



NEWSLETTER

May 2010

SJOG Vocal Awards Competition A Success

Nine aspiring college students competed for \$1000 in prize money on Sunday, April 25 at the San José State Department of Music building. The competition is a biennial event sponsored by the San José Opera Guild. The event was directed by Layna Chianakas, Professor of Vocal Performance at San José State University.

The small but enthusiastic audience applauded the overall quality of the singing and the piano accompaniment of Hadley McCarroll. Judging the singers were: Christopher Bengochea, tenor; Irina Prilipko, pianist coach, and accompanist; and David Sloss, Director of Fremont Opera and Symphony. The competition included five sopranos, one mezzo-soprano, two tenors, and one baritone.

The first prize award of \$600 went to soprano Lori Shulman, who sang “Kommt ein schlanker Bursch gegangen” from *Der Freischütz* by C. M. von Weber and “Once I thought” from *The Tenderland* by A. Copland. The second prize award of \$400 went to soprano Margaret Gordon, who sang “Durch Zärtlichkeit und Schmeicheln” from *Die Entführung aus dem Serail* by W. A. Mozart and “Quel guardo il Cavaliere” from *Don Pasquale* by G. Donizetti.

The competition was followed by a reception sponsored by the San José Opera Guild. Coffee for the reception was donated by the Los Gatos Coffee Roasting Co.. The reception committee provided a variety of snacks and treats. The event was free to all who attended.

Opera Travelers

By Mort Levine

The Nose at the Met is the hit of the year,
but Verdi's *Attila* proved to be a strike out.

A recent jam-packed week of sampling energy-packed midtown Manhattan's cultural delights resulted in a jolting stimulus to the imagination, a kaleidoscope of visual imagery and a yearning for the tranquility of suburban Saratoga.

Focal point of the trip was to experience first hand the most intriguing production the Met has done in years. *The Nose* by the 22-year-old Dimitri Shostakovich is an anti establishment poke in the eye of authority figures as shaped by the absurdist satirical short story by

Opera Travelers, continued from p. 1

Nicolai Gogol in the early 19th century. The music itself is spiky and jazzy with riffs that in themselves would result in a 50-year banning of the opera after its premiere. But in this show, its the visual aspects that are so dazzling and which thus made those who caught the earlier radio broadcast deservedly angry. It wasn't included in the HD movie series this year.

The visuals were done in an idiosyncratic form, which paid tribute to the Dada movement and the Constructivist artists of the 1920s, are the creation of South African artist William Kentridge, director of this production. Kentridge has an absurdist note to much of his work which covers animation and paintings. The NY Museum of Modern Art currently has a big Kentridge show on view.

The story is of a minor official who wakes up one morning missing his nose. While it goes off by itself, having grown to six feet tall, the official attempts to climb the ladder of bureaucracy to get some help in retrieving it. The shabby treatment he gets from those in power obviously didn't sit well with his targets.

However there are just enough loony antics and comic turns, coupled with the excellent voices of the principals and a cast of about 70 characters to keep the audience enraptured. Baritone Paul Szot, who "lost" his nose, still sang with brilliance. He also just starred as Emile deBecque in the new revival of *South Pacific*.

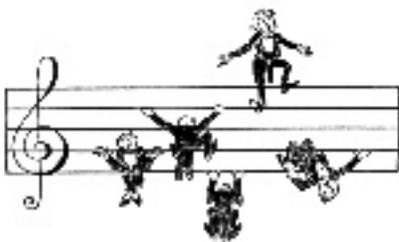
Oddly, the other opera we chose to see proved to be a tiresome mid-career Verdi work, *Attila*, where the set was entrusted to a Swiss architectural firm which did the de Young in San Francisco. They seemingly had no idea of what a staging needed to be to work for the singers. Instead they provided a huge batch of broken concrete which supposedly represented what ruination Attila was bringing on the Romans. Costuming by the same firm was equally wrong.

The remarkable cast did their best [even though] hamstrung by the sets and the early Verdi practice of lots of cabalettas with their triple reprises of the key melodic lines. A splendid bass voice of Ildar Abdrazakov of Ufa, Russia, brought a sensitive characterization to his role. The love interest, Roman princess Odabella, was well sung by Lithuanian soprano Violeta Urmana.

