



NEWSLETTER

February 2011

SJOG DONATES

As we ask you to renew your membership in SJOG, you may be asking just what your membership pays for. The lectures for five of San Francisco Opera's fall operas are free to our members, along with a season preview of both West Bay Opera and Opera San José. In addition, our Guild donates to Opera San José's outreach, and this year will sponsor a returning artist, Daniel Cilli. With the help of our donation, OSJ will present two performances of *Hansel and Gretel* at the Children's Discovery Museum on May 28, 2011 at 1pm and 2:30pm. In addition, the donation will sponsor two performances of the one-act opera in San Jose schools that can not typically afford assembly programs.

Our Guild also contributes to the San Francisco Opera Guild's outreach, and to the Merola Program. This Program was recently featured in an article in the *Wall Street Journal* titled "Boot Camp for Belters," by David Littlejohn. Some of the information contained in his article may aid in understanding how this Program furthers our stated mission to "promote the operatic arts and provide both volunteer and financial support to opera." The following presents an overview of the Merola Program.

Named for Gaetano Merola, who founded

the San Francisco Opera in 1923, Merola is a training program for young singers. It was created in 1957, by Kurt Herbert Adler, Merola's successor, to bring top-quality young singers to San Francisco. This Program aims to transform these young singers into paid professionals in just eleven weeks.

Merola administrators receive between 600 and 800 applications each year. Former soprano of distinction, Sheri Greenawald, heads up the training program. She and her colleagues travel to New York, Chicago, Los Angeles and San Francisco to listen to all of the finalists, and then select the 19 to 23 who will be named Merolini for the year. Also selected are four apprentice coaches and one apprentice director.

There have been 963 young singers who have been trained at Merola over the past 53 years. Former participants include: Brian Asawa, '91; Laura Claycomb, '89-'90; Susan Graham, '87; Joyce DiDonato, '97; Mark Delavan, '85; Thomas Hampson, '80; Ruth Ann Swenson, '81-'82; Carol Vaness, '76; Deborah Voight, '85; Anna Netrebko, '96; and many others.

The San Jose Opera Guild can be proud of the contributions it has made to the art form.

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Opera San José Announces 2011-12 Season

Opera San José General Director Irene Dalis has announced repertoire for the company's 28th season to begin Saturday, September 10 with the company premiere of Mozart's first dramatic masterwork, *Idomeneo*, the mythical tale of the king of Crete set at the end of the Trojan War. George Cleve, founder and music director of the *Midsummer Mozart Festival*, conducts, with stage direction by Brad Dalton. In November, Opera San José will present a double-bill of two intensely dramatic operas, Leoncavallo's *Pagliacci* paired with Poulenc's *La voix humaine*. In partnership with Opera Santa Barbara, acclaimed stage director and artistic director of Opera Santa Barbara José Maria Condemi returns in 2012 to direct Verdi's romantic tragedy *La traviata*. The season will culminate with Gounod's *Faust* conducted by Opera San José's founding music director and principal conductor, David Rohrbaugh, with Brad Dalton returning as stage director.

"Next season we will offer the public Mozart's favorite opera, Leoncavallo's best opera, a tour de force for a single voice by the French master, Poulenc, America's favorite Verdi opera, and Queen Victoria's favorite op-

era of all time. That's quite a line up!" says General Director Irene Dalis. "As always, we select operas that best suit the artists in our resident company, and these operas will fit like a glove."

The 2011-12 season features the principal artists from Opera San José's resident company: Jasmina Halimic (soprano), Jouvanca Jean-Baptiste (soprano), Betany Coffland (mezzo-soprano), Alexander Boyer (tenor), Michael Dailey (tenor), Torlef Borsting (baritone), Krassen Karagiozov (baritone), Isaiah Musik-Ayala (bass-baritone), and Silas Elash (bass). Former residents, soprano Rebecca Davis and tenor Christopher Bengochea, return as guest artists during the 2011-12 season.

All performances will be held at the California Theatre, 345 South First Street in downtown San José.

Season subscriptions (\$100-\$340) on sale February 7, 2011 from the Opera San José Box Office, 2149 Paragon Dr., San José, CA 95131; or call 408-437-4450.

