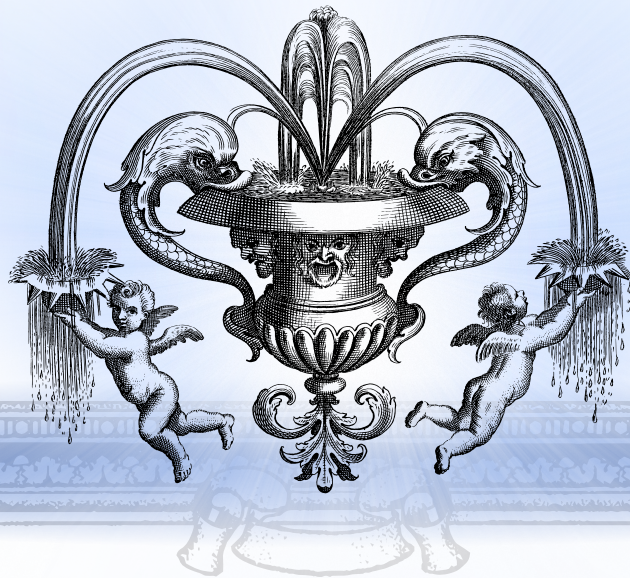


L'Opéra Comique de Washington

Presents

OPERA GALA FRENCH AT THE EMBASSY



FEATURING ARTISTS:

Natalia Pérez
Soprano

Marc-Antoine d'Aragon
Baritone

Sahel Salam
Tenor

Melanie Ashkar
Mezzo-Soprano

Simon Charette
Artistic Director & Conductor
www.operacomiquedewashington.org



November 7th at 7pm
Maison Française
de L'Ambassade de France

Under the Gracious Patronage of the Ambassador of France, Laurent Billé

Under the Gracious Patronage of the Ambassador of France, Laurent Bili

L'Opéra Comique de Washington

presents

Opera Gala at the
French Embassy

Featuring

Natalia Pérez Rodríguez, soprano
Melanie Ashkar, mezzo-soprano
Sahel Salam, tenor
Marc-Antoine d'Aragon, baritone

Ryo Usami, violin
Emily Konkle, violin
Mariusz Monczak, violin
Emily Lane, viola
Natalia Vilchis García, cello
James Peterson, bass
Tatiana Loisha, piano

Simon Charette, conductor

*La Maison Française de l'Ambassade de France in Washington, DC
Thursday, November 7, 2024 at 7 pm*

Dear Friends of L'Opéra Comique de Washington,

It is my great honor and privilege to welcome you to this extraordinary event, presented by L'Opéra Comique de Washington. As General and Artistic Director, I am thrilled to present our Opera Gala within the esteemed halls of the French Embassy, under the Gracious Patronage of His Excellency, the Ambassador of France, Laurent Bili.

Tonight's gala transcends the boundaries of French operetta to explore the full expanse of the operatic canon. Our program will take you on a journey through some of the most beloved arias, duets, and ensembles from across the world of opera, showcasing the universal power of music to connect, inspire, and delight. From timeless classics to hidden gems, our repertoire offers something for every lover of the art form.

Since our founding in 2023, L'Opéra Comique de Washington has been committed to bringing the elegance and vitality of the French lyrical tradition to Washington, DC. But our passion for the operatic art form extends even further, embracing works from across the globe that speak to the human experience. We aim to foster not only a love for French operetta but also a deep appreciation for the many voices that contribute to the operatic landscape.

Tonight, our talented artists will share the stage with a chamber orchestra to bring these iconic works to life, representing both the heart of our mission and the depth of our artistic ambition. We are committed to offering opportunities for rising stars, as well as enriching the cultural life of our city.

I extend my deepest gratitude to our patrons, supporters, and the French Embassy for making this evening possible. Your continued belief in our vision allows us to grow and to share the beauty of opera with our community.

Thank you for being with us tonight. May this gala inspire and uplift you, and may the music linger in your hearts long after the final note.

Bienvenue, et bon gala!

