ABOUT VCU OPERA

Founded in 1950 by L. Wayne Batty, VCU Opera has been directed by Melanie Kohn Day since 1983. In 2008, Dr. Kenneth Wood joined the VCU Voice faculty and additionally assumed the position of Stage Director for VCU Opera. Between November 2011 and December 2012, VCU Opera was the recipient of three national awards from the NOA-National Opera Association: 2nd Place for Humperdinck’s HANSEL & GRETEL, 1st Place for Menotti’s THE OLD MAID & THE THIEF, and 3rd place for the opera scenes competition for Bizet’s CARMEN quintet.

VCU Opera has the longest-running tradition of annual full-scale productions in the state of Virginia and is proud of its outstanding reputation as an opera training program. Each year there is a fully-staged production of opera scenes and arias as well as a full-scale production featuring scenery and costumes and presented in collaboration with the VCU Symphony.

VCU Opera’s mission is to cast undergraduate students in appropriate roles from the mainstream repertoire. We specialize in traditionally styled productions utilizing where possible our extensive collection of costumes, wigs and props.

With a significant emphasis on the holistic training of the complete “singer-actor,” VCU Opera has prepared numerous students for scholarships to the nation’s finest conservatories and university graduate programs, as well as for prestigious summer festivals in the USA and abroad and for Resident Artist positions with regional opera companies throughout the USA. Many VCU Opera alumni have gone on to enjoy highly successful careers performing in the world’s greatest opera houses.

VCU Opera & The VCU Symphony present
GILBERT & SULLIVAN'S
the Gondoliers

April 24, 2015 at 7:30 pm & April 26, 2015 at 4:00 pm
W. E. Singleton Center 3022 Park Avenue Richmond, VA 23284

Co-Directors: Melanie Kohn Day & Kenneth Wood
Conductor: Daniel Myssyk
Light Designer: Curt Blanchard
Set Designer: Mercedes Schaum
Choreographers: Eleanor Hoberman & Pamela Turner

Sponsored by:
AARON JONES (senior, tenor) recently made his Richmond Symphony debut as a soloist on their “Voices of Survival” collaboration concert. In the summer of 2014 Aaron performed a principle role in A Midsummer Night’s Dream at the Harrower Opera Institute in their young artist division and sang various opera scenes at the Crittenden Institute. Recently, Aaron was awarded second place with honors for Senior Men at the Virginia NATS competition, received honors at the Mid-Atlantic Regional NATS Competition, and was also a winner of the VCU Concerto and Aria competition. For the summer of 2015 Aaron was accepted into the Miami Summer Music Festival, Opera Breve Institute in Texas, and the Druid City Opera Workshop at the University of Alabama. He has decided to spend five weeks in Arezzo, Italy with the “Oberlin in Italy” summer opera program where he will sing Basilio in Mozart’s Le Nozze di Figaro. Aaron received a major scholarship from the Oberlin in Italy program.

MALCOLM JONES (senior, baritone) is bringing his undergraduate career to a close, and has become a voice teacher at The Music Tree in Stoney Point, as well as a Vocal Director for New Kent High School’s production of Les Miserables. Malcolm plans on continuing his studies at a graduate level next year.

MARGARET MAYES (junior, mezzo-soprano) placed first for Junior Women this year in the VA NATS Competition.

EMILY NESBITT (freshman, soprano) recently placed first for Freshmen Women at the VA NATS Competition, and received honors at the Mid-Atlantic Regional NATS competition as well.

VICTORIA NOCHISAKI-KINNEY (junior, soprano) placed second for Junior Women at the VA NATS Competition.

TESS OTTINGER (junior, soprano) is a vocal education major at VCU. This year she competed at the Virginia NATS competition and received honors within her category. This summer, she plans on continuing her vocal study with her voice teacher, Cynthia Donnell. Although she will not be attending any summer vocal programs, she plans on competing in various competitions over the summer.

ERIKA STRAUS (senior, soprano) recently received honors at both VA NATS and the Mid-Atlantic Regional NATS competitions. This summer she plans to attend the Wintergreen Summer Music Academy’s Schubert Voice intensive with a full scholarship. She has also been accepted into Opera Works Emerging Artist Program in California and Harrower’s Summer Opera Workshop. She is looking forward to auditioning for graduate programs in the upcoming year.
THE GONDOLIERS
Performed in English with English Supertitles

There will be one 15-minute intermission.

