



NEWSLETTER

May, 2009

From the President

MEMBER COMMUNICATIONS

At its February meeting the Board of Directors changed the process for communicating with the membership between newsletters. If there is an urgent message, or item of general interest, all members who have e-mail will receive a message from Connie Zilles, Chair of e-Communications. Those members who do not have e-mail will receive a telephone message from Joy Hulme, Chair of Telephone Communications, or her designee. All messages will be initiated by the president, or by a board member, through the president. IF YOU CHANGE YOUR e-MAIL ADDRESS OR YOUR TELEPHONE NUMBER, PLEASE NOTIFY THE MEMBERSHIP CHAIR, JOAN SHOMLER, IMMEDIATELY, SO THAT YOU WILL BE INFORMED OF GUILD ACTIVITIES. Joan will notify the appropriate chairperson. Her e-mail address is joan@Shomler.com. To notify her about changes of address or phone numbers, send the information to her at 17015 Piedmont Court, Morgan Hill, CA 95037.

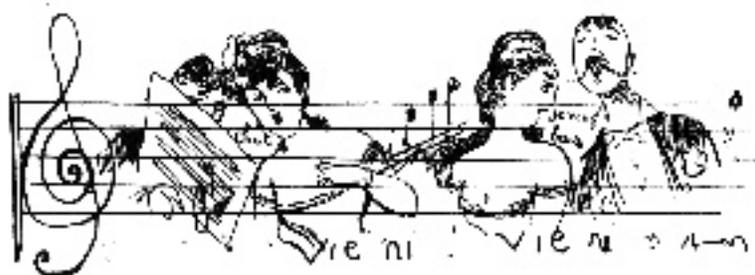
BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Three board members have resigned for personal reasons: Dorothy and Norm Tarowsky and Judy Jaeger. We greatly appreciate their contributions and wish them well in their new endeavors.

The Board of Directors has appointed Elaine Veloz, a former board member, and Gretchen Gregersen, who has been an active volunteer in the Opera a la Carte Program, to fill two of the vacancies. We welcome them both with gratitude for their willingness to serve the Guild.

SAN FRANCISCO OPERA DRESS REHEARSAL

The news from the San Francisco office for Bay Area guilds is that there will not be any information about a free dress rehearsal until July. When we do receive information, it will either go in a newsletter or be communicated to all members by e-mail or telephone.



San José State Opera Theater

Preceding gripping melodrama with frothy social satire, the San José State Opera Theater will present Mona Lyn Reese's *The Three Fat Women of Antibes* and Giacomo Puccini's *Suor Angelica* at the University Theater beginning the second weekend in May. The double bill will play Saturday May 9, Monday May 11 and Tuesday May 12 at 7:30, as well as Sunday May 10 at 3. The operas will be fully produced, with the San José State Orchestra in the pit.

Mona Lyn Reese has recently moved to San José with her husband, Thomas Hassing, who is the librettist of *The Three Fat Women of Antibes*. She is a former Composer-in-Residence with Minnesota Opera. Her works have been performed by the Minnesota and Atlanta Orchestras, among others, and an oratorio of hers has been nominated for a Pulitzer Prize. *The Three Fat Women of Antibes* is a musical setting of a short story by Somerset Maugham depicting the trouble that ensues when a naturally slim woman becomes the bride partner of three other women dieting in a Riviera spa. The San José State Opera Theater production will be the first with orchestra, in an updated version. Reese says, "I want to create music that is intellectually and emotionally satisfying and accessible to people who never studied music as well as those who did."

Giacomo Puccini's *Suor Angelica* is the central panel of a triptych of one-acts composed late in his career. It is intended to be preceded by *Il Tabarro*, a tragedy, and succeeded by *Gianni Schicchi*, a comedy. In fact, given considerations of length and budget, the

three are rarely performed together, though they were, of course, at the 1918 première by the Metropolitan Opera. The melodrama takes place in a seventeenth-century convent, to which a young nun has been consigned by her aristocratic family for having borne a child out of wedlock. Seven years later, her relationship with her son resumes in a mystical manner. The opera merges austerity with lush passion, exploiting compositional nuances refined in a lifetime of masterful creativity.

The San José State Opera Theater's production, made possible in part by a generous gift from the San José Opera Guild, will feature two large alternating casts. Janet Averett and Michel Singher will share conducting duties. Daniel Helfgot is the director, John York the designer.

Tickets are \$25 (\$15 seniors and students), and may be reserved by leaving a message at (408) 924-4654.

SJOG Membership Renewal

We are currently asking members to renew their membership for 2009.

You have probably received your renewal forms, and if you've been putting off renewing, please consider sending in your renewal now.

