By Dominic Massa, WWL-TV, Dec. 19, 2014

The numbers are impressive: some 125 graduations, 50 new student and faculty convocations, thousands of hours shooting photos in classrooms, not to mention alumni parties, athletic events and pep rallies. It all adds up to 25 years that photographer Harold Baquet has spent capturing every aspect of life on Loyola University’s Uptown campus. If those numbers don’t impress you, how about this one: 300,000 of his images are stored on the university’s computer server. Baquet said those files date back to about 1999, which means there are 10 years of his tenure as the university’s official photographer that he’s not even counting.

About the only things Baquet probably didn’t photograph himself are the events where he was presented with three of the university’s highest honors: Loyola’s Coadjutor Optimus award in 2002, recognizing a top staff member; the St. Sebastian award in 2008, recognizing outstanding efforts on behalf of Loyola athletics; and the President’s Medal in 2010. Now, Baquet, 56, is preparing to once again step out from behind the camera, as he leaves the job he has held for 25 years. He plans to retire at the end of December.

“I’ve had a blast, man,” he said, reflecting for a moment on the career that has taken him around the world but kept him firmly rooted in his hometown. He said the nature of university life, with natural beginnings and endings, has kept him engaged in his work over the years.

“Academia is so cyclical. It brings with it the new energy and enthusiasm of the freshmen each fall and the finality of the graduating class each spring,” he said. “It’s young people having the time of their lives, and at the height of their energy, which I love. It’s really a study in anthropology.” Colleagues say the friendships that Baquet has made over the years, either by pointing his lens at someone to take their picture or by engaging them in conversations on a wide range of interests, make it hard to imagine Loyola’s campus without him.

“Nobody can replace Harold. He’s entirely unique and special,” said Mary Degnan, the university’s publications manager. “He really is one of those people who gets his energy from being around others and being a part of what they are experiencing.”

Communications professor Lisa Martin has helped showcase Baquet’s work by organizing several special events highlighting his immense portfolio and giving him a chance to speak about his photographs. The university also staged a retrospective exhibit, to coincide with the publication of a book of his photos, and sponsored a talk he gave to mark Loyola’s centennial in 2012.

“You go into Harold’s office and look at his pictures and realize he knows the history of Loyola like he knows the history of New Orleans, like he knows the history of America and the world, and is able to incorporate all that into one fascinating story,” Martin said. Some of those emotional photos are from Baquet’s life before he joined the university, which included years as the official city photographer for Mayors Ernest “Dutch” Morial and Sidney Barthelemy and many years documenting civil rights struggles and the social and cultural life of the city.

Favorite photos include Morial feeding birthday cake to Fats Domino and Miles Davis handing a trumpet to a young Wynton Marsalis. There also are portraits of Muhammad Ali, the Mannings, Allen Toussaint and Big Chief Alison “Tootie” Montana, as well as scenes from street celebrations and barbershops, important centers of New Orleans’ African-American neighborhood life.

It all came quite naturally to Baquet, a Tremé and 7th Ward native, St. Augustine High School graduate and member of a family that includes cousins Wayne Baquet, owner of Li’l Dizzy’s restaurant, and Dean Baquet, executive editor of The New York Times. A devout Catholic, Baquet has turned to his faith and his family, including his extended Loyola family, for strength and inspiration during the past six years as he battled cancer. Focusing on it full time is one reason he has decided to retire. He said he and his wife, public relations professional Cheron Brylski, have had to travel back and forth to Houston for treatments and surgeries so many times that juggling work schedules became challenging. But when he thinks back to the initial prognosis that he had just six months to live, he remains hopeful.

“I have been totally amazed at his attitude,” Degnan said. “He has been so inspirational. He’s always chipper, positive. Working as closely as we do, I can kind of tell when he isn’t feeling well or is tired. But he really does keep a positive attitude.” Friends and colleagues remain in awe of his attitude and spirit and the fact that he rarely puts the camera down, even when other matters have demanded his attention.

“Harold is the epitome of what I think everyone should strive to achieve in their lives: a balanced dedication to work, family and spirituality, as well as an energetic perseverance that is quite remarkable,” said Loyola’s president, the Rev. Kevin Wildes, SJ. “He will truly be missed.
Loyola Signs Transfer Agreement With Delgado

December 19th 2014 @ 9am

Loyola University of New Orleans has a new transfer agreement with a local college and is working on similar agreements with colleges in Illinois, Texas and Florida.

