



NEWSLETTER

Argo Gherardi, Editor

May, 2006

Vocal Awards Spring Tea

The San Jose Opera Guild will again present its Spring Tea to introduce the 2006 Vocal award Winners. A traditional tea will be served after a program of arias presented by the winners. This annual event will be on May 11 at 1:30 PM. The venue will be the Los Gatos History Club at 123 Los Gatos Boulevard. No advance reservations are necessary. A fee of \$15 for members and friends may be paid at the door. For more information call Alice Swanson at 408-867-1225.

The auditions are sponsored by the San José Opera Guild and are open to competitors who are full time college students from Santa Clara and Santa Cruz counties. Judging is done by professional musicians. Winners receive monetary prizes.

Opera in the Park

SAVE THE DATE! July 16th 5:00 PM. Introducing the new cast of Opera San José singers followed by a buffet dinner catered by Cafe Primavera in the courtyard of La Estancia, a beautiful, historic estate in Los Gatos. Invitations with details to follow.

Opera in the Park is part of the Music in the Park series presented by the Town of Los Gatos Arts Commission in cooperation with the San José Opera Guild. Free admission to the concert. The program runs from 5:00 PM to 7:00 PM and is held at the Los Gatos Civic Center on Main St. (almost across the street from the high school). Seating is on the lawn. Bring blankets or low profile lawn chairs and relax with family and friends to the strains of your favorite arias.

Party Honors Irene Dalis

It was party time at the Silicon Valley Capital Club March 11, as 124 guests gathered to celebrate the 80th birthday of Opera San José founder and general director Irene Dalis. The festivities began at 5 p.m. with cocktails and hors d'oeuvres and music provided by the Jack Conway Trio, courtesy of the San Jose Jazz Society. After a welcome message from Joe Pon, president of Opera San José's Board of Trustees, San Jose City Councilman Ken Yeager presented the guest of honor with a special proclamation in recognition of her many contributions to the city's cultural scene. After an elegant dinner, long-time Opera San José colleagues Larry Hancock (general manager/production director) and David Rohrbaugh (music director/principal conductor) as well as former board president Kitty

Spaulding paid tribute to Ms. Dalis as they described the opera company's early days under her direction. A personal note was added by Ms. Dalis' daughter, Alida Loinaz, who shared recollections of her childhood as the daughter of a world-famous opera star. Ms. Loinaz and her two sons, Gregory and J.T. Mengel, travelled from their Colorado home to attend the party. A (nonmusical) toast to Ms. Dalis offered by Opera San José's resident artists highlighted some of the singers' impressions of their esteemed (and well-respected) boss. While oohs and aahs greeted the presentation of Ms. Dalis' birthday gift from the Board of Trustees (a diamond-studded watch), the real gift came later – more than \$30,000 to add to the opera company's coffers.

Elaine Veloz

Spellbound at the Met

As a recent ex-New Yorker, my California family and friends have frequently asked me what I miss most about New York. At the top of my list is the Metropolitan Opera. Having lived just across town from Lincoln Center and having been a volunteer at the Lincoln Center Information Desk for some years, I thought of the Met as MY Met and, of course, through the many years, I had experienced some great performances there. It has been no surprise to anyone, therefore, that in the two years I have been a resident of Los Gatos, I have returned to visit New York a number of times, and always during the opera season.

In November, 2005 I was in New York at the Met for a performance of ' with Natalie Dessay and Ramon Vargas in the lead roles. I had seen Gounod's opera a couple of times in the past, but at this memorable performance it was as if I were seeing and hearing it for the first time. Dessay and Vargas were so perfectly cast, so youthful, agile, and emotionally engaged with one another, that it seemed as if they were not just singing Romeo and Juliette, they WERE Romeo and Juliet. Ms. Dessay sang with enormous artistry and emotion, and I had read somewhere that she had wanted at one time to be an actress and had studied acting as well as ballet. That was so evident in all of her moves on stage. Mr. Vargas' warm, elegantly smooth singing had its exciting moments as well, and he acted as such a sweet, charming, playful Romeo so that he had his audience liking him from the very start. The rest of the cast were all in excellent form and very well directed on stage, and I thought Bertrand de Billy's conducting gave perfect balance to the entire performance.

