

Giants in the Earth: The Norwegians in the Dakota Territory

April 26, 2025 - 7:30pm & April 27, 2025 - 2:30pm

Program

Saturday, April 26, 2025 at 7:30pm
 Sunday, April 27, 2025 at 2:30pm
 Mary W. Sommervold Hall, Washington Pavilion

Opera in three acts in English
 Music By Douglas Moore
 Libretto by Arnold Sundgaard, based on the novel by Ole Edvart Rølvaag
 First performed on March 28, 1951 by the Columbia Opera Workshop

South Dakota Symphony Orchestra
 Delta David Gier, *conductor*
 South Dakota Symphony Orchestra Chorus
 Dr. Timothy J. Campbell, *chorus director*
 Robert Neu, *stage director*

Michael J. Hawk, Baritone (Per Hansa)
 Meredith Lustig, Soprano (Beret Hansa)
 Jude Lundeby, (Ola Hansa)
 Lucille Lundeby, (Anna Hansa)
 Andrew Gilstrap, Bass-Baritone (Hans Olsa)
 Sarah Nordin, Mezzo-Soprano (Sorrine Olsa)
 Dylan Morrongiello, Tenor (Syvert Tonsenten)
 Megan Koch, Soprano (Kjersti Tonsenten)
 Benjamin Dutcher, Tenor (Henry Solum)
 Abby Brodnick, Soprano (Dagmar)
 Joshua Jeremiah, Bass (Preacher)
 Steve Pence, Bass (O'Hara)
 Peter Tuff, Pantomime (Sullivan)

Douglas Moore (1893 - 1969)

Act I

The crest of a low hill, early morning in the spring.

Act II

Interior of the sod hut of Per Hansa, a June afternoon.

INTERMISSION

Act III - Scene I

Outside the hut. A Sunday morning in September.

Act III - Scene II

Interior of the hut. Late at night in February.

**GIANTS
IN THE EARTH**

O.E. RÖLVAAG



HARPER & BROTHERS PUBLISHERS

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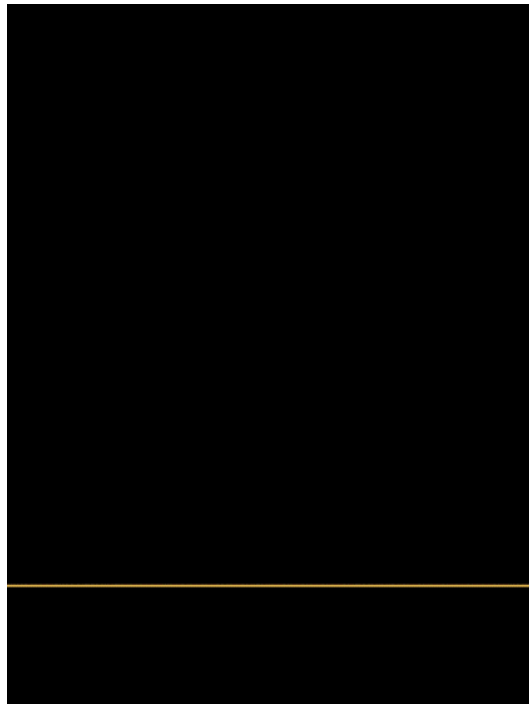
The revival of *Giants in the Earth* is made possible through the generous support of Dean and Rosemarie Buntrock, whose contribution has been invaluable in making this vision a reality.

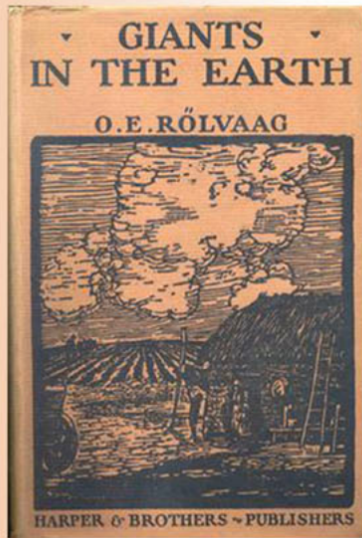
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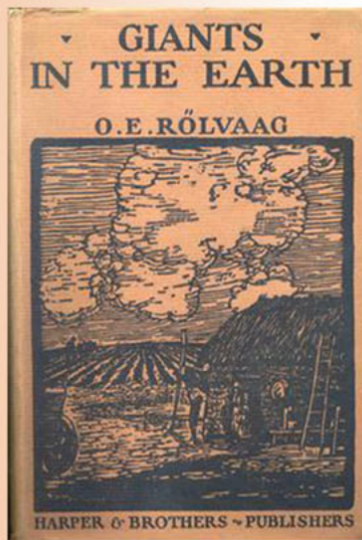
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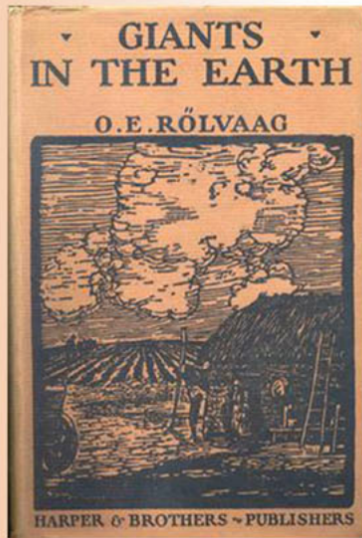
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Community Support

The *Giants in the Earth* production has had a profound and far-reaching impact on our community and region. From its inception, individuals and organizations across South Dakota and beyond have shown immense support and enthusiasm. The South Dakota Symphony Orchestra extends its heartfelt thanks to these partners who have championed *Giants in the Earth*, leveraging their resources to help bring this important work back to life and unite our community.

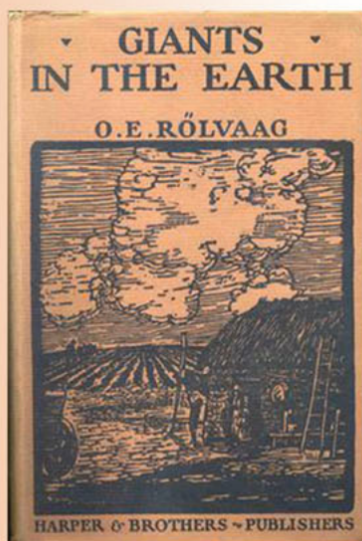


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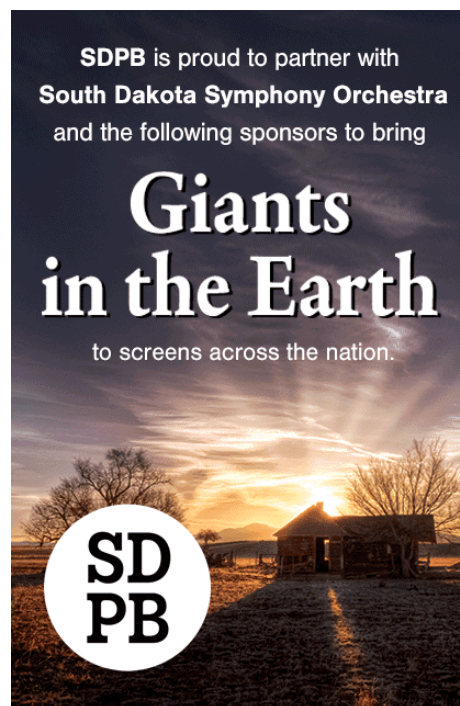
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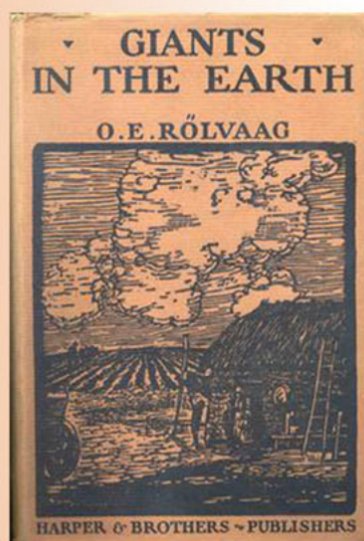
Program Notes

Giants in the Earth

A note from Music Director Delta David Gier:

Welcome to the revival performances of Douglas Moore's opera *Giants in the Earth*. By attending this performance you are joining us in making history by bringing this opera back to life.

