

**With Great Appreciation to  
Nina and Argo Gherardi**  
by Susan English



*Nina and Argo Gherardi*  
Photo by Jan Eurich

As Nina and Argo leave our Board, we applaud their exceptional service to the Guild, our Board, and the operatic arts in our area. Nina has served as our Corresponding Secretary from 2006 to 2014 and has stepped in as Recording Secretary, often at the last minute, since she joined the Board in 2000.

Argo joined the Board in 1999, and served as Treasurer in 2001-2002, becoming President in 2002 and serving until 2004. He then became Parliamentarian from 2004-2006 and again from 2010-2014.

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**Champagne Brunch &  
Opera Entertainment  
at La Rinconada  
Country Club,  
Saturday, April 25, 2015**

Join the San José Opera Guild for champagne and no-host cocktails at 11:30 am, followed by a gourmet brunch, silent auction and raffle, and an exceptional music program by Opera San José Resident Artists.

Tickets are \$65 for Guild members, \$75 for non-members; reservations required. A portion of each reservation is tax deductible. RSVP by April 17, 2015.

Proceeds support the Opera San José Opera Outreach Program, the San Francisco Opera's Merola Opera Program, the San Francisco Opera Guild's Education Program (Opera a la Carte), the West Bay Opera and the San José State University Opera Theater.

For information: 408-243-2404 or  
408-354-2771 or  
<http://www.sjoperaguild.org>

## Career Updates by Susan English

Fans of Opera San José were treated to a return visit from an OSJ former Resident Artist (2008-2013) in **Michael Dailey's** delightful Lindoro in *The Italian Girl in Algiers*. This opera was so well received that several performances sold out. Another former Resident Artist, **Daniel Cilli** (2006-2010) joined the OSJ cast in September as Marullo in *Rigoletto*. He will be performing as The Cellist in Kurt Rohde's opera premiere of *Death with Interruptions* in May with the Left Coast Chamber ensemble in San Francisco.

**Rochelle Bard** OSJ's Resident Artist (2006-2008) was recently Violetta in Shreveport Opera's *La Traviata*. Another alumna of OSJ, **Lori Phillips** (1995-1996) recently sang Santuzza in *Cavalleria Rusticana* with the Amarillo Opera. The Globe News Amarillo noted the opera featured "strong performances by guest artists like the divine Lori Phillips." (10-6-14) In February she will be singing Senta in *Der Fliegende Holländer* with the Victorian Opera in Melbourne Australia.

Winner of Second place in the 2011 Irene Dalis Vocal Competition, **Evan Brummel**, recently sang the title role in Verdi's *Rigoletto* with Opera Santa Barbara. In the summer of 2011, Mr. Brummel was an Apprentice Artist at Santa Fe Opera, where he covered Marcello and sang the Sergeant in *La Bohème*, as well as the Doctor in Menotti's *The Last Savage*.

In February, Merola alumnus **Hector Vasquez** will join his wife, **Cynthia Clayton**, former OSJ Resident Artist, in performing at Opera Colorado's annual Gala to support education and community engagement programs for opera. In April, **Ms Clayton** will perform with the Houston Grand Opera as the Beggar

Woman in Stephen Sondheim's *Sweeney Todd*, with **Nathan Gunn** singing the title role.

A SJOG favorite Merola alumna, **Laura Claycomb** (1989 & 1990) just completed singing Amina in *La Sonnambula* at The Bolshoi Theater in Moscow. She also reprised her engagement as the Queen of the Night in *Die Zauberflöte* with the Bregenz Festival in Austria.

Adler Fellow, **Zanda Svede** (whom SJOG sponsored as a Merolini) recently sang Tisbe in *La Cenerentola* with the San Francisco Opera. She was joined by another Adler, **Maria Valdes**, as the other stepsister to Cinderella, Clorinda. Richard Scheinin wrote of the two in the *San Jose Mercury News* (11-10-14), "The two mean sisters were terrific. Soprano Maria Valdes sparkled as Clorinda, the older sister, while mezzo-soprano Zanda Svede was almost alarmingly honey-voiced in the role of Tisbe. Natural comic actors, these two are also from the Adler program, which continues to be a wellspring for the company." Joshua Kosman echoed this review in the *San Francisco Chronicle* (11-10-14). "But this 'Cenerentola' might serve as an advertisement for the Adler Fellowship, with splendid contributions from baritone Efrain Solis...and from Maria Valdes and Zanda Svede – comically attuned, vocally resplendent – as wicked stepsisters."

