



College of Music
MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

Worthington Family Foundation Opera Theatre Season
MSU OPERA THEATRE



Music by Giuseppe Verdi - Libretto by Arrigo Boito

Melanie Helton, stage director
Katherine Kilburn, conductor

Generously sponsored by
James and Susan Bongiflio,
Susan Davis,
and the Eleanor H. and Harold E. Leichenko
Opera Endowment established by
Lauren Julius Harris

Wednesday, March 22, 2023, 7:00 p.m.
Friday, March 24, 7:00 p.m.
Saturday, March 25, 7:00 p.m.
Sunday, March 26, 3:00 p.m.
Fairchild Theatre, MSU Auditorium

A NOTE FROM THE DIRECTOR

Falstaff is the titan Giuseppe Verdi's last opera, composed from 1889-1892, with its La Scala premiere in 1893. Librettist Arrigo Boito (a composer in his own right) adapted the text from Shakespeare's *The Merry Wives of Windsor* and scenes from *Henry IV* Parts 1 and 2, where we are first introduced to the knight, Sir John Falstaff.

Much more through-composed than his earlier operas, Verdi was nearing the age of 80 when he began *Falstaff*. He had longed to write a comic opera in this new style. Although there are distinct arias, it is not a "numbers" opera, with recitative separating arias and ensembles. It careens along like a runaway train, culminating in the brilliant twelve-part fugue, "Tutto nel mondo è burla" ("all the world's a joke").

From the start, Falstaff is a figure of fun, due to his prodigious eating and drinking habits. At times he admits his own faults, maintaining a wonderful sense of self, as well as self-deprecation. One of the most charming moments occurs in his second act attempted seduction of Alice Ford. "When I was a young lad, page to the Duke of Norfolk, I was light and agile!" For all his braggadocio and self-delusion, one can't help but love him. And even though the trick originally seems to be on the oversized knight, in the end the self-righteous Ford gets his comeuppance.

This is truly an ensemble piece, with at least eight characters having significant moments. It requires Italian sung at breakneck speed as well as attention to rhythmic detail. There are, however, moments of surpassing beauty, such as Nanetta's and Fenton's arias in Act 3. There are also blockbuster arias for both Falstaff and Ford, echoing the power and fury of Iago (*Otello*) and Count di Luna (*Il Trovatore*).

We welcome back Maestra Katherine Kilburn to the podium. Kiki was at the musical helm of our National Opera Association prize-winning production of *Albert Herring* from spring of 2022. Kirk Domer again designs this magnificent set, inspired by the Globe Theatre of Shakespeare's times. And we are thrilled to have wig and makeup *artiste extraordinaire* Martha Ruskai, who makes this wonderful Elizabethan world come alive.

Being able to produce *Falstaff* at the university level is a dream come true. Thanks to all the Vocal Arts Faculty for helping make this possible. Enjoy!

CAST OF CHARACTERS

In order of appearance

	<u>March 22 & 25</u>	<u>March 24 & 26</u>
Dr. Caius, an aging doctor	Landon Black	John Herzog
Bardolfo, Falstaff's thieving sidekick	Cole Harvey	Kevon Thompson
Pistola Falstaff's thieving sidekick	Jamie Eagle	Jacob Turner
Falstaff, an aging corpulent Knight	José Luis Maldonado	Gerardo de la Torre
Meg Page, a bourgeois Housewife	Fan Yu	Jackie Conlon
Alice Ford, wife to a burgher	Elary Mede	Paige Heidrich
Dame Quickly, a family friend betrothed to Arminda	Aurora Krueger	Tyler Roberts
Nannetta, Alice's daughter	Phoenix Miranda	Anna Jesko
Ford, husband to Alice	Liang Zhao	Pengyu Yang
Fenton, beloved of Nannetta	Tianchi Zhang	Xiaojie Ji

Townspeople: Eleanor Barbour, Hannah Tatay, Riley Piazzon, Grace Gits, Nick Perkins, Ryan Jordan, Ethan Staver, Ryan Byrne, Conner Lindsay, Brayden Hunter, Tyrell Harris, RJ Kilcher, Nic Bishop