In our planning, the SDSO has grappled with a certain cultural dissonance. How can we be the orchestra which developed the Lakota Music Project - which addresses racial tension in our state through the sharing of music in order to facilitate cross-cultural understanding - but also present an opera about Norwegian immigrants coming and settling on land that was



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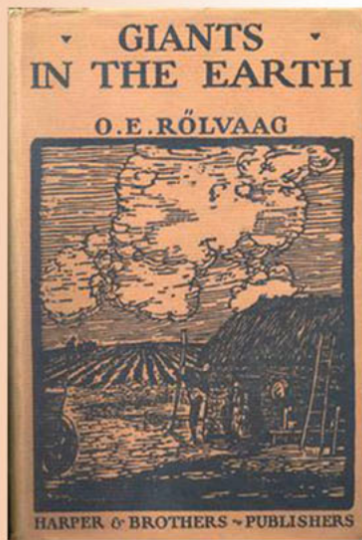
once occupied by Dakota people? Through many discussions over the course of a year with partners both Native and non-Native, we came to peace with the fact that these are two very important pieces of our history, and that history is nuanced as well as complicated. The SDSO remains committed to addressing these issues honestly and diligently, striving towards the goal of inspiring the best in all of us through music.

PROGRAM NOTES

*Written by Jerry McBride
Head Librarian, Emeritus, Stanford University Music Library*

Background

Arnold Sundgaard (1909 - 2006), Broadway lyricist and author, recommended *Giants in the Earth*, by O. E. Rølvaag (1876 - 1931) to Douglas Moore as the basis for an opera libretto in 1948. Moore received the Rome Prize for composition at the American Academy in 1949, necessitating a collaboration by correspondence - a challenging working arrangement. Moore finished in 1950. He wanted a professional performance in New York at the City Center Opera or on Broadway, but the Columbia University Opera Workshop gave the premiere with professional singers in the principal roles in 1951. Shortly thereafter, the opera was awarded the Pulitzer Prize in Music.



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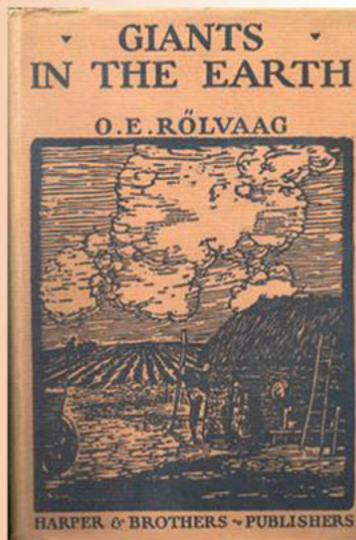


Images courtesy of Columbia University Libraries, Rare Book & Manuscript Library

Copyright issues delayed the opera's publication for three years. By then, interest in the opera had waned, but it was revised for publication in 1963, which is the version used in this production. The only fully staged production since the premiere was by the University of North Dakota in 1974. Although many consider the *Ballad of Baby Doe* (1956) to be his finest opera, Moore felt that *Giants in the Earth* contained some of his best music.

The Opera

The drama centers on the tension between the deep love of Beret and Per Hansa and Beret's inability to adjust to harsh, lonely, pioneer life on Dakota's uninhabited, austere, bleak plains, leading her to insanity. The libretto differs from the novel in two crucial scenes. In the novel, Beret interrupts the baptism of their son, and at the end, Per and Beret's friend Hans Olsa is dying. In the opera, Beret *prevents* the baptism, and it is their unbaptized, child, Peder, whose immortal soul is



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in peril unless Per can bring back the preacher before the child's death. Both changes heighten the drama.

Beret's father's ornate chest from Norway is central to the plot and is symbolic of her attachment to family, friends, and her life in Norway with spiritual overtones. It comforts her when Per refuses to return to Norway, when her son presents a bone from a Native American gravesite, and during the plague of locusts. It serves as an altar for a wedding and a baptism. It reveals "Per's "sin" of removing the land-claim stakes hidden from her, which she finds there. It contains a prized silver coffee pot and a cross that she gives Per to protect him as he goes into the blizzard and to his death.

Moore's compositional style was fully mature when he started *Giants in the Earth*. He composed vocal music by starting with the text, which he would repeat to himself, letting the rhythm and inflection of the words suggest the melodic line. This accounts for the fluidity of the vocal lines and easily, understandable text. *Giants in the Earth* is a prime example of this method of composition, which results in little thematic repetition and short arias. These ariosos are expertly woven into the flow of a continuous melodic line similar to Debussy's *Pelléas et Mélisande*.

For casting, Moore assigns the lower ranges to strong characters and weaker characters to the high voices. Beret (soprano) and Per (baritone) are good examples of this dichotomy. The music is tonal except to evoke terror or tragedy, such as the final, powerfully unresolved chord at the conclusion when Beret and the audience realize she has caused Per to freeze to death in the blizzard, emphasizing the tension that steadily builds throughout.

Synopsis

Act 1

The orchestral opening establishes a sense of foreboding that returns in the last act. The Hansa family meets Hans, Kjersti, Syvert, Sorrine, and Henry, their Norwegian friends on the prairie, and they break into the Norwegian national anthem, "Ja, vi elsker ditto Landet" ("Yes, We Love This Country"). Henry looks for his girlfriend and is heartbroken that she feared the long trip because she has not arrived.

Beret is intensely homesick and pleads with Per to return, but he is determined to forge a new life in this virgin land.

However, Per and Hans excitedly sing a work song. Beret sits beside her father's chest in despair. Their son Ola then presents a bone from an Indian gravesite, horrifying Beret and foreshadowing the death that will be exacted from the family.

Act 2

The women have coffee while the men travel to town. Beret pulls her silver coffee pot from the chest, recalling when she and Per first met. She then discovers land-claim stakes hidden in the chest. The three women continue socializing in a trio in the form of a round. Soon, O'Hara and Sullivan appear looking for their land-claim stakes they believe should be on Hans's land. The Irishmen will return later. Beret checks the stakes in the chest and sees the name O'Hara. The Norwegian men enter and sing a waltz-time tune about the presents they bought in town. The final surprise is Henry and his new girlfriend, Dagmar, who are not yet married. The women insist on getting the preacher quickly. Alone, Beret confronts Per about the stakes. As Per explains it to her, the Irishmen return, fighting with Hans and Per, who force them off the land.



Images courtesy of Columbia University Libraries, Rare Book & Manuscript Library

After the fight, Per leaves his gift for Beret - a cradle for their soon-to-be-born child, which broke during his trip home. Nonetheless, Beret feels her husband is wrong, and the broken cradle is another bad omen.

Act 3. Scene 1

The wedding takes place with the chest as the altar and is followed by dancing that is stopped by the preacher. The group sings a hymn for the baptism of Per and Beret's child, but she interrupts, objecting to the name Peder Victorious as evil. While Per tries to calm her, she faints.



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Locusts arrive, which Beret interprets as divine retribution for this evil. While the settlers battle to save the crops, Beret is terrified. As the plague surges, she moves toward the chest and sinks to her knees, clutching it as Per rushes to help her.

Act 3. Scene 2

The men are drinking in Per's hut during a blizzard. Beret's friend Sorrine commands them to stop because Peder is dying in the other room, so the men leave to sleep. Beret enters, distraught, and dresses to find the preacher. Per stops her, agrees to get the preacher, and sings about their love. She gives Per a cross from the chest as he leaves the hut, praying for the salvation of Peder and the safety of Per. Her prayer restores her to sanity, but it is too late. She realizes she has sent Per into the storm to his death.

