

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.

Mr. Ollarsaba was recently featured in one of his signature roles, Escamillo in *Carmen*, as part of Francesca Zambello’s final season at The Glimmerglass Festival. In 2022-2023, he will bring his Escamillo to Portland Opera and Lyric Opera of Kansas City. Other engagements for the season include reprising his celebrated Count Almaviva in *Le nozze di Figaro* at Knoxville Opera, joining Chicago Opera Theater as Fred Clayton and others in *The Life and Death(s) of Alan Turing*, bowing with Master Chorale of South Florida in Verdi’s *Requiem*, and returning to Palm Beach Symphony as soloist in Handel’s *Messiah*. Engagements for the 2021-2022 season included the title role in *Don Giovanni* with Opera Grand Rapids and Opera Carolina, which Classical Voice North Carolina called a “stunning debut,” Mozart’s *Requiem* with the Palm Beach Symphony, the Count in *Le nozze di Figaro* with Virginia Opera, and Schaunard in *La bohème* with the Jacksonville Symphony. In the 2020-2021 season he made his New Zealand Opera debut as Figaro in *Le nozze di Figaro*.



His 2019-2020 season saw a reprise of his Escamillo in *Carmen* with Kentucky Opera and Handel’s *Messiah* with the Pittsburgh and Phoenix Symphonies as well as cancelled performances of *Pulcinella* with The Dallas Opera. In recent seasons, Mr. Ollarsaba made his role debut as Colline in *La bohème* with Piedmont Opera; sang Escamillo in *Carmen* with North Carolina Opera, Annapolis Opera, and Bar Harbor Music Festival; the title role of *Don Giovanni* in his debut with Opera Hong Kong; 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 Pistola in *Falstaff* 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*.

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, 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. 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. 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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BASS-BARITONE

OPERA ROLES

Count Almaviva	Le nozze di Figaro	Knoxville Opera	2023
Fred Clayton/Judge	The Life and Death(s) of Alan Turing	Chicago Opera Theater	2023
Escamillo	Carmen	Portland Opera; Lyric Opera of Kansas City	2022; '22
Escamillo	Carmen	Glimmerglass Festival	2022
Schaunard	La bohème	Jacksonville Symphony	2022
Count Almaviva	Le nozze di Figaro	Virginia Opera	2022
Don Giovanni	Don Giovanni	Opera Carolina; Opera Grand Rapids; Opera Hong Kong; Intermountain Opera Bozeman; Lyric Opera of Chicago	2022; '21; '19; '16; '14
Figaro	Le nozze di Figaro	New Zealand Opera; Minnesota Opera	2021; '17
Escamillo	Carmen	Kentucky Opera; Bar Harbor; North Carolina Opera; Annapolis Opera; Minnesota Opera; Tulsa Opera	2019 2019; '15; '14
Colline	La bohème	Piedmont Opera	2018
Raimondo	Lucia di Lammermoor	Virginia Opera	2018
Pistola	Falstaff	Opera Omaha	2018
Luciano	Bastianello	Wolf Trap Opera	2017
Angelotti	Tosca	Wolf Trap Opera; Lyric Opera of Chicago	2017; '15
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
Alidoro (cv)	La cenerentola	Lyric Opera of Chicago	2015
Figaro (cv)	Le nozze di Figaro	Lyric Opera of Chicago	2015
Biterolf (cv)	Tannhäuser	Lyric Opera of Chicago	2015
Rochefort; Enrico VIII (cv)	Anna Bolena	Lyric Opera of Chicago	2014-15
Haushoffmeister	Capriccio	Lyric Opera of Chicago	2014
Le Gendarme	Les mamelles de Tirésias	Civic Orchestra of Chicago	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

Bass Soloist	Handel: Messiah	Palm Beach, Phoenix & Pittsburgh Symphonies; St. Paul Chamber Orchestra	2022; '19; '19; '15
Bass Soloist	Mozart: Requiem	Palm Beach Symphony	2021
Soloist	Pasión Latina	Lyric Opera of Chicago	2020
Bass Soloist	Beethoven: Symphony No. 9	Master Chorale S. Florida; Macon Symphony	2020; '13
Bass Soloist	Bach: Magnificat	Master Chorale of South Florida	2019
Soloist	Representing USA	BBC Cardiff Singer of the World	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	Schubert: Mass No. 5 in Ab	Apollo Chorus of Chicago	2015
Bass Soloist	Mozart Cminor Mass, Dvorak Te Deum	Apollo Chorus of Chicago; Elmhurst Symphony	2014
Bass Soloist	Schubert: Mass No. 6 in Eb	Grant Park Music Festival	2013
Bass Soloist	Bernstein: Songfest	Ravinia Festival	2013
Bass Soloist	Beethoven: Choral Fantasy	Boston Symphony Orchestra	2012
Bass Soloist	Stravinsky: Les Noces	Tanglewood Music Center Orchestra	2012