University spokesman James Shields says the agreement signed with Delgado Community College is comprehensive, while an earlier one covered criminal justice and some other evening courses given at Delgado.

He says officials are in talks with the College of DuPage, outside Chicago; Houston Community College in Texas; and, in Florida, Miami Dade College, Pensacola State College and Florida State College at Jacksonville.

The Jesuit university has about 4,500 students. Full-time undergraduate tuition is about $35,500 a year.

Shields says that from spring 2012 through this fall, about 60 Delgado students have transferred to Loyola under the older program.
The question New Orleanians should be asking about the Landrieu Administration’s Great Place to Work Initiative (Re: “Potential Issue? Emails show close communication” /December 18, 2014) is not whether we worked closely with Civil Service Commissioners, staff, unions and employee groups, civic organizations like BGR, the Urban League, the Business Council, Puentes, the Young Leadership Council, and Citizens for One, which we did. The real question is why it took so long for New Orleans to modernize its civil service system, given that the State of Louisiana and many other jurisdictions across the country made similar improvements more than a decade ago. BGR called for reform in 2004 and the Business Council did so in 2010; the Civil Service Department staff even made a proposal similar to the Great Place to Work in 2010 and the Forward New Orleans Coalition secured a pledge to reform our civil service system from all mayoral candidates and each of the city council members elected in 2014.

The Rev. Kevin Wildes, president of Loyola University, has followed in the footsteps of colleagues like Norman C. Francis of Xavier and Scott Cowen of Tulane with his impactful, volunteer civic leadership. He deserves the praise and gratitude of all New Orleanians for taking on tough challenges and making important changes as he has done with his work to improve our civil service system and before that when he led the City’s Ethics Review Board in creating the Office of Inspector General and hiring capable and independent leaders to fill that role.

Wildes once emailed me an article, “If you’ve got a tough job, hire a Jesuit.” The City Council did just that in appointing Wildes to the Civil Service Commission and he more than measured up to the task.

He served with honor and distinction and has earned our thanks for a job well done.

Andy Kopplin

deputy mayor

New Orleans
224,000 Louisiana families struggle for even 'modest but dignified' lifestyle, Loyola study finds
January 13, 2015

Christina Boudwin sat behind her steering wheel last month and tried to muster courage to go inside and ask for help. At home, her nearly 3-year-old son waited, hooked to a ventilator, his small body atrophied by a form of muscular dystrophy that doctors long ago warned would take his life. Her husband's job in the oil industry didn't bring in enough to cover their mounting bills. Credit card companies were calling, seeking more than $12,000 she'd charged to pay for medical expenses, electricity, and groceries. "I can't do this," the 28-year-old Houma woman said she thought to herself that day, outside Annunziata Church, where Catholic Social Services offered help. "People who know me know I'm not a beggar." More than 250,000 Louisiana families are struggling to make ends meet, according to a report by Loyola University's Jesuit Social Research Institute. The report shows that some Louisiana families' income is too high to qualify for most social assistance and too low to cover their basic needs.

Boudwin's is among more than 224,000 families in Louisiana struggling to pay for basics expenses due to the state's low wages, high housing costs, expensive health care and hard-to-find child care. That's the key finding in a study of family income released Tuesday (Jan. 13) by the Jesuit Social Research Institute in Loyola University's College of Social Sciences in New Orleans.

In Louisiana, 1-in-3 married-parent families and 4-in-5 single-mother families don't make enough money to be economically secure, says the report, entitled "Too Much for Too Many." Ali Bustamante, economic policy specialist for the institute, oversaw the research. He and his staff drew on local cost of living data to arrive at what the organization believes to be the amount of money the average household needs to meet basic needs and live what he termed a "modest but dignified" lifestyle, including monthly housing expenses ranging from $738 per month to $966 per month.

According to the study, the average income a Louisiana single parent needs to meet a family's basic needs is $45,840 with one child, $56,556 with two children and $70,464 for a parent with three children. For married parents, the average household income needed is $55,428 with one child, $62,220 with two children and $75,756 for those with three children. "These estimates indicate an economic floor that puts families more than a step away from serious economic deprivation that we know as poverty, homelessness, hunger and untreated physical and mental illness," Bustamante said. Yet even these income estimates seem conservative. They account for spending on food, housing, health care, child care, housekeeping expenses, taxes and emergency savings of 7 percent. But researchers included educational costs of just $34 to $61 per month, depending on the size of the family. Their calculations did not account for costs like private or higher education, internet access, retirement savings and charitable contributions.