Single tickets (\$50-\$100) on sale July 11, call 408-437-4450 or at www.operasj.org

###

Lectures Announced S.F. Opera 2011-2012 Season

by Steve Zilles

On Tuesday, 18 January, San Francisco Opera announced their 2011-2012 Season and with it the Fall lectures associated with that season. These lectures sponsored by the San José Opera Guild will begin on Tues., Aug. 30 with a lecture by Timothy Flynn on *Turandot* by Puccini. Timothy Flynn has spoken to us on *Madame Butterfly* (last year) and *Il Trittico*. Following that lecture, on Tuesday, 6 September, Mitchell Morris will speak on *Heart of a Soldier* by Christopher Theofanidis and

Donna Di Novelli. This is a new opera that promises to be a hit of the season. Mitchell Morris is an expert on 20th and 21st century opera and last spoke to us on *Die Tote Stadt*. On Tuesday, 20 September, Mary Ann Smart will speak to us on Donizetti's *Lucrezia Borgia*, an opera being done for the first time by San Francisco Opera. We have previously enjoyed Mary Ann's talk on *La Fille du Regiment*.
See P. 3

Santa Fe Opera Tour

Will Benefit SJOG

Carol Rabin, President of Creative Travel Arrangers has announced the 2011 summer schedule of Santa Fe Opera tours. Details are given below. Guild members joining a tour have an opportunity to benefit SJOG. Carol has pledged a donation of \$50 to our Guild for each member on the tour.

Santa Fe Opera Tour July 12 -17, 2011

We (Creative Travel Arrangers - ed.) extend an invitation to you to join us and enjoy the spectacular performances at the world acclaim & Santa Fe Opera. The Opera House with its serene and dramatic setting provides a vista of the sky and the mountain range as backdrop. Each person with our front orchestra seats has a screen displaying English super titles. The tour cost of \$3150.00 includes round trip air San Francisco to Albuquerque (transportation from other cities may be arranged), transfers, a reception, 5 nights at the first class Inn of The Governors, 3 operas (*La Boheme, Faust, and Griselda*), daily full American breakfast, 3 dinners, a flamenco evening, opera lecture, a chamber music concert, sightseeing, museum passes, a New Mexican Sampler trip, Georgia O'Keeffe museum, and a backstage tour of Santa Fe's beautiful opera house. Carol Price Rabin will escort the tour, which promises to be a wonderful musical experience.

Santa Fe Opera Tour August 7 - 12, 2011

This trip will appeal not only to music lovers, newcomers or veterans of opera, but also to those who wish to enjoy the beauty of Santa Fe, New Mexico and its dramatic surroundings. Attend 4 operas with front orchestra seating in the architecturally striking Santa Fe opera house. The tour cost of \$3150.00 will include round-trip airfare from San Francisco to Albuquerque, (transportation from other cities may be arranged), transfers, a reception, five nights at the first-class Inn of The Governors, four operas (*Faust, Griselda, La Boheme and The Last Savage*), daily full American breakfasts, two dinners, a chamber music concert, sightseeing, backstage tour, opera lecture, a half day New Mexican Sampler trip, museum pass, and Georgia O'Keeffe museum. Join Carol Price Rabin on her yearly Santa Fe Opera adventure.

**For information and/or booking: Tel. (650) 854-4410, Email carolrabin@gmail.com
Creative Travel Arrangers, 36 Linaria Way, Portola Valley, CA 94028 ###**

Lectures, Continued From P. 2.

Our final two San Francisco Opera lectures are in October. Simon Williams will talk to about Mozart's Don Giovanni on 11 October. Simon has given us a number of lectures and has most recently spoken on Die Walkure and Simon Boccanegra. Finally, on 25 October, Bruce Lamott will speak on Serse (or Xerxes) by Handel. Bruce has spoken to us a number of times in the past, most recently on Ariodante and Iphigenie en Tauride. All these lectures will take place from 10AM to 12 Noon

and, this year, we have a new venue, the Addison Penzak Jewish Community Center Silicon Valley in Los Gatos. This site, which is on Oka Road just off the intersection of Highway 17 and Lark Road is easy to find and get to. Please hold the above dates and plan to attend these fascinating and inspiring lectures. And do not forget to attend Cory Ellison's lecture on Wagner's Ring Cycle at the Saratoga Foothill club at 10AM on June 7, 2011.

###

Opera and Lunch at Santana Row

On Saturday, February 26, 2011, our Guild invites you to join others who are passionate about opera for a morning of HD entertainment with a luncheon to follow at the Left Bank Restaurant. The Metropolitan Opera's simulcast of *Iphigenie en Tauride* starring Susan Graham and Placido Domingo will begin at 10 am at Cinearts Santana Row. We strongly suggest that you purchase your tickets early, either on line or from the box office. Following the movie, we will walk just a few steps to the Left Bank Restaurant for our lunch. There will be four entrees to select from: Quiche et Salade, Eggs Benedict, Pain Perdu, and Sal-

ade Nicoise, all followed by Crème Brulee or Les Profiteroles and preceded by Salade Verte or Strauss yogurt.

You may find a response form on our website, and an email pdf of the invitation will be emailed to all of our members who have provided an email address.