Fairies: Lily Wressell, Iyari Lutz, Lacey Cooper, Denise Carlson, Clara Fuller, Madi LaJoice

STAFF FOR MSU OPERA THEATRE

Music Director	Dr. Katherine Kilburn
Producer	Melanie Helton
Set Design	Kirk Domer*
Set Construction/Technical Director	D.J. Selmayer
Lighting Design	Brent Wrobel*
Costume Designer	Glenn Breed
Wig and Makeup Design	Martha Ruskai*
Guest Coach	Allen Pereillo*
Production Stage Manager	Eliza Beutler
Assistant Stage Manager	Colin Dewitt
Musical Preparation	Dr. Elden Little, Neill Campbell*
	Tongyao Li
Assistant Conductor	Sally Yu
Assistant to the Producer	Paige Heidrich
Rehearsal Accompanist	Mira Choi
Surtitle Creation	Paige Heidrich
Fairchild Theatre Operations Manager	Nick Raffaele
Recording Services	Jennifer Shangraw
Publicity, MSU College of Music	Michael Sundermann, Rick Seguin
Budget Officer	Andrea Worful
Budget Assistant	Janeen Hoover

*Guest Artist

Grateful Acknowledgments

James Forger, Dean, College of Music

MSU Vocal Arts Area Faculty:

Jane Bunnell, Marc Embree, Richard Fracker (chair),
Melanie Helton, Harlan Jennings, Elden Little, Anne Nispel,
David Rayl, Jonathan Reed, Mark Rucker, Sadie Rucker,
Sandra Snow

Deborah Moriarty, Chair, Piano Area; Zhihua Tang,
Collaborative Piano

MSU Department of Theatre

Ann-Marie Lindley, Director of Development, College of Music;
Katie Bethel, Assistant Director of Development

College of Music Staff: Lynne Funk, Shawn Mahorney,
Amy Rivard, Chuck Roberts

SYNOPSIS

Act I, Scene 1: In the small town of Windsor, Falstaff, once a page to the Duke of Norfolk and Knight to Henry IV, holds court at the grimy Inn of the Garter. His two sidekicks, Bardolfo and Pistola, have been accused by Dr. Caius of getting him drunk and then robbing him. Falstaff defends his men and drives Caius off. Falstaff then tells the two of having seen two lovely ladies out and about around Windsor. He plans to court them, even though he knows they are wives. In a sham display of honor, Bardolfo and Pistola refuse to deliver his love letters. In a rage, Falstaff sends a messenger instead.

Act I, Scene 2: Alice Ford and Meg Page are best friends. Joined by their friend Dame Quickly and Alice's daughter Nannetta, they gather besides the hanging laundry with important news: they have both received a letter! In reading the two letters together, they realize that they are identical love letters from the same infamous corpulent knight – Falstaff! At first scandalized, they make a plan to get back at the “monster”. In the meantime, Bardolfo and Pistola are meeting with Ford to tell him of their master's plot to seduce the women. Ford, infuriated, also makes a plan to repay the plot in kind. Accompanying Ford is Dr. Caius, also eager for revenge on Falstaff and to marry Ford's daughter. Also with them is Fenton, the secret beloved of Nannetta. They manage to find a few private moments before all exult in the plans for revenge.

Intermission

Act II, Scene 1: Back at the Garter Inn, Dame Quickly arrives to arrange for a clandestine meeting between Alice and Falstaff that very afternoon “between two and three.” Falstaff is delighted and also very confident about his chances. Ford arrives and introduces himself as “Signor Fontana (Fountain)”. He spins a tale of woe to Falstaff. He himself has been courting a married lady named Alice who spurns his every advance. “Fontana” has thus come up with a plan: get Falstaff to seduce this Alice so as to ruin her virtue and send her into Fontana's very arms. Falstaff confesses with glee that he has already arranged an assignation. Ford tries very hard to contain his shock and jealousy at the news that his wife is apparently about to be unfaithful to him. As Falstaff adjourns to “make himself pretty”, Ford rages about the nature of jealousy, cursing women and his wife. Falstaff returns in his glory. The two attempt to step out together.

SYNOPSIS (cont.)

