

MICHAEL MAYES

www.michaelmayesbaritone.com

BIOGRAPHY

With a “powerful” voice and an “arresting stage presence”, baritone Michael Mayes is known for his consummate portrayals of modern operatic masterpieces as well as iconic characters in the standard operatic repertoire. Originally from Cut and Shoot, Texas, Mayes has performed with opera companies



across the United States including Washington National Opera, Dallas Opera, Nashville Opera, Boston Lyric Opera, Des Moines Metro Opera, Central City Opera, New Orleans Opera, Michigan Opera Theater, and Fort Worth Opera.

The 2015-2016 season included his debut with Dallas Opera and San Diego Opera in the world premiere of Jake Heggie’s *Great Scott*, Jack Rance in Opera Omaha’s *La fanciulla del West*, Manfred in Heggie’s *Out of the Darkness with Music of Remembrance*, Scarpia in *Tosca* with Central City Opera, and *Dead Man Walking* with New Orleans Opera. In the 2016-2017 season, Mr. Mayes will make his debut with Washington National Opera in his celebrated role of Joseph De Rocher in *Dead Man Walking* in addition taking his De Rocher to Pensacola Opera and appearing with Boston Lyric Opera as Escamillo in *Carmen*, Nashville Opera as Older Thompson in *Glory Denied*, and returning to Dallas Opera as Doug in *Everest*. Future seasons include debuts with Lyric Opera Kansas City and the Teatro Real in Madrid, where he’ll reprise his role of Joseph De Rocher alongside operatic superstar, Joyce di Donato. Also, he’ll return to Central City Opera, Atlanta Opera and San Diego Opera and make his debut in 2018 at BBC Symphony at The Barbican and Teatro Real. (should include the performance at the Barbican in London as well)

Engagements for the 2014-2015 season included Charlie in Jake Heggie’s *Three Decembers* with UrbanArias, Eisenstein in *Die Fledermaus* with Syracuse Opera, a return to Michigan Opera Theater for his role debut as Sharpless in *Madama Butterfly*, Escamillo in *La Tragédie de Carmen* with Opera Delaware, Marcello in *La bohème* with

Pensacola Opera, a reprise of his acclaimed Joseph De Rocher with Opera Parallèle in San Francisco, Older Thompson in *Glory Denied* with Opera Memphis, and Lawrence in *The Wreckers* with Bard SummerScape. In the past few seasons, Mr. Mayes has made many important role and company debuts. In the 2011-2012 season Mr. Mayes debuted the role of Joseph De Rocher in *Dead Man Walking* in a performance described by *The Tulsa World* as “an experience those who saw it will never forget”, and has since sung the role with Madison Opera, Central City Opera, and Eugene Opera. In 2014, he debuted the role of Rigoletto with Boston Lyric Opera to great critical acclaim. Additionally, he debuted with the Gotham Chamber Opera in *Baden-Baden 1927*, created the role of Adam in *The Cantic of the Black Madonna* with Anima Mundi Productions, joined UrbanArias for *Photo-Op*, returned to Ft. Worth Opera as Elder Thompson in *Glory Denied* and Kinesias in *Lysistrata*. Mr. Mayes has also performed Eisenstein in *Die Fledermaus* for Opera on the James, Figaro in *Il barbiere di Siviglia* with Pensacola Opera, Don Giovanni with the Green Mountain Opera Festival, Des Moines Metro Opera, and Shreveport Opera, Silvio in *Pagliacci* with Kentucky Opera and Nashville Opera, Valentin in *Faust* with Opera Birmingham, Marcello in *La bohème* with Eugene Opera and Des Moines Metro Opera, Escamillo in *Carmen* with Kentucky Opera, Danilo in *Merry Widow* with Shreveport Opera, and Papageno in *Die Zauberflöte* with Michigan Opera Theater.