GIANTS IN THE EARTH

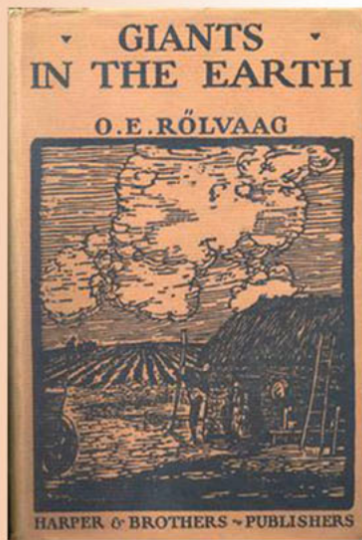
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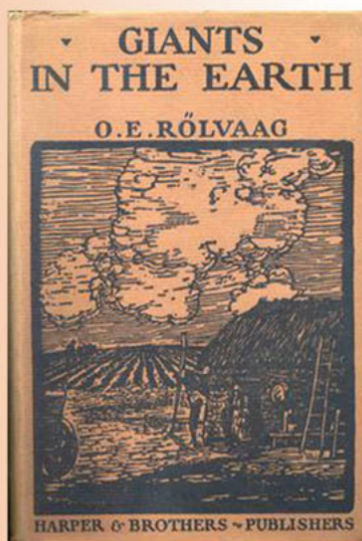
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Singers and Actors

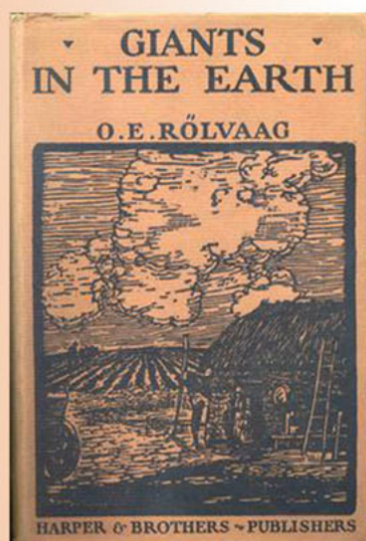


Michael J. Hawk

Per Hansa

Baritone Michael J. Hawk's voice has been described as "distinguished," "commanding," and "stentorian." For the past two seasons, Hawk has been part of the inaugural Resident Artist program with Seattle Opera, where his current assignments include Silvio in *Pagliacci*, Der Sprecher in *Die Zauberflöte* and cover of Scarpia in *Tosca*. Also this season, Hawk will make his South Dakota Symphony Orchestra debut as Per Hansa Douglas Moore's *Giants in the Earth* and will sing Bobinet in *La Vie Parisienne* and cover Steven Kodaly in *She Loves Me* with Opera Saratoga.

Last season with Seattle Opera, Hawk covered Donner in *Das Rheingold* and Melisso in *Alcina*, and sang Fiorello and covered Figaro in *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, as well as presenting a recital



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and appearing on the 60th Anniversary Concert & Gala. He also joined Caramoor as the baritone soloist for Eros & Co and made his Opera Saratoga debut singing Guglielmo in *Così fan tutte* and Big Jule in *Guys and Dolls*.

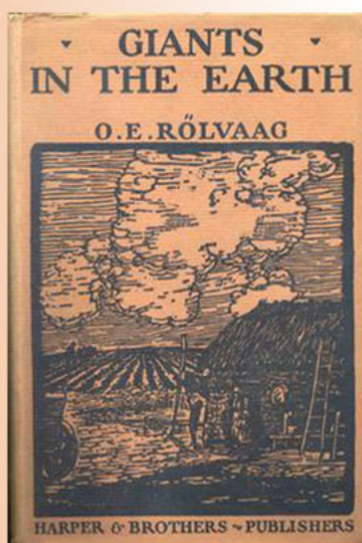
In recent seasons, he sang Papageno in *The Magic Flute* with the Buffalo Philharmonic and returned to Hillman Opera, his alma mater, to sing Dr. Buchanan in Lee Hoiby's *Summer and Smoke*. With Santa Fe Opera, he sang Demetrius in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Rene Gallimard in a workshop of *M. Butterfly* with ALT, and the Officer/Croupier/Junkman in *Candide*, and covered Oppenheimer in *Doctor Atomic*. He has sung Ford in *Falstaff*-opposite Sir Bryn Terfel - and the title role in *Don Giovanni* (Aspen Opera Theatre), Escamillo in *Carmen* (Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra), Der fünfte Richter in the U. S. premiere of Korngold's *Das Wunder der Heliane* (Bard Summerscape), and the Cobbler in *The Juniper Tree* (Wolf Trap Opera.)

With Los Angeles Opera, he has sung the roles of Pontius Pilate in *Las tres mujeres de Jersalén* and Ophémon in Bologne's *L'amant Anonyme*, Schaunard in *La bohème*, Der Sprecher in *Die Zauberflöte*, Sir Gualtiero Raleigh in *Roberto Devereux*, and Ebro/Furore/Caronte in *La morte d'Orfeo* and covered Dandini in *La Cenerentola* and wolfram in *Tannhäuser*.

In his first season with the company in 2018-2019, Hawk sang the title role in the world premiere of Mollicone's *Moses* with Maestro James Conlon, Caireles in *El gato montés*, and Prince Arjuna in *Satyagraha*.

Hawk is an accomplished concert artist. He recently presented two recitals, one featuring the music of Johnathan Dove with pianist Sandra Leary at the Rosch Recital Hall, and the other program of art song and Broadway classics with pianist MiKyung Kim at the Fredonia Opera House. In 2022, he was the bass soloist in the St. Matthew Passion, a co-production with the Hamburg Ballet, and sang alongside Susan Graham in a *Liederabend* at Los Angeles Opera. He has also debuted with the American Symphony Orchestra as the baritone soloist in Zemlinsky's *Lyrische Symphonie*. With the Chautauqua Institution, he has sung the baritone solo in Fauré's *Requiem* and presented a *Swedish Language Recital*.

Hawk is a recent graduate of the Los Angeles Opera's Domingo-Colburn-Stein Young Artist Program. In 2018, he was a finalist in Houston Grand Opera's Concert of Arias, and in the summer of 2018, he joined the Apprentice Singer Program at Santa Fe Opera.



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Meredith Lustig

Beret Hansa

Praised by the New York Times as "luminous", Lustig has enjoyed a diverse career in opera, musical theater, and television. She has headlined with symphonies across the United States, Canada, Japan, and China, and has collaborated with many esteemed conductors including Marin Alsop, Yannick Nezet-Seguin, George Manahan, and Ann Manson. She is a proud Juilliard alumna and chair of the voice department at Circle In The Square Theatre School.



Andrew Gilstrap

Hansa Olsa

With his "dark, powerful bass-baritone" (Traunsteiner Tagblatt) and "perfect [comedic] timing" (Washington Classical Review), Andrew Gilstrap has begun to establish himself as a versatile artist known for musical sophistication and acting ability. In the 2024-25 season, Gilstrap joined Wolf Trap Opera singing Horstmayer in *Silent Night*, made his Arizona Opera debuts with Arizona Opera and Sarasota Opera in the role of Bartolo in *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, and returned to Arizona Opera to cover Colline and Benoit/Alcindoro in *La bohème*.

In concert this season, he makes his Carnegie Hall debut singing as the bass soloist in Vivaldi's *Magnificat* with MidAmerica productions. He also sang as the bass soloist in the *Messiah* with Chattanooga Symphony, performed a recital with Steve Blier entitled *Te Amo, a recital of Spanish-language love songs*, and sang as the bass soloist in Mozart's *Requiem* with the Carolina Philharmonic. Recent concert credits include his Chattanooga Symphony and Opera debut in Handel's

Messiah, and joining Georgia Tech Symphony Orchestra to sing Brahms' *Ein deutsches Requiem*.

In 2023-2024, Gilstrap made returns to Wolf Trap Opera to sing Leporello in *Don Giovanni*, Minnesota Opera to cover roles in *Edward Tulane*, and Atlanta Opera to sing as a soloist in *Frankenstein* and the role of Horace Derwent in *The Shining*. Since his Atlanta Opera debut as the Official Registrar in *Madama Butterfly* in 2022, he has sung Starveling in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, participated in a world premiere of Marcus Norris and Adamma Ebo's *Forsyth County is Flooding*, and made a role debut as Masetto in *Don Giovanni*.

During his time as a member of the Opernstudio at the Bayerische Staatsoper in Munich, Gilstrap sang Antonio in *Le nozze di Figaro*, two runs in the role of Il padre di Nencio in *L'infedeltà delusá*, multiple roles in *The Nose*, Deuxième Sentinelle in *Les Troyens*, and Customs Officer in *La bohème*.

Other engagements include Gregorio in *Roméo et Juliette*, Usciere in *Rigoletto*, and the Goldsmith in *The Juniper Tree* (Wolf Trap Opera), Souring in *Queen of Spades*, cover of the title role in *Sweeney Todd*, and cover of Doktor in *Wozzeck* (Des Moines Metro Opera), Der Pfleger in *Elektra*, Basilio in *Il barbiere di Siviglia*, and Immigration Officer in *Flight* (Minnesota Opera), Zuniga in *Le Tragédie de Carmen* (Opera in the Heights), a program of Mexican Baroque Christmas songs (Mercury Chamber Orchestra), The Beast in *Beauty and the Beast* (College Light Opera Company), and the Sergeant of Police in *Pirates of Penzance* (Ohio Light Opera).

Gilstrap was a Filene Artist with Wolf Trap Opera for two consecutive years, and was a Studio Artist in 2017 and 2018. He has been an Ensemble Artist and an apprentice Artist with Des Moines Metro Opera, and participated in the resident artist program at Minnesota Opera. Gilstrap holds a Bachelor of Music and a Master of Music from the University of Houston.



