

RICHARD OLLARSABA
BASS-BARITONE

Mexican-American bass-baritone, **Richard Ollarsaba**, praised by *The Washington Post* for his “meltingly smooth bass-baritone” and for “evoking a young Ruggero Raimondi in looks and manner,” represented the USA in the 2019 BBC Cardiff Singer of the World competition, was a member of the prestigious Ryan Opera Center at Lyric Opera of Chicago for three seasons and a grand finalist in the 2013 Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions. Last season, he returned to Piedmont Opera for his role debut as Colline in *La bohème* and North Carolina Opera as Escamillo in *Carmen*, a role he reprised in his debut with Annapolis Opera. He also debuted with Opera Hong Kong in the title role of *Don Giovanni* and Bar Harbor Music Festival as Escamillo in *Carmen*. The 2019-2020 season sees a reprise of his Escamillo in *Carmen* with Kentucky Opera, Handel’s *Messiah* with the Phoenix Symphony, *Pulcinella* with The Dallas Opera, and his anticipated debut with New Zealand Opera.



In recent seasons Mr. Ollarsaba returned to Minnesota Opera in the title role in Mozart’s *Le nozze di Figaro*, debuted with Virginia Opera in *Lucia di Lammermoor* as Raimondo, performed the role of Pistola in *Falstaff*, both in his debut with Opera Omaha and Intermountain Opera Bozeman, and returned to Wolf Trap Opera where he scored a triumph as Asdrubale in Rossini’s *La pietra del paragone* in addition to performances as Angelotti in *Tosca* and as Luciano in Musto’s *Bastianello*.

While at the Ryan Opera Center at Lyric Opera of Chicago, his tenure included productions of *La Traviata*, *Capriccio*, *Anna Bolena*, *Tosca*, *The Passenger*, *Otello*, *Madama Butterfly*, *Parsifal*, and the title role in *Don Giovanni*, stepping into the iconic part with a few hours’ notice. Other operatic engagements include Escamillo in *Carmen* with Minnesota Opera, Tulsa Opera, and Lyric Opera of Chicago (cover); Fallito in Gassmann’s *L’opera seria* with Wolf Trap Opera; the title role in *Don Giovanni* with Intermountain Opera; Timur in *Turandot* and Rochefort in *Anna Bolena* with Minnesota Opera; Antonio in *Le nozze di Figaro* with Opera Cleveland; Ferrando in *Il Trovatore* with North Carolina Opera and Reverend John Hale in Ward’s *The Crucible* with Piedmont Opera.

In addition to performances on the operatic stage, Mr. Ollarsaba appears regularly in concert and recital. He has been the bass soloist with the Mainly Mozart Festival in a rare performance of Mozart’s *Thamos, König in Ägypten*, Handel’s *Messiah* with the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, St. Paul Chamber Orchestra and the Kansas City Symphony as well as in Bach’s *St. John’s Passion* with the Madison Bach Musicians, Dvorak’s *Te Deum* with Apollo Chorus of Chicago, Bernstein’s *Songfest* at the Ravinia Festival, Beethoven’s *Ninth Symphony* with the Macon Symphony Orchestra, Verdi’s *Requiem* with the Salisbury Symphony and Beethoven’s *Choral Fantasy* in his debut with the Boston Symphony Orchestra at Tanglewood. That concert was a gala celebration of the venerable festival’s 75th birthday and was telecast nationally on PBS.

A native of Tempe, Arizona, Richard Ollarsaba received his Bachelor of Music from the Cleveland Institute of Music and his Master of Music and post-graduate certificate from the University of North Carolina School of the Arts. In addition to the Ryan Opera Center at Lyric Opera of Chicago, he trained at Minnesota Opera, Music Academy of the West, Chautauqua Opera, Aspen Music Festival, Tanglewood and Wolf Trap Opera.