"We are not talking about families living in luxury or even very comfortable lives," said Father Fred Kammer, executive director of the Jesuit Research Policy Institute. "Rather, family economic security is shorthand for the concept that there is a measurable standard of living that ensures that families can meet essential basic needs and live a modest but dignified life."

Boudwin spoke out Tuesday about her family's own struggle during a press conference at Loyola to discuss the study's findings. She stays home to care for her son and her 5-year-old daughter while her husband works to cover the household expenses, including the mortgage on a home they bought six years ago.

"I was once an average person with an average life and an average job," she said. That changed when her son, at six months of age, was diagnosed with SMA Type 1, also known as spinal muscular atrophy. The boy, Solan, will turn three in March. Even though Medicaid pays for many of his bills, Boudwin said there are medications critical to his care that are not covered under the government-assisted health care program.
"It is a struggle to keep our heads above water and to fight for my son's disability," Boudwin said, choking back tears. "My life feels like it is in nonstop chaos."

On that day last month when she struggled to overcome her misgivings about seeking assistance, she said she finally stepped out of her car, walked into the church and asked for help. But she said she feels that her family should never have been forced into this situation. She didn't want to share specifics about her household income, but said she worries daily about what would happen if her husband is laid off.

"I still feel this could have been avoided if I were to have had more options," she said. "We should not be punished for wanting to be an honest family and do the right things."

Bustamante and Kammer said the study reveals the need for Louisianians to have access to better paying jobs and to health care. Bustamante said the minimum wage should be raised to $10.10 per hour, higher than the federal requirement of $7.25 per hour.

The study also advocates increasing Louisiana's Earned Income Tax Credit for families, set currently at 3.5 percent of the federal Earned Income Tax Credit. The average state earned income tax credit for families across the nation is 15.2 percent.

Louisiana should also expand Medicaid to cover another 330,000 uninsured residents, the study says. Federal law allows Louisiana the opportunity to extend government-assisted health care coverage to its uninsured, but Gov. Bobby Jindal and the state legislature have opposed the expansion, saying the state can't afford its share of the cost.
More than half of Louisiana families can’t meet basic costs, report says
Jan. 17, 2015

An analysis released Tuesday by Loyola University’s Jesuit Social Research Institute found that 52 percent of Louisiana families with children are not making enough to live “a modest, dignified life.” Based on those findings, the authors are asking policy makers and community leaders to aid struggling families by taking steps to raise wages, expand the state-level earned income tax credit and improve access to health care.

The institute’s director, the Rev. Fred Kammer, said he and his staff plan to put the report into the hands of key state legislators and members of Congress. Louisiana’s seven Catholic bishops also are taking “a special interest in a living wage this year,” he said. Kammer noted that there are active discussions about instituting a living wage in all Catholic institutions within the Archdiocese of New Orleans. “We must look at our own house first,” he said.

The report is an attempt to assess what it truly costs families to live in Louisiana. While federal poverty estimates provide one marker of need, Kammer said the institute, after discussions with New Orleans Archbishop Gregory Aymond, was determined to create another standard, one that captures what it takes for families to live a modest lifestyle.

For the analysis, institute researchers looked at how much it costs Louisiana families in different regions of the state to live a no-frills existence. They included basic necessities — housing, food, health care, child care and transportation — but did not incorporate common expenses such as private-school or college tuition and phone, Internet or cable TV bills.

Researchers wanted to err on the conservative side, said Ali Bustamante, the institute’s economic policy specialist, explaining why the report’s projected education costs were so low that they wouldn’t even pay for some public-school uniforms.

Even so, Bustamante and his team found that to live with real “economic security,” families in Louisiana need income levels three times higher than the federal poverty threshold, on average.

Expenses for the average Louisiana couple with one child added up to $55,428 a year. Families in New Orleans face the highest expenses, totaling $62,040 a year, while families in Baton Rouge can expect to pay $56,616 and those in Lafayette $56,352.

Christina Boudwin, a Houma mother of two children, one with muscular dystrophy, spoke during a news conference held by researchers Tuesday about how her child’s illness has created a financial tipping point in her household.

“Our credit cards are now maxed out,” she said, adding that she worries her husband — who works in the oil industry — may get laid off. But she can’t go back to work because her son requires constant care and because any additional income could cost him his Medicaid coverage.