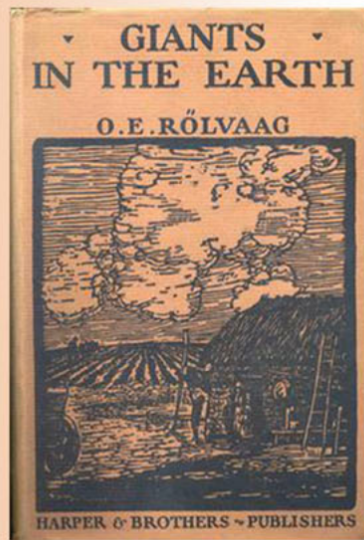
Sarah Nordin

Sorrine Olsa



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Praised by Opera News for the "clear beauty" of her voice and her "spot-on comic timing," mezzo-soprano Sarah Nordin brings an exquisite blend of vocal artistry and strong dramatic instincts to a broad range of repertoire. In the 2024-2025 season, Nordin brings her celebrated Rosina in *Il barbiere di Siviglia* to First Coast Opera, debuts with South Dakota Symphony Orchestra as Sorrine Olsa in the rarely performed opera *Giants in the Earth* by Douglas Moore, returns to St. Petersburg Opera as Countess Charlotte in *A Little Night Music*, and debuts with Utah Festival Opera as General Cartwright in *Guys and Dolls*/Mrs. Harcourt in *Anything Goes*.

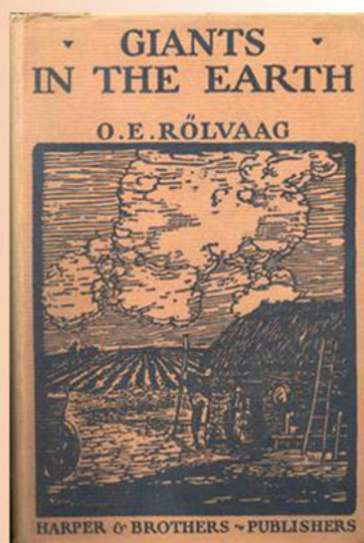
Highlights of the 2023-2024 season included joining Orlando Sings for Bach's *B Minor Mass*, Great Falls Symphony for Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, and First Coast Opera as Ruth in *Pirates of Penzance*.

Known for her interpretations of Rossini and Mozart, Nordin has received accolades for possessing "a voice that fits Mozart like a glove." She has been featured in recent seasons as Rosina in *Il barbiere di Siviglia* with Opera Orlando and Gulf Coast Symphony as well as the title role in *La Cenerentola* with Geneva Light Opera. Likewise, her Cherubino and Marcellina in *Le Nozze di Figaro*, Zerlina and Elvira in *Don Giovanni*, Isabella in *L'Italiana in Algeri* and Dorabella in *Così fan tutte* have charmed audiences at Opera Tampa, Long Island Lyric Opera, Opera Orlando, Gulf Shore Opera, St. Petersburg Opera, Landlocked Opera, Taconic Opera and Winter Opera of St. Louis.

Additionally, Nordin has received great acclaim for her numerous performances in the title role of *Carmen*, most recently with Bel Cantanti Opera, the Missouri Symphony and Gulfshore Opera. Opera News praised her performance stating, "Sarah Nordin demonstrated in this role that her voice can hold its own with the big guns. Its clear beauty resounded effortlessly. She brought the true spirit of Carmen to the stage."

Other notable roles include Maddalena in *Rigoletto*, Charlotte in *Werther*, Nicklausse in *Tales of Hoffmann*, Suzuki in *Madama Butterfly*, Komponist in *Ariadne auf Naxos* and Orlofsky in *Die Fledermaus* in multiple venues, including First Coast Opera, Poera Hunstville and Hubbard Hall Opera Theatre.

New works and musicals comprise a significant part of Nordin's career. Most notably, she premiered the role of Mary Eden Thompson in *The Circuit Rider's Wife*, which included a three-year tour and original cast recording, Lydia in *Penelope Ann's Revenge* (a sequel to Arthur Sullivan's *Cox and Box*), The Conductress in the world premiere of *Un bocca al lupo*, and she premiered the role of Annie Jump Cannon in *Galaxies in her Eyes*. Her favorite classic musical theater roles performed are



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Nellie in *South Pacific*, Maria in *Sound of Music*, Sandy in *Grease*, and Tzeitel in *Fiddler on the Roof*. Nordin has been a Young Artist with Opera Theatre of St. Louis, Central City Opera and Opera North, a Professional Artist in Residence with Gulf Shore Opera and spent two years as a member of the Studio Artist Programs at both Orlando Opera and Knoxville Opera. A Master of Music graduate from the University of Tennessee, Nordin trained under Carrol Freeman and continues her vocal studies with Victoria Livengood. Additionally, she is an award-winning ballroom dancer and an accomplished French horn player.

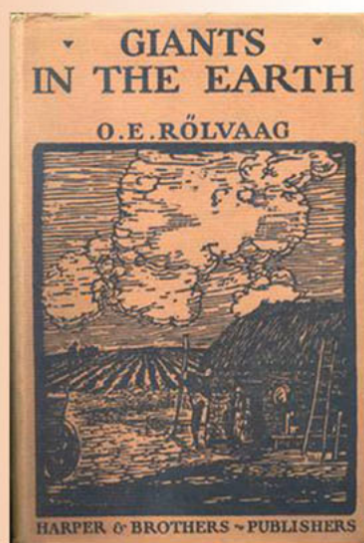


Dylan Morrongiello

Syvert Tonsenten

Dylan Anthony Morrongiello is known for his "over-the-top-committed" portrayals and "stentorian" tenor (*Words and Music, Boston Classical Review*). Recent season engagements include a return to the Metropolitan Opera as the Second Priest in *The Magic Flute*, and in the current season he will cover Don Pizarro in Chicago Opera Theatre's *Leonora*, and will appear as Goro in *Madama Butterfly* with Ameila Island Opera and as Syvert Tonsenten in *Giants in the Earth* with the South Dakota Symphony Orchestra. This summer, Morrongiello will join the Ravinia Festival as a Ravinia-Steans vocal fellow, and he will make his Chicago Opera Theatre debut singing Lottery Agent/Baron Laur in Kurt Weill's *Der Silbersee* in early 2026.

Morrongiello made his Metropolitan Opera debut as the Dean in *Cinderella*, and has since appeared as the Second Priest in the holiday production of *The Magic Flute* and as Player 2 in Brett Dean's *Hamlet*, in addition to covering the roles of Doc Curzio and Don Basilio in *Le nozze di Figaro* and Sellem in *The Rake's Progress*. A recent company debut was with Arizona Opera as Monostatos in *Die Zauberflöte*, a role he has covered at both the Lyric Opera of Chicago. Other role highlights include Beppe in *Pagliacci*, St. Brioche in *The Merry Widow* and Borsa in *Rigoletto* (St. Petersburg Opera), singing Goro in *Madama Butterfly* and covering Red Whiskers in *Billy Budd* (Central City Opera), and singing Don Basilio/Curzio in *Le nozze di Figaro* (Metropolitan Opera, Florida Grand Opera, Opera Saratoga).



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A skilled musician and sought after for new works, Morrongiello premiered the role of Monk in *Monkey: A Kung Fu Puppet Parable* with the White Snake Projects. Reviews described his performance as "aptly stentorian" with "gravitas and charisma" (*Boston Musical Intelligencer*). With Opera Las Vegas, he made his company debut as Miles Zegner in *Missy Mazzoli* and Royce Vavrek's *Proving Up* and returned as Doyle in *A Capacity for Evil*. He also sang the role of Mr. Ford in *Frida* with Florida Grand Opera, and created the role of The Voice He in Franklin Piland's *Rose Made Man*, and opera focusing on transgender issues, in collaboration with the Cohen New Works Festival at the University of Texas at Austin School of Theatre and Dance. Also while at the University of Texas at Austin, Morrongiello appeared in the orchestral premiere of David Hanlon's *Past the Checkpoints*, a piece telling the stories of undocumented immigrants in the Rio Grande Valley.

