



UNT OPERA

presents

**Lisa DeSpain (composer) &
David Simpatico's (librettist)**

THAT HELLBOUND TRAIN

Saturday, January 27, 2024

7:30 pm

Voertman Hall

Music Building

SPECIAL THANKS

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World premiere of piano version

Based on fantasy short story by American writer Robert Bloch

SYNOPSIS

At an unimportant railroad depot, somewhere in middle-America, sometime in the twentieth century, PA, a downtrodden yard worker on the graveyard shift, shovels ballast, drinks muscatel, and sings to his 5-year-old son, MARTIN. PA sings longingly of his unfulfilled dream, living a life out on the rails. MARTIN loves to hear his PA sing, especially about THE CONDUCTOR and That Hellbound Train "where the drunks and the drifters, gamblers and grifters have a grand old time" on their merry way to The Depot Down Yonder. As if on cue, PA is killed by a passing train. MA, a good-time gal, quickly rids herself of young MARTIN by depositing him in an orphanage.

Time slips: Teen MARTIN escapes the orphanage intent on living his father's dream of a life out on the rails. Falling in with a company of disreputable hoboes, MARTIN learns survival skills in grifting, gambling, and thieving that eventually land him on a chain gang; five years for stealing a lousy hubcap!

Time slips: Adult MARTIN, newly freed from prison, contemplates changing his ways and joining up with a group of Salvation Army gospel-shouters. At that moment, That Hellbound Train roars into view and Martin comes face-to-face with THE CONDUCTOR, that mythological being of his father's song.

THE CONDUCTOR offers MARTIN the "standard proposition, one wish in exchange for your soul." Having contemplated this moment for his entire life and thinking he can outsmart THE CONDUCTOR, MARTIN asks for the power to stop time and live forever in a moment of his choosing, "a moment of perfect happiness." The deal is struck. THE CONDUCTOR gives MARTIN his stopwatch imbued with the power to stop time.

As MARTIN journeys through life, he faces the relentless question of what constitutes perfect happiness. Is it in a bottle of muscatel and a dry cot in a flophouse? Is it in a series of flings and one-night stands? Is it the moment Martin meets his wife or the birth of his son? Will he find it in wealth, status, the wonders of the world, or the arms of a mistress?

Unable to find this perfect moment, MARTIN grows older and eventually dies. That Hellbound Train arrives ready to collect his soul. As MARTIN boards, he is greeted with open arms by the merry band of sinners who are engaged in one final drunken revelry before their eternal damnation. As MARTIN hears the merry crew singing his father's song, he has an epiphany...happiness is found in the journey, not the destination. THE CONDUCTOR demands the return of his watch and to his horror, MARTIN chooses that very moment to stop time, ensuring That Hellbound Train will continue its merry journey forever, never arriving at The Depot Down Yonder.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

Young Martin	David Ferguson
Adult Martin	Rudy Polk
Old Martin	Cecil Garrison
Ma	Meredith Hinshaw
Pa	Tim Anderson
Martin's Son	Alexis Mendoza-Sánchez
Impatient Guy/Tour Guide	Seth Bazán
Professor	Christopher Rodriguez Gray
Tiny	Pebbles Guest
Breck	Macey Deck
Leader	James Dickens II
Wailing Tenor	Gavin Godbey
Salvation Army Captain	Harli Daniel
Conductor	Matthew Dexter
Judge/Suave Dude	Ben Bassett
Guy taking a leak in the corner/Used Car Salesman	Ethan Matous
Landlady	Eleanor Williams
Betty Joe	Emma Garcia
Mary Ellen	Madison Lang
Coworker/Boss	Jaden Jackson-Cooper
Lillian	Sara Foshee
Sherry	Taylor Fenner
Violet/OMG Girl	Madison Juneau
Chorus	Katie Grace Stephenson, Maryn West, Bri Nelson, Hayeong Park, Jade Anaiah Wesley

ARTISTIC TEAM

Composer	Lisa DeSpain
Librettist	David Simpatico
Conductor/Music Director	Stephanie Rhodes Russell
Performance Pianist/Vocal Coach	Lauren Koszyk
Performance Pianist	Jesse Fry
Vocal Coach	Sara Steele
Vocal Coach	David Štech

ARTISTIC TEAM



LISA DESPAIN (Composer) is the recipient of an OPERA America Discovery Award for Female Composers, a Rhinebeck Writers Award, and an NEA Challenge America Award for her jazz/blues opera, *That Hellbound Train*, adapted from a story by Robert Bloch (*Psycho*) with libretto by David Simpatico.