In seeing *Attila*, we missed out on a much hailed *Faerie Queen* by Henry Purcell which was at the Brooklyn Academy of Music. Earlier in the week, a late arriving plane kept us from seeing Ricky Ian Gordon's *Grapes of Wrath*, a contemporary opera done semi-staged at Carnegie Hall.

The New York visitor need not fret, however. Some great theater both on and off Broadway is going forth. We recommend *Red* (about painter Mark Rothko) and *God of Carnage* (a comedy that goes *Who's Afraid of Virginia Wolfe* one better) plus a lot of fantastic museum shows. Exhausting as it is, a brief bite of the Big Apple really is worth it.

###



Career Updates

Professor **Layna Chianakas** hosted the SJOG Vocal Awards Competition on Sunday, April 25th, but that's not all she's been doing! She sang in *Misa de los Immigrantes*, Henry Mollicone's world premiere on March 5 & 7, 2010 with the San José Symphonic Choir. On March 10th, 2010 she sang in *Ständchen* by Franz Schubert with the California State Men's Honors Choir. On April 10th, she was a soloist with **Christopher Bengochea & Brian Leerhuber** in Alva Henderson's 70th Birthday Celebration. Coming up on May 14 & 16, 2010 she will be a soloist with the Oakland East Bay Symphony in *The Deepest Desire* by Jake Heggie.

Besides being a judge for our awards competition, **Christopher Bengochea** is appearing in *La Rondine* as Ruggero in Opera San José's current production. You can also see him as a soloist in Verdi's *Requiem* with the Modesto Symphony on May 14 & 15, 2010. He is also soon to be a daddy for the second time!

Rebecca Davis, a Jeanne McCann fellow for Opera San Jose, is also currently appearing in *La Rondine*. She has just been chosen as one of the 25 Merolini for this summer.

Jesse Merlin, versatile singer that he is, is actively singing in Los Angeles where he can be seen in the upcoming production of the *U.S.S. Pinafore*, an out of this world adaptation of Gilbert & Sullivan's *HMS Pinafore* aboard the *U.S.S. Pinafore* starship!! It previews May 15th and runs until June 27th, 2010 at the Crown City Theatre Company in

North Hollywood, CA.

Christina Major returned to the Tucson Symphony Orchestra as a soprano soloist in Handel's *Messiah*. On April 18 & 19th, 2010 she sang in Denton and Fort Worth, Texas with the University of Texas Symphony Orchestra in Verdi's *Requiem*.

Roberto Gomez has been performing with the Long Beach Opera. His most recent role as Cho En Lai in *Nixon in China* on March 20 and 28th, 2010.

Nmon Ford was the winner of the Franco Corelli Award this March and gave a recital March 14, 2010 in Ancona, Italy. He appeared in the title role in *Don Giovanni* at the Teatro Delle Muse in Ancona, Italy on March 19 & 21. Closer to home, he sang Escamillo in *Carmen* at the Palm Beach Opera.

Kirk Eichelberger will be returning to Festival Opera (Walnut Creek) this August as Raimondo in *Lucia de Lammermoor*.

Jason Detwiler is actively singing in Idaho. So far in 2010, he has appeared as a soloist with the Boise Philharmonic Orchestra in Bernstein's *Candide Suite*, as Prince Dandini in *Cenerentola* by Rossini for Opera Idaho, as a soloist in Mozart's *Requiem* for the Boise Baroque Orchestra, and as a soloist in their baroque concert. On May 16th he will be a soloist in Mozart's *Requiem* for the College of Idaho's Chorale and he will be a soloist in a concert performance of Sun Valley Opera's *Miz Saigon* on July 11th. **Isaac Hurtado** will be in *Miz Saigon* also.

continued on p. 4

Career Updates

continued from page 3

Michele Detwiler was Tisbe in *La Cenerentola* last Feb 26 & 28 with Opera Idaho. She is hoping to go to New York for auditions this Spring and is trying to raise \$1500 for the trip. She too will be in Mozart's *Requiem* with the College of Idaho Chorale on May 16th.

Carlos Aguilar was seen April 18th at a piano and violin concert with **Krassen Karagiozov** and was overheard saying, "I will be back singing soon."

In April 2010, soprano **Rochelle Bard** appeared as Magda in Opera Tampa's production of *La Rondine*. She is singing in a benefit concert for Haiti on Sunday, May 16th and she will be Violetta in *La Traviata* with the Music By the Lake summer festival in Wisconsin this July.