Mr. Mayes joined the roster of the Metropolitan Opera in the 2009-2010 season for their production of *Gianni Schicchi*. Other career highlights include the title role in *Don Giovanni* and Dandini in *La cenerentola* with Connecticut Opera, Conte Almaviva in *Le nozze di Figaro* with Des Moines Metro Opera, the title role in *Il barbiere di Siviglia* for Sugar Creek Opera, Orff's *Carmina Burana* with the Oklahoma Ballet and San Antonio Symphony, Guglielmo in *Così fan tutte* with Arizona Opera, Marcello in *La bohème* with Duluth Festival Opera, Shreveport Opera, New Britain Symphony, Skylight Opera Theater, and Opera on the James, Conte di Luna in *Il trovatore* with Eugene Opera, Lancelot in Augusta Opera's *Camelot*, Top in *The Tender Land* with the Charleston Symphony Orchestra, Mercutio in *Roméo et Juliette* with PORTOpera, and Peter in Opera Company of Philadelphia's production of *Hänsel und Gretel*. Mr. Mayes performed Edward Gaines in Margaret Garner opposite Mezzo-soprano Denyce Graves with The Opera Company of Philadelphia and Opera Carolina to critical acclaim.

A graduate of the University of North Texas, Mr. Mayes' honors include 3rd place winner at the Metropolitan National Council Regional Auditions in Chicago, the Entergy Young Texas Artist Competition Vocalist Award, John Alexander Award, the John Moriarty Award, and an advanced division winner at the Anton Guadagno Vocal Competition.

ROLE LIST

Starbuck	Moby Dick	Pittsburgh Opera	2018
Joseph De Rocher	Dead Man Walking	BBC Symphony at The Barbican	2018
Joseph De Rocher	Dead Man Walking	Teatro Real, Madrid	2018
Beck Weathers	Everest	Lyric Opera Of Kansas City	2017
Escamillo	Carmen	Central City Opera	2017
Doug	Everest	Dallas Opera	2017
–	Gala	Fort Worth Opera	2017
Joseph De Rocher	Dead Man Walking	Pensacola Opera	2017
Joseph De Rocher	Dead Man Walking	Washington National Opera	2017
Soldier	Soldier Songs	Des Moines Metro Opera	2017
Older Thompson	Glory Denied	Nashville Opera	2016
Escamillo	Carmen	Boston Lyric Opera	2016
Scarpia	Tosca	Central City Opera	2016
Manfred	Out of the Darkness (Heggie)	Music of Remembrance	2016
Joseph De Rocher	Dead Man Walking	New Orleans Opera; Opera Parallèle; Central City; Madison Opera; Eugene Opera; Tulsa Opera	2016; '15; '14; '14; '13; '12
Jack Rance	La fanciulla del West	Opera Omaha	2016
Eisenstein	Die Fledermaus	Baltimore Concert Opera; Syracuse Opera	2015; '14
Wendell Swann	Great Scott (Heggie)	Dallas Opera; San Diego Opera	2015; '16
Lawrence	The Wreckers	Bard SummerScape	2015
Escamillo	La Tragédie de Carmen	Opera Delaware	2015
Older Thompson	Glory Denied	Opera Memphis; Fort Worth Opera	2015; '13
Marcello	La bohème	Pensacola Opera	2015
Sharpless	Madama Butterfly	Michigan Opera Theater	2014
Charlie	Three Decembers	UrbanArias	2014
Adam	Canticle of the Black Madonna	Anima Mundi Productions	2014
Rigoletto	Rigoletto	Boston Lyric Opera	2014