Kammer and his staff hope the report’s data will provide a helpful metric for policy makers in upcoming debates about Medicaid expansion and about living wages. To keep pace with bills, both parents working full-time in an average two-parent, one-child household in Louisiana would need to make a total of $26.65 an hour, they said.

Parents in urban areas like New Orleans, Baton Rouge and Lafayette would need to make slightly more. Louisiana is one of five states without a minimum wage. The report advocates a state minimum wage of $10.10, which it says would give a boost to 359,000 workers. The report also recommends increasing the earned income tax credit at the state level because it rewards work by giving money back to low-income taxpayers with earned income. Louisiana’s credit, 3.5 percent of the federal credit, is tied with Rhode Island for the lowest in the nation and is far below the national average of 15.2 percent.

Helping people support themselves is in line with the Catholic Church’s teaching, said Rob Gorman, chairman of the interfaith Bread or Stones Campaign, which is working to fight child poverty in Louisiana. The group’s name comes from the Bible, said Gorman, citing the verse: “Which of you, if your son asks for bread, will give him a stone?”

Though the Bread or Stones Campaign is devoted to fighting child poverty, it can’t improve the lives of children without considering the welfare of the entire family, Gorman said.
Kevin Wildes has more than a full-time job as president of Loyola University, so it’s understandable that he would resign from the Civil Service Commission after completing major reforms to New Orleans’ hiring and employment laws. He is owed thanks by citizens but also by the workers of the city, present and future, who will have an up-to-date employment system in which to work — and hopefully to advance in pay and accomplishment. The Jesuit educator served for three years as chairman and shepherded into the statute books the most extensive changes to civil service since the 1970s.

The administration of Mayor Mitch Landrieu, ever ready with a perky label, called the reforms the “Great Place to Work” initiative. While civil service reform was part of that, the city is also working at improving training and other advancement opportunities for workers. Nevertheless, civil service reform is vital to that process, and it has been the subject of numerous reports over many years from the Bureau of Governmental Research and other experts. Landrieu and City Council candidates in 2010 campaigned on pledges of reforms.

It’s taken a long time to get there, and much back-and-forth among Wildes and his colleagues, city managers led by Chief Administrative Officer Andy Kopplin, and city employees and their representatives. Not everybody was going to be happy, but it cannot be denied that the commission’s product is in line with how many other governments across the country are making changes to civil service organizations.

Adjustments to more than 30 civil service rules will give supervisors greater flexibility in hiring, evaluating, promoting and rewarding employees. The Landrieu changes jettison the old “rule of three,” hallowed by more than a century of practice across the country. A job would go to one of the top three applicants, usually as measured by a civil service test. The administration has said the rule of three eliminates from consideration qualified candidates who could be a better fit for a job based on characteristics other than having the highest test scores, such as additional years of experience. Education and technical knowledge of specific fields is increasingly vital in private business and civil service in the past has not changed rapidly with workforce demands.

Are these changes proof against favoritism in hiring? We can only point to generations of experience in which City Hall was all too open to politics and even outright corruption. The new rules work as well as the political culture — just as, so often, the old ones worked so badly. The changes overseen by Wildes may require future adjustment, but there is no way that anyone can argue they are not overdue.
NEW ORLEANS—There has been an increase in roles for women involved in Mardi Gras parades, but Mardi Gras has a long history of women involved in the annual event. "It's not just the taking off your shirt on Bourbon Street thing. There's a lot more significant stuff happening here," said Loyola University professor Jim Gabour. Gabour is the director of the new film division at Loyola University of New Orleans. On Feb. 9, Loyola will host a forum designed to give attendees a closer look at the historical role and contributions of women in the Carnival.

"One of the main reasons we started doing this four, five years ago was that the huge majority of our kids are from out of state and almost a quarter of them are from out of the country," Gabour said.

Gabour wants his students and those new to the experience to know that Mardi Gras is bigger than the sensational stereotype.

"We've always felt that the role of women in Carnival has been always neglected because it always seems it's the big guy roles, you know. Rex, even Bacchus, Endymion, it's the guys up there. So, we wanted to show that not only have women been there almost all along, but they have their own particular take on what Mardi Gras is," Gabour said. The multimedia forum will feature costumed leaders from Carnival krewes such as Iris, the wildly-popular Muses, Divas and the Society of St. Anne. It will also highlight major milestones, such as the first all women’s Mardi Gras krewe.