Act II, Scene 2: In the parlor of Alice's house, the four women plot to ensnare Falstaff as he tries to seduce Alice. They set the stage and then gaily refer to themselves as "the merry wives of Windsor". Quickly, Nannetta and Meg hide themselves and wait for the arrival of Falstaff. Alice is strumming a guitar as Falstaff enters, singing the accompanying madrigal. He is charming, giddily youthful and in physical pursuit of the lovely Alice. She manages to hold him off and accuses him of also loving Meg. As the plan unfolds, Quickly arrives falsely claiming that Meg is outside and that Falstaff must hide. Meg enters as Quickly acts as lookout. Quickly enters again, this time hysterically saying that Ford is just outside and that he is fuming. Alice at first thinks this is part of the plan but is shocked to realize it is true. Ford enters with the other men, sure that he will find Falstaff. He searches the laundry basket to no avail. As the men search the house and swear vengeance, the ladies hide Falstaff in the laundry basket. In the meantime, Nannetta and Fenton have hidden themselves in the screen, proclaiming their love. Eventually Ford thinks that he has Falstaff cornered behind the screen, only to discover his daughter with her lover. As Ford chases Fenton out, Alice, Meg, and Quickly devise a plan to dump the basket in the river with Falstaff inside. The servants labor to get the basket to the edge of the river as Ford reenters with the men. As they unload Falstaff, Alice tells Ford what has been going on and all laugh hysterically.

Intermission

Act III, Scene 1: Outside the Garter Inn, a wet and miserable Falstaff has returned to his haunt. He is depressed, realizing that he is not the man he once was. Quickly enters and he does not want to see her. She tries to tell him that it was all a mistake, that Alice still loves him. She tells him that Alice will be waiting at midnight at Hernes Oak deep in Windsor Forest. He should come dressed as the Black Hunter (a legend of a dead Hunter in Windsor Forest). He agrees, and they go into the inn. Alice and the others arrive and overhear the plan which they have concocted. Alice scolds Ford for doubting her fidelity and proceeds with the plan. They will surround Falstaff in the dark of the forest: Nannetta as the Queen of the Fairies, Meg as a Green Nymph, and Quickly as a witch. Ford assures Caius that this very evening, he shall wed Nannetta.

SYNOPSIS

Act III, Scene 2: Deep in Windsor Forest, Fenton is serenading his beloved, singing of love. They find each other and Alice arrives, carrying the disguise of a Trappist monk for Fenton. They hide as Falstaff enters. He is dressed as the Black Hunter, sporting an enormous pair of antlers (the “corne” of cuckoldry). He is afraid and alone in the dark. Alice arrives and he attempts again to conquer her. The Queen of the Fairies (Nannetta) arrives surrounded by her court. As the others converge, they poke and prod at Falstaff, frightening him. Finally, Falstaff recognizes Bardolfo and realizes that he has been fooled. Ford (Fontana) asks him who now wears the horns. Ford declares the wedding should commence. In the meantime, Quickly has dressed Bardolfo to look like the Queen of the Fairies. She leads him to Caius and they stand before Ford. Veiled Nannetta and disguised Fenton join the wedding as another couple. Ford declares them married, and the disguises are pulled off. Caius is horrified that he has married Bardolfo, and Ford furious. Alice declares that Ford must forgive his daughter as both he and Falstaff have been fools. Ford acknowledges his daughter and Fenton. In the great fugue of the finale, all the players acknowledge that “all the world’s a joke, and all we can do is laugh!”

MSU SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA

Katherine Kilburn, conductor

Violin I

Emelyn Bashour
Xinyu Zhu
Ethan Davidson

Violin II

Edgar Querales
Lei Xiang
Colin Davidson

Viola

Ursula Glasmacher
Gafur Nartadjiev
Emmett Henry

Cello

Mira Cheng
Zhang Zhang
Wenqi Ma

Bass

Eli Hilborn
Ben Merte

Flute

Alex Coble
Kyler Keck (piccolo)

Oboe and English Horn

Emily Demski

Clarinet and Bass Clarinet

Lei Min

Bassoon

Emily Mastenbrook

Horn

Emma Brown
Da'Shon Hayes

Trumpet

Carrie Schafer

Trombone

Elizabeth Simpson

Percussion

Trevor Else
Taryn Parry

Keyboard

Xiaoxiao Ouyang

Assistant/Guest Conductor

Sally Yu

Librarians

Ursula Glasmacher
Catherine Lee

MSU Opera Society Donors

2022 – 2023 Season

MSU Opera Society is the community support organization of the MSU Opera Theatre. With grateful appreciation, we acknowledge the following members of the MSU Opera Society at Michigan State University beginning March 16, 2022.