If you have been on our mailing list for a while and haven't joined, please consider doing so, as we will be up-dating the list soon.

Career Updates

In April, Opera San José presented *Carmen* which was directed by former OSJ Resident Artist, **Sandra Rubalcava**, now **Bengochea**. **Ms. Bengochea** acted as assistant director for *Werther* with OSJ last year. Her husband, tenor **Christopher Bengochea**, will be singing with San Juan Symphony in April, performing Beethoven's *Symphony No. 9* in both Farmington, New Mexico and Durango, Colorado. These two talented OSJ alumni are the proud parents of a son, Jean Elazar, born August 21, 2008.

Also in April, **Lori Phillips** performed with Opera Carolina in *Turandot*, and then traveled to Opéra de Québec to sing in *Cavalleria Rusticana*. This OSJ alumna's *Turandot* was recently reviewed in the *New York Times* (3-17-09) as "both vocally and dramatically...endowed with the icy imperiousness the role demands...it was difficult not to admire her dark timbre and the sheer power she produced." **Ms. Phillips** also sang with the American Symphony Orchestra at Avery Fisher Hall. This concert performance of two one-act operas by Luigi Dallapiccola was also reviewed by the *New York Times* (2-23-09) music critic, Anthony Tommasini, who wrote, "The soprano Lori Phillips was the emotional center of the performance," in one of the operas, and, "brought formidable vocal power and desperation," to her role in the second opera.

Two former OSJ Resident Artists performed with the Oakland East Bay Symphony's "Passion Celebration." In the program **Scott Bearden** sang Iago, and **Talise Trevigne** sang Desdemona in the Act I concert perfor-

mance of Giuseppe Verdi's *Otello*. In April **Mr. Bearden** sang Tonio in *I Pagliacci* with the Knoxville Opera. **Ms. Trevigne** made her company debut with Omaha Opera as Mimi in *La Bohème* on April 15. In June, she will perform in Moscow at the Chekhov International Arts Festival singing The Beloved in Liza Lim's *The Navigator*.

Another former OSJ Resident Artist, **Jason Detwiler**, just completed singing Figaro in *Il Barbiere Di Siviglia* with Virginia Opera. *Portfolio Weekly* noted, "Detwiler grabbed the stage with his first aria, 'Largo al factotum'... (and) displayed charming comedic flair and expansive warmth." In May, **Mr. Detwiler** will sing Yamadori in *Madama Butterfly* with the San Diego Opera.

Another fine review featured OSJ alumna **Rochelle Bard** in her performance in the title role in *The Merry Widow* with St. Petersburg Opera Company. The *St. Petersburg Times* noted, "Bard is marvelous as the well-heeled widow, sweeping onto the stage in sparkling witty voice to a lovely Lehar melody. Her folk song in Act 2 is perfectly poised." **Ms. Bard** just completed performing with the Boston Lyric Opera as the Foreign Princess in *Rusalka*, and with Rockland Opera as Gilda in *Rigoletto*. In May she will be singing Musetta in *La Bohème* with Sacramento Opera, then travel to Cambridge Mass. to sing with the Cambridge Symphony Orchestra. The end of May will bring **Ms. Bard** back to California to sing with the Santa Cruz Chamber Orchestra.

Barbara Divis returned to her home town to sing Pamina in *The Magic Flute* with El

Career Updates

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Paso Opera. This OSJ former Resident Artist noted that her debut with the company is, “fulfilling a dream of mine since the inception of El Paso Opera.” *El Paso Inc*, in reviewing her performance noted that “the exquisitely expressive Barbara Divis... (was) at last able to perform... in her home town.”

OSJ’s alumnus, **Jesse Merlin**, will perform in an unusual venue in May. He will sing The Loudspeaker in *The Emperor of Atlantis* aboard the Queen Mary docked in Long Beach. A satire on fascism, the one act opera was written by Viktor Ulmann and Petr Kien in 1943, and is considered a signature masterpiece of Terezin, a Nazi concentration camp.

Also in May, **Kirk Eichelberger** will perform with Opera Grand Rapids in *Faust* as Mephistopheles. This alumnus of both OSJ and Merola programs just completed singing Sparafucile in *Rigoletto* with Vancouver Opera in British Columbia. *Review Vancouver* writer John Jane noted that **Mr. Eichelberger** “in a smaller though no less significant role’ was stylishly effective as a sinister Sparafucile.”

May will find Merola alumna **Laura Claycomb** singing Tytania in Britten’s *Midsummer Night’s Dream* with the Canadian Opera Company in Toronto. **Ms. Claycomb** will travel to Germany in July to sing with the Munich Philharmonic. There she will be a soloist as Michael Tilson-Thomas conducts Krenek’s *Die Nachtigall*.