Escamillo	Carmen	Pensacola Opera	2014
Multiple roles	Baden Baden 1927	Gotham Chamber Opera	2013
Don Giovanni	Don Giovanni	Green Mountain Music; Des Moines Metro Opera	2013; '12
Soloist	Carmina Burana	New Haven Symphony	2012
Politician	Photo-Op	UrbanArias	2012
Eisenstein	Die Fledermaus	Opera on the James	2012
Kinesias	Lysistrata	Fort Worth Opera Festival	2012
Silvio	Pagliacci	Nashville Opera	2011
Danilo	The Merry Widow	Shreveport Opera	2011
Escamillo	Carmen	Kentucky Opera	2011
Marcello	La bohème	Des Moines Metro Opera	2011
Papageno	Die Zauberflöte	Michigan Opera Theater	2011
Sam/Silvio	Trouble in Tahiti/Pagliacci	Tacoma Opera	2011
Valentin	Faust	Opera Birmingham	2011
Silvio	Pagliacci	Kentucky Opera	2010
Don Giovanni	Don Giovanni	Shreveport Opera	2010
Count Almaviva	Le nozze di Figaro	Des Moines Metro Opera	2010
Figaro	Il barbiere di Siviglia	Sugar Creek Opera	2010
Soloist	Carmina Burana	Oklahoma Ballet; San Antonio Symphony	2010; '09
Marcello	La bohème	Shreveport Opera	2010
Marco ©	Gianni Schicchi	Metropolitan Opera	2009
Guglielmo	Così fan tutte	Arizona Opera	2009
Morales	Carmen	Fort Worth Opera	2009
Conte di Luna	Il trovatore	Eugene Opera	2009
Don Giovanni	Don Giovanni	Connecticut Opera	2008
Top	The Tender Land	Charleston Symphony	2008
Dandini	La Cenerentola	Connecticut Opera	2008
Father	Hänsel und Gretel	Opera Company of Philadelphia	2007
Lancelot	Camelot	Augusta Opera	2007
Figaro	Il barbiere di Siviglia	Duluth Festival Opera	2007
Ping	Turandot	Michigan Opera Theater	2007
Edward Gaines	Margaret Garner	Opera Carolina	2006
Judge	Margaret Garner	Opera Company of Philadelphia	2006

ACCLAIMS

Washington National Opera – Dead Man Walking

“Michael Mayes ... did a strong job embodying Joseph in an intense, tortured and laudably dramatic performance.” - The Washington Post

“Michael Mayes plays Joseph as large as the role needs, but never goes overboard. Indeed, it is his understated performance that makes his terror at the end all the more disturbing and meaningful. A beautiful, gratifyingly dense baritone, Mayes relishes the score’s long, sonorous notes, but he simply stuns with his dexterity. In Joseph’s mini-aria, in which he imagines peaceful evenings on the lake with a woman, Mayes moves seamlessly between opera and jazzy-blues, his voice gliding like liquid gold. Extraordinary.” - Metro Weekly

“Baritone Michael Mayes made a much stronger company debut as Joseph de Rocher. He had the necessary snarling menace as the tattooed convict, convincingly muscled to be believable as the villain he was. He could also croon sweetly at the top of his range, heard as he foolishly tried to seduce Sister Helen at their first meeting and recalling the character’s idolizing of Elvis Presley.” - Washington Classical Review

"Michael Mayes is dangerously good as he inhabits fully the explosive power of the title character. He has been living inside the skin of Joseph De Rocher for more than sixteen years. Mayes seems to have given up acting the role long ago – he is Joe. With his brooding heavy forehead, his aggressive sucking on cigarettes, his knee jerking in frustration then trembling in fear, and his pacing like a caged predatory animal, the work is seamless. In his first scene with Sister Helen he springs towards the barrier between them, and she recoils, as did I, believing he could go through the wall if he had a mind to.

His voice makes me hate him one moment and bleed for him the next. His Cajun drawl can seduce, as he slides between the notes of “A warm nigh, a cold bottle of beer, down by the river wid’ your woman.” He shimmies his hips forward on his chair and slouches, throwing his head back as his voice lifts and lands onto a high note, something between a squeal and a ribbon of sound.

He begins the second act counting his pushups into the high 50’s while singing. He weeps, he howls, he yells. He makes us stare at a man stripped of dignity, exposed and

human. The man can make a big sound for sure and you feel it in your bones, but is it 'pretty' opera? Truth is beautiful." -DC Theater Scene

"As the convicted prisoner, Joseph De Rocher, Baritone Michael Mayes is a powerful stage presence. Mr. Mayes possesses an engaging physicality and he plays his role with an edge of ironic dry humor about his eventual fate. This makes the very realistic finale of this opera all the more unsettling and spellbinding. Mr. Mayes has a voice that would make the Gods weep with envy. Mr. Mayes' aria when he muses about his family background and upbringing was delivered with lush deep and resonant chest tones. Mr. Mayes' vocalizing when he sang of his impending torment was encased with pain and agony, and his duets with Ms. Lindsey were well paced and showed his character's reluctance to admit facts." -DC Metro Theater Arts