SETTING
ACT I The Piazzetta, Venice (1750)
ACT II Pavilion in the Palace of Barataria, off the coast of Spain
(an interval of three months elapses between Acts I and II)

DRAMATIS PERSONAE
The Duke of Plaza Toro: MALCOLM JONES
Luiz: AARON JONES
Don Alhambra del Bolero: EVAN COLDIRON
Marco Palmieri: DEVONTE SAUNDERS
Giuseppe Palmieri: ALEX HARPER
Antonio: FORREST GLASS
Francesco: COLLIER PHILLIPS
Giorgio: ALAN CHAVEZ
The Duchess of Plaza Toro: MARGARET MAYES
Casilda: ZARAH BROCK
Gianetta: ERIKA STRAUS
Tessa: CIARA HILLIARD
Fiametta: TESS OTTINGER
Vittoria: EMMA-CLAIRE POLICH
Giulia: BRENNA MILLER
Inez: VICTORIA NOCHISAKI-KINNEY

CHORUS

The use of photography and recording equipment of any kind is strictly prohibited. Please silence all electronic devices.
Gilbert’s libretto re-uses the baby-swapping idea from *HMS Pinafore* and combines it with kidnapping which brings to mind Gilbert’s own claim to have been captured at an early age by Neopolitan bandits. *The Gondoliers* once again captures that sense of unclouded gaiety which characterizes their earlier operettas. Gilbert’s exaltation of youth and love is sincere and, although the libretto has its satirical elements, these never overshadow the essentially sunny, optimistic and romantic outlook. In many respects *The Gondoliers* is one of Gilbert’s finest, most balanced and human plays.

Soon after the first night Sullivan wrote to Gilbert “in such a perfect book as *The Gondoliers* you shine with an individual brilliancy which no other writer can hope to attain.” Gilbert and Sullivan were never to transcend *The Gondoliers*.


### THE STORY

**ACT I:** Twenty years before the opening of the action, when Casilda (the heroine) was yet a baby, she and the infant heir to the throne of Barataria were married. Shortly thereafter he disappeared, supposedly abducted to Venice by the Grand Inquisitor, Don Alhambra, and there brought up. At length, as the result of insurrection, the throne of Barataria became vacant; and Casilda’s father, the somewhat moth-eaten Duke of Plaza Toro, wished to establish his daughter as Queen. He accordingly went to Venice—accompanied by his wife, daughter, and Luiz, his drummer—in search of his daughter’s missing husband.

As the curtain rises, a chorus of contadine (peasant girls) are waiting for the two leading gondoliers, Giuseppe and Marco, to come and choose their brides from among them. By a sort of blindman’s buff, the two men choose Tessa and Gianetta; and they all dance off to the altar.

The Duke of Plaza-Toro and suite meanwhile arrive in Venice. The Duke tells Casilda about her childhood marriage. Luiz and Casilda (who—unknown to her parents—are in love with each other) accordingly renounce their love. Don Alhambra appears and tells them that the person they are seeking is either Giuseppe or Marco, he is not sure which. He will send for the nurse who took care of the infant prince (she now lives far away, in the mountains); and, when she arrives, she will be able to tell them which one it is. Meanwhile, Giuseppe and Marco are to go to Barataria at once and rule jointly until the matter is straightened out.

Giuseppe and Marco are overjoyed at the prospect; and, with plans for instituting an ideal state in Barataria, they set sail. Tessa and Gianetta must remain behind, with the vague promise from Don Alhambra that they may later join their husbands, and with the idea that one of them will then be Queen.

**ACT II** is set in Barataria, where Giuseppe and Marco have established their extremely limited monarchy. Everything seems to be going well,

### PRODUCTION STAFF

Artistic Director: MELANIE KOHN DAY  
Producer/Music Director/Chorusmaster: MELANIE KOHN DAY  
Co-Director, VCU Opera & Stage Director: KENNETH WOOD  
Conductor, VCU Symphony: DANIEL MYSSYK  
Scenic Designer: MERCEDES SCHAUM  
Lighting Designer: CURT BLANKENSHIP  
Costume Designers/Coordinators: THE COSTUME SHOP, IVY AUSTIN & LESLIE WINN  
Choreographers: ELEANOR ROBERTSON & PAMELA TURNER  
Assistant Choreographer & Dance Captain: EMMA-CLAIRE POLICH  
Technical Director: ROLAND KARNATZ  
Stage Manager: MARGARET TAYLOR  
Assistant Stage Manager: CASSIE MACHAMER  
Scenic Construction: ROLAND KARNATZ  
Prop Construction: ROLAND KARNATZ & MELANIE DAY  
Scenic Decoration: MERCEDES SCHAUM  
Dialogue Coach: MELANIE KOHN DAY  
Dialogue Assistance: CYNTHIA DONNELL  
Publicity Designers:  
RILEY HILL & AMEORRY LUO (VCU Communication Arts & Design)  
Wig/Hair Mistress: MELANIE KOHN DAY  
Running Crew: members of VCU Opera  
Supertitles Operator: PAIGE REISENFELD  
Preparation of Supertitles: DR. KENNETH WOOD
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

VCU OPERA would like to express our profound appreciation to Emerson & Kathy Hughes, as well as Dr. William Welty, Dr. Sonia Vlahcevic, Dr. Velimir Luketic, and Perry Nelson of St. Louis, MO for their ongoing dedication to and support of our productions.

