



VCU OPERA AND SYMPHONY PRESENT

*JULES MASSENET'S*  
**CINDERELLA**

April 26, 2024 | 7pm  
April 28, 2024 | 4pm

VCU OPERA and VCU SYMPHONY  
present

**CINDERELLA**  
by Jules Massenet

**Friday, April 26, 2024 at 7:00 pm**  
**Sunday, April 28, 2024 at 4:00 pm**

**General Director**  
Kenneth Wood

**Music Director & Conductor**  
Daniel Myssyk

**Stage Director**  
Michelle Harman-Gulick

**Vocal Coach and Chorus Master**  
Sara Jobin

**Scenic Designer**  
Mercedes Schaum

**Lighting Designer**  
Curt Blankenship

*This production has been generously underwritten by  
Emerson & Kathy Hughes*

# **CINDERELLA**

(Sung in English with English Surtitles)

French Libretto by Henri Cain

based on the fairy tale "Cendrillon" by Charles Perrault

Setting: A storybook kingdom

## **CAST**

Cinderella	Libby Mullins
Madame de la Haltière	Lauren Maho
Prince Charming	Olivia Carlton
Fairy Godmother	Maya Collins
Naomi	Liliana Dunn
Dorothy	Emily Hettervig
Pandolfe	Nathaniel Roper (VCU Class of 2023)
The King	Adagio Simon
The Dean of the Faculty	Josh Nesbit
The Superintendent of Pleasures	Edwin Dogan
The Herald	Lily Gray

## **ENSEMBLE**

Claudia Andrade  
Maddy Bailey  
Grace Coyne  
Christian Farrace  
Lily Gray  
Christine Jacob  
Margaret Kernan  
Julia Salassi  
Cole Whittington  
Julia Wolver

There will be one 15-minute intermission after Act I.

# ORCHESTRA

Flute	Violin 1
Nat Scida, principal	Arianna Greggs, concertmaster
Jalen Wise	Allison Estabrook
Erin Clark, piccolo	Maia Timm
Oboe	Sabrina Almond
Melanie Aldhizer, principal	Amya Ester
Christopher Guzman-Monroy, English Horn	Heidi Marle
Clarinet	Violin 2
Sine Anderson, principal	Tyler Miranda, principal
Raatib Rahman	Elizabeth Luu
Bassoon	Sydney Bales
Amelia Rose Sheppard, principal	Bitan Chowdhury
Matisse Body	Sara Jade Kelly
Horn	Annalise Box
Micah Honaker, principal	Derek Chiou
Luke Sardinia	Viola
Trumpet	Erik Dearhart, principal
Ninon Kirchmann, principal	Ethan Crane
Daniel Ramirez	Grace Fisherpoff
Will Hamlin	Cello
Trombone	Kevin Nguyen, principal
Stephan McCants, principal	Arowyn Almeida
Percussion	Kofi Mframa
John McCormick, timpani	Cameron Toler
Maddy Bills	Eli Coe
Skylar Novak	Olivia Dempsey
Harp	Bass
Karlee Lanum*	Kairu Mitchell, principal
	Adam Jones

\*Guest Artist

# PRODUCTION STAFF

General Director	Kenneth Wood
Music Director & Conductor	Daniel Myssyk
Stage Director	Michelle Harman-Gulick
Vocal Coach and Chorus Master	Sara Jobin
Rehearsal Pianist	David Kim
Scenic Designer	Mercedes Schaum
Lighting Designer	Curt Blankenship
Costume Coordinators	Michelle Harman-Gulick Kenneth Wood
Costume Assistants	Olivia Carlton, Liliana Dunn
Technical Director	Curt Blankenship
Supervising Stage Managers	Olivia Carlton, Olivia Dunn
Performance Stage Manager	Kenneth Wood
Prop Coordinators	Michelle Harman-Gulick, Olivia Carlton, Liliana Dunn
Publicity Designers	Tariye George-Phillips (lead), Shanice Aga, Ryan Sprowl
Costume Alterations	The Costume Shop Ivy Austin & Leslie Winn
Makeup Designer	Lillian Arning
Wig/Hair Mistress	Michelle Harman-Gulick
Running Crew	Stage Managers & Members of the Cast/Chorus
Surtitles Creator	Kenneth Wood
Surtitles Operator	Sam Robinson

