Welcome
We are delighted to welcome you to UNT Opera, both returning and new students, and look forward to working with each and every one of you. Below are some general notes as to what to expect in your experience with us.

Covid
We all are excited to be back in person doing live opera! We are also all concerned over the spread of the Delta Variant. The current state of affairs is that we are back to live classes and rehearsals as we were before Covid, but are being very careful to be safe: so while we can't legally ask whether or require that you be vaccinated, we very strongly encourage it - your lungs are your future and your colleagues' futures. I can't imagine singers would see this any differently. We will also ask that you wear masks indoors during our activities, and though there are no restrictions in place regarding social distancing, we want to follow the CDC proposals of 3’ of separation. We are fortunate to be working in a building that has very high air exchange rates indeed (between 4 and 11 exchanges per hour depending on the room, all with HEPA 13 filter systems) and while no guidelines have been laid down regarding duration of sessions or changes of rooms, we will be careful to schedule rehearsals safely and sensibly. We will also consult with you as a group - we want you to feel safe and happy with the measures we are proposing, and our doors are always open to you if you have any concerns.

Program
We have an exciting program lined up for you, which, of course, may need to be adjusted if the situation with Covid changes radically. The program includes three mainstage productions and the Student Directors Scenes Program.

The three mainstage shows are: The Bartered Bride by Smetana sung in English and Czech accompanied by the UNT Smphony Orchestra; L'Elisir d'Amore by Donizetti sung in Italian accompanied by the UNT Concert Orchestra; and Benjamin Britten's The Rape of Lucretia sung in English and accompanied by a chamber orchestra. Both The Bartered Bride and Elisir have choruses, so we are providing opportunities for a large number of students of all voice types and differing levels of experience. The Bartered Bride will be conducted by Jaroslav Kyzlink, the Music Director of the National Theater Opera in Prague, the leading opera company in the Czech Republic. It will also feature dancers from the Texas Ballet Theater Studio, and includes a circus/state fair scene - so if anyone has dance, circus or animal handling skills, we want to meet you!

The Scenes Program, directed by students, will be scenes from Puccini operas.
**General Auditions:** These take place on August 21 and 22; please see a separate detailed note about them. In brief: we audition much of the year’s activities at these sessions. Auditions are almost exclusively live and in person: this year singers should come to the building wearing masks and should wear them to sing. For any international students who are still in their home countries awaiting their Visas, or for students who are immune-compromised and can presently only study/audition remotely, or who are otherwise prevented from auditioning by COVID-related issues, videos may be submitted. These should be submitted to our TA Sabatina Mauro no later than 1pm on Monday 23 August.

**Schedules, Non-Availabilities (N/As) for rehearsals or performances and commitment to the program:** We try to be flexible and accommodate an individual’s conflicts and other class schedules as best we can. We want you to go forth and audition for important opportunities and succeed! However for the benefit of all students involved in our productions, we want to set out some guidelines for participation:

**Rehearsal schedules:** We will share with you the complete schedule for rehearsal times for each production in advance of each term, including regular and extra production week rehearsals, in our ‘Master Calendar’. These will be the times you are expected to commit to, if you accept an assignment in an opera. If you anticipate major clashes with rehearsals, don’t accept the opera assignment! Prior to auditions, you can, if you wish, indicate which operas you are interested in, and those you know you cannot commit to.

**Standard, regular weekly rehearsal times:**
- Mondays 3:45-10:00pm (1 hour dinner break scheduled around 6:00-7:00pm)
- Wednesdays 3:45-5:45pm
- Thursdays 3:15-9:30pm (1 hour dinner break scheduled around 6:00-7:00pm)
- Fridays 2:15-6:15pm
- There are additional Saturday & Sunday rehearsals over the course of the season, usually for the two weekends prior to opening nights of mainstage shows, and additional final evening dress rehearsals. These will be listed on the Master Calendar.

**Clashing classes:** You need to be responsible to sign up for (non-opera) classes, lesson times, and coaching times that don’t clash with standard opera times for a show in which you are cast in a role of any size. You should not accept a solo role while having a clashing class. For opera chorus assignments (as opposed to solo roles) rehearsal schedules are much less intensive, and we plan to list chorus rehearsals in advance also in the Master Calendar – but equally, please don’t accept a chorus assignment if you cannot make the rehearsals! Please speak first with the Opera TAs then if you need to with the opera faculty if you have questions about class scheduling.

**Church choirs:** We understand many of you rely on singing in church choirs to earn necessary income. We support this and will never call Sunday morning rehearsals, and as a rule will only call Wednesday evening rehearsals for main productions during tech and performance weeks. If you are in the cast or crew of a show, you are not excused from the
Wednesday night dress rehearsal because of a church job or other church obligation. If you are double-cast, you must also attend the Wednesday night dress rehearsal even if your double-cast colleague is scheduled to sing that evening. Please clear this with your church music director as soon as you accept any opera assignment. Also, please note that Wednesday afternoon rehearsals last until 5:45pm. As a rule you must remain for the entire rehearsal. Please make your dinner/sandwich arrangements between opera and church choir rehearsals so that you can remain in opera rehearsal till 5:45pm. If your church job requires that you leave earlier than 5:45pm you must request this formally through the N/A system at the beginning of the school year.