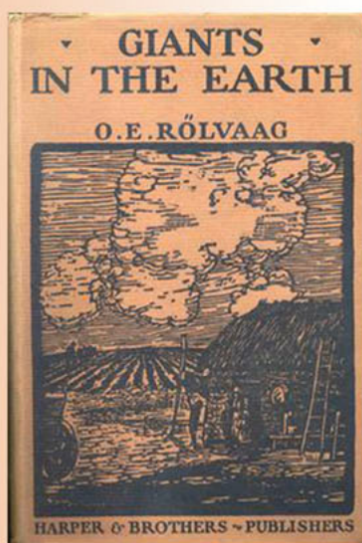
In concert this past season, Morrongiello sang with the Cantata Singers and New England Philharmonic as the tenor soloist in Sandstrom's setting of *Messiah*. Past concert engagements include the tenor soloist in Bach's *St. John Passion* and *Magnificat* with the Bach Society Houston, Evangelist in Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* with the Rice University Chorale under the direction of Thomas I. Jaber, and a coproduction with Da Camera of Houston and the Moody Center for the Arts of Sarah Rothenberg's multimedia production "A Proust Sonata."

Morrongiello has leant his renderings of a varied body of song repertoire throughout his career. In his upcoming recital with Brooklyn Art Song Society, he will perform selected Franz Schubert songs with texts by Goethe, and selected songs of Hugo Wolf's *Goethe-Lieder*. Past recitals with Brooklyn Art Song Society have included selections from Wolf's *Italienisches Liederbuch*, and works by Iain Bell and Ian Venables. This past season, he returned to Cincinnati Song Initiative for a residency at the Hartt School featuring the music of Lori Laitman including "Becoming a Redwood". He first appeared with the company performing songs of John Musto at Ithaca College. Morrongiello also performed a program celebrating the songs an poetry of California, featuring poet laureate and former NEA chairman Dana Gioia, at the SongFest Institute.

He appeared with The Glimmerglass Festival as a young artist for two seasons, singing the Schoolmaster/the Mosquito in *The Cunning Little Vixen*, covering Kronprinz in Kevin Puts' *Silent Night*, and covering Edmondo in Donizetti's *L'assedio di Calais*. During his time there, he made his Glimmerglass debut as Ali Hakim in *Oklahoma!* and sang in numerous concert and ancillary events, including a special appearance with Stephen Schwartz. Other credits include Il Podestà in Mozart's *La finta giardiniera* and the Jazz Trio in Leonard Bernstein's *Trouble in*

Tahiti with the Shepherd School Opera.

Morrongiello is a past winner of the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions Houston district, and an Encouragement Award winner in the Gulf Coast Region. He holds a Master of Voice from the Shepherd School of Music at Rice University in Houston, Texas, where he was a recipient of the Elva Kalb Dumas Prize in Music, and holds a Bachelors from the university of Texas at Austin Butler School of Music.



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Megan Koch

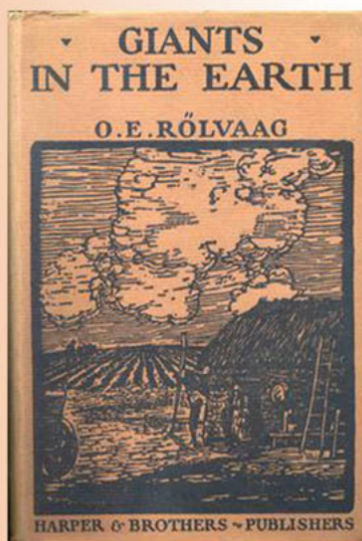
Kjersti Tonsenten

Emerging midwestern soprano Megan Koch is a dynamic performer, currently based in Dallas. She recently made her role debut as Amy in Mark Adamo's *Little Women* with Fort Worth Opera in 2014. In 2023, she was the featured soloist with the Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra and the Illinois Symphony Orchestra on their respective annual holiday pops concerts. Koch made her debuts as Violetta in *La traviata* in 2023 and Berta in *Il barbiere di Siviglia* in 2022 with Shreveport Opera. A Fort Worth Opera Resident Artist in the 2020-2022 seasons, she made her mainstage debut as Annina in *La traviata*, was responsible for the role of Ana Maria in the world premiere of *Zorro*, and put on an indoor/outdoor production of "Manon on the Move," based on the Massenet. Koch won the Classical Singer Competition in 2022 and appeared with Fort Worth Symphony Orchestra in "America Strong", which was broadcasted July 4, 202 on ABC.



Benjamin Dutcher

Henry Solum

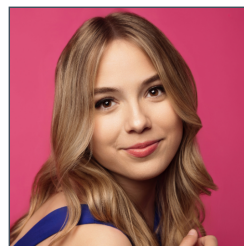


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Tenor Benjamin Dutcher has been seen on operatic and theatrical stages across the country. A Twin Cities based singer, actor, and educator, his repertoire covers a vast range of both opera and musical theater, and includes on-camera appearances for History Channel and PBS. Benjamin is known for his "plaintive tenor" being the "soul of the production". His work is praised as "Deeply involving...[Benjamin] completely engages the emotions of the audience."

Previous engagements include work with Theater Latté Da, Asolo Repertory Theater, Artistry Theater, Trademark Theater, Six Points Theater, History Theatre, Out of the Box Opera, Skylark Opera, Mill City Summer Opera, St. Croix Valley Opera, and Minnesota Opera. Recently, he made his straight play debut in the critically acclaimed "Ironbound" with Frank Theatre, and starred as Macheath in Opera Columbus's "The Threepenny Opera." Benjamin was a part of the Drama Desk Award-winning Cast of "All is Calm: The Christmas Truce of 1914" presented Off-Broadway at the Sheen Center in NYC, and especially loves being a dad.

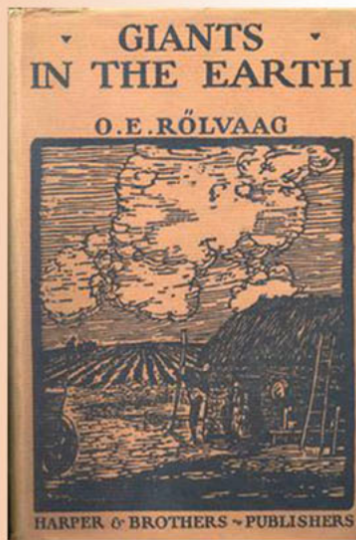


Abby Brodnick

Dagmar

"Beautiful and ethereal" (*Rutland Herald*) coloratura soprano Abby Brodnick captivates audiences all over the country with her "personable and engagin" stage presence (*South Florida Classical Review*). Brodnick specializes in numerous genres of vocal music, including opera and operetta, Baroque and oratorio, musical theater, and contemporary music. Brodnick has recently been a young artist at Opera North, Savannah Voice Festival, and Miami Music Festival. A few favorite operatic performances include *Orphée ux Enfers* (Eurydice), *Pirates of Penzance* (Mabel), *Dido and Aeneas* (Belinda), and *Dialogues des Carmelites* (Soeur Constance).

Recent accolades include First Prize of the Camille Coloratura Awards (Student Division) in October 2023 and the Outstanding Graduate Performer Award of the Cali School of Music in May 2024. Brodnick received her Master of Music at Montclair State



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University's Cali School of Music in the studio of Beth Roberts, and received her Bachelor of Music from DePauw University with a minor in musical theater.

Brodnick's notable oratorio and concert work includes the soprano solos of Handel's *Messiah* and Orff's *Carmina Burana*, and she frequently performs solo and chamber recital programs such as with the Four Seasons of Music, Montclair Music Club, Opera at Florham, and the New York Composer's Circle.

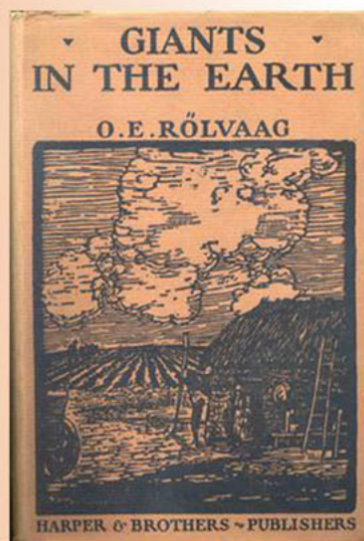


Joshua Jeremiah

Preacher

Hailed as "rich-voiced" (*The New York Times*) and praised for his "warmly appealing, burnished baritone" (*Opera Today*), Joshua Jeremiah continues to bring his celebrated performances to theaters throughout the United States. Most recently he returned to Virginia Opera as Alberich in *Siegfried*, appeared as a soloist with the Virginia Symphony for Orff's *Carmina Burana*, joined Toledo Opera for his role debut as Tateh in *Ragtime*, and appeared in a concert of Puccini highlights with Portland Opera. Additional recent engagements include his debut with Seattle Opera as Steersman in *Tristan und Isolde*, Melchoir in *Amahl and the Night Visitors* with On Site Opera, Senator McCarthy/others in *Fellow Travelers* with Virginia Opera, a reprise of his celebrated Schicchi in *Gianni Schicchi* with Hawaii Opera Theater, and the title role in *Macbeth* with Resonance Works. The 2024-2025 season brings an exciting world premiere with Beth Morrison Projects singing the role of Niles in *Sensorium Ex*, as well as a workshop of the new work *The Sheltering Tree* with Hawaii Opera Theatre and his return to Dallas Symphony covering Alberich for their performances of Wagner's *Ring Cycle*.

