

# Biography



A native of New Jersey, Nic received his formal education at the Oberlin Conservatory of Music in vocal performance, conducting and theater work with Herbert Blau. He subsequently studied voice in Washington, D.C. with the late Todd Duncan, who created the role of Porgy in *Porgy and Bess*, while at the same time pursuing various conducting projects such as *Dido and Aeneas* at the American University and working as an ensemble member of The Theater Lab with Tony Abeson.

## **New York City**

Relocating to New York City, he continued projects as a singer and conductor while beginning his work as a stage director. In 1982, he received a fellowship from the National Institute of Music Theater to study with renowned Metropolitan Opera singer and vocal coach Alberta Masiello in a unique program designed to coalesce musical and theatrical values. In 1983, he was appointed Principal Stage Director and Artistic Advisor to the Kentucky Opera, a position he held until 1988 when, until 1990, he served as Director of Drama with the Metropolitan Opera Young Artist Development Program.

In the late 1980's he served as an assistant to Jean-Pierre Ponnelle on productions of *Lulu* in Munich and *Carmen* in Chicago and as associate director to Peter Sellars in developing his acclaimed production of *Così fan tutte*.

Since 1985 he has been active with the National Endowment for the Arts as an on-site evaluator and panelist for company and project grants. He was on the recommending panel of ARIA (Awards Recognizing Individual Artistry), an organization which provided individual grants in the amount of \$15,000 to promising young singers.

## **Artistic Director, Tulsa Opera**

From 1988-1993, he served as Artistic Director of Tulsa Opera. During his tenure there, he produced and directed two American premières: Verdi's *Le Trouvère* (the French version of *Il Trovatore*), and Rossini's *Armida*, both of which were broadcast on National Public Radio's "World of Opera" series.

He also produced and directed a critically acclaimed production of *La Traviata*, which was purchased by New York City Opera and presented during their 1991 and 1992 seasons.

Another innovative project while at Tulsa was The Spanish Trilogy: new productions of *Carmen*, *Fidelio*, and *Il Barbiere Di Siviglia* integrated into a cycle through a single concept and scenic design. These productions have since been presented in Dallas, Baltimore, Edmonton, Columbus, Nashville, and Winnipeg.

### **Stage Director**

As a freelance stage director, he has directed over two hundred productions with companies in North America, Europe, Australia and Asia. His fruitful relationship with the Houston Grand Opera and Seattle Opera has resulted in two widely presented co-productions: *Il Trovatore*, which has been seen in Seattle, San Francisco, Houston, Tulsa, Vancouver, Melbourne and at the Canadian Opera Company in Toronto, and *Norma*, which has been presented in Seattle, Houston, Los Angeles, Cincinnati, Dallas, Miami, Calgary and Palm Beach.

Additional work with Houston Grand Opera includes the world premiere of *Jackie O*, an opera based on the life of Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis that was also presented at Banff Center for the Arts in Alberta, Canada.

His work at the Canadian Opera Company includes *Lulu* (three act version), *Rigoletto*, which has also been presented in Edmonton, Tulsa, Ottawa, and Minnesota, *Jenůfa*, which was presented in the autumn of 1996 in Vancouver and at Cincinnati Opera in 1998, *Macbeth* and *Pelleas et Mélisande*. He was also the winner of a 2003 Dora Award for best theater production of the year (*Jenůfa*, at Canadian Opera Company)

For the Opera Theatre of St. Louis, he has directed *La Finta Giardiniera*, *Ariadne auf Naxos*, and *Iphigénie en Tauride*. The Minnesota Opera is another company which fostered his early work, where he has directed *Rusalka*, *Don Giovanni*, *Rigoletto*, and two world premieres: Libby Larsen's *Frankenstein*, *The Modern Prometheus*, and Robert Moran's *From the Towers of the Moon*.

### **Europe**

The 1993-94 season marked his European debut at Stadttheater Gießen with *La Fille du Régiment*. Its success led to subsequent engagements at that same theater for productions of *Idomeneo*, *Die Zauberflöte*, and *The Rake's Progress*. In addition, he directed *La Bohème* at the Tiroler Landestheater in Innsbruck, Austria, *Der fliegende Holländer* at Opera Ireland, *Street Scene* at Anhaltisches Theater Dessau in collaboration with the Kurt Weill International Festival, the world premiere of Lorenzo Ferraro's *La Conquista* at The Prague National Theater, *Tosca* at Theater Erfurt and a world premiere version of *Show Boat* at Stadttheater Bern.

The 1993 season also marked debuts with Boston Lyric Opera with the American premiere of the Neopolitan version of Bellini's *I Puritani*. In what is considered one of his most interesting projects, he directed a unique chamber version of Berg's *Wozzeck* in a co-production of the Banff Center for the Arts and Montreal Nouvelle Ensemble Moderne.

### **Artistic Director, Cincinnati Opera**

In 1996 Nic was appointed Artistic Director of Cincinnati Opera Association, which boasts an impressive heritage of opera — founded in 1920, it is the second oldest company in America. COA is a summer festival, presenting four productions during the months of June and July in Music Hall (an historic theater seating 3,400) and collaborating with the Cincinnati Symphony, which plays for all its productions.