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CRITICAL ACCLAIM

LE NOZZE DI FIGARO – VIRGINIA OPERA

"As the Count, bass-baritone Richard Ollarsaba didn't just have the tall-dark-and-handsome bit going for him, but also robust, flavorful, agile vocalism...he delivered his Act III aria with particular panache. Ollarsaba's portrayal of the amoral aristocrat deftly conveyed a sense of entitlement as well as a telling bit of insecurity, making his gorgeously sculpted "Contessa, perdono" all the more affecting."
- *Opera News*

"In a good cast, the standout performance(s) came from bass-baritone Richard Ollarsaba as the Count... He possesses an appealing voice matched by well-executed vocals and a commanding stage presence; he was an excellent choice for the role of the Count."
- *Operagene*

"Ollarsaba's portrayal of the Count was outstanding. From the start there was an air of aristocratic entitlement with a whole lot of Al Bundy incompetence thrown in for good measure."
- *digitalbeat magazine*

"...Count Almaviva, marvelously played by bass-baritone Richard Ollarsaba" - *Virginian-Pilot*

DON GIOVANNI – OPERA CAROLINA

"Dashing, cruel, and overflowing with conceit, bass-baritone Richard Ollarsaba made a stunning debut as Giovanni"
- *Classical Voice North Carolina*

MOZART'S REQUIEM – PALM BEACH SYMPHONY

"and Richard Ollarsaba's smooth, darkly colored bass held up the lower vocal end." -*South Florida Classical Review*

"The quartet was efficient overall, but captivating the audience were Redmon and Ollarsaba, who both exhibited robust voices with clarity and depth."
- *Palm Beach Daily News*

DON GIOVANNI – OPERA GRAND RAPIDS

"Richard Ollarsaba, who plays Don Giovanni, commanded the stage from the first moment he set foot on it. Tall, swaggering, and thin as a rock star, he brought a devilish charisma to the role... It wouldn't have meant much if he couldn't sing; thankfully, he could, and did, in a deep, thick bass-baritone that soared confidently above the music."
- *The Rapidian*

LE NOZZE DI FIGARO – NEW ZEALAND OPERA

"Figaro sung by Richard Ollarsaba performed with a rich controlled voice, his every gesture finely tuned."
- *NZArts Review*

"Susanna (Joanna Foote) and Figaro (Richard Ollarsaba) were most charming as the central pair. . . Ollarsaba similarly played superbly off the other characters and sang with healthy resonance and smooth tone throughout, changing noticeably from jovial (if sometimes clueless) trickster to a deeper, sympathetic character in his angry scene in Act 4."
- *Bachtrack*

PASIÓN LATINA – LYRIC OPERA OF CHICAGO

"Bass-baritone Richard Ollarsaba fielded a rousing, testosterone-infused performance of Mexican songwriter Manuel Esperón's dramatic ranchero song "¡Ay, Jalisco, no te rajes!"
- *Opera News*

CARMEN – KENTUCKY OPERA

"One of the most memorable occurrences of the evening was the entrance of Richard Ollarsaba's Escamillo. Donned in a beautiful pin-striped suit, dapper to the nines and with a tight barbered scruff, he was a vision of want and desire. But as he began to sing the Toreador song, I know I heard one or more members of the audience, if not the singers on stage, make an audible gasp of "Wow". And deservedly so. Rich undertones and a velvety top make his Escamillo one of the best that I have heard in recent past."
- *Arts-Louisville.com*

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"- *Classical Voice North Carolina*

PITTSBURGH SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA - MISSA IN TEMPORE BELLI

"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." - *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." - *Classical Voice North Carolina*

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*

VIRGINIA 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" - *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" - *Post Bulletin*

"Richard Ollarsaba displays a rich voice throughout his range" - *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." - *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." - *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)." - *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." - *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.” - *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.”
- *Chicago Classical Review*

MINNESOTA OPERA - CARMEN

“Richard Ollarsaba (as toreador Escamillo) visually and aurally lives up to his barihunk reputation.”
- *Twin Cities Daily Planet*

RYAN OPERA CENTER - RISING STARS

“...Ollarsaba strutted impressively through the Animal Trainer’s wry prologue to Alban Berg’s “Lulu”...”
- *Chicago Tribune*

“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.” - *Seen and Heard International*

“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”
- *Opera Today*

“Bass-baritone Richard Ollarsaba went head to head with 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.”
- *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*.”
- *YourObserver.com*

CIVIC ORCHESTRA OF CHICAGO/ROC - LES MAMELLES DE TIRÉSÍAS

“The robust-voiced bass-baritone Richard Ollarsaba was a hunky hoot as the Policeman.” - *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.”
- *Tulsa World*

RYAN OPERA CENTER - RISING STARS

“Richard Ollarsaba was both poignant and stirring in Figaro’s fourth act scene from Mozart’s ‘The Marriage of Figaro’.”
- *Chicago Sun-Times*

“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...”
- *Opera Today*

“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.”
- *Seen and Heard International*

“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.”- *Chicago Tribune*

MINNESOTA OPERA - TURANDOT

“Richard Ollarsaba’s understated portrayal of the exiled Timur was tremendously affecting.” - *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.”
- *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.”
- *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.”
- *Classical Voice North Carolina*