This new production was also extremely visually effective. Except for Juliet's bed which unexplainedly had to rise up into the heavens, the set was unusual in that one was transported to Renaissance Italy and its streets and buildings, but the focus was always on the two star-crossed lovers on a stage that split apart to reveal a starry night sky as a backdrop to a timeless, otherworldly circular setting.

This was one night at the Met when 4,000 people sat spellbound throughout the evening – no rattling, coughing, whispering, tapping, etc. As the woman next to me said while we were standing and "bravo-ing" at the end, "This is what grand opera is all about!"

Edith Goldenzohn

Santa Fe Opera Tour Can Benefit SJOG

San José Opera Guild members can take part in a summer trip to Santa Fe and benefit the Guild at the same time. As in past years, Creative Travel Arrangers will donate \$50 to the Guild for each member who signs up for the company's annual tour. The six day escorted tour is being offered not only to opera buffs, but to those who appreciate beautiful music, art, and the magnificent scenery of the Southwest. The tour departs August 6th and the \$2350 (deluxe room, per person, double occupancy) or \$2250 (standard room, per person, double occupancy) rate includes round trip air transportation from San José to Albuquerque (flights from San Francisco, Oakland and other cities may be arranged), accommodations for five nights at the first class St. Francis Hotel, transportation to Santa Fe, a welcome reception, four operas with orchestra seating, a chamber music concert, two dinners, a backstage tour, an opera lecture, a museum pass, a visit to the Georgia O'Keeffe museum and sightseeing in Santa Fe. Extensions for the fifth opera and/or the 50th Gala Anniversary Concert may be requested. The tour will be escorted by Carol Price Rabin. For information: Creative Travel Arrangers, 36 Linaria Way, Portola Valley, CA 94028, 650-854-4412, fax 650-854-2102, email, carolapr@aol.com.

Bel Canto & Realismo Defined

On March 23, 2006 the San José Opera Guild presented an in depth lecture on the subject of the realismo and bel Canto styles of opera. From 10:30 AM to 3:00 PM with a break for lunch, Alexandra Amati-Camperi commanded the attention of an audience of 81 at the Los Gatos History Club. The lecture was an encore presentation by Amati-Camperi, who gave the enthusiastically received lecture on Norma last Oct. 18.

Associate Professor Amati-Camperi described how Rossini, Donizetti, and Bellini treated the art of beautiful singing as it evolved from the classical to the romantic. She showed how they used the orchestra primarily to support the voice even though their styles differed. She illustrated her talk with recordings, and the audience convinced her to elaborate further even though she warned of time constraints. Her method was to explain the structure of the music as it related to the drama.

Amati-Camperi then spoke on how Verdi de-

Bel Canto & Realismo (Cont'd)

veloped the style we call *realismo*, in which the emphasis is on true life drama, i.e., the feelings and emotions of life as it is. Verdi used the orchestra to play a larger role in the drama itself, providing a musical character for every situation but stopping short of becoming the narrator as is the case with Wagner. This part of the lecture was illustrated by excerpts from *La Traviata* and *Otello*.

The Lecture ended with a brief discussion of *verismo* as an aspect of realism with its emphasis on details being true to nature. She focused on Puccini whose melodies are intense and continuous. Time ran out for this informative and dynamic speaker even though the audience would have gladly stayed on.

Career Updates

Mezzo-soprano **Layna Chianakas** (Opera San José 1995-97) is in the process of recording three arias by Henry Mollicone, which will be part of a CD of his works. In addition, she'll sing excerpts from *Carmen* with the Vallejo Symphony on April 29. In August (12-20), she'll sing Donna Elvira in *Don Giovanni* with Festival Opera along with other former Opera San José artists baritone Brian Leerhuber (1997-99) in the title role, and bass Kirk Eichelberger (2001-03, 2005-06) as Leporello. On the home front, son Ghythe Haddad turns 5 in June.