Ms. DeSpain is the winner of the 2020 Zepick Modern Opera Commission (Opera Kansas) for *Staggerwing* about the historic win of female pilots in the 1936 Bendix Trophy Air Race. Additional opera commissions include *No Ladies in the Lady's Book* (Utah Opera)

highlighting the lost stories of women who built the Transcontinental Railroad, *Men I'm Not Married To* (Cleveland Opera Theatre) based on a short story by Dorothy Parker (libretti by Rachel J. Peters). *Song of the Nightingale*, with libretto by Melisa Tien, a co-commission with On Site Opera and Arts Brookfield, received its world premiere in September 2023 at multiple sites throughout New York City.

Ms. DeSpain's concert works (selected) include the oratorio *American Nativity* (New Haven Symphony Orchestra,) *Symphonic Jazz Etudes for Piano* (Barlow Award), *String Quartet No. 1, Rise & Fall* (Cassatt String Quartet), and *The Bicycle Shoppe* (U.S. Air Force Band of Flight).

Additional honors include an Aaron Copland Fellow, the ASCAP Commission Honoring the Duke Ellington Centennial, Dramatists Guild Fellowship for *Storyville* with writing partner, Oscar-award winner Kirsten Anderson-Lopez. DeSpain is the choral arranger of Broadway hits (*Hamilton*, *In the Heights*, *Next to Normal*) for Alfred Music and Professor of Music at LaGuardia Community College – CUNY.

A proud alumna of University of North Texas, Lisa is beyond thrilled to be returning to campus to raise some Hell with the students and faculty of UNT Opera.

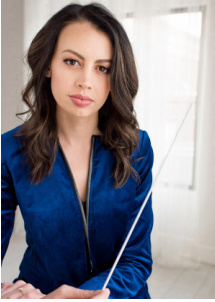


DAVID SIMPATICO (Librettist) has been presented at major theaters around the globe, including London's Hammersmith Apollo, Williamstown Theatre Festival, Lincoln Center/Avery Fisher Hall, Edinburgh Fringe Festival, Franklin Furnace and New York Public Theatre.

Career highlights include: *The Screams of Kitty Genovese* (winner Jonathan Larson Award; music by Will Todd); book/stage adaptation of Disney's *High School Musical*; libretto for choral symphony *Garden of Light* (composer Aaron Jay Kernis). Current plays include: *Ex-Gay Bar*; *Wilde about Whitman*; *Waiting for the Ball to Drop*.

His musical adaptation of *Twelve Angry Men*, music and lyrics by Michael Holland, received its world premiere production in June 2022 at Theatre Latte Da in Minneapolis, directed by Peter Rothstein. His grand opera, *The Life and Death(s) of Alan Turing*, with music by Justine F. Chen, received its world premiere at Chicago Opera Theater in March 2023, also directed by Peter Rothstein. In January 2023, David directed a sold-out concert presentation of his new blues opera, *That Hellbound Train*, with composer Lisa DeSpain, at the National Opera Center in New York City and looks forward to a first piano-vocal workshop with Stephanie Rhodes Russell at the University of North Texas.

David is an alumnus of the Composer Librettist Development Program at American Lyric Theater. He holds an MFA in creative writing from Southern New Hampshire University. He has received support from the Edward Albee Foundation, Millay Colony, NY Theatre Workshop, Eugene O'Neill Foundation and Rhinebeck Writer's Retreat. David is a proud member of the Dramatists Guild, and with playwright Darrah Cloud, is co-founder of A Howl of Playwrights in Rhinebeck, NY, where he lives with his husband and muse, Robert C. Strickstein.



STEPHANIE RHODES RUSSELL (Conductor) recently completed a residency as conducting fellow with the Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra where she appeared regularly with the ensemble leading education, family, and community concerts while serving as cover conductor for the symphonic subscription series. She is the recipient of a 2019 Solti Foundation U.S. Career Assistance Award, designed to aid outstanding young conductors in developing their talents and careers. She has served on the music staff of the Bolshoi Theatre of Russia, The Dallas Opera, Houston Grand Opera, LA Opera, San Francisco Opera, and Washington

National Opera, amongst others, and her extensive operatic experience in the roles of assistant conductor, prompter, chorus master, rehearsal pianist, and diction coach, brings a comprehensive understanding to her work. Other recent engagements include concerts with the American Festival Chorus and Orchestra, performances of Handel's *Alcina* at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, an engagement with Washington National Opera's forum for new works, the American Opera Initiative, and *The Magic Flute* and *Dido and Aeneas* with the Miami Music Festival.



