



NEWSLETTER

AUGUST 2013

FALL LECTURES

By Steve Zilles, Lecture Committee Chair

The Fall Lecture Series of the San José Opera Guild is almost upon us. We have a terrific line-up of events all of which will take place at 10 AM on Tuesdays at the Addison-Penzak Jewish Community Center in Los Gatos (14855 Oka Rd.). There will be four lectures on operas that will be presented by San Francisco Opera and two season previews by West Bay Opera and Opera San José, respectively.

The season begins on the day after Labor Day, September 3rd, with a lecture on Boito's *Mephistopheles* by Simon Williams. The opera is a retelling of Goethe's *Faust*, but one which is a bit more true to the original source. It is also a telling in which the devil is unable to succeed in leading the aged Faust astray. Our lecturer, Simon Williams, has been a frequent lecturer to the San José Opera Guild, most recently, last year on *Lohegrin*. He is a Professor in the Department of Theater and Dance at UC Santa Barbara where he studies European theater, operatic history and performance practice. He is also an active director and reviewer of operas.

Our second lecture, on September 10th, is on *Dolores Claiborne* by Tobias Picker. This new opera will have its World Premiere at San Francisco Opera. The opera is based on 'Stephen King's story of the same name which was translated to the silver screen in 1995 starring Kathy Bates. Dolores, sung by Dolora Zajick in the opera, is willing to do whatever it takes to save her-

self and her daughter – even if it means taking a life. The lecture will be given by Lynne Morrow who gave us such a fine preview of the *Gospel of Mary Magdalene* this past summer. Dr. Morrow is Opera and Musical Theatre Director and Vocal Program Director at Sonoma State University. Dr. Morrow is also the Music Director of the Oakland Symphony Chorus.

Our next event, on September 17th, is not really a "lecture". It is a preview of the West Bay Opera season given by José Luis Moscovich and singers from West Bay Opera. Their season opens with performances of *Tosca* by Puccini. The following two operas are *L'Elisir d'Amore* by Donizetti and Mozart's *Die Zauberflöte*. The lecture will give an overview of all three operas, and we will have excerpts from *Tosca* sung by members of the cast. Maestro Moscovich has been General Director of West Bay Opera since 2006 and a conductor of many of its productions.

The opera lectures resume on Oct. 1 with a lecture by Alexandra Amati-Camperi on Giuseppe Verdi's *Falstaff*. This is Verdi's last opera and his only comedy. It is based on Shakespeare's *The Merry Wives of Windsor* and wistfully shows the vain attempts of the self-deluded old man to seduce two women at the same time. Prof. Amati-Camperi has been a frequent and popular lecturer for the San José Opera Guild and last spoke to us on Verdi's *Attila*. She is Chair of the Performing Arts Department and Professor of Music at the

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FALL LECTURES

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University of San Francisco.

The final San Francisco Opera Lecture is on October 15th. The topic will be the *Flying Dutchman* by Richard Wagner. Stephen Hinton will be the lecturer. *The Flying Dutchman* is one of the most approachable Wagner operas. It tells the tale of a sea captain cursed to roam the seas until the curse is broken by a woman's love. The music is evocative of the situations in which the main characters find themselves. Stephen Hinton is the Avalon Foundation Professor in the Humanities at Stanford University and was a recent chairman of the Department of Music there. He last lectured to us on *Nixon in China* by John Adams in the summer of 2012.

The final presentation is an overview of the remainder of Opera San José's season by Larry Hancock. Their season begins with Verdi's *Falstaff* in September. This presentation, which will cover the final three operas, will be on Tuesday, November 19th and will include excerpts by singers from Opera San José. The final three operas are *Hansel and Gretel* in November, *Madama Butterfly* in February and *Don Giovanni* in April. Larry Hancock is the General Manager for Opera San José and over his career has filled many roles, including educating the public on opera history, and the operas that Opera San José has performed. He always provides interesting insights into these operas.

Please plan on attending these lectures which can only increase your knowledge of the operas discussed. ###

Be Active!

If a current San José Opera Guild member is interested in serving on the San José Opera Guild Board of Directors or in volunteering for a committee, please contact Phyllis Whitney (pwinsj@yahoo.com) or Connie Zilles (connie@zilles.org) for more information. ###

Career Updates

Mezzo soprano **Elizabeth Bishop** (Merola 1992-1993) made her Met role debut as Fricka on Saturday, May 4, 2013 in *Das Rheingold* by Wagner. She replaced Stephanie Blythe who was ill. As previously scheduled, Bishop also sang Mère Marie in Poulenc's *Dialogues des Carmélites* on Saturday afternoon—a rare instance of a singer performing principal roles in two different operas in the same day. Bishop made her Met debut in 1994 as a Venetian Secretary in Britten's *Death in Venice*. Earlier in the season, she sang her first Met performances of Dido in Berlioz's *Les Troyens*. She has sung a total of eight roles with the company, including the title role in Gluck's *Iphigénie en Tauride*, Venus in Wagner's *Tannhäuser*, Fenena in Verdi's *Nabucco*, and the 2nd Norn in Wagner's *Götterdämmerung*. Bishop has sung Fricka with Washington National Opera and San Francisco Opera.