The cost is \$35.00 per person, and we ask that you respond by February 15th. If you have any questions, please contact Susan English at suenglish@yahoo.com or at 408-395-1308. We are looking forward to exciting entertainment and conversations! ###

by Alexandra Mena

A Taste of Boccaccio

Riding on the wave of their successful production of *Die Zauberflöte*, the SJSU Opera Theater Ensemble moves forward with a daring turn, by bringing you a double bill of two naughty tales. Robert Sirota's *The Clever Mistress*, and Robert Xavier Rodriguez's *Suor Isabella*. These contemporary operas will be fully staged and performed with orchestra on Saturday, May 14th, at 7:30 pm, with a matinee on Sunday, May 15th, at 2pm. These will be presented at the Concert Hall, in the San José State University Music Building.

Both *The Clever Mistress* and *Suor Isabella* are based on Giovanni Boccaccio's *The Decameron*, a literary work finished in 1353 and based on one hundred short stories. In *The Decameron*, Boccaccio tells us of seven ladies and three gentlemen who flee Florence to escape the bubonic plague and settle in the outskirts of the city. While there, each of the ten protagonists tells a story during the course of ten days, resulting in one hundred stories. These are often funny and suggestive, yet under all the humor and mischief, there's

a serious tone resulting from the effects of the bubonic plague, and the overall sentiment toward the Catholic Church and its core beliefs. Boccaccio's use of satire, aimed particularly at the Catholic Church, and his clever use of the number ten, a sacred number to the church, is precisely the type of thinking that led to the awakening during the Renaissance Period and the questioning of church dogma.

Armed with an exceptional group of singer-actors, the SJSU Opera Theatre Ensemble will revel in the humorous side of Sirota's and Rodriguez's operas, while observing Boccaccio's cautionary tales of the human condition under trying times. As university students, the Ensemble has the fortune of exploring these themes at length while pushing the envelope of interpretation.

The Clever Mistress/Suor Isabella
SJSU Opera Theater Ensemble
Saturday, May 14, 2011, 7:30 pm
Sunday, May 15, 2011, 2 pm
Concert Hall - Music Bldg.
San José State University ###

Opera Travelers

by Mort Levine

Another part of Placido Domingo's inspired operatic career comes into focus with *Il Postino*.

Coupled with the nearby San Francisco Opera performance of *Cyrano de Bergerac* last fall, along came the opportunity to witness another aspect of Placido Domingo's operatic genius at work. Almost simultaneously, while singing the title role as the lovesick poet-swordsman, this most versatile artist was also singing the role of the Nobel prizewinning Chilean poet, Pablo Neruda, at Los Angeles Opera, where he also remains the general director.

There are other astonishing parallels in the two operas. Both operas are far better known for their movies. *Il Postino* was first a successful film. It inspired Mexican composer Daniel Catan, when he saw it, to say, "This is a perfect theme for an opera. It deals with art and love: the foundations on which we build out lives."

Neruda's luminous love poetry figures strongly in the opera as does his story of exile. He was booted out of Chile for protesting the policies of the Pinochet regime in 1949 and found himself on the Italian island of Cala di Sotto where the tale of a lovesick postman, Mario Ruoppolo, unfolds. The postman and the poet develop a friendship in which the poetic lines help Mario win the girl of his dreams, another interesting connection to *Cyrano*.

The opera elevates Mario to a much more thoughtful character than in the movie. As a result he emerges from Neruda's tutelage as heroic yet sensitive, like his mentor.

Los Angeles based Tenor Charles Castronovo sang the title role. Amanda Squitieri's buttery soprano was perfect for the object of his affections. The always hovering mamma,

Donna Rosa, was sung with appropriate authority by mezzo Nancy Fabiola Herrera. Neruda's wife, Matilde, was Cristina Gallardo-Domas, a Chilean soprano most recently seen as Desdemona opposite Domingo as Otello.

Domingo was an early advocate of this opera, along with earlier works by Catan. LA Opera presented his *Florenzia en el Amazonas*, based on Garcia Marquez' *Love in the Time of Cholera*. Both operas manifest a strong romantic and lyrical style which fits human voices well and is very accessible to audiences.

It is hard to encapsulate the multi-faceted impact of Domingo on the opera world today. There is simply no one like him anywhere. A fine, disciplined and well-trained musician, he is a conductor, an administrator of major companies and conceptualizer of significant operatic projects. These include operas but also such ventures as "Operalia", a periodic vocal competition designed to jump-start careers of budding singers.

And now well into his 60s, Placido Domingo is still a hot ticket at the box office with amazingly unimpaired acting and singing ability after so many years.

It was well worth the trip to experience the range of Placido Domingo's artistry.