Simon Charette
General and Artistic Director

Musical Numbers

Jacques Offenbach	En attendant que l'heure sonne from <i>La Grande Duchesse de Gérolstein</i>	The OCW Chorus
Gioacchino Rossini	Largo al factotum from <i>Il Barbiere di Siviglia</i>	Marc-Antoine d'Aragon, baritone
Léo Delibes	Sous le dôme épais from <i>Lakmé</i>	Natalia Pérez, soprano Melanie Ashkar, mezzo-soprano
Gaetano Donizetti	Una furtiva lagrima from <i>L'Elisir d'Amore</i>	Sahel Salam, tenor
Giacomo Puccini	O mio babbino caro from <i>Gianni Schicci</i>	Natalia Pérez, soprano
Giacomo Puccini	Avete torto from <i>Gianni Schicci</i>	Sahel Salam, tenor
Giuseppe Verdi	Pura siccome un angelo from <i>La Traviata</i>	Natalia Pérez, soprano Marc-Antoine d'Aragon, baritone
Georges Bizet	Habanera from <i>Carmen</i>	Melanie Ashkar, mezzo-soprano

INTERMISSION

Jacques Offenbach	Le Choeur des voisins from <i>La jolie parfumeuse</i>	The OCW Chorus
Giuseppe Verdi	Sul fil d'un soffio etesio from <i>Falstaff</i>	Natalia Pérez, soprano
Karol Szymanowski	Chant de Roxane from <i>King Roger</i>	Mariusz Monczak, violin Tatiana Loisha, piano
Giuseppe Verdi	Parigi o cara from <i>La Traviata</i>	Natalia Pérez, soprano Sahel Salam, tenor
W.A. Mozart	La ci darem la mano from <i>Don Giovanni</i>	Melanie Ashkar, mezzo-soprano Marc-Antoine d'Aragon, baritone
Charles Gounod	Ah! Lève-toi soleil from <i>Roméo et Juliette</i>	Sahel Salam, tenor
Giacomo Puccini	Quando m'en vo from <i>La Bohème</i>	Natalia Pérez, soprano
Jacques Offenbach	Ah que j'aime les militaires from <i>La Grande Duchesse de Gérolstein</i>	Melanie Ashkar, mezzo-soprano
Giuseppe Verdi	Bella figlia dell'amore from <i>Rigoletto</i>	Natalia Pérez, soprano Melanie Ashkar, mezzo-soprano Sahel Salam, tenor Marc-Antoine d'Aragon, baritone
Geoges Bizet	Votre toast je peux vous le rendre from <i>Carmen</i>	All Company

The Artists



Spanish soprano **Natalia Pérez Rodríguez** graduated with a Master's degree in Music Education from Málaga University in Spain after completing her classical singing studies at the Royal Conservatory of The Hague (Netherlands), where she earned a Bachelor of Music degree with Distinction. Throughout her musical career, Natalia has performed at many well-known concert halls, such as Tivoli Vredenburg in Utrecht and Palau de la Música in Barcelona. Mrs. Perez's operatic roles include Pamina in Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte*, Berenice in Rossini's *L'occasione fa il ladro*, the title role in Gounod's *Mireille*, Amore in Monteverdi's

L'incoronazione di Poppea, and Bastienne from Mozart's *Bastien und Bastienne*. She has also performed in oratorio projects such as Mozart's *Requiem* and Rossini's *Stabat Mater*.



Lebanese-American mezzo-soprano Melanie Ashkar is known for the "rich texture" of her voice and her "delightfully expressive" stage presence. She has performed across the United States with companies such as Utah Opera, Utah Symphony, Central City Opera, New York City Opera, Washington Concert Opera, OperaDelaware, Opera Baltimore, Opera Southwest, Virginia Opera, Winter Opera St. Louis, Opera Western Reserve, the Oratorio Society of Virginia, the Arlington Chorale, and the Canton Symphony Orchestra. This season, she debuts with Opera in the Heights in a favorite role as the Fox in *The Little Prince* and with IN Series at Moll in *The Cradle Will Rock*. She is thrilled to return to L'Opéra Comique de Washington as the title character in

La Grande-Duchesse de Gerolstein. Melanie has been recognized by the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions, Opera Piccola, the Schuyler Foundation for Career Bridges Grant Awards, and the Gerda Lissner Foundation. An Arlington, VA native, she holds degrees from the University of Virginia, Georgetown University, and Mannes College.