Soprano **Rebecca Davis** (OSJ 2008-2009) returned to OSJ during the 2010-2011 season to appear in the title role of Puccini's *Tosca*. Ms. Davis recently made her Carnegie Hall debut as soprano soloist in Schubert's *Mass in G*, Mozart's *Laudate Dominum* and Raminsh's *Missa Brevis*. Roles performed recently include Mimi (*La Bohème*) and Fiordiligi (*Così fan Tutte*) with American Opera Group. She will sing the title role of *Tosca* with DuPage Opera Theater. She has received numerous awards, including the Grand Prize of the Bel Canto competition and finalist at the Tri-State Region in the Metropolitan Opera National Council's competition. Richard Scheinin notes in an article written for the *San José Mercury News*, that George Cleve has chosen Rebecca Davis, whom he describes as “a shimmery and technically accomplished singer” to perform in this year's Midsummer Mozart Festival.

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Opera Views

*Opera confronts the everlasting need
to attract new, younger audiences*

By Mort Levine

A line in the recent edition of Opera News should give every opera fan pause. It declared in terms of U.S. opera-going that “overall attendance declined by approximately a third from 2002 to 2008”. The piece, about a 32-year-old composer, Jennifer Jolley, claims that the problem is caused by repertory choices.

I would have guessed that another major reason is that the aging base of opera is not being replaced as it dies off or can't get to the opera house very easily. One must agree the classic repertory of Butterflies, Bohemes, and Traviatas don't pull the way they used to. But then what does in our world of DVRs, DVDs, HD movies et al?

Ms. Jolley, from her HQ in Cincinnati, has launched an outfit to deal with the problem in some unique ways. Her NANOWorks is an acronym for North American New Opera Workshop which has as its target the always elusive youth audience. She told the *Denver Post* opera critic Kyle MacMillan audiences are “turned off by grand opera--two or three hour works, not in English, two or three hours long and dealing with issues they can't relate to.”

Silicon Valley knows NANO as a way to describe miniaturization. Ms. Jolley has in mind 21st century operas that will be a maximum of a half-hour in length (more related to today's attention spans), subjects in English dealing with current news events which will still be “high art”. She hopes to keep costs down by limiting casts and making the music with a 5-piece combo. Her first offering only took 10 minutes. It was titled “Krispy Cremes and the Butter Queens” about a celebrity TV chef, Paula Deen.

Everyone should welcome fresh ideas to reinvigorate opera attendance. But can such endeavors insure opera's future? True, if it spreads, it could help absorb the amazingly talented outputs of various young artists programs like SF's Merola and Opera San José's young resident artists. Our great conservatories and university music programs are likewise producing outstanding singers and musicians with little heed to how they will sustain themselves.

Marketers are also hard at work devising ways to extend audiences. San Francisco's Bravo program offers discounts and special events for the 20 to 45 year old bracket. Same day discounts for servicemen and women, seniors, and students are sizable and the seats are outstanding.

The Bay Area opera scene is fortunate to have imaginative and far-sighted artistic leaders who believe in encouraging contemporary works. SFO's General Director David Gockley was lured here because of his innovative programming and commissioning of new works at Houston Grand Opera. This season's *Mary Magdalene* by Mark Adamo and this fall's Tobias Picker's new work *Dolores Claiborne* keeps that tradition alive.

Most critics found fault with the Adamo work. With some editing and rewrite, it could eventually find its way to join his *Little Women* which is one of the most frequently performed works by a living composer. I found Mary a challenging piece which rewarded preparation and attention. Soprano Sasha Cooke's title role performance was mesmerizing. I suspect Dolora Zajick will be the same when the Stephen King novel reaches the San Francisco stage on September 18.

So the effort goes on to make opera relevant to today's entertainment-saturated audiences.

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Calendar

AUGUST 1 at 7:30pm and August 3 at 2 pm Merola Opera Program will present *Le nozze di Figaro* by Mozart at the Everett Middle School in San Francisco. San Francisco Opera Box Office, (415) 626-1729, \$60/\$40/\$25/\$15 Students

AUGUST 17 Merola Opera Program will present the Merola Grand Finale at the War Memorial Opera House. San Francisco Opera Box Office, (415) 626-1729, \$45/\$35/\$25/\$15 Students

AUGUST 27 Opera San José, previews of *Falstaff* by Verdi. 12:00 - 1pm, MLK Library, San Jose, free; Preview at Bella Mia restaurant, San Jose, 6:30 - 8pm, \$30.00 includes wine and light refreshments at 6:30 pm and then a lecture by Larry Hancock with Opera San José singers.

