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## AUSTIN OPERA CELEBRATES 40<sup>TH</sup> BIRTHDAY IN 2025-2026 SEASON

(Austin, TX—Tuesday, February 25, 2025) Austin Opera's 2025-2026 Season will mark several major milestones, as the company celebrates its 40<sup>th</sup> birthday as well as the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of **Annie Burridge**'s tenure as General Director & CEO. The momentous year will also see the opening of Austin Opera's new [Sarah and Ernest Butler Performing Arts Center](#), bringing year-round community-centric programming to the city.

"This 2025-2026 Season at Austin Opera celebrates the rich history and love for this art form that our city has built over the past four decades while also looking to a future brimming with promise and possibility," said Burridge, who was recently named one of the [Top 30 Professionals of 2024](#) by *Musical America*. "From a celebratory concert led by our inimitable Music Director **Timothy Myers** to grand productions of an American masterpiece and opera's greatest love story, plus exciting developments at our new home, this is a season that makes an emphatic statement, that Austin is an opera town and will be for many years to come!"

The 2025-2026 Season opens in November with **Celebrate Opera! A Spectacular Birthday Concert** at the Long Center for the Performing Arts conducted by **Timothy Myers**, Austin Opera's Sarah and Ernest Butler Music Director. The two concerts will feature some of opera's most iconic showstoppers, including famous arias and ensembles from Puccini's beloved *Tosca* and Verdi's masterpieces *Aida* and *Rigoletto*. Guest soloists include soprano **Leah Crocetto**, tenor **Jonathan Burton**, mezzo-soprano **Zoie Reams**, and baritone **Malcolm MacKenzie**.

February brings a new production of Rodgers & Hammerstein's *Carousel* created in partnership with **Boston Lyric Opera**, led by Obie Award-winning director **Anne Bogart**. A cast of Central Texas' finest singers will star in the opera, with **Lauren Snouffer** as Julie Jordan, **Mark Diamond** as Billy Bigelow, and **Mela Sarajane Daily** as Nettie Fowler.

The season concludes in spring 2026 when Puccini's masterpiece *La bohème* returns to Austin for four performances. One of the world's most popular and relatable operas, *La bohème* centers on the romance of the young poet Rodolfo and shy seamstress Mimì, who live in Paris among a group of poor, hopeful Bohemian artists. Tenor **Joshua Blue** and soprano **Hailey Clark** star in opera's greatest love story as the poet Rodolfo and the shy seamstress Mimì. Soprano **Jasmine Habersham**, in her Austin Opera debut, sings the role of Musetta, with baritone **Troy Cook** as Marcello.

Subscriptions for the 2025-2026 Season will go on sale to current subscribers on Tuesday, February 25, and new subscribers can purchase a season ticket package starting on Wednesday, March 26. Individual tickets for the season will be available on Monday, August 4, 2025. Subscriptions and individual tickets can be purchased at [www.austinopera.org](http://www.austinopera.org).

## Austin Opera's Season at the Long Center for the Performing Arts

### Celebrate Opera!

#### A Spectacular Birthday Concert

Saturday, November 15, 2025 —7:30 pm

Sunday, November 16, 2025—2:00 pm

Austin Opera celebrates 40 years as a fixture of the Austin cultural landscape with a special birthday concert featuring some of opera's most iconic showstoppers. **Timothy Myers**, Austin Opera's Sarah and Ernest Butler Music Director and one of America's most versatile conductors, leads the Austin Opera Orchestra & Chorus and a cast of guest vocalists in famous arias and ensembles from operatic masterpieces like Verdi's *Aida* and Puccini's *Turandot*, including "Nessun dorma," Mozart, and more. The event will also include performances of "Make Our Garden Grow" from Bernstein's *Candide*, and selections from *West Side Story* and *Carousel*. **Rebecca Herman** serves as stage director.

"I am so pleased by the wonderful variety of artistic experiences we have created for this 40<sup>th</sup> birthday season in Austin," said Myers, one of America's most versatile conductors, engaging collaborators, and innovative purveyors of ideas. "November's birthday concert will be both an exciting preview of this season's *Carousel* and *La bohème* as well as a celebration of the artists who make opera such a singularly thrilling live experience. There will be something for every Austinite, whether this is your first year as an opera fan or your 40<sup>th</sup>."