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OPERA ROLES

Figaro	Le nozze di Figaro	New Zealand Opera	2020
Bass Soloist	Pulcinella	Dallas Opera	2020
Escamillo	Carmen	Kentucky Opera	2019
Escamillo	Carmen	Bar Harbor Music Festival	2019
Don Giovanni	Don Giovanni	Opera Hong Kong	2019
Escamillo	Carmen	North Carolina Opera; Annapolis Opera	2019
Colline	La bohème	Piedmont Opera	2018
Raimondo	Lucia di Lammermoor	Virginia Opera	2018
Pistola	Falstaff	Opera Omaha	2018
Figaro	Le nozze di Figaro	Minnesota Opera	2017
Luciano	Bastianello	Wolf Trap Opera	2017
Angelotti	Tosca	Wolf Trap Opera	2017
Asdrubale	La pietra del paragone	Wolf Trap Opera	2017
Escamillo (cv)	Carmen	Lyric Opera of Chicago	2017
Panthée (cv)	Les Troyens	Lyric Opera of Chicago	2016
Raimondo (cv)	Lucia di Lammermoor	Lyric Opera of Chicago	2016
Timur (cv)	Turandot	Opera Philadelphia	2016
Fallito	L'Opera Seria (Gassman)	Wolf Trap Opera	2016
Don Giovanni	Don Giovanni	Intermountain Opera Bozeman	2016
Alidoro (cv)	La cenerentola	Lyric Opera of Chicago	2015
Figaro (cv)	Le nozze di Figaro	Lyric Opera of Chicago	2015
Escamillo	Carmen	Minnesota Opera	2015
Angelotti	Tosca	Lyric Opera of Chicago	2015
Biterolf (cv)	Tannhäuser	Lyric Opera of Chicago	2015
Enrico VIII (cv)	Anna Bolena	Lyric Opera of Chicago	2014-15
Rochefort	Anna Bolena	Lyric Opera of Chicago	2014-15
Haushoffmeister	Capriccio	Lyric Opera of Chicago	2014
Don Giovanni	Don Giovanni	Lyric Opera of Chicago	2014
Le Gendarme	Les Mamelles de Tirésias	Civic Orchestra of Chicago	2014
Escamillo	Carmen	Tulsa Opera	2014
Publio (cv)	La clemenza di Tito	Lyric Opera of Chicago	2014
Dr. Grenvil	La traviata	Lyric Opera of Chicago	2013
Timur	Turandot	Minnesota Opera	2013
Ferrando	Il trovatore	North Carolina Opera	2012
Reverend John Hale	The Crucible	Piedmont Opera	2012

CONCERT & ORATORIO

Soloist	Representing USA	BBC Cardiff Singer of the World	2019
Bass Soloist	Handel: Messiah	Phoenix Symphony	2019
Bass Soloist	Haydn: Mass in Time of War	Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra	2018
Bass Soloist	Verdi: Requiem	Salisbury Symphony	2017
Bass Soloist	Bach: St John Passion	Madison Bach Musicians	2017
Bass Soloist	Bach: B minor Mass	Apollo Chorus of Chicago	2017
Bass Soloist	Handel: Messiah	St. Paul Chamber Orchestra	2015
Bass Soloist	Schubert: Mass No. 5 in Ab	Apollo Chorus of Chicago	2015
Featured Soloist	Selected Works	Artist Series and Concerts of Sarasota	2014
Bass Soloist	Mozart: Mass in C-minor	Apollo Chorus of Chicago and	2014
	Dvorak: Te Deum	Elmhurst Symphony Orchestra	
Bass Soloist	Schubert: Mass No. 6 in Eb	Grant Park Music Festival	2013
Bass Soloist	Bernstein: Songfest	Ravinia Festival	2013
Bass Soloist	Beethoven: Symphony No. 9	Macon Symphony Orchestra	2013
Bass Soloist	Beethoven: Choral Fantasy	Boston Symphony Orchestra	2012
Bass Soloist	Stravinsky: Les Noces	Tanglewood Music Center Orchestra	2012
Featured Artist	Selected Arias	Greensboro Symphony Orchestra	2012

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CRITICAL ACCLAIM

OPERA HONG KONG – DON GIOVANNI

"Richard Ollarsaba as the decadent don and Joseph Barron as his wing man excelled . . . Carrying the bulk of the "buddy story" were Richard Ollarsaba as Giovanni and Joseph Barron as Leporello, the not-so-nobleman and his full-time wing man, both of whom conveyed moments of dark humour with dark vocal timbres rich in narrative nuance." -*South China Morning Post*