Soprano **Laura Claycomb** (Merola Opera 1989-90) is featured on an Opera Rara recording of Meyerbeer's *L'Esule di Granata* released in November, 2005. In December 2005 and January 2006, she sang the title role in Handel's *Semele* with Vlaamse Opera, with performances in Ghent and Antwerp. In February and March she sang Gilda in *Rigo-*

Career Updates (Cont'd)

letto for Opera de Paris (Bastille). Also in March, she returned to Moscow to sing a concert with the Novaya Rossiya Orchestra. (In 1994, she was awarded a silver medal at the International Tchaikovsky Competition in Moscow). In May and June, she'll be back in the U.S. to perform in the world première of *Grendel* by Elliot Goldenthal with the Los Angeles Opera. She'll sing the role of Queen Wealthew in the opera, which is based on the Beowulf story.

Soprano **Barbara Divis** (Opera San José 1996-2000) returns to San Diego Opera in May to sing First Lady in *The Magic Flute*. (She just finished singing Micaela in *Carmen* with the same company). This fall, she'll sing the title role in *Madama Butterfly* with Lyric Opera of Kansas City (Sept. 30-Oct. 8). In January and February, she'll sing the same role with Arizona Opera (Jan. 26-Feb. 4, 2007).

Baritone **Nmon Ford** (Opera San José 1996-97) recently took home three Grammy awards for his role on Naxos' recording of William Bolcom's *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*. The CD won Grammy awards in three categories: Best Classical Recording, Best Choral Recording and Best Contemporary Classical Composition. Upcoming engagements for Mr. Ford include Demetrius in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* with Hamburg Opera, soloist in *Carmina Burana* with the New West Symphony on May 19 and 20 (see www.newwestsymphony.org) and Mahler's Eighth Symphony with the National Symphony Orchestra of Washington D.C.

Baritone **Hector Vasquez** (Merola Opera 1989-90) was recently named program director of the Houston Grand Opera Studio. In a press re-

lease issued by the opera company, Music Director Patrick Summers (also a former Merola Scholar) said "Hector brings the experience and practical knowledge of a fine 20 year singing career combined with his personal qualities of impeccable integrity and intelligence." He has often appeared with the Houston Grand Opera, making his debut there as Schaunard in *La Bohème* in 1996. He recently completed his tenth season with the Metropolitan Opera, where he sang and covered a variety of roles. He has also sung with San Francisco Opera, Los Angeles Opera, Seattle Opera and Boston Lyric Opera among others both here and abroad and has taught and given master classes at universities throughout California (his home state). In June, he'll sing Blitch in Cedar Rapids Opera's production of *Susannah* opposite his wife, soprano **Cynthia Clayton** (Opera San José 1992-96).

Soprano **Eilana Lappalainen** (Opera San José 1988-92) began 2006 by singing the title role in *Salomé* in Warsaw, Poland in January and February. In March, she found herself in the Czech Republic singing Donna Anna in *Don Giovanni* and Silvia in Mascagni's *Zanetto*. She made her recital debut in April in New York City's Weil Hall at Carnegie, singing songs by Puccini, Sibelius, Richard Strauss and Wagner. In May, she'll perform at a concert in Cologne, Germany, with the Philharmonic, singing arias as well as Act III from *Tosca*. In May and June, she'll again sing *Salomé*, this time in Detroit. In June, she'll sing the title role in Alessandro Pacini's *Medea* in Palermo, Italy. In July, she'll be in Syros, Greece to sing Donna Anna in *Don Giovanni* and to take part in the Gala of American Musicals in Syros and Paros, Greece.