Recent seasons brought his return to Opera Company of Middlebury as Dunois in *The Maid of Orleans* and Jupiter in *Orphée aux enfers*, his role and company debut as Donner in *Das Rheingold* with Nashville Opera, his role debut as Germont in *La Traviata* with First Coast Opera, and Mr. Meriwether



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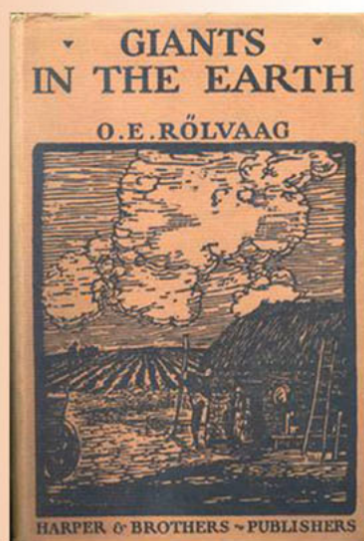
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(Pooh-Bah) in *The Montana Mikado*, Intermountain Opera Bozeman's new adaptation of the Gilbert & Sullivan classic. Additionally, he sang Il Conte di Luna in *Il trovatore* with Opera Tampa, Pangloss in *Candide* with Opera Company of Middlebury, and his debut with Houston Grand Opera to sing the student matinee and cover *Rigoletto*.

Jeremiah recently made his debut with Minnesota Opera as Horstmayer in *Silent Night*, performed the title role in *Rigoletto* with the Sacramento Philharmonic and Opera, *Carmina burana* with the Westmoreland Symphony, Scarpia in *Tosca* with the Reading Symphony, Father in *Chunky in Heat* with Experiments in Opera, Silvio in *Pagliacci* with New Orleans Opera, The Man in *Persona* in his Los Angeles Opera debut, covering Alberich in *Das Rheingold* with Arizona Opera, his debut with On Site Opera as Aaron Greenspan in *Morning Star*, *When Adonis Calls* with Asheville Lyric Opera, Marcello in *La bohème* with the Pittsburgh Festival, and *Gianni Schicchi* with the Opera Company of Middlebury.

Other highlights for Jeremiah include his role debut as *Macbeth* with Opera Company of Middlebury, the title role in *Rigoletto* and Lassiter in the world-premiere of *Riders of the Purple Sage* with Arizona Opera, The Man in the world-premiere of *Persona* with Beth Morrison Projects, Demetrius in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* with Hawaii Opera Theatre, *Gianna Schicchi* with Mobile Opera, Alfio in *Cavalleria rusticana* with the New Jersey Festival Orchestra, his debut with Des Moines Metro Opera as The Foreman in *Jenufa* and Sonora in *La fanciulla del West*, Escamillo in *Carmen* with the Northern Lights Festival, John Sorel in *The Consul* with Opera Santa Barbara, Aeneas in *Dido and Aeneas* to Stephanie Bythe's Dido with Mark Morris Dance Group at the Mostly Mozart Festival, Ford in *Falstaff* with Opera Louisiane, the world premiere of *A Death in the Family* with Hungary's Armel Music Festival, Don Pedro in *La Perichole*, Deputy Mayor in *Anna Nicole*, the cover of Junior in *A Quiet Place*, and Guglielmo in *Così fan tutte* with New York City Opera, Billy Bigelow in *Carousel* with the Carnegie Visual and PAC, Captain Lutte in Noel Coward's *Bitter Sweet* with Bard SummerScape, and Athanael in *Thaïs* with Opera Company of Middlebury, and Silvio in *Pagliacci* with Spokane Opera.

Jeremiah has been heard in concert with the New Haven Symphony, Cape Cod Symphony, Toledo Symphony, debuted with Jazz and Lincoln Center in a Rufus Wainwright concert, appeared with the New York Festival of Song with Steven Blier, and debuted at Alice Tully Hall with the Little Orchestra Society in an all-Victor Herbert program. He had his State Theater debut with the New York City Opera orchestra in their 2010 gala *Lucky to Be Me: Music of Leonard Bernstein*. He has also joined the Yakima Symphony Orchestra for Beethoven's



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Symphony No. 9, the Great Falls Symphony for Handel's *Messiah*, and the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra for Nielsen's Symphony No. 3. He is featured on the live recording of *Silent Night*, now available on the NAXOS label. He is a former Young Artist with Seattle Opera, Wolf Trap Opera Company, and The Glimmerglass Festival.



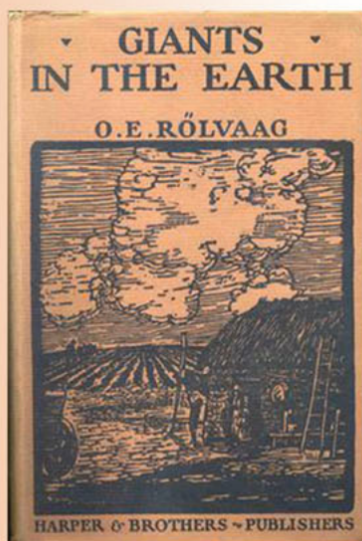
Steve Pence

O'Hara

Steve Pence has appeared as a soloist with most of the major classical music organizations in Southern California, including The Los Angeles Philharmonic, The Los Angeles Opera, The Los Angeles Master Chorale, The Pasadena Symphony, and The Long Beach Symphony. He has also performed solos internationally with National Orchestra of Uruguay, The London Philharmonic, and The National Orchestra of Peru.

Pence is especially known for his solo work in Brahms' *Ein Deutsches Requiem* and Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, though he has sung much of the concert repertoire, including Bach's *B-minor Mass*, *St. John Passion*, and *St. Matthew Passion*, Haydn's *Lord Nelson Mass*, *Maria Theresa Mass*, *Creation Mass*, and *Creation*, Mendelssohn's *Elijah*, Handel's *Messiah*, and the Requiem Masses of Mozart and Verdi. In 2015, he created the role of The Kaiser in John Powell's *A Prussian Requiem*, a role he recorded with The London Philharmonic and tenor Javier Camarena, under the baton of Jose Serebrier on the album *Hubris*. His opera roles include Sarastro in the *Die Zauberflöte*, King Alonzo in Hoiby's *The Tempest*, and Figaro in *Le Nozze di Figaro*.

He has lent his voice to numerous films including *Pacific Rim*, *The Secret Life of Pets*, *Despicable Me 2*, *Star Wars: The Last Jedi*, and *Star Wars: Rise of Skywalker*. He can be heard as a soloist on the score of *Happy Feet 2*.



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Peter Tuff

Sullivan

Peter Tuff has been hailed as "an outstanding singer" (*Salzburger Nachrichten*), "strong and commanding" (*San Francisco Examiner*), and "in voice and appearance the ideal romantic hero" (*Reno Gazette-Journal*). In a career spanning 30 years on three continents, Tuff has performed 30 leading roles in opera and musical theater, and dozens of supporting roles.

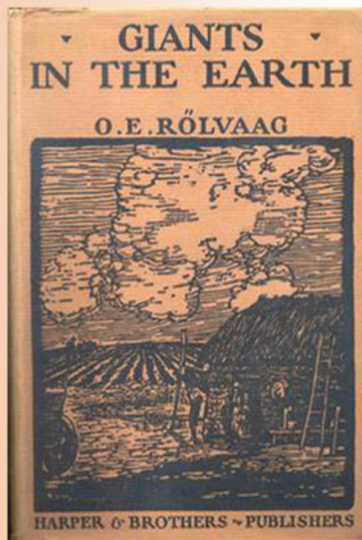
Tuff sang his first role - John Sorel in *The Consul* by Menotti - during his undergraduate studies in voice and horn at Pacific Lutheran University. Following private study with the late Dickson Titus in San Francisco, Tuff moved to Austria, where he lived with his wife and three children for ten years, singing in the Salzburg Festival (Stravinsky's *The Rake's Progress*, Strauss' *Der Rosenkavalier* and others), and where he was a member of the Vienna State Opera and the Imperial Chapel. Tuff was invited to perform Schubert's *Schwanengesang* in the Baroque Palais Harrach for the *Tausend Jahre Österreich* celebration, and in Graz he performed a unique recital of Schubert song fragments with fortepiano. Invited by the Vienna Schubert Society, Tuff performed Schubert's songs in the house of the composer's birth. Of his performance as Hans Scholl in Udo Zimmermann's *Weißer Rose* with Musikwerkstatt Wien, the Vienna *Kurier* wrote that Tuff "conquered the demanding role."