NORTH CAROLINA OPERA - CARMEN

"As the strutting bullfighter, Richard Ollarsaba cut a fine figure, his baritone ringing out in the familiar "Toreador Song" ("Votre toast"). The aria is always difficult to pull off, but he did so with panache. Ollarsaba's later scenes with Carmen and Don José were equally well-handled, including a believable knife fight with the latter"- Roy C. Dicks *CVNC*

PITTSBURGH SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA - MISSA IN TEMPORE BELL

"Bass-Baritone soloist Richard Ollarsaba was especially impressive, his rich, smooth timbre gently ballooning with the cello and basses at times and crashing stridently among the brass at others." - Jeremy Reynolds *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*

PIEDMONT OPERA - LA BOHÈME

"Colline the philosopher was sung by Richard Ollarsaba, whose touching last act farewell aria to his coat, which he pawns to raise money to buy medicine for the dying Mimi, brought tears to my eyes and a lump to my throat. Ollarsaba has a magnificent bass-baritone voice." - Peter Perret *CVNC*

MAINLY MOZART FESTIVAL – THAMOS: KING OF EGYPT

"Ollarsaba's speech and demeanor made him an imposing pillar of gravitas and authority amidst those hamming it up as though in a silent movie. He spoke lines furthering the plot until unveiling a powerful and attractive voice in the work's only aria, which comes in the final movement." -*Broadway World*

VIRGINA OPERA – LUCIA DI LAMMERMOOR

"The rich tone and charismatic presence of bass-baritone Richard Ollarsaba as Raimondo are strong points as well." -*Richmond Times-Dispatch*

"The other surprise was Richard Ollarsaba who played the chaplain Raimondo. I was impressed with Mr. Ollarsaba in his performances as a young artist with Wolf Trap Opera, but his strong, resonant bass-baritone and stage presence now are commanding the stage." -*OperaGene.com*

MINNESOTA OPERA – LE NOZZE DI FIGARO

"Richard Ollarsaba's virile Figaro encompassed the character's many facets —bold, playful, bitter—and cut a striking figure in Travers's costumes" -Larry Fuchsberg, *Opera News*

"Bass-baritone Richard Ollarsaba is fantastic as Figaro, servant to the pompous aristocrat Count Almaviva. . . Ollarsaba, who was a swaggering Escamillo in "Carmen" two years ago, has no patience with Almaviva and makes that robustly clear through every scene, especially in his spitting-nails cavatina, "Se vuol ballare," and the wedding scene" -Jay Furst, *Post Bulletin*

"Richard Ollarsaba displays a rich voice throughout his range"

-Rob Hubbard, *St. Paul Pioneer Press*

WOLF TRAP OPERA – BASTIANELLO

"Richard Ollarsaba's warm, hefty bass-baritone was heard to keen advantage in the role of the disillusioned Luciano, who sets off in search of six people who are even dimmer bulbs than his wife." -Tim Smith *Opera News*

"Richard Ollarsaba was in fine voice in the title role, a groom so disgusted with the ignorance of his bride and parents that he goes on a search for people more stupid." -Charles T. Downey, *Washington Classical Review*

WOLF TRAP OPERA – LA PIETRA DEL PARAGONE

"As Asdrubale, Richard Ollarsaba used his sizable, creamy bass-baritone to keen effect. He proved an astute comic actor, too, especially in Act I, cavorting in disguise as a turban-topped, snake-cuddling creditor (part of the Count's scheme to see if anyone will stick with him if he were penniless)." -Tim Smith, *Opera News*

"The count Asdrubale (Richard Ollarsaba, who did well in "L'Opera Seria" here last year, evoking a young Ruggero Raimondi in looks and manner, with a meltingly smooth bass-baritone) . . . were clearly the people of most substance onstage."

-Anne Midgette, *The Washington Post*

WOLF TRAP OPERA – L'OPERA SERIA

"Some of the evening's most prismatic, theater-filling vocalism came from baritone Kihun Yoon as the passionate librettist Delirio and bass-baritone Richard Ollarsaba as the duplicitous impresario Fallito." -Tim Smith, *Opera News*

HARRIS THEATER - BEYOND THE ARIA

"Richard Ollarsaba more than held his own with his starry colleagues [Thomas Hampson and Heide Stober]. In two Viktor Ullmann settings, the young bass-baritone displayed a dark, deep-pile voice, delivering a jaunty "Vorausbestimmung" and a hearty paean to Bacchus in "Lob des Weines." His two contemporary settings proved a highlight of the evening. In Chris De Blasio's "Walt Whitman in 1989" he offered a poignant rendering of the AIDS-inspired setting. . . Ollarsaba's performance of Steven Mark Kohn's "The War Prayer" was mesmerizing. The singer showed the poise and communicative power of a seasoned artist, singing with commanding, stentorian tone and delivering all the passion, tenderness and biting irony of Mark Twain's antiwar text."

