**OPERA NIGHT: COSÌ FAN TUTTE**

**SUNDAY, JULY 9 | 8 PM | THE BREAKERS**

This concert is made possible through the generous support of Linda and Jack Purdy, Roseanne and Dennis Williams, and an anonymous friend.

**Chelsea Basler**, Fiordiligi  
**Leah Heater**, Dorabella  
**Armando Contreras**, Guglielmo  
**David Blalock**, Ferrando  
**James Demler**, Don Alfonso  
**Victoria Okafor**, Despina  
**Charles Kim**, piano

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MOZART  
*Cosi fan tutte*  
(Approximate duration 115 minutes)

Most revere Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791) as one of the great composers of all time. Born in Salzburg, Mozart began performing with his sister on the piano at age 3 and composing at age 5. By age 8, he created his first symphony and by age 12 he composed his first opera. Among Mozart’s enumerable works, he is well known for his clever and well-crafted operas. His opera collaborations with Lorenzo Da Ponte (1749-1838) are some of his most widely played works and are some of Mozart’s greatest masterpieces. Mozart and Da Ponte collaborated on three operas: The Marriage of Figaro, Don Giovanni, and Cosi fan tutte. Cosi fan tutte premiered on January 26, 1790 in Vienna and was an immediate success. However, it was shut down soon after its opening because the commissioner, Joseph II died suddenly after its opening. In the 19th and early 20th century the piece fell into obscurity due to its amoral nature.

**Act I**

Guglielmo and Ferrando, two officers, are visiting with their friend, the philosopher, Don Alfonso, in a cafe. They are engaged to sisters, Fiordiligi and Dorabella, and boast of their fiancés undying faithfulness to them. Don Alfonso is skeptical of their claims because he believes that all women are fickle. Guglielmo and Ferrando disagree, so they wager a bet with him that their women will be faithful under any circumstance. Don Alfonso sets the parameters of the bet: the two officers are to pretend that they are going to war, and later return disguised as Albanians. Guglielmo and Ferrando give a soldier’s oath that they will do all they can to follow Don Alfonso’s instructions to woo their fiancés away. Later, Dorabella and Fiordiligi are home daydreaming about their wedding day. Don Alfonso visits them and announces that their fiancés have been called to go to war. The girls are overcome with sorrow as they say goodbye. After Don Alfonso leaves, Despina, their house maid, comes in to serve them breakfast.
Act II

Alone in the sister’s bedroom, Despina urges Dorabella and Fiordiligi to give the two suitors a chance. After Despina leaves, the girls confide in each other their interest in the men and decide that it would not be harmful to have a little fun while their men are at war. They agree to meet with them at a garden party. There, the girls split off with Guglielmo and Ferrando and while they are alone, each suitor is successful at seducing their partner sister. Discouraged and defeated, the two soldiers meet up with Don Alfonso to announce that he has won the bet. Although the men are disappointed about the lack of faithfulness of their fiancés, Don Alfonso comforts them by telling them “Cosi fan tutte” or “All women are like that.” The next scene is the wedding day for the sisters to marry the foreign grooms. Despina enters pretending to be the notary and presents a marriage contract for all four of them to sign. The two girls sign the contract, but as soon as they do, they hear word that their fiancés are back from war. The woman panic and ask the two to hide in another room. The men change out of their disguises and reenter the home in their military clothing professing their love to their women. However, when they notice the wedding notary, they express their anger and disappointment. At that moment, the two men reveal the truth that they were the Albanians and Despina was the doctor. The sisters realize they have been duped. They ask for forgiveness and re-vow to their fiancés that they will be faithful and true forever. The men accept their apologies and vow never to tempt fate again.