Coming to the San Francisco Opera this summer is the SFO debut of Merola alumnus **Bryan Hymel** in *Les Troyens* as Aenas. Mr. Hymel stepped in to the role in 2012 on short notice at London's Covent Gardens. Reviewer Anthony Tommasini praised "Hymel's impassioned and confident performance of a heroic role" in the New York Times. He went on to note the young tenor's commanding stylistic range and wrote, "(he) sang with unflagging stamina and impetuous abandon, capped with some exciting full-voiced top notes. But

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he was his best in the tender, high-flying exchanges” with Susan Graham. **Mr. Hymel** just performed Don Jose in *Carmen* in his home town, New Orleans. His wife, Irini Kyriakidou, also an opera singer will join him as Micaela, the “good village girl” that gets left behind for Carmen. They have a duet near the beginning of the opera.

Adler Fellow, **Leah Crocetto** (2009-2011) has just made her UK operatic debut as *Otello’s* wife Desdemona. Before her debut with the English National Opera she was interviewed about her participation in the Merola and Adler programs. (eno.org/news):

“Before I was an opera singer professionally, I was waiting tables in New York and singing jazz and cabaret. In 2008 I was admitted into the Merola Opera Program at the San Francisco Opera (similar to ENO’s Harewood Artists scheme) and then taken into the Adler Fellowship. While I was there, I had the opportunity to cover almost every role in my repertoire, and was lucky to sing 10 performances of Liu in *Turandot* to open the 2011 season at SFO. Since then, I have sung Leonora in *Il Trovatore*, Desdemona, Donna Anna and the Countess, Anna in *Maometto II* by Rossini, Verdi’s *Luisa Miller*, the Verdi *Requiem*, Handel’s *Messiah*, Mahler’s *Second Symphony*, Beethoven’s *Ninth*, among others!”

**Pene Pati** (Adler 2013) and his best-selling vocal group SOL3MIO recently made their Royal Albert Hall debut. This group is made up of two tenor brothers, Pene and Amitai Pati, and their baritone cousin Moses Mackay. According to their web site: “SOL3 MIO is the combination of three powerful and moving operatic voices, with more than a dash of uncontainable Samoan humor. By their own definition they are first and foremost ‘classical singers bridging the gap with contemporary’

but the unique way in which they do it has already shown the potential to cut through the critical cognoscenti, and appeal to audiences who wouldn’t normally be found anywhere near an aria.” Their biography notes that: “Bringing the realness to opera, and breaking down the perceived barriers and stereotypes of the music, as well as breathing new life into time honored classics – their desire to share, entertain and inform, and the easy manner in which they go about it, is positively infectious.” With a nod to Valentine’s Day, it should be noted that **Mr. Pati** just proposed to his girlfriend (and opera singer) Amina Edris on stage during an outdoor Christmas concert in a New Zealand vineyard. (She accepted!)

*Note to readers:* If you are following a former Resident Artist and/or Merolini and have information you’d like to share in the Newsletter, please contact Susan English at suenglish@yahoo.com. ☺

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With Argo as chair, the Guild presented speaker Dr. Paul Fryer (lecturer from Rose Bruford College in England) who presented the restored and re-released 1915 silent film, *Tsar Ivan the Terrible*, which featured Fedor Chaliapin (famous Russian bass). This was held at West Valley College Theatre in 2003.

Argo has also been responsible for our Newsletter from 2006. Nina began writing the Career Update section of this Newsletter in 2010. Both Gherardis have been active on many committees, and have contributed so much to the goals and activities of the Guild.

Bravi to our gracious and adept colleagues! We are so fortunate that you will continue to support opera in our area. You have advanced our Guild’s influence and respect by your leadership. Thank you. ☺

## OPERA DISCOVERIES

Five centuries of opera in five stimulating lectures by one of the great company directors, Seattle's Speight Jenkins

By Mort Levine

The world of opera is coming alive close to home in a fascinating set of lectures which began on January 12 exploring a comprehensive overview of the art form by Speight Jenkins, recently retired from a remarkable 31 year run as general director of Seattle Opera. It is part of Stanford's Continuing Studies set of evening courses on the nearby campus. A number of San José Opera Guild members are among the 150 or more participants.

Jenkins combines a lifetime knowledge of opera history with a down-to-earth demeanor which de-mystifies and strips away an aura which at times has tended to obscure rather than enlighten. For example, at the outset of the first lecture he set forth four basic principles everyone attracted to opera needs to remember:

You must accept and welcome the unamplified voice; accept singing instead of talking to advance the action; accept deep emotional involvement with the characters and finally, be able to really concentrate on a story which will sometimes last three hours or more, in an age of short attention-spans.