- Lawrence A. Johnson *Chicago Classical Review*

MINNESOTA OPERA - CARMEN

"Richard Ollarsaba (as toreador Escamillo) visually and aurally lives up to his barihunk reputation."

- Basil Considine, *Twin Cities Daily Planet*

RYAN OPERA CENTER - RISING STARS

"One of the highlights was the conclusion of the first half, the first-act duet from Donizetti's *Lucrezia Borgia*. Tracy Cantin and Richard Ollarsaba were at the top of their form, with consummate finesse and power. Cantin elicited a rich sound at all dynamic levels, and Ollarsaba matched her intensity and even intensified it. Both stylishly brought out the dramatic and musical dimensions, and (since it was an excerpt), made one want to hear more." - James L. Zychowicz, *Seen and Heard Int'l*

"the duet for *Lucrezia Borgia* and Don Alfonso from Donizetti's *Lucrezia Borgia* sung by Tracy Cantin and Richard Ollarsaba. As *Lucrezia* begs mercy for Gennaro, both Ms. Cantin and Mr. Ollarsaba were swept up in the emotional confrontation of this exciting duet. Cantin's languorous variations on "Clemenza," as she sought a hearing were rebuffed by Ollarsaba's equally assertive "No, non posso." . . . The concerted passage was especially effective for the both singers: Ollarsaba's accusatory "tu sei" varied over several lines, reached impressive heights"

- Salvatore Calomino, *Opera Today*

"...Ollarsaba strutted impressively through the Animal Trainer's wry prologue to Alban Berg's "Lulu"..."

- John von Rhein, *Chicago Tribune*

"Bass-baritone Richard Ollarsaba went head to head with Cantin as Duke Alfonso in the "Lucrezia Borgia" duet and more than held his own. He then came right back on the second half with a wonderfully animated take on the prologue to Alban Berg's "Lulu" - an excerpt that was ideal for his expressive, resonant voice."

- Kyle Macmillan, *Sun-Times*

LYRIC OPERA OF CHICAGO - ANNA BOLENA

"Richard Ollarsaba, a Ryan Center young artist, showed impressive maturity and vocal strength as Rockford, Anne's Brother, holding his own with Hymel in the tenorial male bonding of the prison scene." - *Chicago Classical Review*

ARTIST SERIES CONCERTS OF SARASOTA - OPERA AND MORE

"Ollarsaba's performance of "Il modo di prender moglie," a comic song in Italian by Schubert, was charming, funny and strong, with more overtones of the Count in Mozart's "Marriage of Figaro" than the prolific Lieder composer. His renditions of Copland's "Zion's Walls" and Steven Mark Kohn's "Farmer's Cursed Wife" were stylish and hearty..."

"Ollarsaba seemed as at home with the Broadway tunes as he was with opera. His performance of the Toreador Song from Bizet's *Carmen*...which took the singer an octave and a fifth, from bottom to top, was stirring, as was his rendition of "The Impossible Dream" from *Man of La Mancha*."

- June LeBell, *YourObserver.com*

CIVIC ORCHESTRA OF CHICAGO/ROC - LES MAMELLES DE TIRÉSIAS

"The robust-voiced bass-baritone Richard Ollarsaba was a hunky hoot as the Policeman." - John von Rhein, *Chicago Tribune*

TULSA OPERA - CARMEN

"As Escamillo the bull fighter, Richard Ollarsaba makes you believe he could halt a charging bull with the power of his voice the way he conveys the suspense of a corrido in "Votre Toast" (better known as the "Toreador" song) is most effective."