SEPTEMBER San José Opera Guild lecture, Simon Williams speaks on *Mephistopheles* by Boito, at our new location at the JCC of Silicon Valley, 14855 Oka Road (cross street Lark Avenue) Los Gatos. Tuesday - 10 am to Noon. SJOG and JCC Members free. Non-members \$10.

SEPTEMBER 7, Opera San José Opening Night Dinner, 5-7PM, Sainte Claire Hotel. Champagne reception in the hotel atrium followed by a three-course meal in the grand ballroom with entertainment by a resident artist. Following the performance, a post-opera party with the cast will be presented in the Palm Room of the Sainte Claire Hotel. \$100, 408-437-4450 or www.operasj.org.

SEPTEMBER 7, 8, 12, 14, 15, 17, 20, and 22, Opera San José presents *Falstaff* by Verdi. California Theatre, 8pm except Sundays at 3pm. Tickets: 408-437-4450 or www.operasj.org.

SEPTEMBER 8 San Francisco Opera, Opera in the Park, Golden Gate Park, San Francisco, 1:30pm, FREE

SEPTEMBER 10 San José Opera Guild lecture, Lynne Morrow speaks on the new opera, *Dolores Claiborne*, by Picker. See Sept. 3 for further information.

SEPTEMBER 10 San José Opera Guild lecture, West Bay Opera director José Luis Moscovitch will give us an introduction to his 2013-2014 opera season. He will have cast members of his fall opera *Tosca* sing for us. Don't miss this wonderful live opera lecture. See Sept. 3 for further information on location.

SEPTEMBER 20 San José Opera Guild lecture, Mary Ann Smart speaks on *Lucrezia Borgia* by Donizetti. See Aug. 30th for further information.

OCTOBER 1 San José Opera Guild lecture, Alexandra Amati-Camperi speaks on *Falstaff* by Verdi. See Sept. 3 for further information.

OCTOBER 3, West Bay Opera presents a free preview with piano of *Tosca* by Puccini, 8pm, Avenidas, 450 Bryant Street, Palo Alto, for more information call 650 424-9999.

OCTOBER 5 Metropolitan Opera Simulcast in HD, 9:55 am, new production of *Eugene Onegin* by Tchaikovsky featuring Mariusz Kwiecien in the title role. The movie theaters have not been listed at the time of this publication but last year it was live at CineArts Oakridge 20, 225-7340; Santana Row 6, 554-7010; and AMC Eastridge Mall 15, 274-2274. Simulcasts were \$24.00 for adults, \$22.00 for seniors. (The encores which occur later were \$22.00 for adults and \$20.00 for seniors. Prices may vary for the various HD operas.)

OCTOBER 11, 13, 19, 20, West Bay Opera presents *Tosca* by Puccini at the Lucie Stern Theater, Palo Alto, Fridays at 8pm and Sundays at 2pm, \$70/65, Seniors \$58/52, Youth 45/40, Call 650 424-9999 or visit www.wbopera.org,

OCTOBER 15 San José Opera Guild lecture, Stephen Hinton speaks on *The Flying Dutchman* by Wagner. See Sept. 3 for further information.

OCTOBER 26 Metropolitan Opera Simulcast in HD, 9:55am, *The Nose* by Shostakovich. See

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Calendar

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October 5 for more information.

This coming opera season there will be 10 MET Live Opera Simulcasts instead of the usual 12.

SAVE THE DATE !!!!! Saturday May 31, 2014, Annual San Jose Opera Guild Champagne Brunch at La Rinconada in Los Gatos. Plan ahead for next year!! ###

Visit our website at:
www.sjoperaguild.org

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Career Updates

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The following Merolini will be performing in San Francisco Opera's 2013-14 Season:

Soprano **Patricia Racette** (1989) Marguerite and Elena in *Mephistopheles*

Mezzo-soprano **Dolora Zajick** (1983) in *Dolores Claiborne*

Contralto **Meredith Arwady** (2002,2003) Mistress Quickly in *Falstaff*

Baritone **Lucas Meacham** (2003) Figaro in *The Barber of Seville*. Mezzo soprano **Catherine Cook** (1982) sings the role of Berta in the same cast.

Soprano **Allyn Perez** (2005) will sing Violetta in *La Traviata* and **Quinn Kelsey** (2002) will sing Giorgio Germont. ###



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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.

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