LAUREN KOSZYK (Pianist) is currently pursuing her doctor of musical arts at the University of North Texas studying with Dr. Steven Harlos and Dr. Elvia Puccinelli. Originally from Normal, Illinois, Ms. Koszyk has given performances and presentations across Austria, Canada, Germany, Italy, and the United States. As an opera pianist, coach, or music director

Ms. Koszyk has worked with Illinois Festival Opera, Midwest Institute of Opera, Music Onsite Inc., Musiktheater Bavaria, and Opera Seme. She has accompanied masterclasses given by renowned Metropolitan Opera sopranos Angela Brown and Yvonne Redman. Ms. Koszyk has prepared complete productions of *Amahl and the Night Visitors*, *Dialogues of the Carmelites*, *Gianni Schicchi*, *La bohème*, *L'enfant et les sortilèges*, *Les contes d'Hoffmann*, *Mese mariano*, *Suor Angelica*, *The Beautiful Bridegroom*, *The Old Maid and the Thief*, and *The Pirates of Penzance*. She has assisted in productions of *Aïda*, *Carmen*, *Cavalleria rusticana*, *Don Giovanni*, and *Hänsel und Gretel*. Ms. Koszyk holds degrees in piano, collaborative piano, and German and currently serves as a teaching assistant for UNT Opera.



Jesse Fry (Pianist) is originally from Findlay, Ohio. After completing his bachelor's degree in instrumental music education at Asbury University (Wilmore, KY) he moved to Dallas in 2003 to work for the Salvation Army Texas division as an Assistant Music Director. He obtained his master's degree in music education-piano pedagogy from SMU in 2009. Jesse accompanies a variety of choirs and soloists, and has been involved in musical theatre as keyboardist and music director for over 50 different shows. He is also fluent in Spanish and has the pleasure of

being invited to Central and South America to perform and teach. In 2009 he created an agency to facilitate the process of hiring professional piano accompanists for school districts in the DFW metroplex. That endeavor is now known as Trekorda (www.trekorda.com) and it manages the flow of communication and payment for all types of freelance musicians so they can simply practice, perform, and get paid. The Music Institute at Carrollton Square (www.micsquare.com) was founded in 2015 by Jesse and two other SMU graduates with the goal of connecting highly qualified teachers of piano, voice, and guitar with students of all ages and abilities in the Carrollton community. Jesse and his wife Emily live in Carrollton, TX and are blessed with two children, Molly (9) and Max (4).



Sara Steele (Vocal Coach) is a collaborative pianist and vocal coach in the Dallas–Fort Worth metroplex. A Presser Award winner, Ms. Steele has performed at Carnegie Hall as a winner of the chamber music division of the Semper Pro Musica Competition and has accompanied masterclasses given by Mary Dibbern, Kathy Kelly, and Tamara Wilson. She has performed with the Springfield (Missouri) Symphony Orchestra. She served on faculties of the Colorado Vocal Institute, Music in the Marche, and Brancaloneoni International Music Festival. Sara earned the

BM in piano performance from Southwest Baptist University, MM in piano performance and pedagogy from Baylor University, MM in collaborative piano from Baylor University, Graduate Artist Certificate in opera coaching from the University of North Texas, and DMA in collaborative piano from the University of North Texas. Ms. Steele is a vocal coach and music director of the Texas Christian University Opera Studio.

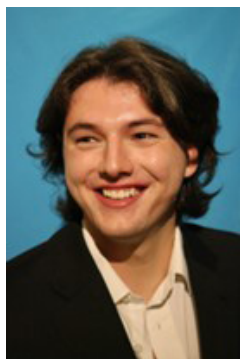


David Štech began his academic journey at California State University, Chico, earning a bachelor of arts in organ performance and a minor in choral conducting. Subsequently, he secured his master of music in orchestral conducting from Northwestern University and a professional studies diploma in collaborative piano from the Manhattan School of Music. He is currently pursuing a doctor of musical arts at UNT. Štech is the founder and artistic director of the New York Conducting Institute. His dedication to pedagogy is further evidenced by his

tenure at esteemed institutions, including the University of Illinois Chicago, Roosevelt University, and, notably, the Manhattan School of Music, where

he taught for eight years. Štech's mentors include David Itkin, Donald Schleicher, Paul Nadler, and Michael Morgan. He was in the conducting class at Tanglewood where he participated in masterclasses with Sir Roger Norrington, Christoph von Dohnányi, and Kurt Mazur. Professionally, Štech has held key roles such as associate conductor for the dell'Arte Opera Ensemble and the New York Lyric Opera. He is music director emeritus of the American Opera Group in Chicago and the Astoria Symphony Orchestra in New York City. He was assistant conductor at Sarasota Opera and the long-time assistant conductor and chorus master at St. Petersburg Opera. David's recent guest conducting engagements include The Florida Orchestra and Brooklyn Ballet. Next summer, he will conduct at the inaugural season of the Lyric Arts Festival in southern France.