Career Updates (Cont'd)

Tenor **Robert McPherson** (Opera San José 1997-99) is presently in Toulon, France singing Lindoro in Rossini's *L'Italiana in Algeri*. In May, he'll sing the same role with the Washington National Opera (May 30 and June 3). Next season, he will be first cover for Count Almaviva in the Metropolitan Opera's new production of *Barber of Seville*, covering ten performances. Later in the season, he'll walk across the way to make his New York City Opera debut singing Rodrigo in Rossini's *La Donna del Lago*, a role he has sung many times in Europe. Next season, he'll also make his Carnegie Hall debut with Opera Orchestra of New York, singing Iago in Rossini's *Otello*.

Tenor **Dan Montez** (Opera San José 1989-93) sang the Verdi *Requiem* in April with the Chappaqua (New York) Orchestra. In June, he will direct a new production of Boito's *Mefistofele* for Taconic Opera (for details, see www.taconicopera.org) His upstate New York opera company recently moved into a new, larger theater, the Paramount, in Peekskill, New York. This fall, the company begins its tenth anniversary season and will present *Don Giovanni*, *Carmen* and *Otello*, all directed by Mr. Montez.

Tenor **Sean Panikkar** (Mero-la Opera 2004), a SJOG sponsoree, received a rave review for his portrayal of Macduff in North Bay Opera's production of Verdi's original 1847 version of *Macbeth*. Reviewer Richard Bammer of the Vacaville Reporter lauded Panikkar for his "voice full of vim, clarity and straight-ahead beauty, evident in his Act III "let's-rally-the-troops aria." Also receiving a rave review for his portrayal of Banquo in the same production was bass-baritone

Clifton Romig, a former Opera San José artist (1993-97) whose voice, the reviewer said, "gauged just below a rumble, rang with assurance, confidence and a sonorous bell-like quality that was a pleasure to hear."

Soprano **Lori Phillips** (Opera San José 1995-96) will be singing the title role in *Turandot* in Indianapolis in May. She'll then make her debut with Opera de Nice in France in Dukas' *Ariane et Barbe-bleue*. In September and October of this year she'll sing Lady Macbeth with Arizona Opera. In February and March of 2007 she'll sing her first Ariadne in *Ariadne auf Naxos* with Vancouver Opera. From there she'll head for the Metropolitan Opera to cover performances of *Turandot* and Giorgetta in *Il Tabarro*.

Baritone **Joseph Wright** (Opera San José 2002-2006) will sing the title role in Anthony Davis' *X: The Life and Times of Malcolm X*, to be presented by Oakland Opera Theater June 2-11. For information, see www.Oaklandopera.org. Mr. Wright is currently singing the title role in Opera San José's production of *Don Giovanni*.

CALENDAR

MAY 11: The SAN JOSÉ OPERA GUILD will present the annual Vocal Awards Spring Tea at 1:30 PM at the Los Gatos History Club, 123 Los Gatos Boulevard. Entertainment by the SJOG scholarship winners followed by a tea. Cost \$15 at the door. Information: Alice Swanson, 408-867-1225.

MAY 13, 20, 21, JUNE 2, 4: Donald Pippin's POCKET OPERA will present Offenbach's *The Tales of Hoffman*. The May 13 and May 20 performances will take place at 2PM at the Florence Gould Theatre, Legion of Honor, San Francisco; the May 21 performance at 2PM at the Napa Valley Opera House; the June 2 performance at 7:30 PM at the Legion of Honor and the June 4 performance at 2PM also at the Legion of Honor. Tickets, \$18-\$35. Information: 415-972-8934 or www.pocketopera.org.

MAY 19 and 20: OPERA SAN JOSÉ'S Annual Fundraiser, OPERAFEST, will be held at Napredak Hall, 770 Montague Expressway, San José. \$100 per person. Information: 408-437-4450 or Glen Wong at 408-437-4463 or email wong@operasj.org.