- James D. Watts, Jr. *Tulsa World*

RYAN OPERA CENTER - RISING STARS

"A comparable set of performances was offered by bass-baritone Richard Ollarsaba. In his rendering of Figaro's Act IV aria, "Tutto è disposto ... Aprite un po' quegli'occhi" . . . Ollarsaba demonstrated excellent sense of color and the ability to use his resonant sound as a means to suggesting varying emotional states. Even within the single word "Ingrata" the expressive range that Ollarsaba attached to individual vowels communicated both distress felt by the character portrayed and a growing sense of irritation. . . As Don Alfonso, Ollarsaba's upper register and fluid *legato* connecting multiple pitches outlined an impressive backdrop for the myriad emotions expressed..."

- Salvatore Calomino, *Opera Today*

"Richard Ollarsaba was both poignant and stirring in Figaro's fourth act scene from Mozart's 'The Marriage of Figaro'."

- Andrew Patner, *Chicago Sun-Times*

"Richard Ollarsaba was likewise commanding in "Aprite un po' quegli'occhi" from the final act of Mozart's *Le nozze di Figaro*. Ollarsaba's rich, resonant voice was suited well for the part, and he delivered the aria with the maturity of a seasoned bass-baritone - modulating his voice when appropriate, and enunciating [the] text with letter-perfect clarity. As a first-year member of the program, Ollarsaba shows remarkable talent, and he seems poised for a memorable career."

- James L. Zychowicz, *Seen and Heard Int'l*

"Also serving with distinction among the male contingent [was] Richard Ollarsaba [who] had what it takes to put a 'face' to the title character Mozart's 'The Marriage of Figaro,' in Figaro's fourth-act recitative and aria."

- John von Rhein, *Chicago Tribune*

MINNESOTA OPERA - TURANDOT

"Richard Ollarsaba's understated portrayal of the exiled Timur was tremendously affecting."

- Larry Fuchsberg, *Star Tribune*

ST. PAUL CHAMBER ORCHESTRA - MESSIAH

"Ollarsaba stood out as having the best handle on Handel. His booming baritone voice has a power and a confidence ideal for Handel's forceful exclamations."

- Rob Hubbard, *Pioneer Press*

GREENSBORO SYMPHONY - FEATURED SOLOS

"The program included the 'Catalogue Aria' from *Don Giovanni*, as well as 'Aleko's Cavatina' from *Aleko* by Rachmaninoff, and 'Come dal ciel precipita' from Verdi's *Macbeth*. Richard performed all three absolutely perfectly. He was vocally flawless, and also showed his gifts of interpretation. Instead of a concert stand-and-deliver stance, he rather acted the arias, being funny during the 'Catalogue', pungent in Aleko's Cavatina - with great dramatic impact when delivering the line "Zemfira nyevyerna! Moya Zemfira okhladyela!" . . . and ominous in the *Macbeth* piece. The latter with its higher tessitura was also a good showcase for his range. Mr. Ollarsaba had no trouble singing above the orchestra, and produced a powerful, beautiful, and well controlled sound."

- Luiz Gazzola, *Opera Lively*

"The evening began with magnificent singing by Richard Ollarsaba in the form of three bass arias. Mozart's comic 'Catalogue' aria from *Don Giovanni* gave the large audience a taste of the bass-baritone's substantial and rich timbre. His winning presentation revealed his acting chops as well...The second aria, from Rachmaninoff's opera *Aleko*, featured Ollarsaba's romantic side, as the character sings of his grief over his lost love. The third aria from Verdi's *Macbeth*, revealed the dramatic side of the singer, who as the character Banco, senses his own impending murder. The audience was justly smitten Ollarsaba's wonderful artistry and beautiful and moving voice."

- Timothy H. Lindeman, *CVNC*

A.J. FLETCHER OPERA INSTITUTE - MARIA STUARDA

"Bass Richard Ollarsaba already has a sable quality to his tone which aided in his characterization of the manipulative power behind Elizabeth, Lord Cecil, Chancellor of the Exchequer."

- William Thomas Walker, *CVNC*

A.J. FLETCHER OPERA INSTITUTE - MERRY WIVES OF WINDSOR

"The big delight of the production, and I do mean 'big' in so many senses, was the magnificent Falstaff of bass Richard Ollarsaba. His full, rich sound, with plenty of boom, was ideally at one with his truly full assumption of the character. What superb timing! What wonderful gestures! What 'comic gravitas'!"

- William Thomas Walker, *CVNC*