SOLOISTS



TIMOTHY ANDERSON, tenor, a native Texan, is a senior vocal performance major at the University of North Texas, where he has had the honor to study under Drs. Stephen Austin and Stephen Morscheck. Anderson has performed with UNT Opera in the chorus and through their scenes program multiple times. Tim's notable roles include The Ringmaster (*The Bartered Bride*), The Young Collector (*A Streetcar Named Desire*), Gobin (*La Rondine*), and Pa (*That Hellbound Train*) with UNT Opera, and as Tamino (*Die Zauberflöte*) with Luke Housner's LAHSOW program. Additionally, Anderson is a two-year member of the UNT University Singers, a first-year member of UNT's A Cappella Choir, and works as the tenor section

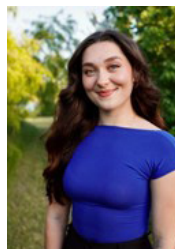
leader at the Episcopal Church of the Annunciation in Lewisville, TX, having previously worked in various churches all around the DFW metroplex.



BENJAMIN BASSETT, baritone, is a sophomore from Katy, Texas studying vocal performance with Prof. William Joyner. This past spring, Ben was given the award for 2nd place in the DFW NATS competition for classical music. One of Ben's recent roles was The Phantom (*The Phantom of the Opera*) with his high school. Upcoming roles for Ben include Crebillon (*La Rondine*) and the roles of the Judge and the 'Suave dude' (*That Hellbound Train*) all with UNT Opera.



SETH BAZÁN, baritone, is a senior from Beeville, Texas, studying vocal performance with Professor William Joyner. This summer, Seth performed with the Highland Park Chorale, singing Stravinsky's *Symphony of Psalms* and Brahms' *Ein deutsches Requiem* and competed in the Handel Aria Competition. Upcoming roles include Le Roi (*Cendrillon*), Il maggiordomo (*La Rondine*), and Impatient Guy/Tour Guide (*That Hellbound Train*).



HARLI DANIEL, soprano, is a senior from Houston, Texas studying voice performance at the University of North Texas under the instruction of Dr. Stephen Morscheck. Most recently she performed in the chorus of *Le nozze di Figaro* with UNT Opera. Upcoming roles with UNT Opera include Bianca (*La Rondine*) and Salvation Army Captain (*That Hellbound Train*).



MACEY DECK, soprano, is a 3rd year vocal performance undergraduate currently studying under Mary Mills-Gertken. Previous roles include 2nd Lady (*Die Zauberflöte*) and Flower Girl (*Le nozze di Figaro*), as well as being in the chorus for *The Bartered Bride*, *L'elisir d'amore*, *Le nozze di Figaro*, and *Cendrillon*, all with UNT Opera. She is performing the role of Breck in *That Hellbound Train* this semester.

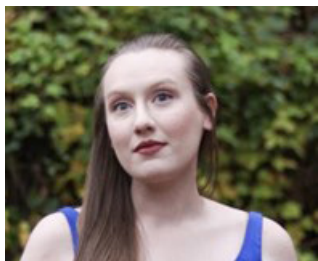


MATTHEW DEXTER, bass-baritone, is a junior from McKinney, Texas, studying vocal performance with Dr. Stephen Morscheck. In 2020, he was a winner of Youngarts, and performed at the winner's concert in Miami. During his time with UNT Opera, he has performed the roles of Mícha (*Prodaná nevěsta*), Bartolo (*Le nozze di Figaro*), and Zuniga (*Carmen*). He also performed the role of Herold in the concert version of *Othello* with the UNT Symphony Orchestra. For the past two years, Matthew has been a vocal fellow at

Spoletto Festival USA in which he premiered Rhiannon Giddens and Michael Abels' Pulitzer Prize-winning opera *Omar* in 2022 and covered the role of the Old Doctor in *Vanessa* in 2023. As a winner in the 2021 TEXOMA Region NATS Auditions Matthew entered the National Association of Teachers of Singing 2022 National Competition and was a finalist in his category. In addition to being a recipient of the Deborah Johnson Miller, Frank McKinley, Jack Roberts, and W & M Joyner scholarships, Matthew was recently named the 2023 undergraduate Presser Scholar. He will perform the role of Conductor (*That Hellbound Train*) with UNT Opera this semester.

