



## NEWSLETTER

ARGO GHERARDI, EDITOR

NOVEMBER 2012

### Board of Directors Election

### November 13, 2012

Members of the San José Opera Guild will elect directors and officers at the General Membership Meeting to be held at the Nov. 13 Opera San José lecture at the Jewish Community Center in Los Gatos.

#### For Directors

Corinne Carter	Joan Shomler
Wendy Dewell	Diane Snow
Jan Eurich	Alice Swanson
Peggy Heiman	Augusta Wilson
Edna Herman	Phyllis Whitney
Laurel Kaleda	Connie Zilles
Hannelore Romney	Steve Zilles

#### For Officers

Olga Nespole, Vice President  
Margaret Boddy, Recording Secretary  
Nina Gherardi, Corresponding Secty.  
Elliot Swanson, Treasurer  
Argo Gherardi, Parliamentarian  
Susan English will complete the second year of her two-year term as President.

Serving on the Nominating Committee: Corinne Carter, Co-Chair; Hannelore Romney, Co-Chair; Phyllis Whitney; Connie Zilles. Please plan to attend and cast your vote.

### Amahl and the Night Visitors

“Ever since I began singing the role of ‘His Mother’ in Menotti’s *Amahl and the Night Visitors*, I dreamed about what it would be like to have a son who sang beautifully and who shared the vision of performing with his mother!” said Layna Chianakas Haddad. She knew this was a tall order, but miraculously, her dream is turning into a reality as her son and she will sing the opera as a scholarship fundraising effort for San José State University’s Opera Workshop and Choral programs.

Ghythe Haddad, a 6th grader at Valley Christian Junior High School will sing the title role. “I’ve always liked to sing and I perform when we have people over for dinner but I never had voice lessons until my mom began teaching me

last summer. At first I was nervous about singing ‘Amahl’ because it’s a big role but now I am just excited. Besides, I like singing with my mom.”

Known for her numerous performances in operatic roles around the United States and our Bay Area, Ms. Chianakas is an Associate Professor of Voice at San José State University and still maintains an active national performing career. This project is very dear to her heart as she will sing with Metropolitan Opera tenor and colleague, Professor Joseph Frank, in the role of King Kaspar, rounded out by a cast of graduate and undergraduate SJSU voice students as well as the SJSU Choraliers who will perform the Shepherds’ Chorus in the production. Director of Choral Activi-

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# Opera Goes to School

By Corinne Elliott Carter

In October and November, 120 schools in the Bay Area have the unique experience of having a live performance of an opera or operetta performed in their school. For these children it offers a lifetime experience.

In 1939 children were bused to the San Francisco Opera House for student matinees. What evolved from many like programs is Opera à la Carte, a San Francisco Opera Guild production where a mini-version of an opera is performed in the school.

San José Opera Guild provides docents for each performance in the South Bay area to introduce the singers and help prepare the school for the production. The school will purchase one or two performances that are targeted for 3rd to 8th graders. The children selected to perform have speaking parts that require weeks, if not months, of preparation in advance of the performance. On the day of the performance, the cast of costumed singers, the pianist, and the docent arrive early for the dress rehearsal, and the children finally get to meet the professional singers. Kindergarteners are exceptional in their enthusiasm.

This year the San Francisco Opera Guild has prepared an operetta, *Pirates of Penzance*, for eight area schools. If you are a member of the San José Opera Guild and are interested in becoming a docent, please contact Corinne Elliott Carter or email [www.sjoperaguild.org](http://www.sjoperaguild.org) ###

## Amahl and the Night Visitors

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ties, Dr. Jeffrey Benson, will conduct. "This is truly a labor of love from each of us. We believe in the high quality of our School of Music and Dance Vocal Department, and feel very passionate about showing our community what we can do to enhance the arts in San José," said Benson.

See **Calendar** for time and dates. ###

# Career Updates

Soprano **Melinda Whittington** was sponsored, in part, by the San José Opera Guild for her participation in the 2012 Merola Young Artist Summer Program. Here are some of her thoughts on that experience.

"My fellow Merolini have provided a listening ear, musical and emotional support, many good laughs and memories, and talent and devotion that encourage me to always strive for excellence. ... In addition to the amazing relationships that have been formed, my other take away for the summer can be summarized in one word: BALANCE. ... When away from your "normal" life--your relationships, jobs, and home-- and given the amazing opportunity to focus on nothing but your craft all day, every day, the scale can easily tip. I have had to work to balance my singing life with my personal life. I have had to work to balance all the opinions of so many well-qualified coaches and teachers while recognizing and maintaining what makes me a unique, individual artist. I have had to work to balance all the details of vocal technique, stylistic rules, the business of being an opera singer, the pressure I put on myself with my heart, my artistry, my love for what I do, and for sharing that with others."