Praised for his “fine tenor voice” (Winston-Salem Journal), David Blalock is becoming widely known for his beautiful lyric tone and his varied repertoire. In 2021-2022, he made a debut with Bar Harbor Music Festival as Ferrando in Così fan tutte, returned to the Metropolitan Opera for their productions of Turandot and Ariadne auf Naxos, debuted the role of Tamino in Die Zauberflöte with Pensacola Opera, made his Opera Columbus debut as Alfredo in La traviata and performed a recital with Madison Opera. This summer, he will join St. Croix Valley Opera for a concert and reprise Tamino in Die Zauberflöte with Northern Lights Music Festival. During the 2022-2023 season, Mr. Blalock will reprise Young Thompson in Glory Denied with Permian Basin Opera, join Madison Opera as Second Jew in Salome, sing the Duke in Rigoletto with Opera Columbus, and return to the roster of the Metropolitan Opera where he will appear as Gastone in La traviata and cover Thierry and Chaplain in Dialogues des Carmélites. During the 2019-20 season, Mr. Blalock made his Metropolitan Opera debut as Pong in Turandot and joined Pensacola Opera to sing Don Ottavio in Don Giovanni. Mr. Blalock also made his debut with the South Dakota Symphony Orchestra as the tenor soloist in Handel’s Messiah and joined the Firelands Symphony Orchestra for a concert of Mozart, Puccini, and Verdi. COVID-19 cancellations included the title character in Orpheus in the Underworld at Madison Opera, Frederic in Pirates of Penzance at Virginia Opera, Jaquino in Fidelio with South Dakota Symphony, and a reprisal of Count Almaviva in On Site Opera’s acclaimed production of Paisiello’s Barber of Seville at Caramoor. In early 2021, he joined Atlanta Opera as Young Thompson in a recorded production of Glory Denied.
Praised for “the easy caramel syrup of his voice” (Opera Today), Mexican-American baritone Armando Contreras is quickly becoming a standout in the world of opera. In 2021, Mr. Contreras was a part of the world premiere of Aleksandra Vrebalov and Deborah Breevort’s The Knock, singing the lead role of Lt. Roberto Gonzales with The Glimmerglass Festival. Other highlights of his 2021-22 season included making his debut with Salt Marsh Opera as Moralès in Carmen, reprising the role of Diego Rivera in Frida and the Bravest Girl in the World with Central City Opera, joining Opera Steamboat in The Three Feathers as The King/Rat, making his Denver Philharmonic debut in L’elisir d’amore as Belcore and singing the role of Dandini in La Cenerentola with Tri-Cities Opera, Syracuse Opera and Salt Marsh Opera. This summer, Mr. Contreras returned to The Glimmerglass Festival to sing a lead role in the world premiere of Tenor Overboard, a Rossini pastiche, and cover Moralès in Carmen. In the 2022-2023 season, Mr. Contreras returns to Lyric Opera Kansas City as Horace Derwent in The Shining, performs the role of Cesar Chaves in a workshop of a new opera by Nicolas Benavidas based on the life of civil rights leader Dolores Huerta, will perform recitals with Colorado State and Pikes Peak Opera League, and will make his company debut with Cincinnati Opera in an upcoming season. In the 2020-2021 season, Mr. Contreras was seen as Ernesto in the US premiere of Bizet’s Don Procopio with Pacific Opera Project, Il Conte in Le nozze di Figaro and Marcello in La bohème with Boulder Opera, and Diego Rivera in Frida and the Bravest Girl in the World with Opera Steamboat. In the summer of 2021, he covered the role of Papageno in Mozart’s The Magic Flute with The Glimmerglass Festival.

Bass-baritone James Demler is known for his versatile range of repertory, spanning the operatic, oratorio, concert, and popular music genres. In 2021-22, Mr. Demler made his company and role debut as Odysseus in Mary Prescott/Cerise Lim Jacobs’ A Survivor’s Odyssey: The Journey of Penelope and Circe with White Snake Projects, covered the role of Howie Albert in Champion with Boston Lyric Opera, sang Caterpillar and King in the world premiere of ALICE, An Operatic Wonderland, and performed as the bass soloist in Beethoven’s 9th Symphony with Reno Philharmonic. In 2022-23, Mr. Demler joins the roster of The Metropolitan Opera to cover the Notary in Der Rosenkavalier and will return to the Berkshire Opera Festival as Benoit/Alcindoro in La bohème. He has been an annual favorite with Odyssey Opera, with recent roles as Pistol in Sir John in Love by Ralph Vaughn Williams, Jov in Dvorak’s Dimitrij, Pietro de Wissant in Donizetti’s L’Assedio di Calais, Geronte in Gounod’s Le Medecin Malgre Lui, Gualtiero in Pacini’s Maria, Regina D’Inghilterra, and most recently the role of Earl of Arundel in the World Premiere of Arnold Rosner’s The Chronicle of Nine, a co-production with the Grammy Award winning BMOP Orchestra of Boston. Other recent engagements have included performances with Boston Lyric Opera as the title role in Verdi’s Macbeth, Dikoy in Janacek’s Katya Kabanova, and Le Bailli in Massenet’s Werther. Mr. Demler has been featured numerous times as a soloist with the Boston Pops, with highlights that include Ralph Vaughn Williams’ Fantasia on Christmas Carols, and The Boston Red Sox Baseball Cantata by George Kleinsinger, conducted by Keith Lockhart as part of their City of Champions series. Internationally Mr. Demler has sung the role of Don Alfonso in a concert version of Così fan tutte with the Tuscia Opera Festival in Viterbo, Italy, and in 2016 debuted at the
Concertgebouw in Bruges, Belgium, and at the Liederhalle in Stuttgart, Germany, singing the Bass solos in Verdi’s *Requiem*. In addition, he made his film debut as Noah in Wes Anderson’s *Moonrise Kingdom*, which opened the 2012 Cannes Film Festival, and was also a guest Public Address Announcer for the Boston Red Sox at Fenway Park in June 2012.