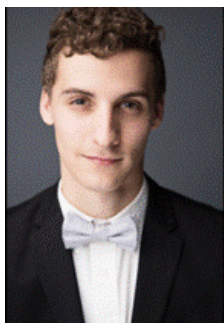


JAMES DICKENS II, tenor, is a 1st year master's student in vocal performance from Denton, Texas, studying with Professor Jennifer Lane. Current roles include Adolfo (*La Rondine*) and Leader (*That Hellbound Train*).



TAYLOR FENNER, soprano, is a 2nd year master's student from Brookings, South Dakota and graduate of Augustana University. She is studying voice performance with Dr. Carol Wilson. Most recently, she debuted Alcina (*Alcina*) with the Handel Opera Academy in Tarnowskie Góry, Poland. This season, Taylor will be singing Yvette/Georgette (*La Rondine*) and Sherry (*That Hellbound Train*) with UNT Opera. On the opera stage, she has performed the roles of Susanna (*Le nozze di*

Figaro), Micaëla (*Carmen*), Ida (*Die Fledermaus*), Sophia (*The Ransom of Sophia*), and Celié (*Signor Deluso*).

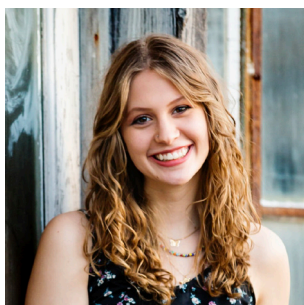


DAVID FERGUSON, tenor, from Conroe, Texas is a first year master's student at the University of North Texas under the tutelage of Mr. William Joyner. This past summer, he made his debut at the Leipzig Bachfest singing with Bach Society Houston. Recent roles include Chorus (*The Wreckers*) with the Houston Grand Opera, and The Mayor (*Albert Herring*), Orpheus (*Orpheus in the Underworld*), Dandy (*The Ballad of Baby Doe*), and Trip (premiere of *School for Scandal*) with the Moores Opera Center at the University of Houston. David's schooling includes an undergraduate degree at the University of Houston studying with Mr. Hector Vasquez, and a reciprocal

exchange semester at the Hochschule für Musik und Theater „Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy“ Leipzig, Germany. David is the recipient of The Gilman Foundation Scholarship, The COM Beasley Vocal Scholarship, and the COM Competitive Merit Scholarship. He will perform the role of Young Martin (*That Hellbound Train*) with UNT Opera this semester.



SARA FOSHEE, mezzo-soprano, is a junior from San Antonio, Texas studying vocal performance with Dr. Carol Wilson. This summer she was in Urbino, Italy performing the roles of Dorabella (*Così fan tutte*) and Sesto and Annio (*La clemenza di Tito*) with the summer program Opera in Concert in their opera scenes program. In performance with UNT Opera, she will perform the role of Suzy and Lolette (*La Rondine*) and Lillian (*That Hellbound Train*). In the past, Sara has performed the role of First Lady (*Die Zauberflöte*) in the UNT Opera scenes program and chorus in *Le nozze di Figaro* and *The Bartered Bride*.



EMMA GARCIA, soprano, is a junior pursuing a bachelor of music in vocal performance and choral music education at the University of North Texas, studying under Dr. Carol Wilson. Emma was recently awarded second place in the third-year treble division of the 2023 Texoma NATS Conference. Emma sings with UNT's A Cappella Choir and early music ensemble, Vox Aquilae. In the summer of 2023 in Urbino, Italy, she performed in a scenes program as Mimì from *La bohème*, Giulietta from *I Capuletti e i Montecchi*, and as Servilia

from *La clemenza di Tito* with the Opera in Concert Young Artist Program. Emma has also been involved in the University of North Texas' operas, with her roles as Gretel (*Hänsel und Gretel*) in their scenes program and as chorus in *Le nozze di Figaro* (2022) and *The Bartered Bride* (2021). Additional UNT Opera roles include Betty from *That Hellbound Train* and Dew Fairy in *Hansel und Gretel* in the spring of 2024.



CECIL GARRISON, tenor, is a 2nd year DMA student from Farmington, New Mexico, studying with Dr. Jeffrey Snider. He played the role of Don José in UNT's Spring 2023 production of *Carmen*. His undergraduate studies took place at the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque, and he received his MM from Southern Methodist University in Dallas, where he performed as Giles Corey in their 2022 production of Robert Ward's *The Crucible*. He will perform the role of Old Martin (*That Hellbound Train*) with UNT Opera this semester.