**Talise Trevigne** (former Opera San José resident artist) made her San Francisco Opera debut as Pip in *Moby Dick* in a role she created at the Dallas Opera in 2010. She garnered Britain's Royal Philharmonic Society Music Award for her portrayal of Violetta in Graham Vick's *La Traviata* with Birmingham Opera and the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra. Other recent engagements include Gilda (*Rigoletto*) with Tulsa Opera; the title role of Manon with Knoxville Opera; Micaëla (*Carmen*) with San Diego Opera; creating the role of The Beloved in Liza Lim's *The Navigator* at the Brisbane Festival, which she later performed in Moscow and Paris; and originating the title role of Judith Weir's film *Armida*. On the concert stage she has appeared with Dance The-

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## Career Updates

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ater of Harlem, the Lincoln Center Festival, the Dallas Symphony, and at the Dorothy Chandler Pavillion, the Kennedy Center, and New York's Schumann Festival. **Trevigne** made her operatic début under the direction of Maestro Julius Rudel in *La Traviata* and *Don Giovanni* in Aspen. She has also performed principal roles in Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas*, *Les Malheurs D'Orphée*, Nerea in Handel's *Deidamia*, Norina in *Don Pasquale*, Constance in *Les Dialogues des Carmélites*, Miranda in *The Tempest*, and Sophie in *Der Rosenkavalier*.

Soprano **Elizabeth Caballero** (Merola (2001-2002) triumphs in Lyric's lush production of *Madama Butterfly* and was the headline in the *Kansas City Star* on September 16, 2012. Other roles have included Liu in Austin City's *Turandot*, and Magda in Florida Grand Opera's *La Rondine*. Acclaimed by the *San Francisco Chronicle* as a "powerful diva in the making," Cuban-American soprano, **Elizabeth Caballero**, is becoming widely recognized for her fearless portrayals of the lyric soprano repertoire.

Georgia Rowe of the *San José Mercury News*, commenting on the cast of San Francisco Opera's revival of Verdi's *Attila*, noted that Merola's tenor **Nathaniel Peake** (2002-2009) in his first appearance with the company, impressed as Uldino, Attila's Bretan slave. "Baritone **Quinn Kelsey** (2002) gave a warm, expressive performance as the Roman general, Ezio."

*Opera News Magazine* describes Lyric Soprano **Ailyn Pérez** (Merola 2005) as having a lovely voice, musical imagination, acting ability and an impressive appetite for hard work. She is a fast rising artist who was named winner of the 2012 Richard Tucker Award. This month **Pérez** visits Ravina Festival to sing Pamina in *Die Zauberflöte*, and the Salzburg Festival for Mimi in *La Boheme*. The coming season will include Mozart's Countess Almaviva in Hamburg, Mimi

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## Opera Traveller

By Mort Levine

The most amazing and mystifying of all the operas of Philip Glass arrived in the Bay Area the last weekend in October to packed houses and thrilled audiences. Clearly a path-breaking piece of music theatre, *Einstein on the Beach* in 1976 (when it had its US premiere at the Met) proved that contemporary forms had a place on the opera stage.

Ostensibly, as conceived by the composer and by his collaborator, director-set designer Robert Wilson, the work uses our knowledge of Einstein to engage us in a meditation on genius. It tells the story in a way that opera lovers are able to find a different way to gather in the music, dance and the accompanying lyrics which are mostly bits of syllables, solfege (do, re, mi), counting out loud or bursts of somewhat surrealistic poetical dialog.

The music usually described as minimalist consists of long, almost Wagnerian chord strings interrupted by upwardly spiraling riffs from the electronic organs and assorted woodwinds.

This set of three performances at UC Berkeley's Zellerbach theatre quickly became as hot a ticket as the extravaganza across the bay at AT&T baseball park.

The four hours plus of performance begins with a kind of droning overture before the doors open. As people get seated it becomes clear they can come and go as they please. There is no intermission. There are no arias, no divas or doomed lovers, no linear narrative story line, but the audience was expected to fill in the missing pieces just as you would do in making sense of an abstract painting by Jackson Pollack or a surrealist work by Salvador Dali.

It is a game-changing form but not an undisciplined one. The structure consists of nine 20-minute scenes "connected" by five separate knee play interludes. Knee play because knees are the con-

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## Opera Traveller

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nective parts of our legs. These provide time for set changes. These include a stylized steam engine train, a courtroom, a prison, a field, a moon and a space ship, and a tower from which a young boy, Jasper Newell, tosses paper airplanes.

The score is always crystalline, driving, and clear in propelling the stage action. Glass followed Einstein with operas about world-changing geniuses like Gandhi (Satyagraha), Akhnaten, Columbus (*The Voyage*). Hints of *Einstein* musical style are present to some degree in each of them.

The dance, choreographed by Lucinda Childs, is strikingly effective as a counterpoint. She also contributed some of the poetry lines adding to the text by Christopher Knowles and Samuel Johnson. The cast is headed by Helga Davis and Kate Moran, both of whom stay costumed in baggy grey pants, short sleeved white shirts and suspenders. This garb is repeated among the 12 member chorus and the dozen dancers. One of them, Caitlin Scranton, danced with an eerie calm while tipped at an angle in a piece called "Diagonal".