"Mayes is excellent in his signature role of De Rocher, acting as a physical manifestation of the challenge facing Sister Helen: how to find the humanity in someone who appears to feel no remorse? Mayes' baritone paints De Rocher as harsh and unrefined, with unexpected tenderness bubbling up under the brashness in pivotal moments." -BroadwayWorld.com

"Baritone Michael Mayes performs something of a miracle. Prodded by his character's plight and the interplay with Lindsey, Mayes makes De Rocher not necessarily likeable, but forgivable, with his strong, insistent voice and his gymnastic physical self-torture." -The Georgetowner

"Michael Mayes delivered a big, magnetic stage presence for Joseph De Rocher, supported by a warm, even baritone that proved equally at home tackling the music's sliding jazzy motifs and the more demanding passages as De Rocher wrestles with his guilt." -Parterre Box

"But what gives the opera heft isn't the crime or the inevitable ending, but the two principals, Sister Prejean and De Rocher, both the relationship between the two and their own personal evolutions. And this production boasts two capable principals, mezzo Kate Lindsey as Prejean and baritone Michael Mayes as De Rocher" -Washington City Paper

"Mayes, a tall and muscled singer, had a voice as strong as he looked. He guided us through his burdened and conflicted character making us hate him and forgive him in our own way." - MD Theater Guide

"I must tell you of the first entrance of Michael Mayes into the rehearsal room for a run through. (He plays the killer Joseph De Rocher and been out sick for a week.) Standing six-foot-one, and giving the appearance of being even taller, next to Kate Lindsey who plays Sister Helen, towers over her. Despite shackles that rattle and create a drag-and-shuffle to his walk, he seemed like a wild animal that might spring and break those chains any minute. He has lived in this role through several productions; his face draws down heavily until all you can see is his heavy brow like some pre-human link. She showed us a grotesque coiled-with-rage bestiality hiding a primal fear. Later, I imagined this is what poverty, ignorance, and a life-and-death sentence in prison can do to some people. But in the moments after his first scene, even in the bare rehearsal room setting, I'd sat frozen, both hating and feeling for this terrifying man." - DC Theatre Scene

Des Moines Metro Opera – Soldier Songs

"And panelist David Neely, DMMO music director and the conductor of this production, echoed the full-house audience's standing ovation when he described what a moving experience it had been for him to make drama with an artist as talented and committed, and as brutally honest, as Mayes." - The Des Moines Register

"...one of the chief tenets of opera has always been the primacy of the human voice as a teller of stories and a projector of emotion, and Mayes was extraordinarily effective at both tasks..." - The Des Moines Register

"...Mayes spoke, enthusiastically and movingly..." - The Des Moines Register

"Baritone Michael Mayes' charged performance...was practically unprecedented in DMMO's almost half-century history." - The Des Moines Register

"I don't think I've ever come away from an opera quite so shaken as I did from Sunday's Des Moines Metro Opera final staging of David T. Little's "Soldier Songs." - The Des Moines Register

Nashville Opera – Glory Denied

"It's impossible for Nashville Opera to have predicted how poignant this line, sung first by baritone Michael Mayes as Older Thompson in Tom Cipullo's minimalist chamber opera Glory Denied, really is. There's an almost physical laceration that many of us are feeling right now. It's divisive, it's tragic, it's devastating." - Shmopera

"Michael May[e]s gives us all of that subtext in his performance. He sings fearlessly, his voice velvety, vivid, and lush. Vocally, he gets out of his character's way in favor of revealing the range of emotions that Older Jim (or any of us, really) bears at any moment." - Schmopera

"Baritone Michael Mayes as Older Jim sucked the breath out of the room. More than once." - Schmopera

Boston Lyric Opera – Carmen

"...baritone Michael Mayes looked as charming and confident in the role of Escamillo, the Toreador, as his voice sounded alluring." - The Harvard Crimson

"The cartoonishly masculine, granite-jawed Michael Mayes brought a shyster's swagger and a robust sound as Escamillo." - The Boston Musical Intelligencer