GAVIN GODBEY, tenor, from Carrollton, Texas, is a first year vocal performance major studying with Dr. Jeffrey Snider. This is his 3rd production with UNT opera, and the 5th one of his career. His previous credits include the Party Man (*The Tender Land*), Voci Interne (*Otello*), and Chorus in *Amahl and the Night Visitors*, *The Bartered Bride* and *L'elisir d'amore*. He attended Booker T. Washington High School for the Performing and Visual Arts in Dallas, and he also received 3rd place in NATS as a First Year Student where he also competed in the Musical Theatre, Commercial and Chapters programs, and very

soon will compete in the Nationals for NATS. At UNT, he has covered the role of Don Curzio (*Le nozze di Figaro*) and sang Tamino in the quintet from *Die Zauberflöte* as part of UNT Opera Scenes. He will perform the role of Wailing Tenor (*That Hellbound Train*) with UNT Opera this semester.



PEBBLES GUEST, mezzo-soprano, is a senior from Amarillo, Texas studying voice performance with Dr. Stephen Morscheck. She is also a music education major and sings in UNT's A Cappella Choir and UpFront choir. In 2021 she began interning at Amarillo Opera. Recent roles include, Quiltlover (*Remove Shoes Before Entering*) and Dandini (*Billy Goats Gruff*) with Amarillo

Opera, and a chorus member in UNT's production of *The Barber of Seville*. She will perform the role of Tiny (*That Hellbound Train*) with UNT Opera this semester.



MEREDITH HINSHAW, soprano, is a junior from Murphy, Texas, pursuing a degree in vocal performance. She currently studies with Professor Mary Mills, and she previously studied under Dr. Stephen F. Austin. She is an active performer around the DFW area, singing in groups such as the Highland Park Chorale and Verdigris Ensemble. She will perform the role of Ma (*That HellbBound Train*) with UNT Opera this semester.



JADEN JACKSON-COOPER, bass-baritone, is a junior from Houston, Texas. He studies voice performance with William Joyner. Jaden is a member of ΦMA Sinfonia, current music director and historian of the Gamma Theta Chapter. Upcoming roles with UNT Opera include the chorus in *Cendrillon*, *La Rondine*, and *Coworker and Boss (That Hellbound Train)*.



MADISON JUNEAU, soprano, is a senior from Bridge City, Texas studying choral music education and voice performance under the direction of Dr. Carol Wilson. Most recently Madison has performed in the chorus (*Le nozze di Figaro*) and as assistant stage manager (*Carmen*) for UNT Opera. Last spring for her junior recital, she sang the role of Zerlina (*Don Giovanni*). In performance with UNT Opera, she will perform as Spirit 7 and in the chorus (*Cendrillon*) this fall and the roles of Violet and OMG Girl (*That Hellbound Train*) this spring.



MADISON LANG, soprano, is a 4th-year vocal performance major from McKinney, Texas. She studies voice under professor Jennifer Lane and is a member of UNT's A Cappella Choir. Madison is also a member of the Division of Vocal Studies student council. This is Madison's second season doing UNT Opera. Her previous UNT Opera roles include Barbarina (*Le nozze di Figaro*) and Gretel (*Hänsel und Gretel*) in the UNT Opera scenes program. Madison also sang the role of Second Woman in a UNT summer production of *Dido and Aeneas* directed by Molly Fillmore. In 2023,

Madison won first place in the Texoma Regional NATS in musical theatre, and also won first place in the DFW Chapter NATS in classical voice. She will perform the role of Mary Ellen (*That Hellbound Train*) with UNT Opera this semester.



ETHAN MATOUS, baritone, is a junior from Temple, Texas, studying vocal performance with Dr. Daniel Bubeck. He has recently transferred from his hometown school Temple College, where he performed the roles of Luke (*The Lightning Thief*) and Papageno (*The Magic Flute*). Most recently, he performed the role of Squidward in *The Spongebob Musical* with Temple Civic Theatre. Ethan was the 1st place winner of the 2022 South Texas NATS competition in the Freshman Classical TBB category and was a member of the TTCCDA Honor Choir in both 2022 and 2023. He will perform

the roles of Guy taking a leak in the corner and Used Car Salesman (*That Hellbound Train*) with UNT Opera this semester.



ALEXIS MENDOZA-SÁNCHEZ, tenor, is a sophomore from Jacksonville, Texas, studying vocal performance with Professor Nereida García. He will perform the role of Martin's Son (*That Hellbound Train*) with UNT Opera this semester.