"Now, they didn't get to march until about 1949, and fairly significant, they were the very first Mardi Gras krewe to ever have their ball, their tableau, televised; and it was on WDSU," Gabour said. That krewe was Iris.

"The Krewe of Venus had actually started in 1941. But it poured down rain on them, and the men weren't exactly happy about seeing women usurp their position and do these things," Gabour said. "And so, it's said that some of the men in the audience actually threw rotten fruit at the women in the driving rain during the parade."

Now that action comes with a $250 fine.

"We've been in the big Roussel auditorium in the main communication music building that seats over 600 and we've had standing-room only the last two years in there. So now we're down to half the size, so I'm telling people (to) come early, get a nice comfy seat and watch the show," Gabour said.
Anchor Brian Williams' statements about Katrina under scrutiny

Posted: Feb 06, 2015 6:28 PM CST

The firestorm continues for NBC anchor Brian Williams. Now questions are being raised over statements he made about his time in New Orleans covering the arrival and aftermath of Hurricane Katrina in August 2005.

"My goal was to get to the Superdome because that was being called the shelter of last resort in New Orleans...we watched, all of us watched as one man committed suicide," Williams said.

This week, Williams took to the airwaves with an apology for getting the facts wrong about some of his time covering the conflict in the Middle East.

"I want to apologize," he said during a newscast. "I said I was traveling in an aircraft that was hit by RPG fire. I was instead in a following aircraft. We all landed after the ground fire incident."

"It seemed to be a heartfelt apology. You can't be right all the time, you do make mistakes, and when you do you need to face up to them," said Loyola journalism instructor Michael Giusti, who has also worked as professional journalist.

Now there is scrutiny of some of Williams' comments related to what he experienced during Katrina.

"When you look out of your hotel room in the French Quarter and watch a man float by face down, when you see bodies that you last saw in Indonesia and swear to yourself that you would never see in your country, I beat that storm," Williams said in a post-Katrina interview.

And in an interview with the man he succeeded in the anchor chair, Tom Brokaw, Williams said, "I accidentally ingested some of the flood waters. I became very sick with dysentery. Our hotel was overrun with gangs. I was rescued in the stairwell of a five-star hotel in New Orleans by a young police officer."

Williams was staying at the Ritz-Carlton on Canal Street, which backs up to the edge of the French Quarter. By most accounts, the French Quarter remained mostly dry when the levees failed. So the question becomes: Could a body realistically have floated on a French Quarter street?

"The portions of the French Quarter between Bourbon Street and, you know, the river-I think that that area pretty much stayed dry," said former NOPD Officer Donovan Livaccari who was working on the force during Katrina and now speaks for the Fraternal Order of Police.

However, he remembers water on Canal Street.

"There certainly was water on Canal Street at some level. I recall the water over the first couple of days kind of creeping up toward the river. I think that there was more water like down towards Claiborne Avenue, Rampart, Basin Street," Livaccari said.

A former NOPD captain whose name we are not using because of his current employment, was in charge of search-and-rescue missions and the recovery of human remains after Katrina. "There were no bodies floating in the French Quarter," he said. "There was no water in the French Quarter."

"He needs to be as precise as he's able. You know, it may be a case of him calling the Canal Street the French Quarter, and we all know the difference here, but coming down from New York he doesn't realize where the lines of demarcation are. It may be something as simple as that," Giusti said.

"I personally didn't witness any of that, but I know that I heard some fairly gruesome stories. You know - again, it's difficult to separate what's fact from fiction," Livaccari said.

And Guisti fears that questions about Brian Williams' credibility could result in skepticism of all journalists.

"The public perception of journalism is pretty low," he said. "There's low public trust in anything that's going to make us look worse, is bad for the industry."

The NOPD was contacted for corroboration of Williams' statement that he had to be rescued from a stairwell, but so far there has been no response from the department.
Xavier President Norman Francis named 2015 St. Ives Award recipient

NEW ORLEANS — Norman Francis, Xavier University president and New Orleans native, was the recipient of the 2015 St. Ives Award Tuesday.

Francis is the first African-American to graduate from the Loyola University New Orleans College of Law and the longest sitting university president in the U.S.

"I am most grateful to be a recipient of the St. Ives Award and humbled to be listed with the distinguished past honorees," Francis said. "Loyola University contributed to my growth and development at an important time of my life."