The talented violinist Jennifer Koh, a Korean-American based in the Bay Area, performed a touching solo decked out as Einstein with moustache and wig.

The revival now moves on to Amsterdam and Hong Kong completing the 14 city tour over three continents. It leaves its mark wherever it goes.

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[www.sjoperaguild.org](http://www.sjoperaguild.org)

## Calendar

NOVEMBER 10-25, Opera San José presents *Die Fledermaus* by Strauss. California Theatre, 8pm except Sundays at 3pm. Tickets: 408-437-4450 or [www.operasj.org](http://www.operasj.org).

NOVEMBER 10, 9:55 am, Metropolitan Opera Simulcast in HD, Thomas Ades conducts the Metropolitan Opera premiere of his own work, *The Tempest*, live at CineArts Oakridge 20, 225-7340; Santana Row 6, 554-7010; and Cupertino 16, 871-2262. Cost \$24.00 for adults, \$22.00 for seniors. Encore: Wednesday, November 28th 6:30 pm. (The encores cost \$22.00 for adults and \$20.00 for seniors. Prices may vary for the various HD operas.

NOVEMBER 13, San José Opera Guild lecture, San José Opera Preview by Larry Hancock with Resident Artists soprano Melody King, mezzo-soprano Nicole Birkland, tenor James Callon, and bass Silas Elash at our relatively new location at the JCC of Silicon Valley, 14855 Oka Road (cross street Lark Avenue), Los Gatos. Tuesdays 10 am to Noon. SJOG and JCC Members free. Non-members \$10.

NOVEMBER 17, 18, Christopher Bengochea, My Sun, My Stars Concert, Holy Trinity Episcopal Church, Menlo Park, and November 18th Saint Marks Episcopal Church, Palo Alto. \$20.00 general, \$15.00 seniors/students. For more information contact <http://www.siliconvalleysymphony.net/Concerts/Fall/fall.html>.

NOVEMBER 30, DECEMBER 1, *Amahl and the Night Visitors* with Layna Chaianakas Haddad and her son. Nov. 30, 7:30 pm, SJSU Concert Hall. Dec.1, 7:30 pm, Valley Christian High School. \$25 general, \$15 students. For more information: 408-924-4658 or email [AmahlSJSU@gmail.com](mailto:AmahlSJSU@gmail.com).

DECEMBER 1, 9:55 AM, Metropolitan Opera Simulcast in HD, Mozart's *La Clemenza di Tito*. Encore December 19th, at 6:30 pm. See November 10th for more information. Cont'd on P. 5

SAN JOSÉ OPERA GUILD

## Calendar

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DECEMBER 7, 7:30 San José State Opera Theater presents *An Operatic Feast* -- Scenes from *Faust*, *Hansel and Gretel*, *Capuleti e i Montechi*, *Most Happy Fella*, and more. SJSU, Concert Hall, for more information call 408 924-4658.

Upcoming Metropolitan Opera Simulcasts in HD. See November 10th for more information on locations.

DECEMBER 8, 9:55 am, Verdi's *Un Ballo in Maschera* - New Production. Encore: January 9 at 6:30pm.

DECEMBER 15, 9:55 am, Verdi's *Aida*, Encore: January 16 at 6:30 pm.

JANUARY 5, 10 am, Berlioz's *Les Troyens*, Encore: January 23 at 6:30 pm.

JANUARY 19, 9:55 am, Donizetti's *Maria Stuarda* - Met Premiere, Encore: February 6 at 6:30 pm.

FEBRUARY 16, 9:55 am, Verdi's *Rigoletto* New Production, Encore: March 6 at 6:30 pm.

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## SAN JOSÉ OPERA GUILD

New Members as of October, 2012

**Booker, Carolyn E.** 408.741.1677  
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**Smith, Laurel G.** 408.255.0893  
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## SAVE THE DATE

CHAMPAIGNE BRUNCH

SATURDAY, JUNE 8, 2013

11:30 AM

LA RINCONADA COUNTRY CLUB

LOS GATOS

## Career Updates

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at Florida Grand Opera and Adina in *L'elisir d'amore* in Vienna.

Four former Opera San José resident artists were in the cast of West Bay Opera's production of the *Tales of Hoffmann*. They included **Christopher Bengochea** (Hoffmann), **Bettany Coffland** (Muse), **Carlos Aguillar** (Antonio's father, Crespel) and **Rochelle Bard** who opted to sing all four roles of Hoffman's loves whereas most sopranos sing only one. When asked why she made that choice by interviewer Philip Hodge, her response was she that she wants to be another Joan Southerland. ###

San José Opera Guild  
c/o Argo Gherardi  
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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 it's 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 \_\_\_\_\_

Memberships:      Family \$60  
                              Single \$45  
                              Organization \$75  
Donation \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
Total \$ \_\_\_\_\_

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