BRIANNA (BRI) NELSON, mezzo-soprano, is a senior from Omaha, Nebraska, studying voice performance with Professor Mary Mills-Gertken. Recent roles include First Witch in UNT's summer production of *Dido and Aeneas*, as well as La Ciesca (*Gianni Schicchi*) and La Badessa (*Suor Angelica*) with Varna International. She also recently made an appearance singing on Channel 8, WFAA News for their post-Oscar's special. Upcoming roles include chorus (*That Hellbound Train*) with UNT Opera and involvement in *Godspell* this summer, produced by UNT professor William Joyner.



HAYEONG (JESSICA) PARK, mezzo-soprano, is a first-year master's student at the University of North Texas studying voice performance with Dr. Jeffrey Snider. She currently serves on the UNT Division of Vocal Studies Student Council for 2023–2024 season, is the representative of international students at UNT Opera, and a member of Opera on Tap North Texas. She made her debut as La Zelatrice (*Suor Angelica*) and Gherardino (*Gianni Schicchi*) at The Grand Stand Music Festival MUZIKA! in South Carolina. Her recent roles include Meg (*Falstaff*), Paquette (*Candide*), Flower Girl (*Le nozze di Figaro*), and upcoming roles

are Suzy, Lolette (*La Rondine*), and covering Dorothee (*Cendrillon*) for this season with UNT Opera. She performs as a soprano scholar at a church in Dallas, and she was also a soprano soloist for Fanny Mendelssohn's *Hiob Cantata* concert with University Singers choir while she was studying voice and fashion merchandising during her undergraduate studies at the University of North Texas. She will perform in the chorus of *That Hellbound Train* with UNT Opera this semester.



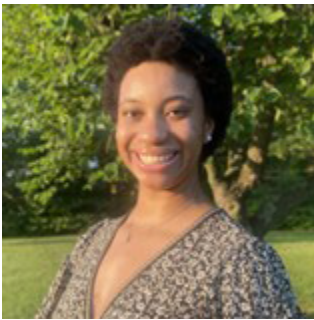
RUDY POLK, tenor, is from Clinton, Mississippi with considerable achievements as a young musician. Rudy has been singing and performing in choir since he was seven years old. In his youth he played Gavroche (*Les Misérables*) and Twin 1 (*Peter Pan*). Throughout high school, he performed in one of the nation's most well-known and successful show choirs, Attaché. Rudy is a member of A Cappella Choir and is currently a sophomore studying vocal performance at the University of North Texas with Professor William Joyner. Rudy plans to begin a minor in commercial music next semester. He will perform the role of Adult Martin (*That Hellbound Train*) with UN



CHRISTOPHER A. RODRIGUEZ GRAY, bass-baritone, is a sophomore from Dallas, Texas, and is studying voice with Dr. Stephen Morscheck. He has been in choir for eight years and is employed as a bass choral scholar at University Park United Methodist Church. This past summer, he performed as Gaston (*Beauty and the Beast*) with *In The Wings* at Trietsch Memorial United Methodist Church in Flower Mound, Texas. This year, Christopher is a member of A Cappella choir. With UNT Opera he will perform the role of Professor (*That Hellbound Train*).



KATIE GRACE STEPHENSON, soprano, is a junior from Fort Worth, Texas studying vocal performance with Professor William Joyner. With UNT Opera, she will perform in the choruses of *Cendrillon*, *La Rondine*, *Hänsel und Gretel*, and *That Hellbound Train*. Katie Grace was the recipient of the Jennifer Glidden Performer of the Year award from the DFW Chapter of the National Association of Teachers of Singing in both 2022 and 2023.



A transfer student from Glassboro, New Jersey, contralto **JADE ANAIAH WESLEY** is in her 4th year of college, yet her third year at UNT. She is studying vocal performance with Dr. Stephen Morscheck and violin with Professor Philip Lewis. During her time at UNT, she placed as a gold prize winner in the Cambridge Music Competition in the Advanced Voice Category. Jade also received the Great Musicianship Special Prize for this competition in September of 2022. Also in England, in December of 2022, Jade Wesley received a Special Mention Award from the Birmingham International

Music Competition in the Advanced Voice Category. In April of 2023, she placed second in the Advanced Popular Voice category of the Music International Grand Prix Competition, taking place at the Kauffman Music Center in Manhattan, New York. Here, she was hailed for her “deep rich tone” and having a “very expressive and engaging” stage presence by voice faculty from Southeastern University and the University of Montevallo. She has also been featured on Channel 8 WFAA Daily Morning News for the day after the Oscars Morning Special singing Oscar-nominated and winning songs. Jade Wesley made her professional orchestra debut in Leon Lacey's *Black Tie Cinematic Symphony*. Here, she played violin with renowned gospel and inspirational artists including Yolanda Adams, Donald Lawrence, and Iyanla Vanzant.