Mezzo-Soprano Leah Heater just finished the Resident Artist Program with Pittsburgh Opera, where she sang the roles of Flora in *La Traviata* and The Page in *Salome*, in which she “impressed” with her “solid low register” (*Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*). She portrayed the title role in Riccardo Primo, Marcellina in Le nozze di Figaro, and Jessie Castner in the Long Walk. Her first role with Pittsburgh Opera was the role of Cecelia in Little Women in which she “displayed singing and acting abilities that lifted a secondary character into considerable prominence” (*Pittsburgh In The Round*). More recently Ms. Heater has been seen and heard in Verdi’s *Requiem* with Chautauqua Symphony Orchestra in which her “sonorous yet vigorous phrasing stood out” (*Chautauquan Daily*), and as Gertrude in Opera Ithaca’s *Hamlet*, in which her “passion, carnality, and splendid voice completed communicated the transgressions of sovereigns.” (*Ithaca.com*) Leah graduated from the Masters and Artist Diploma programs at University of Cincinnati, College-Conservatory of Music and she performed many works there, including: Mezzo Soloist in Mahler’s Das Lied von der Erde and Symphony No. 3, Verdi’s *Requiem*, and John Adam’s El Niño, as well as Carmen in La tragèdie de Carmen, Mother Marie in Dialogues of the Carmelites, Dritte Dame in Die Zauberflöte, Aloès in L’Étoile, Mother Goose in The Rake’s Progress, and Eboli in the CCM Philharmonic’s concert presentation of the five-act French version of Verdi’s Don Carlos. She has also sung as mezzo soloist in Dvorak’s *Requiem* with Annapolis Symphony Orchestra and with Asheville Symphony Orchestra in Haydn’s Lord Nelson Mass. In June of 2015, Leah made her Carnegie Hall debut as mezzo soloist in Maurice Duruflé’s *Requiem* and was praised by the New York Concert Review for her “exquisite voice”.

Leah has been fortunate to workshop a number of new works: at Cincinnati Opera she created the role of Sadie in two workshops of Ricky Ian Gordon’s new opera, *Morning Star*, and sang the role of Kathleen in the world premiere of the same opera. She also had the opportunity to work closely with Jake Heggie and Terrance McNally in a workshop of their new opera, *Great Scott*, which premiered at Dallas Opera. As a Gerdine Young Artist at Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, Leah covered the role of Kathy Hagen in the world premiere of Terrence Blanchard’s *Champion*, as well as the role of Gertrude Stein in the premiere of 27 by Ricky Ian Gordon, during which she stood in for the first two weeks of staging for Ms. Stephanie Blythe. Leah sang as Carmen in the touring reduction of Bizet’s famous opera with Cincinnati Opera as well as the full length version with Rome Festival Opera. She covered Princess Eboli in Verdi’s French version of *Don Carlos* as a Studio Artist with Sarasota Opera. While an Emerging Artist at Virginia Opera, she sang the role of Juno in Offenbach’s *Orpheus in the Underworld* and covered the role of Mary in *The Flying Dutchman*.