Central City Opera – Tosca

"But the most important aspect of any Tosca are the singers who portray the three key characters, and all of them were more than able. . . Baritone Michael Mayes clearly enjoyed himself as Scarpia; he has the imposing presence and vocal chops to embody the character's villainy." -Opera News

"Michael Mayes made an overwhelming impression in his debut as Baron Scarpia. His is a powerful, booming, dark baritone that has a searing presence. Mr. Mayes is also a highly imaginative singer capable of great diversity of effects. I have never experienced quite such a sinuous Va, Tosca, so laced with menace as he seemed to taste her name as he uttered it. He not only had the reserves for the Big Sell moments, but also could command a skillful legato. As a Las Vegan, I can paraphrase the Cosmopolitan's promo when I say Mr. Mayes' colossal Scarpia is just "the right amount of wrong." - Opera Today

"Baritone Michael Mayes relishes his role debut as the amoral, lustful and vicious chief of police Baron Scarpia. CCO audiences might remember his tremendous performance as Joseph De Rocher in 2014's "Dead Man Walking." Mayes is a dominating presence both vocally and physically. His line "Tosca, you make me forget God" at the end of Act I is chilling. In his hands,

Scarpia's lust for Tosca and hatred of Cavaradossi is both frightening and convincing as he tortures them in both physical and emotional ways." - Daily Camera

Music of Remembrance – Out of Darkness (Heggie)

"Manfred Lewin, another teen who dies at the hands of Auschwitz murderers, reminds Krystyna that "a survivor is not a hero ... a survivor is just a survivor." With his eyes closed in painful recalling, Michael Mayes voices Krystyna's memories of him and what he and others like him suffered. He does so in a majestic baritone that rises from tortuous depths to a volume that startles and then backs off effortlessly, leaving in the air a memory now silenced no more. . . What we saw and heard in a glimpse in Act One of Michael Mayes as Manfred now becomes a tour de force performance in Act Two where he is the sole singer, bringing a range of vocals astounding to behold. He playfully flirts in lilted notes full of tease the aged Gad (and even mounts Gad's bed with chest bare and hips pumping). But he also recalls in a powerful voice that strikes like a lightning bolt the screams of an eighteen-year-old's death and of his own pain and terror being strung up on poles in "Der Singende Wald" (the singing forest). When he finally utters in shaking voice how the horrors were "beyond comprehension," that final word is sung with such a vibration of feelings to send shudders through the audience." -Theater Eddys

San Diego Opera – Great Scott

"Character parts . . . Michael Mayes as a buff baritone, . . . were exactly as they should be." -LA Times

"And, as the hottie baritone (who's never sure if the audience is applauding for his voice or his bod), the highly engaging Michael Mayes.... As the bari-tenor comedy team (the hunky and the chunky?), Michael Mayes and Garrett Sorenson make a hilarious pair; they shine both vocally and dramatically." -Times of San Diego

"Baritone Michael Mayes and Tenor Garrett Sorenson pretended to labor at impersonating stereotypical operatic baritones and tenors, preening and attempting to outsize one another in clever duets—of the "Anything You Can Sing, I can Sing Louder" genre—designed by Heggie to do nothing more than that. Rich, flexible voices that complemented each other—I was surprised that they did not launch into an "impromptu" rendition of the tenor-baritone blockbuster from The Pearl Fishers just for the fun of it. Sorenson took pride in his tenorial girth, and Mayes allowed us to take in his baritonal buff physique. Folks who did not know the

term "barihunk" before they came to Great Scott surely understood it after watching Mayes perform shirtless in scenes from Rosa Dolorosa." -San Diego Story

Dallas Opera – Great Scott

"Two other excellent singers, tenor Rodell Rosel and baritone Michael Mayes, fill out the cast for the imaginary opera, with plenty of would-be divo antics." -Dallas Morning News

"Two unadulterated stereotypes are played by tenor Rodell Rosel and baritone Michael Mayes, both overly proud of their high notes. Mayes character, a sendup of barihunks, is even prouder of his pecs and abs and takes his shirt off at a moment's notice. Both play it up but also have the high-note goods to pull it off." -TheaterJones.com