## DIRECTOR'S NOTE

Everyone loves a fairytale and Cinderella is one of the most popular, dating back, perhaps, to the 7 c., in the form of Rhodopis, an Ancient Greek girl or China's, Ye Xian in 850. At least 500 hundred versions of the "rags to riches" story span the world and centuries. The idea of a "Cinderella Story" continues to live on to this day, as someone we have least expected, emerges to overcome all odds and prosper. Variations of this well known story includes "Fairy Godfathers" masquerading as philosophers or step-fathers instead of step-mothers. The version most widely recognized is Perrault's *Histoires ou contes du temps passé*, Cendrillon, later anglicized to Cinderella, with presumably the beautiful but decidedly uncomfortable glass slippers. Massenet chose this version for his opera Cendrillon. He provided lush melodies, comical character, grand processions, magical moments and happily ever afters. Movies, musicals, animation and at least six operas, to date, have been written on the Cinderella story. Disney's 1950 version helped elevate the stature of the classic story to new heights with millions of young girls wishing to find their Prince Charming. Massenet honors the cherished fairytale with the characters we love, gorgeous music and still inspires us to believe in the magic of happily ever after.

- Michelle Harman-Gulick

## BACKGROUND TO **CINDERELLA**

Plans for *CINDERELLA* were first made when Massenet and librettist Henri Cain were in London for the premiere of *La Navarraise* in 1894. The score was completed in 1896, but the premiere planned for the following year was postponed for logistical reasons and eventually occurred in May of 1899. The lavish production as well as the quality of the music ensured an immediate success resulting in 50 performances by the end of the year. The work has never entirely lapsed from the repertory, and has enjoyed frequent revivals as recently as 2022 at the Metropolitan Opera.

The *New Grove Dictionary of Opera* notes that Massenet's sense of humor and wit is more evident in this work, and the use of recurrent motifs is more discrete, while the love music "reminds us how well Massenet knew his Wagner." Another writer comments that Massenet's perfectly proportioned score moves from a scene worthy of Jean-Baptiste Lully's *Armide* (in Cinderella's monologue) through Rossinian vocalises and archaic orchestrations to ballet movements on a par with Tchaikovsky. The 18th century is also echoed in the witty pastiche of galant music, such as the trio of harp, viola d'amore and

flute that fails to rouse the melancholy and silent Prince at the opening of Act 2.

One unique compositional choice Massenet made was to write the role of the Prince for a Falcon soprano. While there are numerous examples of "pants" roles for mezzo-sopranos, there are comparatively few for sopranos. Massenet's decision likely stems from the French affinity for the voice type. A Falcon soprano is an intermediate voice type between soprano and mezzo-soprano, but with a darker colored dramaticism. There is no authority for transposing this role for a tenor. It is contrasted in *Cinderella*'s other scenes with the coloratura writing for the Fairy Godmother, which is characterized by trills and arpeggios.

*Adapted in part from Oxford Music Online and Wikipedia.*

## **SYNOPSIS**

*A storybook kingdom.* Pandolfe, a country gentleman, has married Madame de la Haltière, an imperious countess. She and her daughters, Naomi and Dorothy, bully Pandolfe's daughter from his first marriage—known as Cinderella.

### **ACT I**

The household prepares for a ball to be given at the royal court that evening. Pandolfe bemoans his lot: married to a nagging wife who ill-treats his daughter. Madame de la Haltière enters and instructs her daughters on how to behave at the ball. She refuses to let Cinderella attend the festivities or to let her father say goodbye to her. After the family has left, Cinderella dreams of the ball, before falling asleep. Cinderella's fairy godmother appears and conjures her a coach, horses, a beautiful gown, and glass slippers. She tells Cinderella that she can go to the ball but must leave before midnight and that the glass slippers will prevent Cinderella's family from recognizing her.