Joining the concert as guest soloists are some of opera's top voices. Described by *The New York Times* as possessing an "agile coloratura technique and a feeling for the Italianate style... with warmth, full penetrating sound and tenderness," American soprano **Leah Crocetto** continues to astonish audiences with her moving portrayals of opera's greatest heroines. She most recently joined Austin Opera in February 2025 as a soloist for Verdi's *Requiem*. Tenor **Jonathan Burton** is engaged to sing the most demanding roles in the repertoire including Cavaradossi in *Tosca*, Calaf in *Turandot*, Dick Johnson in *Fanciulla del West*, and Radames in *Aida*. In 2023, Burton delighted Austin Opera audiences as Canio in *Pagliacci*. Mezzo-soprano **Zoie Reams**, lauded by Opera News for her "velvety mezzo," last appeared in Austin as the Beggar Woman *Sweeney Todd*. Baritone **Malcolm MacKenzie** has been heard in leading opera houses throughout the U.S. and Europe. *Opera News* recently raved that "his rich, warm, and dark tone was bolstered by a relentless legato line." He'll make his Austin Opera debut in April 2025 as Sharpless in Puccini's *Madama Butterfly*.

The Saturday evening concert will pair with the annual Season Opening Celebration, complete with a spectacular party on the H-E-B Terrace featuring cocktails and a seated pre-performance dinner, followed by an after-party complete with dancing and birthday cake.

**Rodgers & Hammerstein's *Carousel***

**Thursday, February 5, 2026—7:30 pm**

**Saturday, February 7, 2026—7:30 pm**

**Sunday, February 8, 2026—2:00 pm**

Step right up and take your seat for this enduring story of the power of love and redemption, brimming with the unforgettable songs "Soliloquy," "If I Loved You," and "You'll Never Walk Alone." Charismatic but roguish barker Billy Bigelow knows trouble all too well; it's only when he meets the resilient millworker Julie Jordan does he quickly change his tune. After struggling to provide for his soon-to-be family, Billy falls back into his past behavior, with devastating consequences.

Recognized for her unique artistic curiosity in world-class performances spanning the music of Claudio Monteverdi and Georg Frideric Handel through to Missy Mazzoli and Sir George Benjamin, Austin native **Lauren Snouffer** is celebrated as one of the most versatile and respected sopranos on the international stage. Last seen on the Austin Opera stage as Rosina in 2022's *The Barber of Seville*, Snouffer returns as Julie Jordan opposite **Mark Diamond** as Billy Bigelow. Complimented for his "virile and buzzy baritone" Diamond impressed Austin audiences in the fall of 2024 as Sgt. Raymond Shaw, the U.S. soldier and war hero caught in a web of political intrigue in Kevin Puts and Mark Campbell's *The Manchurian Candidate*, and in 2023 as the earnest, love-struck Anthony in Sondheim's *Sweeney Todd*. Grammy-winning soprano **Mela Sarajane Daily**, who wowed Austin audiences as Mrs. Lovett in *Sweeney Todd*, returns as Nettie Fowler, Julie's cousin and trusted confidant. **Ryan Everett Wood** co-stars as Enoch Snow, with **Robert Faires** as Starkeeper. **Timothy Myers** leads the Austin Opera Orchestra & Chorus. Additional casting information will be announced.

The timeless American musical is brought to life in a stunning new production created in partnership with Boston Lyric Opera (premiering April 2025) and directed by **Anne Bogart**, with choreography by **Shura Baryshnikov**, who served as movement designer for Bogart's critically acclaimed production of *The Handmaid's Tale* at Boston Lyric Opera. Regarded as an American theater icon, Bogart is a theater and opera director, writer, educator, and founder of SITI Company, whose decades-long career has influenced generations of theater practitioners.

**Puccini's *La bohème***

**Thursday, April 30, 2026—7:30 pm**

**Friday, May 1, 2026—7:30 pm**

**Saturday, May 2, 2026—7:30 pm**

**Sunday, May 3, 2026—2:00 pm**

Four young artists struggle to make ends meet while chasing their dreams. The passionate bohemians are determined their bonds of friendship will sustain them ...until love complicates *everything*.

One of the most beloved operas of all time, *La bohème* follows the lives of young people living in the Latin Quarter of Paris. The poet Rodolfo falls head over heels for seamstress Mimi, who lights up his world as soon as she enters the room, and painter Marcello is once again hypnotized by Musetta when her voice fills the cafe. As the chilly air is filled with love, all seems to be joy and laughter. But the realities of poverty and illness threaten to break their bohemian spirit. Puccini's soaring, aching melodies perfectly capture the emotion of every moment, from the exhilaration of young love at first sight to the story's heartbreaking conclusion.

Austin native **Eboni Adams** makes her company debut as director of *La bohème*. A multidisciplinary artist, she has worked alongside Celine Dion, Cirque du Soleil and the Los Angeles Opera, among others. As a choreographer and assistant director, she has collaborated with esteemed opera companies like Cincinnati Opera, Dallas Opera, and Washington National Opera.