The St. Ives Award is the highest honor awarded by the Law School Alumni Association. As this year's recipient, Francis is being honored for his volunteer services, and the highest standards of the profession and furthering the mission of the alumni association.

Francis will add the St. Ives Award to a list of other awards he has received in recent years. In 2006, he received the nation's highest civilian award, The Presidential Medal of Freedom, from George W. Bush.

In addition, he was recipient of both Loyola's Integritas Vitae Award in 1986 and the Adjutor Hominum Award in 1991. In 2012, he was presented the Black Law Student's Association's A.P. Tureaud Achievement Award.

Francis' resume includes adviser to five U.S. presidents and recipient of 41 honorary degrees, including Harvard University and Johns Hopkins University.

Late this year, Francis will retire from his post at Xavier University. He will be given the St. Ives Award on Feb. 6 at the Ritz-Carlton Hotel.
Loyola Opera Theatre to stage two of Puccini’s one-acts

Feb. 11, 2015

Toward the end of his life, following such successful, full-scale operas as “La Boheme,” “Tosca,” “Madama Butterfly” and others, Italian composer Giacomo Puccini tried his hand at one-acts. He wrote three between 1916 and 1918. Though they are sometimes performed together as “Il Tritico” (The Triptych or Trilogy), it has become customary in recent years for opera companies to perform just two in one staging.

This is what Loyola Opera Theatre will be doing when it presents Puccini’s “Suor Angelica” and “Gianni Schicchi” on Jan. 23 and 25 at Loyola’s Louis J. Roussel Performance Hall. “Suor Angelica” (Sister Angelica) is the tragic story of a nun who commits suicide after learning of the death of her illegitimate son who was taken from her at birth.

“Gianni Schicchi,” named after the title character, is a comedy about greed and backstabbing by members of a family trying to cash in on the wealth of a recently deceased relative. Many of the roles in the Loyola production are double-cast, including the title role in “Suor Angelica,” with Annie Halbert in the Friday evening performance and Emily Barber in the Sunday matinee. Kenneth Weber sings the title role in both performances of “Gianni Schicchi.” Most of the cast members are Loyola music students or recent graduates.

Veronica Sharkey, a 2014 Masters in Music graduate from Loyola, sings the supporting role of the Principessa (princess) who is Sister Angelica’s aunt, in the Friday night performance. A mezzo-soprano, Sharkey also sings in “Gianni Schicchi” as Zita, one of the family members, in the Sunday afternoon production.

“These two roles I’m doing are very different,” Sharkey explained. “The Principessa is very concerned with the stature and reputation of her family. She’s determined to preserve the integrity of the family as it relates to society.

On the other hand, Zita is just greedy,” Sharkey added. “She wants everything she can get from her dead relative. And the whole family is really like that. ‘Angelica’ is a tragedy and ‘Schicchi’ is a comedy, so in one I’m very serious and in the other there’s a lot of laughs and a lot of really silly things going on.” Sharkey’s character in “Suor Angelica” is the one who breaks the news to her niece about her son’s death. The Principessa’s aria, “Nel silenzio” (In the silence), is one of the two major solos in the opera. The other is “Senza Mamma” (Without your mother), sung by Sister Angelica as an ode to her son soon after hearing about his passing.

Weber, a bass-baritone who directs liturgy and music for Loyola’s Office of Mission and Ministry, is no stranger to the “Gianni Schicchi” libretto, having sung the role of Betto di Signa, one of the relatives in a 2007 New Orleans Opera production of the full “Il Tritico” one-acts. Moving up to the title role in this production, Weber said, “It’s a lot of fun, and I appreciate the opportunity to work with the students on this.”

Weber also had words of praise for stage director Bill Fabris. “I’ve worked with him many times, so he and I know how to communicate,” he said. “Bill gives me free rein to be creative with character development and staging, so there’s a lot of flexibility.” Other major performers in “Gianni Schicchi” are Lauretta, his daughter, sung by Amanda McCarthy on Friday and Jade Coates on Sunday, and Rinuccio, Zita’s nephew and Lauretta’s fiancé, sung by Dennis Shuman on Friday and Kameron Lopreore on Sunday.

The opera’s signature aria is “O mio babbino caro” (Oh, my dear father) sung by Lauretta.

Carol Rausch, director of Loyola Opera Theatre, will serve as musical director and conductor for both of the operas.

Performers will sing in Italian with English translations superimposed above the stage — a first in a Loyola Opera production.