Requests for N/As (Non-Availabilities): Requests to be non-available for opera rehearsals must be made a minimum of two weeks in advance in writing to our Rehearsal and Scheduling Coordinator Teaching Assistant (Taylor Carnes). There is an official form and procedure for these requests. We recommend you apply well before this deadline, however, please do not commit to another obligation until you have received an official written release.

The two-week N/A Embargo: In order for final rehearsals for productions to run smoothly for all students, no absences from any opera rehearsal will be allowed for any reason from cast, chorus, or crew beginning two weeks before opening night for all productions and continuing until strike of each production. We are calling this the “Embargo” period. For shows that are not fully staged, such as concert operas or scenes programs, the embargo may be less than two weeks before the show opens. The embargo dates are listed below.

Performance and Embargo Dates for the 2021-22 season:

**The Bartered Bride**
Embargo: October 22 - November 14 inclusive
Performances: November 5 & 12 at 7:30pm; November 7 & 14 at 3:00pm

**L’Elisir d’Amore**
Embargo: February 17 - March 6 inclusive
Performances: March 3, 4, 5 at 7:30pm, March 6 at 3:00pm

**The Rape of Lucretia**
Embargo: April 7 - April 24
Performances: April 21, 22, 23 at 7:30pm, April 24 at 3:00pm

**Opera Scholarships:** If you are a holder of an opera scholarship, of whatever size, you effectively pledge to be part of the opera program. If you are unable to observe the participation guidelines above, your opera scholarship will be in jeopardy and may be allocated to someone who is available to participate in the program. Opera scholarship holders are also expected to be a positive role model to our other students in work ethic, attitude, and collegiality.
Your acceptance: All students receive at the beginning of the year a contract including both casting and crew assignments for the whole year. Please note that amendments may be made to this contract after the initial acceptance has gone out and throughout the year as the need arises. You have one week to accept your assignments and turn in your contracts. When you sign your acceptance of any role assignment for an opera program activity, you are also indicating that you understand and accept the participation guidelines and schedules outlined above.

Opera Directing and Acting Classes with Prof. Eaton: There is a cap of 7 on the opera directing class. Do be aware that while it is registered as a Fall class, the actual scenes performances take place in January early in the Spring term.

Opera Crewing Obligations

Rationale: In common with all university opera programs, students are required to assist in a variety of crewing activities, without which productions cannot be mounted. We depend on students to help run our shows; we are grateful for their assistance, acknowledge that there is often a time burden involved, and remind students that there is also an educational advantage in learning the scope of what it takes to put on a production.

The Opera TAs assign students to crews according to the following guidelines:

- Undergraduates: must sign up for the full year (both terms) for any year they wish to be involved in opera, and do one crew per semester, of deck, props, costume, other technical fields, or (less likely) orchestra support or hospitality.
- Masters: must sign up for one full year (either first or second year), and for that year do one crew per semester, of deck, props, costume, other technical fields, orchestra support, hospitality, admin or PR; Masters may sign up for an additional full year if they wish to perform in opera and must be available to do at least one crew in one semester only, though they may be asked to do two crews based on need.
- DMA and Voice GAC (as opposed to Opera GAC): if they wish to be involved in opera, must sign up for at least one full year, and in that year do two crews, likely to be orchestra support, hospitality, admin or PR; in subsequent years may sign up for one term only and crewing will be voluntary.
- Opera GAC: must sign up for two crews per year, usually in orchestra support, hospitality, admin or PR.
- Opera Scholarship holders: must sign up to participate in two crews for each year they hold an opera scholarship whether they are cast in a production or not.

Some crews involve more time than others. For instance the ‘running crews’ in the list below for the first show in the season, which is usually our largest production, may demand more time than the running crews for the last production of the season which is usually our
smallest. However for the first production we tend to assign crew responsibilities to those singers cast in the chorus since they are required to be present anyway.

We try to allocate the less time-consuming crew commitments to those who have been with us longest, and so have already done some crewing for us, or to those who have the most demanding academic schedules – so there is a rough sort of ‘seniority’ factor in making crewing assignments.

Students may register in the beginning of the year a preference for a certain category of crew if they already have pre-existing interest or expertise in a certain area.

**Crewing categories:** Crewing activities take place in the following categories, with examples in parentheses. Estimated time commitments are listed below each description. We may also assign non-performers - those who have not been cast in a show - to be crew members.

- **Deck Run Crew** (scene changing, set up, strike etc.)
  - Needed for final chorus rehearsals, scene change rehearsals, tech week, all performances and final strike.
  - Usually pulled from chorus members who are already involved in the production, so few ‘extra’ hours are required but the commitment is significant.