Soprano **Leah Crocetto**, an Adler fellow, was one of the 5 winners of the Metropolitan Opera's National Council Auditions on March 14, 2010. Mezzo soprano **Maya Lahyani**, another Adler fellow, was also one of the finalists. Past winners of the Met Auditions include **Stephanie Blythe, Renee Fleming, Susan Graham, Nathan Gunn, Ben Heppner, Samuel Ramey, and Deborah Voigt.**

That's it for this quarter! If you want me to look up your favorite singer and follow what he or she is doing, please email me at wendy_dewell@yahoo.com.

###



Publisher
San José Opera Guild
President
Susan English
Editor
Argo Gherardi
Publicity
Jan Eurich
Career Updates
Wendy Dewell
Calendar
Connie Zilles

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

San José Opera Guild
P.O. Box 33025
Los Gatos, CA 95031-3025

Calendar

MAY 1, Metropolitan Opera Simulcast in HD, *Armida* by Gioacchino Rossini, live at CineArts Oakridge 20, 225-7340; Santana Row 6, 554-7010; and AMC Eastridge Mall 15, 274-2274. Simulcasts are at 10AM and cost \$24.00 for adults, \$22.00 for seniors. The encores which occur later are at 6:30 PM and cost \$22.00 for adults and \$20.00 for seniors.

MAY 19, Metropolitan Opera Encore in HD, *Armida* by Gioacchino Rossini at 6:30 PM. See May 1 for more information.

MAY 21, 23, 29, and 30, West Bay Opera presents *La Traviata* by Giuseppe Verdi, Lucie Stern Theatre, Palo Alto, 650 424-9999 or visit www.wbopera.org

MAY 22, Fourth Annual Irene Dalis Vocal Competition, California Theatre, 7 PM., Opera San José will award \$50,000 to three winners chosen from ten finalists. Judges are various opera conductors and artistic directors including Lotfi Mansouri, former General Director of San Francisco Opera. \$50.00 and \$100.00 Call OSJ Box Office (408) 437-4450

JUNE 1, San José Opera Guild Lecture, by Dr Laura Basini on *The Girl of the Golden West (La Fanciulla del West)* by Giacomo Puccini. 10AM Saratoga Foothill Club, 20399 Park Place, Saratoga, \$10 at the door

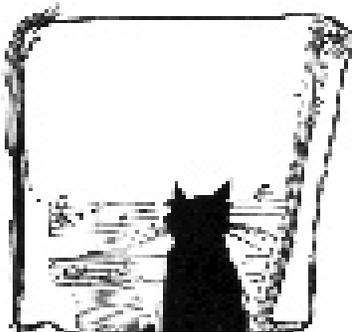
JUNE 8, San José Opera Guild Lecture, by Simon Williams on *Die Walküre* by Richard Wagner. 10AM Saratoga Foothill Club, 20399 Park Place, Saratoga, \$10 at the door

JULY 16, 7:30 PM. Merola Opera Program, Schwabacher Summer Concert, Herbst Theatre, San Francisco. \$40 or \$25 and \$15 Students, San Francisco Opera Box Office, (415) 864-3330

JULY 25, Merola Singers, Outdoor Schwabacher Summer Concert, Yerba Buena Gardens, San Francisco, 2:00 PM. free.

JULY 25 SAVE THIS DATE! Music in the Park, Los Gatos, Opera San José resident singers performing opera arias outdoors next to the library. Bring a blanket, snack, hat, and enjoy!, 5PM, followed by the San José Opera Guild's Summer Event: Dinner at Dio De-ka Restaurant in Los Gatos. Event Invitations to follow in June.

###



Visit our website at
sjoperaguild.org

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

Nonprofit Organization
U.S. Postage
PAID
Saratoga, CA
Permit No. 5

Return Service Requested

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.

Name _____

Name of Family Member _____

Address _____

City _____ Zip _____

Telephone (_____) _____ - _____

Email _____

Membership Individual	\$45
Levels: Under 30	\$30
Family	\$60
Organization	\$75
Donation	\$ _____
Total	\$ _____

Make check payable to SJOG
Mail this form and check to:
Membership Chairman
San José Opera Guild
P.O. Box 33025
Los Gatos, CA 95031-33025

The San José Opera Guild is a nonprofit 501(C)(3) organization.
Contributions are deductible to the extent provided by law.
Does your company have a matching grant program?
Visit our website at www.sjoperaguild.org