MAY 23: SAN JOSÉ OPERA GUILD LECTURE. Simon Williams will lecture on Puccini's *Madama Butterfly* at 10AM at the Los Gatos History Club, 123 Los Gatos Boulevard, Los Gatos. Members, free; non-members, \$10. Information: Joy Hulme, 408-741-1331.

MAY 27 to JUNE 25: The SAN FRANCISCO OPERA will present Puccini's *Madama Butterfly* at the War Memorial Opera House, San Francisco. Tickets \$25 to \$235. Information: 415-864-3330 or www.sfopera.com.

MAY 27-28 AND JUNE 2-4: WEST BAY OPERA will present Stravinsky's *The Rake's Progress* at the Lucie Stern Theatre, 1305 Middlefield Road, Palo Alto. Tickets, \$46 and \$50. Information: 650-424-9999 or www.wbopera.org.

MAY 30: The SAN JOSÉ OPERA GUILD and the SARATOGA FOOTHILL CLUB will co-sponsor a lecture by Richard Taruskin on Tchaikovsky's *The Maid of Orleans* at 10AM at the Saratoga Foothill Club, 20399 Park Place, Saratoga. Admission is \$10 at the door. Information: Joy Hulme, 408-741-1331.

JUNE 3-JULY 1: The SAN FRANCISCO OPERA will present Tchaikovsky's *The Maid of Orleans* at the War Memorial Opera House, San Francisco. Tickets \$25 to \$235. Information: 415-864-3330 or www.sfopera.com.

JUNE 3: MONTALVO ARTS will present Thomas Hampson in concert at 8PM at the California Theatre, 345 South First Street, San José. Tickets \$60-\$100. Information: 408-961-5858 or www.villamontalvo.org.

JUNE 10-JULY 2: The SAN FRANCISCO OPERA will present Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro* at the War Memorial Opera House, San Francisco. Tickets \$25 to \$235. Information: 415-864-3330 or www.sfopera.com.

JUNE 10: The WAGNER SOCIETY OF NORTHERN CALIFORNIA. Evan Baker will present his lecture, "What's so funny? Wagner as a subject of parody, satire and caricature", a multi-media event, at 2PM in the Laurel Heights Conference Center, 3333 California Street, San Francisco. WSNC members, free; non-members, \$10. Information: 415-421-4412 or www.wagnersf.org.

JULY 15-23: BERKELEY OPERA will present Puccini's *The Girl of the Golden West* at the Julia Morgan Theatre, 2640 College Avenue (at Derby), Berkeley. Tickets \$15-\$40. Information: 925-798-1300 or www.berkeleyopera.org.

JUNE 16, 18, 25, JULY 7, 9: Donald Pippin's POCKET OPERA will present Verdi's *Rigoletto*. The June 16 performance will take place at 7:30PM at the Florence Gould Theatre, Legion of Honor, San Francisco; the June 18 performance at 2PM at the Legion of Honor; the June 25 performance at 2PM at the Napa Valley Opera House; the July 7 performance at 7:30PM at the Legion of Honor and the July 9 performance at 2PM also at the Legion of Honor. Tickets, \$18-\$35. Information: 415-972-8934 or www.pocketopera.org.

JULY 16: The SAN JOSÉ OPERA GUILD and the TOWN OF LOS GATOS will present Opera in the Park featuring singers from Opera San José, 5-7PM, Los Gatos Civic Center, Main Street, Los Gatos. Admission free. A dinner following the performance will be offered. Details to follow.

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An Invitation to Join

Established in 1947, the San José Opera Guild was formed to promote the appreciation and enjoyment of the operatic arts and to provide both volunteer and financial support to opera.

The Guild incorporated in September 1958 as a non-profit corporation under the laws of California. The original purpose of the Guild has not changed over the years since its founding. Financial support of promising young artists in the community is a high priority for the Guild, which helps sponsor singers each year at Opera San José, and the Merola Opera Program, as well as other opera groups.

Throughout the year, the Guild sponsors lectures and previews at three different venues to coincide with the San Francisco Opera and Opera San José's seasons.

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