We are grateful to our members for their generous contributions.

The 2022-23 MSU Opera Theatre season is generously funded by the Worthington Family Foundation.

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MSU Opera Society Donors

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Please consider how much you enjoy the Opera Theatre productions and send your check or money order made payable to Michigan State University with "MSU Opera Society - AE0605" written on the memo line. Mail your contributions to:

Opera Theatre

College of Music Advancement Office
333 W Circle Drive, Room 105
Michigan State University
East Lansing, MI 48824

For information about the MSU Opera Society, please contact the College of Music Advancement Office at (517) 353-9872 or e-mail Ann-Marie Lindley at alindley@msu.edu.

MAKE A GIFT



STUDENT NEWS

Ruoxi Bian (DMA 2024, student of Jane Bunnell) sang Amastre in *Serse* at Chicago Summer Opera. **Jackie Conlon** (MM 2023, student of Jane Bunnell) sang Arsamene in *Serse* at Chicago Summer Opera. **Paula Duva-Rodriguez** (BM 2023, student of Jane Bunnell) sang 3rd Lady in *Magic Flute* with Chicago Summer Opera. **GeDeane Graham** (DMA 2023, student of Jane Bunnell) sang Schwertleite in *Die Walküre* at Detroit Opera. **Xiaoji Ji** (DMA 2025, student of Richard Fracker) won an Encouragement Award in the 2023 Michigan District MET auditions. **Ben Reisinger** (MM candidate, student of Mark Rucker) is a Detroit Opera Resident Artist. **Natalie Sweeney** (BM 2023, student of Melanie Helton) will appear in *A Little Night Music* and *Fiddler on the Roof* with the Seagle Festival. **Jose Luis Maldonado** (DMA 2025, student of Mark Rucker) was a finalist for the Duncan-Williams competition. He returns to the Aspen Festival where he will sing the role of Father Arguedas in *Bel Canto*. **Elary Mede** (MM 2023, student of Melanie Helton) won an Encouragement Award in the 2023 Michigan District MET auditions. She will return to Des Moines Metro Opera as the cover for Micaela in *Carmen*. **Tyler Roberts** (BM 2023, student of Mark Rucker) competed in the Michigan District MET Auditions and will cover the role of Carmen with Chicago Summer Opera; **Gerardo de la Torre** (DMA 2024, student of Mark Rucker) was a finalist for the inaugural Duncan-Williams Competition and will sing the role of Escamillo in *Carmen* with Chicago Summer Opera. **Tianchi Zhang** (DMA 2023, student of Richard Fracker) will cover the role of Roméo in Gounod's opera at the Glimmerglass Festival. He recently finished 2nd in the William C. Byrd Vocal Competition. **Xulei Zhao** (DMA 2023, student of Jane Bunnell) sang the role of Dorothée in *Cendrillon* at Chicago Summer Opera.

ALUMNI NEWS

Leah Bryzski (BM 2015, student of Anne Nispel) recorded the role of Agave in *Lord of Cries* by John Corigliano and Mark Adamo with Odyssey Opera and appeared in the world premiere at the Santa Fe Opera. She made multiple appearances at Minnesota Opera as a principal in *Albert Herring* and *The Anonymous Lover*. **Catherine Goode** (MM 2017, student of Melanie Helton) sang the leading role in *The Gift of the Magi* with Kentucky Opera and is debuting the role of Gilda in *Rigoletto* at Opera in the Heights in Houston. **Isaac Frishman** (DMA 2017, student of Richard Fracker) was the tenor soloist in the world premiere of *La Jetee* with Chicago Fringe

ALUMNI NEWS (cont.)