Tuff has performed with San Francisco Opera, Monterey Symphony, Opera San Jose, Pocket Opera, Berkeley Opera, and more. Following a performance of Vaughan Williams' *A Sea Symphony*, the San Jose Mercury called Tuff a "top shelf soloist" and "a burnished and expressive singer." *Performing Arts Monterey Bay* wrote that "Tuff was best of show in Ford's monologue" [from Verdi's *Falstaff*]. His performances with Opera Theatre of the Rockies in Colorado Springs - most recently in the title role of Gilbert & Sullivan's *The Mikado* - have included *Carmen*, *Pagliacci*, *Daughter of the Regiment*, *La Cenerentola*, and *The Sound of Music*. With the Colorado Springs Philharmonic, he has been featured in Beethoven's *9th Symphony*, Orff's *Carmina Burana*, and in both sets of Aaron Copland's *Old American Songs*. Some of his favorite recital

performances have included songs of Beethoven, Schubert, Schumann, Copland, and Vaughan Williams.

Tuff made his debut in Freeman's Schmeckfest in 2022 as Abel Frake in Rodgers & Hammerstein's *State Fair*, and in 2023 he appeared as Count Almaviva in Mozart's *Le Nozze di Figaro* in Colorado's Crested Butte Music Festival. He has sung with The Rose Ensemble and Colorado Vocal Arts Ensemble, and he currently sings with the Sioux Falls vocal ensemble Transept and the South Dakota Symphony Orchestra Chorus. Tuff teaches Applied Voice as adjunct voice professor at Augustana University.

Children of Per and Beret Hansa



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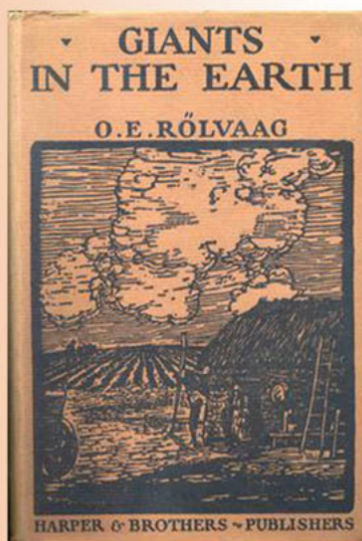


Jude Lundeby

Ola

Thirteen-year-old Jude Lundeby, from Sioux Falls, South Dakota, brings a rich background in local theater to his performance. For six years, he has captivated audiences with his talent and dedication, beginning with roles in beloved productions like *Aristocats Jr.* and continuing through *The Sound of Music* and *Matilda*. His consistent versatility and stage presence have made him a familiar face in the community.

In addition to his theatrical pursuits, Lundeby is an active member of his middle school show choir, where he has further developed his vocal skills and appreciation for ensemble performance. This experience has instilled in him the importance of teamwork and harmony, qualities he carries with him on stage.



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Lucille Lundeby

Anna

Sioux Falls native, twelve-year-old Lucille Lundeby steps onto the operatic stage for the first time, bringing with her a vibrant history of theatrical performance. For six years, she has immersed herself in the world of local theater, cultivating a deep love for storytelling and character development. Her journey began with a spark of curiosity, which quickly ignited into an enthusiastic pursuit of the performing arts.

Lundeby's dedication to her craft extends beyond the stage. She has pursued work in local advertising campaigns and has trained in dance and gymnastics. Her commitment to honing her skills reflects her deep love for the performing arts.

South Dakota Symphony Orchestra Chorus

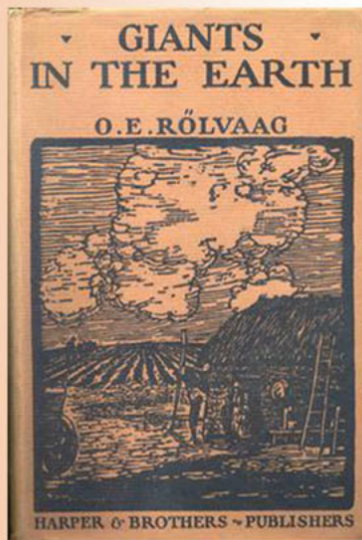
South Dakota Symphony Orchestra Chorus

Collaborative Pianist

Natalie Campbell

Soprano

Ashlynn Anderson
Mallory Beckler
Katie Begic
Katie Brown
Erin Burggraff
Haley Dahl
Ivory den Hoed
Nancy Durajczyk
Taylor Elmer
Heather Engberg
Michelle Friesen
Rachel Friez
Claire Gillaspey



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Maddie Graves
Carmelita Guse
Haley Hobbie
Gretchen Hofstad Starnes
Becky Hollan
Katherine Howard
Angela Loftesness
Maggie Lynch
Shannon McCrary
Kelly Okerlund
Ana Olivier
Diane Rahn
Courtney Renner
Michelle Sawyer
Catherine Schlimgen
Susan Schrader
Anna Stemsrud
Jacklyn Talsma
Elizabeth Trygstad
Kasidy Tvedt

Alto

Kjerstin Aspaas
Molly Augspurger
Aubrey Baumann
Lonna Beshai
Christine Brandner
Meg DeBoer
Mary DeVany
Katie Eliason
Kate Friesen
Rachel Gross
Serena Gutnik
Dawn Gutnik
Elise Hasche
Sarah Heckmann
Araylla Hennigar
Kristen Herbst
Meredith Jenkins
Karen Jepperson
Sydney Jessen
Mercedes Lodmell
Clara Meyer
Hannah Moravec
Rachel Pierson
Ally Quanbeck
Mary Reiter
Emma Smith

Rebecca Thompson
Lindsay Tjarks
Jennifer Tschetter
Coral Winter
Milaana Wollman

Tenor

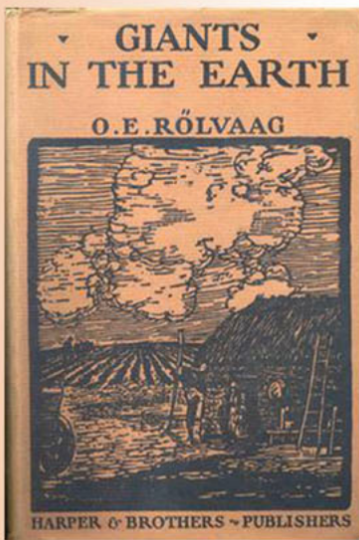
Jon Callies
Jason Douma
Paul Gillaspey
Matthew Gustafson
Charles Kriech
Zander Larson
Mark Larson
Jace Larson
Alan Luense
Leslie Olive
Nicholas Petersen
Andrew Ridder
Rita Schwab-Parcel
Joel Tjarks
Eric Wicks

Bass

Joel Brejda
Ted DeLange
Jacob Fossing
Joel Gullickson
Chase Kramer
Frederick Matthews
James Moore
Shawn Stemsrud
Dan Stratton
Anders Svenningsen
Liam Swart
Peter Tuff
Collin Waltner
Ryan Wilkison
Tim Worthington
Shane Wuebben

Ensemble Cast

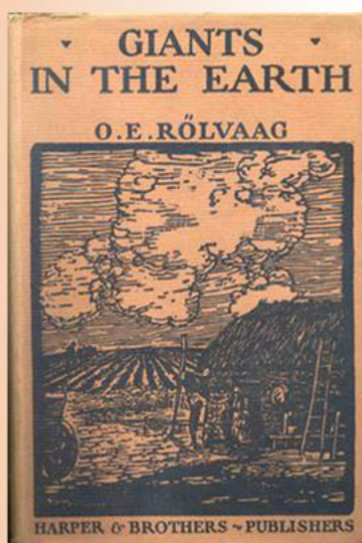
Molly Augspurger
Haley Dahl
Meg DeBoer
Jason Douma



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Kate Friesen
Zander Larson
Ally Quanbeck
Andrew Ridder
Anna Stemstrud
Anders Stemstrud
Anders Svenningsen
Elizabeth Trygstad
Peter Tuff
Kasidy Tvedt
Eric Wicks
Shane Wuebben



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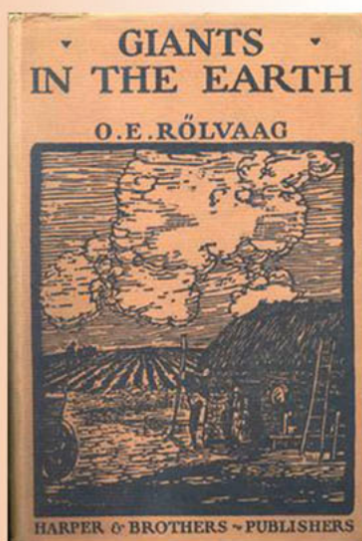
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and
HAVING FUN!