MARYN WEST, soprano, is a sophomore from Houston, Texas studying vocal performance with Dr. Carol Wilson. Maryn is a member of the UNT A Cappella Choir and Vox Aquilae. Recent performances with UNT Opera include chorus (*Le nozze di Figaro*) and Dew Fairy (*Hänsel und Gretel*) in the 2023 Opera Scenes Program. Upcoming roles include chorus (*Cendrillon*), Yvette (understudy) and chorus (*La Rondine*), Sherry (understudy) and chorus (*That Hellbound Train*), and Sandman (*Hänsel und Gretel*).



ELEANOR WILLIAMS, mezzo-soprano, is a junior from Round Rock, Texas majoring in vocal performance with Professor Mary Mills. This past summer she attended the opera scenes program *Respiro* in New York, where she performed the role of Charlotte (*Werther*). Recent roles include Hansel (*Hänsel und Gretel*) in UNT Opera's scenes program and chorus (*Le nozze di Figaro*). This fall she will perform the role of fifth spirit as well as participate in the chorus of UNT Opera's *Cendrillon*, and upcoming roles with UNT Opera include Bianca (*La Rondine*) and Landlady (*That Hellbound Train*).

Opera Studies

Jonathan Eaton, Margot and Bill Winspear Chair in Opera Studies/

Stage Director

Stephanie Rhodes Russell, Music Director

Willem van Schalkwyk, Coach/Pianist

Julie Hohman, Production Manager

Lauren Koszyk, Yu-Hsuan Lu & Jiaxin Ou, Pianists

Isaac Carlin & David Štech, Administrative Assistants

Choral Studies

Allen Hightower - Director of Choral Studies & Conductor, A Cappella Choir,

Vox Aquilae, & Grand Chorus

Marques L. A. Garrett - Conductor, University Singers

Jessica Nápoles - Choral Music Education; Conductor, Concert Choir

Jamey Kelley - Choral Music Education

Joshua Habermann - Choral Literature

Teaching Fellows

Jacob Augsten - Conductor, Chorale; Conducting Associate,

Dallas Symphony Chorus; Assistant to DCS

Dong Hyun Kang - Conducting Associate, A Cappella Choir

J. Christine Le - Conducting Associate, Concert Choir; Conducting

Fundamentals Instructor; Choral Librarian

Julianna LoBiondo - Conductor, Camerata

Evan Powers - Conducting Associate, Concert Choir

Kenneth Sieloff - Conducting Associate, University Singers and Vox Aquilae

Boyoon Choi, Collaborative Pianist, Camerata & University Singers

Dong Hyun Kang - Collaborative Pianist, Concert Choir

Daeun Kim - Collaborative Pianist, A Cappella Choir and Grand Chorus

Chun-Yuan Wei, Collaborative Pianist, Chorale

Jiyoung Kim - Collaborative Organist, Vox Aquilae

Vocal Studies

Daniel Bubeck (countertenor), Samantha Dapcic (German diction; soprano),

Stephen Dubberly (Opera), Jonathan Eaton (Opera), Molly Fillmore (Division

Chair; soprano), Nereida García (soprano), William Joyner (tenor),

Jennifer Lane (mezzo-soprano), Mary Mills (soprano), Stephen Morscheck

(bass-baritone), Elvia Puccinelli, Stephanie Rhodes Russell (Opera),

Jeffrey Snider (baritone), Willem van Schalkwyk (Opera),

Carol Wilson (soprano)

Teaching Fellows: Natasha Bekker, Isaac Carlin (Opera), Megan Gackle,

Beatrice Kim, Shuyi Li, Kara Libby McBain, Kori Miller, Christopher Rodriguez,

David Štech (Opera), Jennifer Watson

College of Music Administration

John W. Richmond - Dean

Warren H. Henry - Senior Associate Dean, Academic Affairs

Kirsten Soriano - Associate Dean, Operations

Emilita Marin - Assistant Dean, Business and Finance

Raymond Rowell - Assistant Dean, Scholarships and External Affairs

Jaymee Haefner - Director, Graduate Studies

Mark Montemayor - Director, Undergraduate Studies

Cyriel Aerts - Director, Piano Services

Matt Hardman - Director, Communications, Marketing and Public Relations

Austin Martinez - Director, Recording Services