### **ACT II**

Prince Charming is in a melancholy mood. The king orders his son to find a wife at tonight's ball. Later, at the ball, several princesses dance for the prince. An unknown beauty, Cinderella in all her finery, enters the room to general surprise. The whole court—except Madame de la Haltière and her daughters—are charmed by the stranger, and the prince immediately falls in love with her. Left alone with Cinderella, he tells her of his feelings and begs her to tell him her name, but she says she cannot. Cinderella is equally taken with the prince, but at the first

stroke of midnight, she hurries away, remembering the fairy godmother's words

## ACT III

Cinderella remembers her frightening journey home from the royal palace and how she lost one of her glass slippers as she left the ball. Madame and her daughters enter, abusing Pandolfe. Madame then describes to Cinderella the "unknown stranger" who appeared at the king's ball, telling her that the prince spoke contemptuously of the girl and that the court regarded her with disdain. Cinderella is crushed. When Pandolfe tells his wife to be quiet, she turns on him again, but he has finally had enough and sends Madame, Naomi, and Dorothy out of the room. He suggests to Cinderella that they leave town the next day and return to his country estate.

## ACT IV

Madame, Naomi, and Dorothy enter, excited that the king has summoned maidens from all over the land in the hope that one of them is the unknown beauty whom the prince met at the ball. Madame is sure that the prince must mean one of her daughters and is determined to go to the palace. A herald announces that the prince is insisting that each woman who appears at court must try on the glass slipper left behind by the unknown beauty, for it will only fit perfectly upon her foot. Cinderella resolves to go to the palace as well.

The prince is desperately searching for his beloved among the young women summoned to the palace. Having not found her, he despairs, until Cinderella arrives, aided by the fairy godmother. The prince immediately recognizes her, and the pair declare their love to the court. Pandolfe and the rest of Cinderella's family express their surprise and everyone rejoices that love has triumphed.

—adapted from *The Metropolitan Opera*

## Tremendous Thanks to our Donors

*Emerson and Kathy Hughes*

*Dr. Velimir Luketic*

*Dr. Sonia Vlahcevic*

*Robert E. Knox*

*Linda Johnston*

*Professor Cynthia Donnell*

*Anonymous*

## **Special Thanks To**

Dr. James Wiznerowicz, VCUArts Associate Dean for Academic Affairs/ Chair of VCU Music; Jessica Casey; Linda Johnston; Melanie Day; Ryan Sprowl; VCU Voice Faculty

## **We Invite Your Support**

If you have an interest in assisting VCU Opera with student scholarship funding, sponsoring a Guest Artist for Masterclasses/ Workshops, or offering financial assistance for costumes and scenic production, we would welcome your much-needed support! Please contact Linda Johnston, Administrative Director for the Department of Music at 804.827.4542

## **ABOUT VCU OPERA**

Founded in 1950 by L. Wayne Batty and cultivated by Melanie Kohn Day from 1983 until her retirement last year, VCU Opera is now directed by Dr. Kenneth Wood, who has been a member of the production team since 2008. Between November 2011 and November 2015, VCU Opera was the recipient of four national awards from the NOA-National Opera Association: 2nd Place for Humperdinck's HANSEL & GRETEL, 1st Place for Menotti's THE OLD MAID & THE THIEF, 1st Place for Gilbert & Sullivan's THE GONDOLIERS, as well as 3rd place in the opera scenes competition for the opening duet from Act IV of Puccini's LA BOHÈME.

VCU Opera has the longest-running tradition of annual full-scale productions in the state of Virginia and is proud of its outstanding reputation as an opera training program. Each year there is a fully-staged production of opera scenes and arias as well as a full-scale production featuring scenery and costumes and presented in collaboration with the VCU Symphony.

VCU Opera's mission is to cast undergraduate students in appropriate roles from the mainstream repertoire. We specialize in traditionally styled productions utilizing where possible our extensive collection of costumes, wigs and props.

With a significant emphasis on the holistic training of the complete "singer-actor," VCU Opera has prepared numerous students for scholarships to the nation's finest conservatories and university graduate programs, as well as for prestigious summer festivals in the USA and abroad and for Resident Artist positions with regional opera companies throughout the USA. Many VCU Opera alumni have gone on to enjoy highly successful careers performing in the world's greatest opera houses.