"Mayes is memorable as the loveable meathead Swann, always ready for a break from rehearsal and eager to show off his svelte physique. Together, Rosel and Swann provide playful, gratuitous virtuosity and more than a few laughs." -Front Row

"Mayes not only sang quite well as Wendell Swann, but also managed to pump his gym-toned pecs and strut about in a most hilarious manner." -Classical Voice America

Bard SummerScape – The Wreckers

"As Lawrence, Michael Mayes did a remarkable job of projecting the text with his focused baritone." -Opera News

"The baritone Michael Mayes made a strong impression as Lawrence, Avis's father." -New York Times

"Her father, Lawrence the lighthouse keeper, is played by baritone Michael Mayes, booming out effectively" -Bachtrack.com

New Orleans Opera – Dead Man Walking

"Musically, the casting of the leads could not have been bettered. Baritone Michael Mayes, in his sixth production of the opera, embodied the conflicted character of Joseph De Rocher with an almost eerie intensity. . . this was a consummate performance, powerfully sung and acted." -Opera News

Opera Parallèle - Dead Man Walking

"Michael Mayes, by far the best singer and most convincing actor in the cast, played Joe De Rocher, the name given to the convicted rapist-murderer waiting to die in a Louisiana prison. He lifted scenes with Sister Helen (Jennifer Rivera)—Joe's confidante, and the work's nominal star—and with Joe's mother (Catherine Cook) into moments of great musical and dramatic force." -Wall Street Journal

"As convicted death row inmate Joseph De Rocher, baritone Michael Mayes sang and acted with animalistic ferocity. Loud and blunt, the frightening murderer's humanity gradually emerged in his many scenes with Sister Helen, especially a touching scene where they swap Elvis Presley stories." - Opera News

"What this production had that the premiere lacked was a baritone who could give a full measure of dramatic and musical heft to the role of de Rocher. Michael Mayes is not a singer known around the Bay Area, but his performance was nothing short of phenomenal — a feral but emotionally vulnerable characterization given voice in robust and impeccably controlled singing." -SFGate

"Although not always on stage, baritone Michael Mayes projects an ominous presence as the convict De Rocher. With a powerful, rich, dark voice he also has the physical attributes of a hardened criminal. With his muscular, tattooed body and masculine looks, he pulls the audience into his world and pending doom. But as much as we would want to hate him there is tenderness in his acting and singing thanks to the complex, multilayered and lyrical score by Heggie who pulls from classical, modern and blues music traditions." -Living Out Loud, LA

Central City Opera - Dead Man Walking

"As the doomed Joseph De Rocher, baritone Michael Mayes captured the repulsive persona of a cold blooded murderer. His vocal production and physical presence made me rethink what is possible from an opera singer. His march toward death and final asking for forgiveness was shockingly and beautifully rendered." - The Gazette

"As de Rocher, Michael Mayes is downright scary, tattooed in swastikas, angry and insulting even to the woman present to save his soul. He understands the instancy present in a man with moments to live and he sings that way. He pushes his baritone as far as it will go into Heggie's difficult score and he handles the touches of blues, rock and gospel the composer eases into the work... Mayes' performance is gripping. . . "

-The Denver Post

". . . baritone Michael Mayes is an elemental force as Joseph De Rocher, the condemned man of the title. Mayes has made this his signature role. It is physically and vocally exhausting, even without considering the way the audience must perceive the character at the beginning and at the end." -Daily Camera

Madison Opera - Dead Man Walking

"And then there is Michael Mayes, who Heggie has described as incomparable in his portrayal of the tortured convict. . . As frightening and convincing as Mayes is from the black and white standpoint of criminal evil, it is a far greater trick to get us to feel any varying degrees of remorse by the end as we see him die by lethal injection, but Mayes manages that, too." -Madison Magazine

"If Mack's performance leaves one admiring Sister Helen's heart and courage, it's in part because Mayes' De Rocher throws everything he can at her. Profanity and hatred, as well as growing fear, are both jarring and effective in his gorgeous baritone..." -The Cap Times