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SAVE THE DATE: JUNE 5th
EVENT: CHAMPAGNE BRUNCH
WHERE: LA ESTANCIA
TIME: 11:30

Invitations to follow, late April

Calendar

FEBRUARY 1, Opera San José, Free opera preview of *The Barber of Seville*, 12 noon, Dr. MLK Jr. Library, 4th and San Fernando Streets, San Jose.

FEBRUARY 12, 13, 15, 18, 20, 24, 26, 27, Opera San José presents *The Barber of Seville* by Gioachino Rossini, California Theatre, San Jose. Call 408 437-4450 or visit www.operasj.org.

FEBRUARY 12, Metropolitan Opera Simulcast in HD, *Nixon in China* by John Adams, 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)

FEBRUARY 10, West Bay Opera, Free Opera Preview with piano of *Turandot*, Palo Alto Art Center, Palo Alto

FEBRUARY 18, 20, 26, and 27, West Bay Opera presents *Turandot* by Giacomo Puccini, Lucie Stern Theatre, Palo Alto, 650 424-9999 or visit www.wbopera.org, student, senior and group discounts available.

FEBRUARY 26, Metropolitan Opera Simulcast in HD, *Iphigenie en Tauride* by Christoph Gluck, 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)

FEBRUARY 26, San José Opera Guild, luncheon at the Left Bank brasserie on Santana Row after the 10am Metropolitan Opera live HD Simulcast of *Iphigenie en Tauride* starring Susan Graham and Plácido Domingo.

Theatre tickets should be purchased early. To make reservations for the luncheon (choice of four entrees at the brasserie) send a check or your credit card information for \$35 with your name and telephone number to San José Opera Guild, P.O. Box 33025, Los Gatos, CA 95031-3025. Questions? Email suenglish@yahoo.com or call 408 395-1308. If you can't go to the movie, you can still join us for the luncheon.

MARCH 2, 6:30 pm, Metropolitan Opera Encore of Adams' *Nixon in China*, see February 12 for additional information.

MARCH 16, 6:30 pm, Metropolitan Opera Encore of Gluck's *Iphigenie en Tauride*, see February 26 for additional information.

MARCH 19, Metropolitan Opera Simulcast in HD, *Lucia di Lammermoor* by Gaetano Donizetti, 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).

APRIL 6, 6:30 pm, Metropolitan Opera Encore of Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor*, see March 19 for additional information

APRIL 12, Opera San José, Free opera preview of *La Boheme*, 12 noon, Dr. MLK Jr. Library, 4th and San Fernando Streets, San Jose.

APRIL 23, Metropolitan Opera Simulcast in HD, *Capriccio* by Richard Strauss, 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 seniors. (The encores which occur later are at 6:30 pm and cost \$22.00 adults and \$20.00 for seniors).

Calendar

Continued from P. 6

APRIL 23, 24, 28, 30, MAY 1, 3, 6, 8, Opera San José presents *La Boheme* by Giacomo Puccini, California Theatre, San Jose. Call 408 437-4450 or visit www.operasj.org.

APRIL 30, Metropolitan Opera Simulcast in HD, *Il Trovatore* by Giuseppe Verdi, 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 18, 6:30 pm, Metropolitan Opera Encore of Verdi's *Trovatore*, see April 30 for additional information.

MAY 21, 6:30 pm, Metropolitan Opera Encore of Strauss's *Capriccio*, see April 23 for additional information.

SAVE THE DATES for these exciting events

JUNE 5 San José Opera Guild Event, Brunch at the beautiful La Estancia estate in Los Gatos.

JUNE 7 San José Opera Guild Summer Lecture jointly held with the Saratoga Foothill Club, *The Ring Cycle* by Richard Wagner, lecturer Cory Ellison, 10AM, Saratoga Foothill Club, 20399 Park Place, Saratoga, \$10 at the door. Come join us to see Ms. Ellison help us to understand and enjoy 17 hours of Wagner's wonderful music in less than two! ###

What Do You Think?

During the past few meetings, the San Jose Opera Guild Board of Directors has been discussing the possibility of delivering the quarterly newsletter electronically, via email, rather than via the U. S. Postal Service. This step is being considered not only to help the Guild "go green" but also to save on the printing and mailing costs for the newsletter. At present these amount to about \$1200.00 per year.

Before discussing this issue further and in order to make an informed decision, the board of directors would like to poll the Guild's members as to their preferred method of delivery for the Guild's quarterly newsletter.

Please indicate your preference by email to suenglish@yahoo.com or by mailing the form below to:

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PO Box 33025
Los Gatos, CA 95031-3025

_____ I want to start receiving the newsletter electronically.

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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.

Name _____

Name of Family Member _____

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Telephone (_____) _____ - _____

Email _____

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

Make check payable to SJOG
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San José Opera Guild
P.O. Box 33025
Los Gatos, CA 95031-33025

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Visit our website at www.sjoperaguild.org