Illinois College Fine Arts Series

presents

Karen Fergurson, Soprano
Francisco Almanza, Tenor
Tatiana Liakh, Pianist

in Virtual Recital

October 16, 2020 at 7:30 p.m.

Im Prater blühn wieder die Bäume Du sollst der Kaiser meiner Seele sein Zwei Herzen im Dreivierteltakt	Robert Stolz
No puede ser (from *La Tabernera del Puerto*) Granada	Pablo Sorozábal Augustin Lara
Vilja Lied (from *Die Lustige Witwe* or *The Merry Widow*) Wie eine Rosenknospe (Duet: Valencienne and Camille) Lippen schweigen (Duet: Hanna and Danilo)	Franz Lehar
Over the Rainbow (from *The Wizard of Oz*) Can't Help Lovin' That Man of Mine (from *Showboat*)	Harold Arlen Jerome Kern/Oscar Hammerstein
Nell Lydia	Gabriel Faure
Mario, Mario, Mario!, Duet from the opera *Tosca* 1. Act: Floria Tosca and Mario Cavaradossi	Giacomo Puccini

KAREN FERGURSON, Soprano

Greenfield native Karen Fergurson began her musical training at the age of 6, studying piano. She went on to earn a Bachelor of Music degree in Piano Performance from Millikin University, and a Master of Music degree in Vocal Performance from Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville.

The internationally-acclaimed soprano made her professional debut with the prestigious Wolf Trap Opera Company as a Filene Young Artist, was a participant in the Merola Opera Program, continuing as an Adler Fellow with San Francisco Opera.

Ms. Fergurson won many competitions in her early career, including the Eleanor McCollum Competition associated with Houston Grand Opera, was a National Winner of the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions, the Palm Beach Opera Competition and placed twice in the Hariclea Darclee Competition in Braila, Romania. Ms. Fergurson is equally at home in art song and lieder, having been named a winner in the D'Angelo Competition and a finalist in the Naumburg Competition.

Her roles include Konstanze in Mozart's *Die Entführung aus dem Serail*, the title role in Puccini's *Le Villi,* La Contessa (*Le Nozze di Figaro*), Micaela (*Carmen*), Clorinda (*La Cenerentola*), Fiordiligi (*Cosi fan Tutte*), Die Feldmarschallin (*Der Rosenkavalier*), Amelia (*Un Ballo in Maschera*), Die Gräfin (*Wiener Blut*), the title role in *Jenufa*, Hanna Glawari (*Die Lustige Witwe*), Madame Lidoine (*Les Dialogues des Carmelites*), Desdemona (*Otello*) and Elisabeth (*Tannhäuser*).

In 2009, Ms. Fergurson reprised the role of Die Feldmarschallin with Oper Kiel, debuted the role of Donna Anna with Oper Frankfurt, going on to sing Donna Anna with Oper Leipzig and made her Staatsoper Hamburg debut in 2010, again with Donna Anna. Ms. Fergurson has proven herself adept at jumping into very difficult situations. On three weeks' notice, she learned and premiered the difficult role of Lucrezia Contarini in *I Due Foscari* with the Südthüringes Staatstheater Meiningen, receiving fantastic reviews.

In 2014, Ms. Fergurson performed the difficult role of Lady Billows from Britten's *Albert Herring* with Musiktheater-im-Revier Gelsenkirchen, to great critical acclaim. In contrast, she was the cover for the title part of Ariadne in Strauss' *Ariadne auf Naxos* with Oper Leipzig as part of the Beijing Music Festival.

The soprano is also a very active concert singer, having appeared as part of the Mozart Festival in Augsburg, Germany, in a gala concert with the Prague Chamber Orchestra, and has debuted many important pieces in the repertoire with the Neubrandenburger Philharmonie, including Beethoven's *9th Symphony*, Mahler's *2nd Symphony*, and *8th Symphony*, Rossini's *Stabat Mater*, Strauss' *Vier Letzte Lieder*, und most recently, Verdi's *Messa da Requiem*.

FRANCISCO ALMANZA, Tenor

Francisco Almanza, a native of Chihuahua City, Mexico, received both his Bachelor and Master of Music at the Shepherd School of Music at Rice University in Houston, Texas. He has participated in the Chautauqua Opera Studio, Houston Grand Opera Studio, Sarasota Opera Apprentice Program, Pittsburgh Opera Center at Duquesne and twice with San Francisco Opera's prestigious Merola Opera Program. His debut with the Merola Program was the part of Don Jose in *Carmen*, which he has gone on to sing over 50 times, in both French and German, with Western Opera Theater, Anchorage Opera, West Bay Opera, Erzgebirgische Theater und Orchester, Theater Görlitz, and Chemnitz Opera.