Cincinnati Opera experienced astonishing growth during his tenure, including a doubling of the company budget, expansion of the repertoire, creation and presentation of new productions and the successful completion of The Festival Campaign, a \$12 million fundraising effort. He forged a new relationship with the Cincinnati Conservatory of Music, which has recently blossomed into an endowed program called *Opera Fusion*; he began a community-wide, very popular lecture series called *Opera Rap* which continues to this day; in his first year on the job he spearheaded a \$1 million fundraising effort for technical improvements to the theater and state-of-the-art lighting equipment; he re-instated and revitalized a Young Artists Training Program. Profiles in every major opera journal (*Opera News*, *OPERA*, *Opernwelt*, *Opera Now*, *International Arts Magazine*) all attest to the impressive growth and quality under his leadership. He was the 2003 winner of the *Cincinnati Post's* Post-Corbett Award for Individual Artist of the Year.

Company premieres: *Brundibár*, *Different Fields*, *Jenůfa*, *The Turn of the Screw*, *Pelléas et Mélisande*, *Bluebeard's Castle*, *Erwartung*, *Nabucco*, *Dead Man Walking*, *Elektra*, *La Voix humaine*, *The Seven Deadly Sins*, *Medusa* (world stage premiere), *Der Kaiser von Atlantis*, *The Maids* (U.S. premiere) and *Margaret Garner* (world premiere).

New Productions: *Brundibár*, *Different Fields*, *Don Giovanni*, *Faust*, *The Turn of the Screw*, *Salome*, *Nabucco*, *Elektra*, *La Voix humaine*, *The Seven Deadly Sins*, *Medusa*, *Der Kaiser von Atlantis*, *The Maids* and *Margaret Garner*.

### **CCM (College-Conservatory of Music, University of Cincinnati)**

In 2006 he was appointed Distinguished Artist-in-Residence at CCM where he was promoted to Full Professor in 2010 and where he taught an advanced Acting Class for singers, a course in Professional Development and a seminar in Stage Directing in addition to mentoring design students and serving as stage director. His productions at CCM include: *The Crucible*, *Albert Herring*, *Werther*, *Une éducation manquée/Le pauvre matelot*, *Assassins*, *L'incoronazione di Poppea*, *Così fan tutte*, *Ariadne auf Naxos*, *Postcard from Morocco*, *Of Mice and Men*, *Giulio Cesare in Egitto* and *Don Giovanni*.

His focus on training of young artists has brought him to work with the Metropolitan Opera, Washington National Opera, San Francisco Opera, Music Academy of the West, Wolf Trap Opera, Florida Grand Opera, New England Conservatory of Music, Boston Conservatory of Music, Yale School of Music, Manhattan School of Music, Eastman School of Music, Atlantic Music Festival, Academy of Vocal Arts in Philadelphia, Indiana University, Montclair State University, University of California at Humboldt, Rising Star Festival and Miami University. In Asia: Shanghai Conservatory, Wuhan Conservatory, Kyung Hee University, Tokyo TIVAA and Opera Hong Kong.

### **Academy of Vocal Arts and Bard College Vocal Arts Program**

From 2013-2016, Nic worked at both of these wonderful Institutions as Professor of Stagecraft and Acting. After directing a very successful production of *L'elisir d'amore* in 2012, he was invited as the first faculty teacher of acting in AVA's history. During this time he also directed *Così fan tutte* and *Lucia di Lammermoor*. Simultaneously, he was hired by Dawn Upshaw to work with the graduate singers at Bard and during his time there directed two very successful double bill productions: the 2014 world premiere of *Payne Hollow* by Shawn Jaeger paired with a new, one-act adaptation of Britten's *The Turn of the Screw* and in 2016, the New York premiere of Oliver Knussen's *Higglety, Pigglety Pop!* alongside a one act version of *Die Zauberflöte*. For both of these productions, presented in the magnificent Sosnoff theater designed by Frank Gehry, Nic designed the scenery, lighting and projections in addition to preparing both of the one-act adaptations.

### **A.J. Fletcher Opera Institute at the University of North Carolina School of the Arts**

In summer of 2015, Nic was appointed Professor of Music and Artistic Director of the A.J. Fletcher Opera Institute for a five-year term. His mandate was to expand the program and to advance the status of the Institute on a National scale. During his tenure, his productions of *La Tragédie de Carmen*, *Florença en el Amazonas* (the first Spanish language opera presented in the Institute's history) and *Impressions de Pelléas* won three consecutive top prizes in the National Opera Association annual production competitions. In addition, *Impressions de Pelléas* won first place in The American Prize opera production competition for 2019. In spring of 2017, he collaborated with orchestra director Christopher Lees in creating *Concert Art*, a program funded by the Kenan Institute in which an orchestra concert was designed and theatrically lit in order to bring visual focus and interest to concert presentation.

### **Hong Kong/Asia**

In 2016, Nic was invited to direct and design the inaugural production for a new company in Hong Kong called More Than Musical. The mission of this company is to present the classic repertoire in reduced versions, in very intimate performance spaces and with a contemporary aesthetic. In June, 2017 MTM produced *La Traviata* in a 90 minute version, set in the present day with an all-Asian cast of 6 artists, no chorus and presented in a space seating 200 people. Response was so strong that the production was presented again in December, 2017 and Nic was named Artistic Director of the company. The next production was *The Kiss of Tosca*, a 75 minute adaptation of Puccini's masterpiece, this time with 4 characters, no chorus and an ensemble of piano, cello and percussion. Attending *Tosca* was the head of the Opera Hong Kong Young Artists program, who immediately offered Nic a project involving the 13 young artists. He curated a scenes program called *Crazy In Love*, integrated into a conceptual whole by utilizing the phenomenon of online dating which served as the motivation for characters from the various operas to meet in a bar setting. It was presented in four cities in China: Shanghai, Suzhou, Nanjing and Guangzhou. Nic also began offering master classes in acting and has since taught at music conservatories in Shanghai, Wuhan, Seoul and Tokyo.