"Of course, it is the two protagonists who are central to any production. . . And Michael Mayes is astounding as the blustering but inwardly ravaged DeRocher. The interaction of these two singers, both vocally and theatrically, is extraordinary." -Madison Isthmus

Tulsa Opera - Dead Man Walking

"And every aspect works so well that Tulsa Opera's "Dead Man Walking" is absolutely gripping from the start of its elegiac overture to the final iteration of the hymn that, in its child-like simplicity, sums up the hope of us all. . . The production is anchored by searing, incandescent performances by Kirstin Chavez and Michael Mayes as the nun and the convict at the center of the story. . . It is, simply, a triumph — the best production Tulsa Opera has staged in more than a decade. . . Chavez and Mayes are exemplary — they sing this music as naturally as breathing and make these characters as real and believable as can be." -Tulsa World

Albany Records and Fort Worth Opera – cast recording Glory Denied

"All the singers in this production deserve great praise. All have fine young voices, but special praise is due Michael Mayes, who uses his strong baritone to project every heart-breaking emotion of the older Jim." -American Record Guide

"Michael Mayes, as Older Thompson, sings with a heroic baritone that magnifies his suffering when appropriate, but he never resorts to self-pity, no matter how great his physical or psychic suffering." - Opera News

Opera Memphis - Glory Denied

"At the center is Older Thompson, sung by baritone MICHAEL MAYES with power and nuance. Mayes has performed this role before and it's difficult to imagine how, with his skill at the dramatic and in singing, it might be done better. He has the bearing of an officer yet we see and hear him crumbling as life shakes out of control. There are times when Mayes mimics his captors who demand he obey rules – at such moments he offers a malignant, chilling smile." -The Commercial Appeal

Boston Lyric Opera – Rigoletto

"It is difficult to believe that Michael Mayes was undertaking the title role for the first time. Mayes captured the many facets of the deformed jester, first mocking and then raging at the members of the depraved court, as his attempts to protect his daughter moved from steely to tragically futile. This gifted baritone was never less than compelling dramatically, but his performance of "Cortigiani, vil razza dannata" was superb." - Opera News

"Mayes handles well his character's cognitive dissonance as the narcissistic court jester and the caring/sensitive father. His baritone, powerful yet fully controlled, shifted seamlessly in color between expressions of terror, pleading, and angry vengeance in his astounding "Povero Rigoletto." He was well matched by the rising star soprano Nadine Sierra . . . their duet "Figlia, mio padre" was, hands down, the best number of the evening, not for its vocal pyrotechnics or acting, but for their nuanced interpretation and sensitive musicality." -Boston Musical Intelligencer

"Making his Lyric Opera debut as well as singing his first Rigoletto, Michael Mayes was compelling at the hunchbacked jester of lore. His baritone is generously scaled and on Friday, with a few exceptions, he deployed it well to convey both sides of this character who both cruelly mocks the world and then finds himself a tragic victim of its cruelty. The element of class critique that "Rigoletto" inherits from the Victor Hugo play on

which it is based, also registers in Mayes's portrayal, particularly his pointed rendering of Verdi's extraordinary aria, 'Cortigiani, vil razza dannata,' in which he lashes out at the vile courtiers who have abducted Gilda for the Duke's pleasure." - The Boston Globe

"As Rigoletto, baritone Michael Mayes, also in his first BLO performance, caught the full range of the character's jocularly as well as the dark anger and sorrowful depths of his tragic downfall. His amber-toned "Cortigiani" the jester's pleading to the Duke's courtiers, made for a pitiable and poignant moment, and Mayes' singing in the final scene was heart-breaking. . . Mayes and Sierra struck a fine chemistry as father and daughter, their voices melding with the other in a sweet blend." - Boston Classical Review

Michigan Opera Theatre – Madama Butterfly

"Michael Mayes' rich, engaging baritone and realistic dramatic style created a compassionate Sharpless whose paternal care for Butterfly warmed the stage." -Opera News

"The standout vocal performance, however, is that of Michael Mayes as Sharpless, the U.S. Consul in Nagasaki, Japan. His flawless [baritone] carries through the audience as consistently and powerfully as any of the instruments in the orchestra pit." -Daily Tribune