- **Props Crew** (helping maintain props, running shows, sometimes helping with finding or creation of props)
  - Needed at various times during the rehearsal process (to help create props/set up prop tables/organization), for tech week, and all performances and strike.
  - Usually pulled from chorus members who are already involved in the production, so few ‘extra’ hours are required with the commitment usually similar to that of Deck Run.

- **Costume Crew** (helping to find or occasionally build, maintain costumes, launder them, dress performers, carry out small fixes during performances, assist with quick changes, and strike/clean-up)
  - Must be available tech week and all performances. Sometimes called outside of that time frame to help with small sewing/creation items. Usually no more than 5 hours outside of tech and performances. For performances, must arrive 1.5 hours before downbeat and stay until everyone is out of costume for the evening.
  - Usually a mixture of chorus members and non-performers (MM or DMA). We have to have at least 2 non-performers who are uninvolved in the performance for this crew to function efficiently.

- **Makeup Crew** (applying makeup)
  - Must be available tech week and all performances. Sometimes called outside of that time frame for makeup training or makeup practices (headed by makeup designer or crew head). Usually no more than 5 hours outside of tech and performances. For performances must arrive 1.5 hours before downbeat and stay until everyone is out of makeup for the evening.
- Usually a mixture of chorus members and non-performers (MM or DMA). We have to have at least one non-performer to help organize. Note: sometimes double casts are willing to help their counterpart with complicated makeup, which is helpful when appropriate.

- **Orchestra Support Crew** (setting up orchestra pit for opera orchestra rehearsals, Sitzprobes, and performances; erasing markings and putting cuts in scores before and after production; maintaining pit cleanliness and organization between shows; working with Maestro on any additional needs)
  - Low time commitment crew. Generally needed for 30 mins per call before any orchestra rehearsal. There are generally 5-6 calls per show. The crew head also organizes their crew to check on the state of the pit before performances, but there is rarely any work to be done.
  - Usually a mix of MM, DMA, and GAC students. Needs a maximum of 4 students. There is a need for some flexibility because calls often have to happen during orchestra rehearsal hours which may be outside of opera rehearsal hours. These calls are set by the crew head based on the availability of the crew members. This is the most flexible crew.

- **Other technical fields** (operating a follow spot or a projector, child wrangler, etc.)
  - Only needed for tech week and all performances. Sometimes, training happens outside of the tech weekend.
  - When a child wrangler is needed, they are asked to be at all of the children’s rehearsals. Those dates will be communicated by the Assistant Director.
  - These crews are always assigned after speaking directly with the students about their interest and availability, so this could include undergrads, MM, or DMA. They cannot be involved in the performance of the production.

- **Hospitality Crew** (running the ‘bar’ and refreshments at performances, picking up drink and food from suppliers, help setting up the cast party after final show)
  - Call is for performance days only. Must be available for all performances, since the time is so restricted. Needs to be certified for TABC (Texas Alcoholic Beverage Commission – certification test cost will be fully refunded) and have that completed and submitted to the TA before the first performance. Certification takes generally 3-4 hours to complete online.
  - Usually crewed by DMA students, occasionally MM and undergrads over 21 when needed. Low time commitment and they are usually able to sit in and watch the operas as well.

- **Admin Crew** (photocopying, assisting Opera TAs)
  - Called on an as-needed basis, not exceeding 20 hours (average time called though is 5-10). Can be either during or outside of opera rehearsal times.
  - Usually crewed by GAC, DMA, or MM students who are unavailable to work a crew during a certain production. Low time commitment and extremely flexible.

- **Public Relations (PR) Crew** (feeding the social media dragon, distributing flyers and posters, website and email designing, maintaining patron lists, etc.)
  - **This is a full year crew!** All members are expected to help out throughout the entire school year. Generally around 1 hour of work per week.
o Usually crewed by GAC, DMA, and MM students, with the occasional interested undergrad. This crew is always assigned after speaking with those who express interest and have availability for the entire year. If a student is assigned to this crew, they will have served all of their crew obligations for the year.

- **Crew Head** for any of the previously listed crews
  o Called for the same time periods as the crews listed above, generally with more managerial responsibilities. Sometimes are asked to attend a few extra rehearsals to learn their duties or help AD/SM as needed.
  o These positions are offered to students who have shown an interest in crew heading (based on the beginning of the year survey). Usually MM or highly organized undergrad students.

TAs, Crew Heads and ASMs will be tasked with keeping records of crew attendance, and more than two unexcused absences will drop students a grade, though please understand that crewing only works when all participants turn up, so absenteeism is seriously frowned upon!

**Paid Production Support Opportunities**

We also pay qualified students to work in two areas: Assistant Stage Managing and Assistant Directing. These involve a presence at the great majority of staging rehearsals and performances, so involve a great deal of extra time, which is recognized in the payment, and these students will be considered also to have fulfilled their crew obligation for the term they are working in. Contact the TAs if you are interested in these opportunities.