Tenor **Joshua Blue**, who last appeared with Austin Opera as Scaramuccio in *Ariadne auf Naxos*, returns for three performances (April 30, May 1, May 2) as Rodolfo, a role for which he has earned rave reviews with Opera Philadelphia, the Glimmerglass Festival, and English National Opera. Rising tenor **Demetrious Sampson, Jr.**, sings the role of Rodolfo on Sunday, May 3. **Hailey Clark** is an award-winning operatic soprano who continues to garner praise on the international stage for her signature character portrayals, as well as her versatility in operatic and concert repertoire spanning nearly three centuries. Having made her role debut as the defiant Nedda in Austin Opera's 2023 *Pagliacci*, she returns to the Long Center as shy seamstress Mimi.

Baritone **Troy Cook**, praised for his "strong, well-rounded portrayal of Marcello" (*Opera News*), returns to Austin Opera, where he impressed as Father Palmer in the Pulitzer Prize-winning opera *Silent Night* by Kevin Puts and Mark Campbell. Making her Austin Opera debut as Marcello's love, Musetta, is American soprano **Jasmine Habersham**, a versatile and dynamic performing artist whose voice has been hailed as "exquisite" by *Broadway World* and possessing a "well-controlled, silvery tone" by *Opera Today*.

## **Opening the Sarah & Ernest Butler Performing Arts Center Spring 2026**

In October 2024, Austin Opera welcomed its community to the public phase of a capital campaign that will support the establishment of a new company headquarters, the next major step in the company's evolution as an essential partner in Austin's performing arts scene. The 16,000-square-foot programming, rehearsal, and administrative hub located at 5811 Trade Center Drive is being retrofitted to include a 185-seat performance theater and rehearsal space, teaching and practice studios, a costume shop, a conference center, outdoor event space, and the Opera's administrative offices. When it opens to the public in spring 2026, the building will enable Austin Opera to engage its community year-round with a broader range of programming, while also addressing the performing arts community's critical need for affordable performance

and rehearsal space in Austin. The company is engaged in a \$7.5 million capital campaign goal to purchase and retrofit the building. Details on a public opening of the [Sarah & Ernest Butler Performing Arts Center](#) will be shared later this year.

## **ABOUT AUSTIN OPERA**

Austin Opera leverages the multidisciplinary, collaborative, and transcendent power of opera to increase the quality of life for its diverse community by bringing together local and national artists to create outstanding, meaningful operatic performances and experiences; partnering with local schools and community groups to provide robust, responsive educational programs that inspire and engage; and leading the development of new, innovative strategies that increase the scope and impact of the operatic medium in Austin and beyond. Over a four-decade history, Austin Opera has presented over 100 opera productions with coinciding engagement programs, enriched the lives of more than 200,000 children through arts education programming, and developed robust partnerships with educational and nonprofit institutions across Central Texas. Austin Opera is a Founding Resident Company of the 2,400-seat Long Center for the Performing Arts.

Under the visionary leadership of General Director & CEO Annie Burrige and Music Director Timothy Myers, Austin Opera has reached new heights of artistic excellence, innovation, and impact in recent years. The company serves more than 25,000 community members annually through a curated season at the Long Center for the Performing Arts and other venues across Austin. The company's community engagement programs, such as *Conductor Cues*, *Opera Overtures*, and *Masterclass with the Artists*, provide unique opportunities for audiences to connect with the music, the artists, and the creative process behind each production.

In 2021, Austin Opera partnered with the Consulate General of Mexico in Austin to create *Concerts at the Consulate*, a performance series to spotlight Latinx artists and Hispanic culture held at the Consulate and led by Claudia Chapa, the company's Curator of Hispanic and Latinx Programming. The Austin Opera Residency for Latinx Creatives provides a workshopping home for the development of new Spanish language works.

Austin Opera works directly with educators in 15 local school districts and nonprofit organizations like Austin Public Library to offer inspired educational programming for students of all ages, offering much of its programs free of charge. *Opera Treasure Chest* and *Access Opera* provide 12,000 students annually with Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills-aligned curriculum and live opera.

Austin Opera offers on-demand broadcasts of *Concerts at the Consulate*, episodes of the *Tetzlaff & Tiblier Conductor Cues Series*, and *Opera Overtures* created by Scholar-In-Residence Dr. Charles Carson. Thousands of patrons tune into the Sunday Matinee Broadcast on KMFA 89.5. Austin Opera has filmed concerts for PBS and PBS affiliates including *An All-Star Concert* (2021), *Bella Noche de Música* (2023), and *Ryan Speedo Green in Concert* (2023), to bring opera into the homes of millions of people across the U.S.

Austin Opera anchors Austin's cultural ecosystem by providing employment, mentorship, and career opportunities to hundreds of artists throughout the region.

To learn more about Austin Opera, visit [austinopera.org](http://austinopera.org) or follow along on [Instagram](#), [Facebook](#), or [Twitter](#) at @austinopera.