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Stage Director



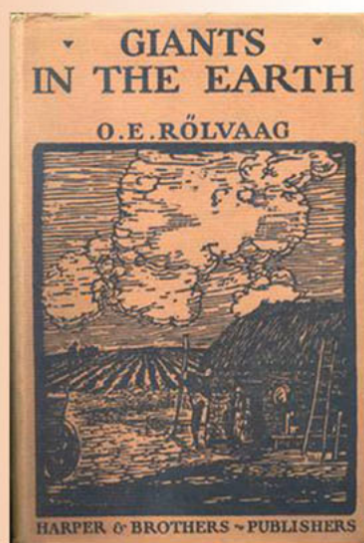
Robert Neu

Stage Director

Known for his "distinctive staging style" and for being "the most inventive opera director in town" (*St. Paul Pioneer Press*), Robert Neu is challenging the norms by becoming a pioneer in the field of semi-staged operas with symphony orchestras. Sought after for his highly theatrical and musically sensitive work, Neu has directed more than ninety productions of opera, musical theater, and plays throughout the country. Last season, Neu returned to Opera Idaho to direct *Il barbiere di Siviglia* and Shreveport Opera for *La Traviata*. This season, he returns to Opera Idaho to direct their production of *Le nozze di Figaro*.

Recent engagements include St. John's Passion with Shreveport Symphony, Colorado Symphony and Lyric Opera of the North: *The Merry Widow* for Opera Idaho; both *Amahl and the Night Visitors* and *Eugene Onegin* for Skylark Opera; *La Traviata* and *Otello* for Pacific Symphony; *Le nozze di Figaro* with Inland Northwest Opera and Orlando Opera; *La bohème* and *The Barber of Seville* with Opera Orlando; *As One* and *Così fan tutte* with Skylark Opera Theatre; *West Side Story* with Central City Opera in collaboration with the Boulder Philharmonic; *Don Giovanni* for Steamboat Springs Opera; and *L'enfant et les sortilèges* and *The Magic Flute* with Pacific Symphony.

His fully staged productions include *Così fan tutte* with Cincinnati Chamber Orchestra, *La bohème* with West Virginia Opera and Gulf Coast Symphony, *Trouble in Tahiti* for the Minneapolis Fringe Festival, and *Le nozze di Figaro* for Bellevue Opera. Over the past decade, Neu established an ongoing relationship with Skylark Opera for which he has directed a wide variety of operettas, operas and musicals including *Naughty Marietta*, *Don Pasquale*, *The Merry Widow*, *On the*



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Town, Wonderful Town, The Fantasticks, Candide, and Putting It Together. An audience favorite with Lyric Opera of the North, he has directed its productions of *Don Pasquale, The Face on the Barroom Floor, Carmen* and *Il barbiere di Siviglia*. In the theatre genre, he helmed productions of *Oliver, The Sound of Music, Fiddler on the Roof, Patience, Becky's New Car, Death of a Salesman, Art, Godspell, Blithe Spirit* and *The Laramie Project* for the theater companies throughout the United States.

With his vast experience of bringing semi-staged operatic repertoire to symphony orchestra stages, Robert Neu has worked closely with the Minnesota Opera presenting critically acclaimed productions of *Candide, Fielio, Hänsel und Gretel, Tosca, Carmen, Peer Gynt, La bohème, La Traviata, Bernstein's Mass, Die Zauberflöte, Die Fledermaus, and Carousel.* With the Colorado Symphony, he has directed *Tosca* and *The Music Man.* Cincinnati Symphony and Cincinnati Pops audiences have seen his productions of *The Music Man, Die Zauberflöte, Peer Gynt* and *The Sound of Music.*

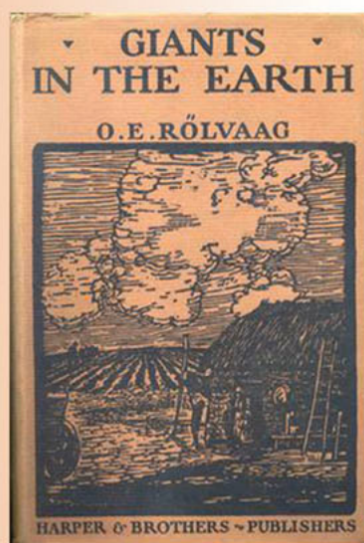
As an innovator who seeks to combine symphonic music with theater in unique ways, Neu has adapted a version of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* for four actors and orchestra which has been produced by orchestras across the country including Minnesota Orchestra, Des Moines Symphony, Eugene Symphony, and Wintergreen Music Festival.

He has also co-written and produced a series of programs that seek to introduce orchestra audiences to the joys of opera. His production company, Angels & Demons Entertainment, focuses on working with orchestras in producing theatrical and operatic offerings.

In the past ten years, nine of Neu's productions have received "Best of the Season" citations from various media including Minneapolis Star Tribune, Cincinnati Post, St. Paul Pioneer Press and Minnesota Public Radio. His production of *The Larmie Project* received awards for Best Ensemble and Outstanding Theater Event of the 2014 season from Broadway World.

Neu teaches masterclasses in audition techniques for the University of Minnesota's opera department, and he is a Resident Director at Lyric Arts Theater in Minneapolis. He is a graduate of The Juilliard School.

Stage Manager, Erin joy Swank



Giants in the Earth: The Norwegians in the Dakota Territory

April 26, 2025 - 7:30pm & April 27, 2025 - 2:30pm

Erin Joy Swank (she/her) is pleased to work with stage director Bob Neu again on this historic project, having worked on his other semi-staged productions of Bach's *St. Matthew Passion* for Boulder Philharmonic/Central City Opera and another *Passion*, as well as *The Music Man in Concert* for Colorado Symphony.

They will next join forces for Sioux City Symphony Orchestra's *Carmen*. Swank is a Denver-based freelancer whose recent credits include theatre (Human Race, Opera House Arts, Northern Sky), *The Nutcracker* with Texas Ballet, a *Star Wars* burlesque parody, a Jennifer Holliday concert, a hybrid opera/circus (Opera North), and hosting a popular industry blog. Her favorite cast members ever remain the three adorable camels in the *Radio City Christmas Spectacular*.

Production Team

Larissa Giddings, Assistant Stage Manager
Anne Waltner, Rehearsal Accompanist
Antonio Colaruotolo, Lighting/Projection Designer
Matt Cook, Lighting Assistant
Sarah Larson, Costume Designer
Victor Shonk, Set Designer
Cal Metts, Set Builder
Jocelyn Cartwright, Props Designer
Krissy Sneshkoff, Wigs/Make-Up Designer
Solveig Zempel, Norwegian Coach
Tasteful Titles, Jay Reeve & Katherine Peterson, supertitles

A Giant Awakening Article

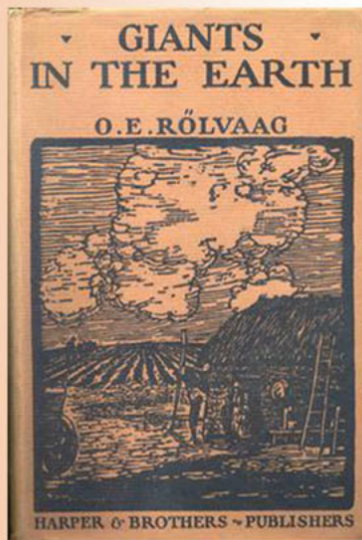
A Giant Awakening

South Dakota Symphony Orchestra Revives Pulitzer-Prize Winning Opera

Take a deeper dive into the journey of how *Giants in the Earth* was awakened, along with the work and stories of how the opera revival came to be.

Written by Keeley Ehrmantraut

[READ HERE](#)



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