Charlie Kim is a versatile performer with several musical identities—pianist, tenor, conductor, educator, and community arts leader. He is thrilled to be appearing as pianist for Newport Classical. He can be seen as pianist...
and music director for Los Angeles Opera in educational and community outreach efforts. Most recently, Charlie made his debut with Long Beach Opera as Tenor 1 in their revolutionary performance of Stimmung by Karlheinz Stockhausen. Other recent vocal appearances include Lagrime di San Pietro (Los Angeles Master Chorale world tour), Nanki-Poo in The Mikado (Pacific Opera Project), Ojichan/Mojave Boy in The White Bird of Poston (Los Angeles Opera Connects) and as a soloist in Walt Disney Concert Hall for the world premiere of Ready, Bright by Derrick Spiva (Los Angeles Master Chorale). Charlie is member of SAG-AFTRA, with credits as a performer on-screen, in the recording studio, and as a coach for on-screen talent. He can be heard on the soundtrack to Star Wars: Rise of the Skywalker, the 2021 Grammy winning Complete Symphonies of Charles Ives with Los Angeles Philharmonic, and The Sacred Veil by Eric Whitacre with Sony Records. He has appeared on screen with Cardi B and Weird Al Yankovich and has served as talent coach with names like JK Simmons for Amazon Studios. His commercial work is currently receiving national circulation. As a community arts leader, Charlie is the conductor and artistic director for the San Fernando Valley Master Chorale. He seeks to create more opportunities for high-quality classical music by partnering with other local performance organizations and forging supportive relationships with the City of Los Angeles. Charlie currently serves as the Director of Choirs and Orchestra at the Brentwood School in Los Angeles.

Ms. Okafor’s 2020 season would have included Mendelsohn’s Elijah with the Hilton Head Symphony, Papagena in Die Zauberflöte with CCM Opera and again as a cover with Santa Fe Opera. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, these engagements were canceled or postponed. However, during the height of the pandemic, Ms. Okafor enjoyed being a part of numerous projects like Angela Brown’s Opera From A Sistah’s Point Of View, Cincinnati Opera at 100 with Cincinnati Opera and the Mozart Requiem with the Kentucky Symphony as a featured soloist. She also competed in the Kentucky District for the Metropolitan National Council Competition and received an encouragement award.

One of the highlights of Ms. Okafor’s 2021 season was placing second in the prestigious Lotte Lenya Competition. The finals took place in New York city after the cancellation of the competition in 2020 due to COVID-19. With over 600 applicants, she made it to the finals and sang for renowned Broady music director and conductor Andy Einhorn, Tony Award-winning actress, singer, and director Victoria Clarke, and Obie Award-winning actress and singer, Mary Beth Peil. Ms. Okafor also had the opportunity to return to her alma mater, Shenandoah Conservatory, to perform Knoxville: Summer of 1915 with the Shenandoah Symphony as well as William Grant Still’s From the Hearts of Women. In 2022, Ms. Okafor has had a full season

Praised for her silvery-voiced soprano... (Seen and Heard International), Victoria Okafor is steadily making a name for herself in the world of classical music. She has sung with companies such as Washington National Opera, Opera Birmingham, and Opera Columbus. Ms. Okafor’s 2019 season included her debut with Cincinnati Opera as Barbarina in Le nozze di Figaro followed by the role of Alesha in the new opera Blind Injustice. The role of Alesha was created by Ms. Okafor during the opera’s original workshop at Cincinnati Opera. She has also originated the roles of Wilhelmina in Gregory Spears’s Castor and Patience, Nyomi in William Menefield’s Fierce, and Laura in Kevin Puts’s The Hours. The Hours will premiere at the Metropolitan Opera and star singers Renee Fleming, Joyce DiDonato, and Kelli O’Hara.
with 2 role debuts, concert, and recital engagements. She was set to do another workshop of The Hours with The Metropolitan Opera in January but the workshop was canceled due to COVID-19 Omicron outbreak. However, Ms. Okafor was able to revisit the role of Laura again when she covered Kelli O’Hara in the concert version of The Hours with the Philadelphia Orchestra under the direction of world renown conductor Yannick Nézet-Séguin. Ms. Okafor also premiered the role of Wilhelmina in Gregory Spears and Tracy K. Smith’s new opera Castor and Patience. The opera received rave reviews and media coverage from the Wall Street Journal, NPR, Washington Post and more.

