocal Institute in residence at the Ravinia Music Festival. While in residence, she played for many voice recitals as well as master classes led by Christoph Eschenbach, Christa Ludwig, Thomas Hampson, Thomas Allen, Barbara Bonney, among others.

**Michael LaRoche** (Production Manager/Technical Director) A Wilmington, Delaware native, baritone Michael LaRoche has sung in many locales along the east coast as well as internationally. He currently serves as the Technical Director for Opera at USC. A graduate of the University of Delaware, East Carolina University, and the University of South Carolina, he holds BM, MM, and DMA degrees in voice performance. Recent engagements include the roles of Herr Frank in *Die Fledermaus*, Pandolfe in *Cendrillon*, Fred/Ghost of Christmas Present in *Scrooge*, Giuseppe in *The Light in the Piazza*, Editor Webb in *Our Town*, Coppelius and Lindorf in *Les Contes d'Hoffmann*, Pooh-Bah in *The Mikado*, Trinculo in *The Tempest*, Ben in *The Telephone*, The Vicar in *Albert Herring*, The Count in *Le Nozze di Figaro*, and Tarquinius in *The Rape of Lucretia*. In 2002 Dr. LaRoche made his international debut with the Regional Choir of Guadeloupe and the Cuban National Symphony under the baton of Tido Dejan during a 6 concert tour of the French Territorial Island of Guadeloupe. Previously, Dr. LaRoche has created several roles with Opera Delaware including *Out of the Rain* and *Billy and Zelda*. Equally at home on the recital and oratorio stages, he has recently performed Vaughan Williams's *Dona Nobis Pacem* and Schuman's *Casey at the Bat*, Mozart's *Vesperae solennes de Dominica*, Moravec's *Songs of Love and War*, Howell's *Sir Patrick Spens*, Dubois's *Seven Last Words of Christ*, Haydn's *The Seasons*, Fauré's *Requiem*, Mozart's *Requiem*, Vaughan Williams's *Five Mystical Songs*, and given recitals in Augusta, Greenville, Columbia, and Hartsville.

**Alberto Pelisier Lopez** (New Sounds Quartet) was born in Ciudad Victoria in Mexico, but lived in Chetumal, Quintana Roo (Mex). In 2012 he moved to Merida, Yucatan to earn his undergraduate degree under Hungarian professor Veselin Dechev in the Escuela Superior de Artes de Yucatán. He has played as a soloist twice with the Orquesta Sinfonica Gustavo Rio Escalante, the orchestra of the Escuela Superior. Between 2012-2016 he participated in the Musical Education Program organized by Mexican bank Banamex, a workshop by Decoda, a New York-based ensemble affiliated to Carnegie Hall. Between 2015 and 2018 he performed as an extra cellist with the Orquesta Sinfonica de Yucatán and toured with this orchestra to Mexico City and the 42nd Cervantino International Festival.



In the summer of 2015 & 2016, he traveled to Saratoga Springs to participate in the Decoda Skidmore Chamber Music Institute. Also in 2016 he was accepted to participate in the St. Lawrence String Quartet Chamber Music Seminar at Stanford University. He was first chair in the String Orchestra of Yucatan's University and taught cello in the Cultural Center Jose Jacinto Cuevas. He also participated in chamber music festivals in Mexico including 3er Seminario de Música de Cámara del Festival Internacional Música Naolinco, in Naolinco Veracruz and Encuentro Internacional de Música de Cámara Aguascalientes in Aguascalientes. In the Fall of 2019, he started a Master in Music, Cello Performance at the University of South Carolina studying with professor Claire Bryant. He is a recipient of the Cello Fund Award.

**Scott Rickenbaker** is the Stage Manager for The Koger Center for the Arts. He has been with the building since it opened in 1989. A graduate of the University of South Carolina's Media Arts department, Scott spent his earlier years at WACH TV. He has 3 sons ages 13, 7, and 4. Spending time with them is his joy these days.

**Ellen Douglas Schlaefer** (Stage and Video Director) is in her 16th year as Director of Opera Studies, following a long and successful career in professional opera. Schlaefer has worked as a freelance director and stage manager for companies including Houston Grand Opera, The Washington National Opera, The Santa Fe Opera, The Dallas Opera, Michigan Opera Theatre, The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, Lyric Opera of Kansas City, Brott Opera (Canada), Opera Carolina, Opera Illinois, Artpark & Company (NY), The Connecticut Opera, Kentucky Opera, Opera Memphis, Tulsa Opera, Opera Colorado, Seattle Opera, The Princeton Festival and Green Mountain Opera Festival. She is the 2016 receipt of the University of South Carolina School of Music's Cantey Outstanding Faculty Award and the 2017 USITT (United States Institute for Theatre Technology) Wally Russell Professional Mentoring Award. Schlaefer is also founder and general director of FBN Productions, Inc., Opera for Kids, a touring company with 25 years experience sharing opera to the young and young at heart throughout the Southeast. Opera at USC has produced over 62 operas and musicals since Schlaefer arrived at USC including the acclaimed production of Bernstein's MASS in 2018. Former students who have participated with Opera at USC are now working as college professors, arts administrators, church music professionals and, of course, singers across the globe.

**Melissa Starkweather**, (*Stage Manager/Video Switcher*) a native of Tulsa, Oklahoma graduated from USC with her M.M. (Opera Theatre) in the spring of 2020. She previously obtained her Bachelor's Degree in Voice Performance at Belmont University in Nashville, TN. During her time with Opera at USC, she played Amelia in Gian Carlo Menotti's *Amelia al Ballo* and Susannah in Carlisle Floyd's *Susannah*. She also performed in the ensemble in Rogers and Hammerstein's *Carousel*. In addition to her time performing, she worked as assistant stage manager/props mistress for Janacek's *The Cunning Little Vixen*, and stage managed Judith Weir's *Armida*. She was also stage manager for Choirs of Trinity Episcopal Cathedral's production of Benjamin Britten's *Noye's Fludde*. Last summer, she participated in Berlin Opera Academy's summer, 2019, festival as a production and management apprentice. Melissa hopes to continue her participation in the creation of operatic works both on and off the stage.

**Kai-Yi Zhang** (New Sounds Quartet) is currently pursuing her doctorate degree in music performance at the University of South Carolina in Dr. Ari Streisfeld's studio. Before relocating to Columbia, Kai-Yi received her Bachelor Degree from China Conservatory in music and her Master Degree from DePaul University in Chicago while studying with Professor Olga Kaler. She has also received coaching for chamber music from George Vatchnadze, Cliff Colnot, Ilya Kaler, Janet Sung, and Jason Moy. She has participated in Ensemble 20+ under director Michael Lewanski to premier/perform a range of works from the early 20th century to present day. Additionally, Kai-Yi has performed in the Baroque Ensemble under director Jason Moy to enrich the experience of the 16th through mid-18th centuries' music performance and techniques.

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