As a 2023 National Finalist of the Metropolitan Opera Laffont Competition and 2023 Winner of the Mario Lanza Competition, **Sahel Salam** enters his second year as a Cafritz Young Artist of Washington National Opera. Sahel has recently performed with WNO as Pang in its new production of *Turandot*, as Tybalt in *Roméo et Juliette*. In addition, he sang as Lord Arturo Bucklaw in *Lucia di Lammermoor* (Cincinnati Opera), as Ernesto in *Don Pasquale* (Academy of Vocal Arts), and as Tamino in *Die Zauberflöte* (Merola Opera Program). Mr. Salam is an alumnus of Merola Opera Program, Glyndebourne Festival Opera as a Jerwood Young Artist, and The Music Academy of the West. In Santa Fe Opera's 2024 summer season, Sahel covered Alfredo Germont in *La Traviata*, The Italian Singer in *Der Rosenkavalier*, and Eli in the world premiere of Gregory Spears' *The Righteous*. This 2024-25 season, Mr. Salam returns to

WNO where he will perform as Jaquino in Beethoven's *Fidelio* and as Shere Khan in Kamala Sankaram's *Jungle Book*.



Baritone Marc-Antoine d'Aragon has an international career that led him to perform in the opera houses of Verona, Quebec, Ottawa & Seattle. He is recognized in the roles of Schaunard, Papageno, Mercutio & Dancairo, for performing French songs with his group *Bohème* and is often a guest soloist for recitals and symphonic concerts. He has distinguished himself in several competitions: *Montreal Symphonic Orchestra*, *Verona*, *Marmande*, *Classical Idol Competition*, *Spazio Musica*, *Liederkrantz*, *MET National Council Auditions*, *Opera Lyra Ottawa*, *Czech & Slovak Competition* & *Jeunes Ambassadeurs Lyriques du Canada*. Graduate of HEC, Musitechnic, Université de Montréal, and McGill, he completed his doctorate in performance. He acts as a consultant, conference speaker, teacher & producer. He

was a member of Opera Lyra Ottawa's Studio Artist Program. Administrator of several projects and for several organizations, he is the Executive Director of the Canadian Vocal Arts Institute, the founder of Tourneson Studio in Montreal, and the new portal Artist Center. He also works as a teacher and conference speaker and has published the recipe book « *Des crêpes à l'opéra* ». www.marcantoinedaragon.com

Tatiana Loisha has over 20 years of experience working as a piano accompanist with singers and instrumentalists. In 2016–2019, Tatiana worked as staff accompanist at the Cleveland Institute of Music and Baldwin Wallace University, and as a rehearsal and performance pianist with the Cleveland Opera Theater. Recent productions included *Traviata*, *The Rake's Progress*, *The Barber of Seville*, *Madame Butterfly*, *The Threepenny Opera*, *The Marriage of Figaro*, etc. She also



worked as a pianist at Oberlin in Italy program (Arezzo, Italy) summer 2018. Since moving to the D.C. area in 2014, Tatiana works as pianist accompanist with the Potomac Vocal Institute and actively performs in the D.C. area accompanying singers and instrumentalists. Tatiana studied at the Belarusian State Academy of Music, Minsk, Belarus, where she graduated with a BA in piano performance and a graduate degree in collaborative piano. Tatiana is a winner of the Shostakovich competition (St. Petersburg, Russia, 2001), International Competition for Young Pianists (Brest, France, 2002), and a winner of contests for singers and pianists duets in Vilnius, Lithuania, 2006; St. Petersburg, Russia, 2006; Kazan, Russia, 2007. Tatiana collaborated with well-known vocalists, Yuri

Gorodetski, Oksana Volkova, and Ilya Silchukov to name a few. Such collaborations prepared her for performing at international competitions, i.e. Queen Elisabeth Competition, Operalia, BBC Cardiff Singer of the World, and Montreal International Musical Competition. Tatiana's discography includes 'Tchaikovsky, Rachmaninov: Romances' (CD, 2014, Kovcheg, Minsk, Belarus), 'Rachmaninov, Tchaikovsky: Russian Songs' (CD, Oct-2013, ATMA Classique, Canada), 'Queen Elisabeth Competition: Singing 2008. Various artists' (CD, 2010, Queen Elisabeth Competition, Belgium).