Former Adler Fellow, director **José Maria Condemi**, recently directed West Bay Opera’s *Orfeo ed Euridice* and Lyric Opera of Chica-

go’s *Tristan und Isolde*. In Chicago, he was joined by 2005-2006 Merola alumnus **David Portillo**, who sang Sailor. Mr. Portillo won the 2008 first place in the Union League Civic and Arts Foundation competition, and received an Encouragement Award from the Sullivan Foundation. Mr. Condemi will direct *Faust* for Opera Grand Rapids this spring and in the fall will return to Lyric Opera of Chicago to direct a new production of *Ernani*.

An alumnus of the Merola Program and former fellow of the Houston Grand Opera Studio, **Beau Gibson** has been busy with the Los Angeles Opera. He made his LA Opera debut as the First Armed Man in *Die Zauberflöte*, and more recently sang Froh in their new production of *Das Rheingold*.

Berkeley Opera celebrated its 30th Anniversary with a concert featuring Adler Fellow, and San Francisco Opera Medal winner, **Ruth Ann Swenson**. The concert featured an array of wonderful singers who have appeared on the Berkeley Opera stage over the years and are fellow Merola alumni. Joining **Ms. Swenson** were soprano **Marie Plette**, mezzo-soprano **Catherine Cook**, and bass-baritone **Phillip Skinner**. The program included highlights from the 64 operas by 40 different composers that have been performed by Berkeley Opera. Artistic Director Jonathan Khuner conducted the Berkeley Opera Orchestra.

Merola alumnus, **Quinn Kelsey** performed in February’s Schwabacher Debut Recital. He sang majestic songs by Mahler and Mussorgsky and poignant works by Gerald

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Opera Travelers

Summer Time Opera Festivals

By **Mort Levine**

All it seems to take is a patch of beautiful weather and a rising Dow Jones average to focus the mind on travels abroad, especially when looking over the riches of the many festivals that dot the continent. It brings back memories of memorable experiences that involved both performances, unique settings and the chance to interact with a widely diverse and opera-literate attendees from the world over.

The casual nature of summer festivals invite the interchange of experience, shared

views of the operas, and even restaurant suggestions and other festivals to enjoy.

With some careful surfing of the web, one can now get the lineups of operas and other musical events at each festival. A starting point will be the imminent arrival of the May issue of *Opera News* which will feature these European festivals, but any search engine will provide dozens of entry points to get the information about what is on offer, what is sold out already, and even some tips on lodging and nearby attractions.

Among our all time favorites would be the following:

Glydebourne Festival Opera runs this year from May 21 through August 30. It is on an estate in the sunny East Sussex countryside which is about a three hour drive south from London. Trains also serve the site. This festival lineup has six operas to mark their 75th anniversary. The *Giulio Cesare* by Handel should be a highlight, and it's also Handel's 250th birthday. Purcell's *Faerie Queen* is another rarely performed gem. New productions of *Rusalka* and *Falstaff*, plus the *Elixer* and *Tristan and Isolde* round out the season.

Salzburg is the granddaddy of festivals where the entire town gets in the action. From July 25 through August 30 one can partake of the joys this festival offers. Available are six operas plus theatre pieces in several languages and dozens of chamber music, orchestral appearances and recitals. Mozart would be proud of his hometown.

Savonlinna is a very special place on an island castle converted to opera performances in midsummer. The opportunity to experience

Career Updates

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Finzi. The *San Francisco Chronicle* noted of his previous performances, "The magnitude of his singing, so robust and forceful...was remarkable." In May, **Mr. Kelsey** will perform with Opera Grand Rapids in *Faust*. Another Schwabacher Debut Recital featured current Adler Fellow **Alek Shrader**. San Francisco *Classical Voice's* Janos Gereben said of Shrader's singing, "He opens his mouth and glorious music comes through it...In his voice production, his making music, his projection, diction, and legato...everything about this artist is natural and effortless, so different from just about everybody else." **Mr. Shrader** is one of the artists featured in the Metropolitan Opera's documentary film *The Audition* which will be shown as a part of the Met's series of HD presentations. Two Merola alumni were featured in this winter's HD operas: **Patrick Summers** conducted *Madama Butterfly* and **Michael Myers** sang Normanno in *Lucia Di Lammermoor*.

Opera Travelers

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the wooded waterland of central Finland is a lifetime treat. The website for a full spectrum of useful information is www.operafestival.fi and it's truly extraordinary.