Ms. Okafor will be starting off her 2023 season as a soloist for Mendelsohn’s Elijah with the Hilton Head Symphony Orchestra followed by performances of La Cenerentola with Kentucky Opera. A native to the DC/Maryland area, Ms. Okafor holds degrees from Shenandoah Conservatory and the Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music with a BM in voice performance, an MM in voice performance and an AD in opera performance.

Ms. Basler enjoys a particularly strong relationship with BLO, which she initially joined as an Emerging Artist during the 2013–2014 season. She rejoined the company for their March 2018 production of The Threepenny Opera as Lucy and Ms. Basler made her critically acclaimed role debut as Micaëla in Boston Lyric Opera’s mounting of the Calixto Bieito production of Carmen in the autumn of 2016. Her other roles with Boston Lyric Opera include Valencienne in The Merry Widow; Glasha in Katya Kabanova; Margret in Lizzie Borden, a production which was reprised at the 2014 Tanglewood Festival; and Isolt the Fair in Frank Martin’s The Love Potion (Le vin herbé), a portrayal of hailed as “lovely, passionate, and clear” by Opera News.
Particularly noted for her interpretation of the title role of Carlisle Floyd’s Susannah, Ms. Basler has benefited from the mentorship of the role’s creator, the late Phyllis Curtin, and both the coaching and enthusiastic endorsement of Floyd himself. She made her Nashville Opera debut in the role during the spring of 2018 and her Pasadena Opera debut in the same role in 2016. Additional recent engagements include performing Mozart’s Susanna in Opera Saratoga’s 2016 production of Le nozze di Figaro and covering Liù in Virginia Opera’s 2017 production of Turandot.

Ms. Basler has fulfilled several prestigious young artist residencies, most recently joining Santa Fe Opera as a 2015 Apprentice Artist, covering Arminda in Mozart’s rarely performed La finta giardiniera and creating the role of Sara in the world premiere of Jennifer Higdon’s Cold Mountain, a live recording of which was released by Pentatone and has recently been nominated for a Grammy. As a 2013 Apprentice Artist with Opera Saratoga, she performed Josephine in H.M.S. Pinafore. In 2012 and 2013, Ms. Basler was a young artist with Sarasota Opera, where she appeared as Guardian of the Dawn in Daron Hagen’s Little Nemo in Slumberland and Curley’s Wife in Of Mice and Men. As a young artist with Des Moines Metro Opera in 2012, Ms. Basler covered the role of Magda in La rondine.

An accomplished concert and recital performer, Ms. Basler’s 2017 and 2018 engagements include debuts with Omaha Symphony, performing Mendelssohn’s Elijah, Boston’s Mercury Orchestra, performing Strauss Lieder and Berg’s Lulu Suite, and Glen Falls Symphony, performing the J.S. Bach Cantata 51 and Mahler’s Symphony No. 4, as well as joining the Cape Symphony both as soprano soloist for ‘Opera’s Greatest Hits’, in collaboration with Boston Lyric Opera, and as soprano soloist for the Mozart Requiem. In 2019, Ms. Basler will join the Providence Singers for The Wound in the Water by Kim Andre Arnesen. In recent seasons, her concert repertoire has also included Barber’s Knoxville: Summer of 1915, Vaughan Williams’ Dona nobis pacem, Puccini’s Messa di Gloria, Mozart’s Exsultate Jubilate, and Handel’s Messiah.

Ms. Basler’s talents have been recognized throughout the vocal competition circuit. Most recently she was awarded second place for the 2017–2018 American Prize in Vocal Performance (Friedrich and Virginia Schorr Memorial Award), first place in the National Opera Association’s prestigious Carolyn Bailey and Dominick Argento Vocal Competition, as well as both Fourth Place and the Lorena Beasley Mangin Memorial Award in the Mary Jacobs Smith Singer of the Year Vocal Competition (Shreveport, LA). Ms. Basler has also earned the Flournoy Award from the Mary Jacobs Vocal Competition, Boston University’s Kahn Award, first place in the Peter Elvins Vocal Competition, and a grant from the Shoshana Foundation. Ms. Basler earned her Artist Certificate (Opera Institute) and MM from Boston University and her BM from NEC.