Polish-Canadian violinist, Marius Monczak

After arriving to North America, he studied in New York and Montreal, where he got a Master and Doctorate degree in Music. He has played in renowned halls such as Carnegie Hall and Lincoln Center, Place des Arts in Montreal, Union Hall in Rotterdam, Grand Theater Wuxi, The Moscow Conservatory Hall, Royal Castle in Warszawa and at EXPO Dubai. As soloist and chamber musician, he has performed in international festivals in China, Brazil, Switzerland, Spain, Ukraine, Serbia, Slovakia, Germany, Romania, Armenia, Greece, Netherlands, Hungary, Israel, Cyprus, United State

and Italy. He was a soloist with numerous orchestras, such as Montreal Chamber Orchestra, Young Virtuosi of Montreal, Nouvel Ensemble Moderne, Concordia Symphony Orchestra, Brandenburg Symphony Orchestra, Amadeus Polish Radio Chamber Orchestra, Leopoldinum Orchestra, Kosciuszko Festival Orchestra, as well as the State Symphonic Orchestras in Poland. He has performed with outstanding musicians and cooperated with contemporary composers such as: Henryk Mikolaj Górecki, Krzysztof Penderecki, Denis Gougeon, André Prévost and others. He made world premieres, recorded by Canadian radio stations Radio Canada and CBC2 in Toronto. He records for radio, television and on CD for SNE, Concordia Records, Castalia and Dux. He's the founder & artistic director of several music festivals in Poland, Canada, United States, Italy and Brazil. Additionally, he gives lectures and master classes at Universities in Canada, Poland, Brazil, China and Music Conservatories in Russia and Italy.

Simon Charette is a sought-after conductor, collaborative pianist, and vocal coach based in Washington, DC. Passionate about opera from an early age, Simon is the founder and artistic director of the Opéra Comique de Washington, an opera company specializing in French operetta. Recently, he has worked with the Canadian Vocal Arts Institute (Montréal), the National Music Festival Orchestra, the Mid-Atlantic Symphony Orchestra, the Montgomery Symphony Orchestra, and l'Orchestre de la Francophonie (Montréal). In 2022, he was named Artistic Director of the newly founded French Choir of Washington. Simon is also the Artistic Director of the Choir of the Embassy of France in Washington. He conducted this ensemble for French President Emmanuel Macron's address in Washington, DC, in 2018 and 2022. Simon worked as assistant conductor and pianist for the Washington Opera Society. He also served as assistant conductor of the Chesapeake Youth Symphony Orchestra in Annapolis, MD, and of the Southern Maryland Youth Orchestra and Chorus. After receiving a Master's degree from the Université de Montréal, he furthered his training at the Dirigierakademie (Toronto, Canada), at the National Music Festival (Chestertown, MD), and the Académie Musicale de Villecroze (France).



L'Opéra Comique de Washington Chamber Orchestra

Violin:	Ryo Usami
Violin:	Emily Konkle
Viola:	Emily Lane
Cello:	Natalia Vilchis García
Bass:	James Peterson
Pianist:	Tatiana Loisha

L'Opéra Comique de Washington Chorus

<u>Soprano</u>	<u>Alto</u>	<u>Tenor</u>	<u>Bass</u>
Atoshi Chowdhury	Clarisse Barbier	Guillaume Cléaud	Raymond Ghattas*
Carissa Crofford	Claire Morange	Martin Lamarre	Joaquim Nassar
Noëlle Gires	Nathalie Pouliquen	Charles Martins-Ferreira	Yannick Réveillon
Ashlyn Mazone*	Janet Replogle	René Soudée	
Océane Turker			
Monique Vittet			

* Section Leader

Support Our Mission!

As a non-profit organization, L'Opéra Comique de Washington relies on the generosity of our patrons and sponsors to continue bringing high-quality performances to the community and to support emerging talent in the operatic world. Your donations enable us to preserve and share the beauty of the lyrical arts, from beloved classics to rare gems. If you feel inspired by tonight's performance, please consider making a contribution to support our future endeavors. Simply scan the QR code to donate – every gift, no matter the size, helps us keep the music alive. Thank you for your support!



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We would also like to thank:

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Opera Christmas Concert

Mizuho Takeshita	Soprano
Melanie Ashkar	Mezzo-Soprano
Jesus Daniel Hernandez	Tenor
Raymond Ghattas	Baritone
Simon Charette	Piano

In program:

Puccini | Verdi | Mozart | Bizet | Giordano
Massenet | Donizetti | Rossini | Strauss | Delibes

Tickets



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Presents

OFFENBACH'S



**LA
GRANDE**

**DUCHESSE
DE GÉROLSTEIN**

Feb 21st, 7:30pm



Simon Charette
Artistic Director & Conductor
www.operacomiquedewashington.org

Maison Française
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Tickets

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Rehearsal Pianist:	Tatiana Loisha
Subtitles:	Victoria McGrath
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