"Baritone Michael Mayes' warm, orotund voice served him well in making the U.S. Consul Sharpless a just and trustworthy character." -The Detroit News

"Michael Mayes brought real depth and conscience to his portrayal of the consul Sharpless." - Detroit Free Press Syracuse Opera – Die Fledermaus

"As Rosalinde's philandering husband, Eisenstein, baritone Michael Mayes sang with a commanding, booming baritone that would have been perfectly suited to a large opera house such as the Met. . . Mayes's thickly textured baritone appeared handsome and well focused, and when he sang by himself I marveled at his confidence and vocal presence. . . As a comedic actor, Mayes was beyond reproach, and his presence onstage invariably commanded the attention of the audience." -Opera Today

"Baritone Michael Mayes, whom I saw and loved in Madison Opera's Dead Man Walking last spring, was outstanding as Eisenstein, a role that couldn't be more different from Joseph De Rocher. His singing was strong and polished, and he seemed to relish every

opportunity to be funny. His high voice made me wish I'd seen his Rigoletto last season, and any other Verdi baritone roles he has on offer." -Taminophile.com

UrbanArias – Three Decembers

"and Michael Mayes as Charlie were as strong dramatically as they were musically . . . his body language as Maddy dropped her bombshell about his "Daddy," and at the memorial service as Bea reflected on her relationship with Maddy, was eloquent. . . - The Washington Post

Des Moines Metro Opera –Don Giovanni

"Michael Mayes traded in his habitually genial persona for a skillful portrait of the enigmatic Don; this guy was one sadistic, irresistibly attractive, alpha-male jerk. Better yet, he sang beautifully. Lobby buzz made much of his shirtless scene (yes, he looked great), but that was a mere plus in his intelligently conceived performance. . . This was possibly the most satisfying Giovanni I have encountered on the regional opera scene in the U.S." -Opera News

"For three hours the swaggering Texas baritone Michael Mayes embodied the rascally title role with such appalling conviction that at the curtain call, it was hard to separate the actor from the character he played. . . " -Des Moines Register

Connecticut Opera – Don Giovanni

"Michael Mayes amplified the obsessive side of the Don with ramped-up confidence and a fiery vocal performance. His charisma in the mandolin serenade "Deh vieni alla finestra" and in the duet with Zerlina, "Là ci darem la mano", made his attraction seem a force of nature." -Hartford Courant

"In the title role, baritone Michael Mayes has Giovanni's much steeper vocal and dramatic demands well within his grasp. . . Michael Mayes has not only the looks and the voice for Don Giovanni, but also the dramatic chops to keep his shirt on and portray the nastier-than-usual Don this production calls for. He is not your usual lovable rogue; by the time we encounter him, his best days are behind him. We see him constantly angered and bewildered as he suddenly begins to encounter failure in the chase. Clearly, this is a man unaccustomed to being thwarted – one who believes pleasure is his right and always comes first. Still, he knows how to throw a great party. And in his formidable "champagne aria," a tongue-twisting race to enumerate all the delectations in store for

his guests, Mayes actually had the orchestra chasing his tempo rather than the other way around.” - Republican American

Fort Worth Opera – Lysistrata

“Baritone Michael Mayes wields a dreadnaught-class voice as an Athenian commander. . .” - Fort Worth Weekly

Michigan Opera Theater – Magic Flute

“And in his role debut, baritone Michael Mayes clearly won the hearts of the balcony gang as Papageno, the lusty but timorous bird catcher who gets looped into accompanying the prince on his rescue quest and ends up enduring trials he'd really rather not. Mayes proved to be a delightful sufferer who could also deliver Papageno's endearing arias with equal parts of spirit and vocal authority.” - Detroit News

Eugene Opera – La bohème

“Mayes had the most powerful voice among the four leading singers, and sometimes he overwhelmed the others, but for the most part he used his warm baritone and ease on the stage to project the volatile character of the painter.” - Register Guard

Connecticut Opera – La Cenerentola

“A particular standout was Michael Mayes as Dandini, the servant who gleefully trades places with the prince... met all comedic challenges with no vocal compromises in bel canto style.” -Republican American