Opera. He also sang Count Almaviva in *The Barber of Seville* alongside alumni **Mark Davies** (BM 2009, student of Melanie Helton) with Pacific Northwest Opera. **Nick Hudak** (MM 2020, student of Richard Fracker) is a regional Finalist at the Great Lakes MET auditions and appeared with the Sarasota Opera on their mainstage. He was also an apprentice with Pittsburgh Opera. **John Riesen** (MM 2016, student of Richard Fracker) was a finalist *America's Got Talent*. He sang the role of Chris in the Emmy-nominated performances of *Favorite Son* (Marcus Hummon) with Nashville Opera Camille in *The Merry Widow* with Knoxville Opera, and Frederic in *The Pirates of Penzance* with Utah Opera as well as numerous concert appearances. **Gabe Reitemeyer** (BM 2018, student of Marc Embree) has begun a career as an actor in the Chicago area and is in original cast of a new musical, *Miranda: A War-Torn Fable*, at The Den Theatre. **Brian Major** (DMA 2019, student of Mark Rucker) made his MET debut as Baron Douphol in *La Traviata*. He will also cover the role of Benny in the premiere of *Champion* at the MET. **Anna Montgomery** (MM 2019, student of Melanie Helton) sang Musetta in the Ecklund Opera Center's *La Bohème* at the University of Colorado. **Matt Scollin** (BM 2008, student of Richard Fracker) is the bass soloist and has made numerous solo appearances as member of the Air Forces elite singing group The Singing Sergeants. **Jadrian Tarver** (DMA 2020) is a teaching fellow at Gonzaga University and baritone soloist for Beethoven's 9th Symphony with the Spokane Symphony. **Shannon Crowley-Teixeira** (BM 2022, student of Mark Rucker) will be a young artist at Saratoga Opera this summer, covering the role of Norina in *Don Pasquale*. She sang the role of Poppea at the Shepherd School of Music's production of *Agrippina*. **Kyle White** (BM 2018, student of Marc Embree) sang Nardo in *La Finta Giardiniera* in his European debut with The Hungarian State Opera and Germont in *La Traviata* at Virginia Opera, among others. **Zaikuan Song**, (DMA 2020, student of Richard Fracker) sang Timur in *Turandot* at Opera Grand Rapids and The King in *Aida* with Opera Carolina.

The MSU Opera Theatre family would like to express their condolences to the families of the three students who lost their lives in the recent violence on our campus. We also send our very best wishes to those injured for a complete recovery.

This will be our reply to violence: to make music more intensely, more beautifully, more devotedly than ever before.

- Leonard Bernstein

<https://givingto.msu.edu/spartan-strong.cfm>

UPCOMING EVENTS

Worthington Family Foundation Opera Theatre Season

Falstaff by Giuseppe Verdi

3/22 7:00 p.m.

3/24 7:00 p.m.

3/25 7:00 p.m.

3/26 3:00 p.m.

Fairchild Theatre, \$\$\$

3/23 Thursday

Symphony Orchestra: Honors Concert

7:30 p.m., Cobb Great Hall, Wharton Center \$

3/24 Friday

Wind Symphony

8:00 p.m., Cobb Great Hall, Wharton Center \$

3/29 Wednesday

Artist-Faculty and Guest Recital Series sponsored by WKAR

International Chamber Soloists led by Dmitri Berlinsky

7:30 p.m., Fairchild Theatre \$

3/31 Friday

Artist-Faculty and Guest Recital Series sponsored by WKAR

Happy Birthday Bach: The Cello Solo Suites

6:30 p.m., Alumni Chapel \$

4/1 Saturday

MSUFCU Showcase Series

Barbara Wagner Chamber Music Competition

6:00 p.m., Fairchild Theatre \$

4/2 Sunday

Artist-Faculty and Guest Recital Series sponsored by WKAR

Young Hyun Cho Performs Beethoven

3:00 p.m., Cook Recital Hall \$

TICKET PRICES

\$ \$12 Adults, \$10 Seniors (age 60 and older), Students with ID and anyone under age 18 are free but require a ticket for admission.

\$\$ \$17 Adults, \$15 Seniors, \$7 Students with ID and anyone under age 18.

\$\$\$ \$22 Adults, \$20 Seniors, \$12 Students and those under age 18.

Please note: *All events scheduled in Murray Hall are general admission seating.*