Mr. Almanza has also participated in master classes with renowned artists such as Mdme. Regine Crespin, Dame Joan Sutherland, Thomas Hampson, Renata Scotto, Carol Vaness, Justino Diaz, Martin Isepp, and Donald Runnicles.

His vast repertoire includes Edgardo (*Lucia di Lammermoor*), Tamino (*Die Zauberflöte*), Fenton (*Falstaff)*, Des Grieux (*Manon* von Massenet), Walther von der Vogelweide (*Tannhäuser)*, Ferrando (*Cosi fan Tutte)*, Il Duca (*Rigoletto*), Radames (Aida), Riccardo (*Un Ballo in Maschera),* Don Alvaro (*La Forza del Destino*), B.F. Pinkerton (*Madama Butterfly*), Jack O'Brien (*Aufstieg und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny),* Albert Gregor (*The Makropulos Affair),* Enzo (*La Gioconda)* and the title role in *Otello.*

He has appeared with the Caramoor International Festival, Nationaltheater Mannheim, Landestheater Detmold, Theater Solingen, Vereignete Bühnen Krefeld/Mönchengladbach, Festival d'Antibes, Festival de La Coste Opera du Luxemburg, Opera National de Lorraine, Stettiner Oper, Theater und Orchester Neubrandenburg/Neustrelitz, Theater für Niedersachsen, Anchorage Opera, The Orchestra of St. Luke's, Oper Chemnitz, Virtuosi Brunenses, and Operafabriken in Malmö.

In concert, Mr. Almanza has appeared with Ensemble Vocal/Sinfonietta de Lausanne, St. Louis Bach Society, Philharmonie Thüringen, Anhaltische Philharmonie Dessau, Neubrandenburger Philharmonie, Münchener Symphoniker, and the Heidelberg Philharmonic, in varied repertoire, including Mendelssohn's *Elijah* and *Walpurgisnacht*, Beethoven's *Mass in C* and *Symphony No. 9,* Puccini's *Messa di Gloria,* Mahler's *Symphony No. 8*, Händel's *Messiah*, and Verdi's *Messa da Requiem.*

In Spring, 2011 Mr. Almanza made his Opera National de Paris debut in the roles of Spoletta in *Tosca* under the baton of Maestro Renato Palumbo, and Roderigo in *Otello* alongside Aleksandrs Antonenko and Reneé Fleming, under the musical direction of Maestro Marco Armiliato.

In 2013 he sang his Chinese debut with the Xiamen Philharmonic in Xiamen, P.R. China, under the direction of Prof. Zheng Xiaoying.

Mr. Almanza is a past winner of the prestigious *Concorso Lirico Internazionale-Trofeo* LA FENICE in Viareggio, Italy, where he was awarded the 'Giuseppe di Stefano' Prize for best tenor, as well as 1st place overall.

TATIANA LIAKH, Pianist

Belarus native Tatiana Liakh comes from a very musical family. Her father was a conductor with the Minsk National Orchestra and her mother a professional singer with the Minsk Radio Chorus. She began studying piano at age 4 and spent many hours in the Opera House in Minsk.

As her musical talent was evident from an early age, Tatiana attended a special school for music in Minsk. She completed her A-levels as a concert pianist at the Hochschule (University) for Music in Minsk, while at the same time participating in courses at the Hochschule for Musik in Cologne and Muenster, Germany.

As a competition winner, she won the 1st prize at the Franz Liszt Competition in Belarus and in the Chopin- and Liszt Competitions in Brest, France.

Tatiana has performed with many famous orchestras, including the Russian National Orchestra and the Warsaw Symphonikern, performing the works of Tchaikovsky, Rachmaninoff, Schumann, Brahms and Beethoven in concert halls in Spain, Russia, Germany and Holland.

In addition to these concert performances and many solo recitals across Europe, Tatiana is equally at home in the world of chamber music. She has accompanied many musicians, from singers to violinists, including Alexey Semenenko, cellists Daniel Müller-Schott und Alexander Buslov, trumpeter Kirill Soldatov and hornist Esa Tapani.