Italy, as the first home of opera, pays special homage to its foremost composers each summer with an array of operas in their hometowns. Among them are the Rossini festival in Pesaro which always offers some of the most obscure masterworks as well as the best known. It runs two weeks in August. Its website is www.rossinioperafestival.it. Puccini is similarly honored at Torre del Lago from mid-July through much of August with four operas. And, while in Italy, one shouldn't overlook the amazing Maggio Musicale Fiorentino which brings opera and music events from late April to July 1. www.maggiofiorentino.com.

There are many, many others to provide a special remembrance to a European trip. Once at an opera festival, you find yourself among fellow enthusiasts who become friends.



Calendar

MAY 3: Camera Theater at the Pruneyard presents *L'Incoronazione di Popea* at 11am Encore, May 6 at 7pm, Information: www.fathomevents.com.

MAY 8: Italian American Heritage Foundation Benefit for Opera San José, Dinner. Program by Resident Artists of Opera San José, 6:30pm. \$30.00 members, \$35.00 Non-members, \$20.00 Students with valid ID, Information (408) 293-7122.

MAY 9: Metropolitan Opera Live in HD presents *La Cenerentola* at 9:30 am at AMC Eastridge Mall 15, Cinearts, Santana Row 6, and San Jose Oakridge, 7pm. Encore, May 20 at 7 pm, same venue. Information: www.fathomevents.com.

MAY 9, 11, 12 at 7:30pm, MAY 10 at 3pm: SJSU Opera Theatre, *The Three Fat Women of Antibes* by Mona Lyn Reese and *Suor Angelica* by Giacomo Puccini in the University Theater. Tickets \$25, seniors and students \$15. For reservations leave a message at 408 924-4654. Theater is on San Fernando near 5th.

MAY 10: Camera Theater at the Pruneyard presents *Giulio Cesare* at 11:00 am. Encore, May 13 at 7 pm. Same venue. Information: www.fathomevents.com.

MAY 16: Third-Annual Irene Dalis Vocal Competition, California Theatre, 7pm., Reserved seating, \$ 50; premier seating \$100 (includes pre-event talk with the judges and post-competition reception with the winners),

Reservations required. To attend call 405 437-4450

MAY 20: 2009-10 Season's Preview, Larry Hancock speaker and OSJ Resident Artists performance, Santa Clara Public Library, 2635 Homestead Road, Santa Clara. Free Event

MAY 22, 24, 30 and 31: West Bay Opera presents *Madama Butterfly*. Call 650 424-9999 for times, tickets and venue.

MAY 26: Saratoga Foothill Club Public Lecture by Heather Hadlock on *Tosca* by Giacomo Puccini, 10am Saratoga Foothill Club, 20399 Park Place, Saratoga. Opera lectures offered in association with San José Opera Guild. \$ 10. For more information contact Joy H. Hulme 408 741-1331. Hotflash96@aolcom or Saratoga Foothill Club.

MAY 29: San Francisco Opera, One Night Gala with Donald Runnicles conducting Verdi *Requiem*. Patricia Racette, Stephanie Blythe, Stefano Secco, and Andrea Silvestrelli singing. Tickets available at the S.F. Opera Box Office 415 864-3330

JUNE 2: San José Women's Club presents annual Scholarship Fund Raiser. 11:30 am Hospitality (complimentary wine and appetizers) luncheon, and OSJ resident artist performance. Rebecca Davis, Michael Dailey, Silas Elash and possibly one other will sing. Cost \$35 (\$25 tax deduction), Parking permits provided. Mail checks to: Maxine Lubow, 581 South 13th Street, San Jose CA 95112. Reservations due by May 29.

JUNE 2: Saratoga Foothill Club Public Lecture by Lynne Morrow on *Porgy and Bess* by George Gershwin, 10am Saratoga Foothill

Club. See information for May 26th lecture.

JULY 11: San José Opera Guild Summer Event at Santana Row, coupled with an outdoor performance by Opera San José singers. Invitations and announcements to follow. Save this date!

The Following are all San Francisco Merola Performances. Tickets available at S.F. Opera Box Office 415 864-3330

JULY 10: Schwabacher Summer Concert, War Memorial Veterans Building, Herbst Theatre, 7pm.

JULY 12: Yerba Buena Gardens, Free Merola Concert, 2pm.

JULY 24: 8pm, 25 at 2pm: *L'Amico Fritz* by Pietro Mascagni, Cowell Theater at Fort Mason Center.

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SJOG Newsletter is published four times a year in Feb., May, Aug., and Nov. by:
San José Opera Guild

San José Opera Guild
c/o Argo Gherardi
P.O.Box 33025
Los Gatos, CA 95031-3025

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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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