SPECIAL THANKS to Roland Karnatz, Curt Blankenship, Mercedes Schaum, Leslie Winn, Ivy Austin, Pamela Turner, Eleanor Robertson, and Emma-Claire Polich, who have dreamt, planned, organized, constructed, choreographed, and created the magic for us! We could not exist without their talent, expertise, and dedication!

SPECIAL THANKS ALSO to Dr. Darryl Harper, Chair of VCU Music; Linda Johnston; Micah Baldwin; Max Cook; Chris Crowley; Joshua Hyde; Cassie Machamer; Cynthia Donnell; Amy Sheets; Tiffanie Chan; Ron Keller; Theatre VCU; Al Williamson, Theatre VCU; Leland Lew; Paige Reisenfeld; Sarah Grady and Marcia Miller Hailey of The Virginia Repertory Theatre; the parents of Micah Baldwin, Max Cook, and Josh Hyde for sharing their sons with us; Prof. Bill Messerschmidt; Dr. Terry Austin; Prof. Susanna Klein; Dr. Justin Alexander; Prof. John Patykula; Christopher Sheets; Aaron Frisbie; Ric Withers & Wythken Printing; Prof. Robert Meganck; Riley Hill; Ameorry Luo; Alex Harper; and Malcolm Jones.

BACKGROUND TO THE GONDOLIERS

The Gondoliers was the last great success of the Gilbert and Sullivan partnership. Written in a spirit of conciliatory accord following a period of particularly bitter artistic estrangement, it carries every indication of having been created—as one first night reviewer observed—‘con amore.’

[Previously], Sullivan had explained to Gilbert how he ‘wanted to do some dramatic work on a larger musical scale’ in which ‘the music must occupy a more important place,’ and that ‘he wanted a voice in the musical construction of the libretto.’... Gilbert had rationally maintained, however, that Sullivan could satisfy his ambitions for large scale operatic work by writing a grand opera for the audience which wanted that, without having to abandon the lighter form of operetta favoured by the patrons of the Savoy [theatre].... Making his peace with Gilbert, Sullivan expressed a particular liking for the Venetian subject he knew the librettist had been considering. Just over seven months later, on 7th December, 1889, The Gondoliers opened at the Savoy Theatre.

Sullivan’s diary records that at the premiere performance ‘Everything went splendidly with immense ‘go’ and spirit—right up to the end. Gilbert and I got a tremendous ovation—we have never had such an audience and never such a brilliant first night. It looks as if the opera were going to have a long run and be a great success.’ His estimate proved correct. The Gondoliers achieved a remarkable initial run of 554 performances. It was even honoured by a Royal Command Performance before Queen Victoria—who on that occasion certainly was amused.

If The Gondoliers has remained amongst the most popular collaborations between Gilbert and Sullivan, it was also one of the most congenial for the partners themselves. Having managed to cajole Sullivan back to the Savoy, Gilbert was anxious to ensure that the composer had no cause for regrets. For various lyrics sent by him to Sullivan, Gilbert provided alternatives, gave him carte blanche for lines to be omitted and even offered to write completely new material to please the composer. The structure of the operetta also revealed Gilbert’s willingness to concede prominence to the music for significantly more of the playing time of the work is taken up by the music than in any of the previous full-length pieces. It is the predominance of dance rhythms which is so distinctive a feature of Sullivan’s music for The Gondoliers. There are the waltz tunes of the opening sequence and the courtly pastiche of the gavotte in Act II, but most striking is the wealth of sparkling Mediterranean measures: the saltarello, tarantella and cachuca—this latter being intended, perhaps, to indicate the proximity of Barataria to the Spanish mainland. Outstanding in every respect, but not least for its authentic Italian ring—albeit Neopolitan rather than Venetian—is the duet ‘We’re called gondolieri.’ As well as these exotic elements in the score there is also music in the composer’s more familiar vein. The glee ‘Try we lifelong’ is closely related to the pseudo-madrigals of, for example, The Mikado and Ruddigore. There are species of Italian-style patter songs and even tenor balladry which extends into Sullivan’s drawing-room output.