In his view, opera is 51% music and 49% theater. Over hundreds of years, opera's practitioners have widely differed about that balance. He offers us a number of illustrated musical and vocal excerpts to make his case.

The title of the course is "Four Hundred Years of Opera: Murder, Passion, Betrayal and Ecstasy". It runs through February 23 each Monday except January 19 and February 16.

Jenkins is a lawyer but found his opera calling early as a writer-editor for *Opera News* and later as a critic for the *New York Post*, back

when it was a serious, respected newspaper. He served as Metropolitan Opera's radio broadcast host. We first heard him in person as the guest lecturer for the Ring cycle at Seattle in the early 80s. We were impressed by his opera wisdom and wit. Evidently, Seattle's board of directors saw that as well, offering him the general director's job shortly thereafter.

Our course seems like a bit like walking through a grove of old-growth sequoias. We use the giant composers who dot the opera landscape with their masterpieces. Our first lecture featured Monteverdi, Handel, Gluck and Mozart. Subsequent evenings will be spent studying the works of Bellini, Donizetti, Rossini, Verdi, Wagner, Bizet, Richard Strauss and Berg. Jenkins' experiences with most of the great interpreters of the past half-century is also shared. He has worked closely with the likes of Maria Callas, Birgit Nilsson, Joan Sutherland, Leontyne Price, Placido Domingo and Luciano Pavarotti, along with major conductors and directors.

At Seattle he championed rarely performed and contemporary operas, including several premieres.

It will wind up asking us all to participate in "Where does opera go from here?" It looks to be a magical trip for any opera buff.☺



# CALENDAR

## February

**February 4**, Wednesday, 6:30, Metropolitan Opera Simulcast in HD, encore, *Les Contes d'Hoffmann* by Offenbach, see Feb. 14 for theater information.

**February 7, 8, 12, 15, 20, 22**, Opera San José presents *Where Angels Fear to Tread*, California Theatre, 8pm except Sundays at 3pm. Introduction to Opera meets one and a half hours before the opera. Tickets: 408-437-4450 or [www.operasj.org](http://www.operasj.org). Opening Night Reception of Angels, February 7, Sainte Claire Hotel, following performance, \$50.00, reservations required, for more information call Opera San José.

**February 13, 15, 21, 22**, West Bay Opera, *The Abduction from the Seraglio* by Mozart, 8pm except Sunday at 2pm, tickets 650-424-9999 or order online [www.WBOpera.org](http://www.WBOpera.org). Student, senior, and group discounts.

**February 14**, 9:30 am, Metropolitan Opera Simulcast in HD, New Production - Tchaikovsky's *Iolanta*/Bartok's *Bluebeard's Castle*, live at Century 20 Oakridge, 225-7340; CinArts Santana Row, 554-7010; and Cupertino Square 16, 871-2262. Cost \$24.00 for adults, \$22.00 for seniors. Encore: Wednesday, **February 18th**, 6:30 pm. Encores cost \$22.00 for adults and \$20.00 for seniors. (Prices may vary for the various HD operas.)

Now at Camera 3 Cinema, located at 288 S. Second Street in the heart of downtown San Jose: an exclusive series of first class pre-recorded operas from the legendary European opera houses in HD Digital Projection with Dolby Digital sound (programs subject to change without notice). There is an opera scheduled each month, with screenings Sunday mornings at 12 noon, and a repeat show Tuesday evening at 7:15pm. For ticket information, <http://www.cameracinemas.com/operas.shtml>.

**February 22** (12 noon) & 24 (7:15pm)

*Pagliacci/Cavalleria Rusticana* (Mascagni / Leoncavallo) — Teatro Antico Taormina, Italy

**March 15** (12 noon) & 17 (7:15pm)

*Tosca* (Puccini) — Opera de Paris (2014)

**April 12** (12 noon) & April 14 (7:15pm)

*Arabella* (Strauss) — Salzburg Festival (2014)

**May 10** (12 noon) & May 12 (7:15pm)

*Rigoletto* (Verdi) — Vienna State Opera

**June 21** (12 noon) & 23 (7:15pm)

*Don Giovanni* (Mozart) — Salzburg Festival

**February 26**, 7:30-9:30pm, reception following, Professor Layna Chianakas and Friends Recital, San Jose State University, Room 150, free admission, donations will support San Jose State Opera Program.

## March

**March 14**, 9:55 am, Metropolitan Opera Simulcast in HD, *La Donna del Lago*, Met Premiere, Encore: Wednesday, **March 18**, 6:30pm. See February 14 for details.

**March 27**, San José Opera Guild Lecture and Musical Program, Larry Hancock and resident artists will present an introduction to Opera San José's Fall 2015 — Spring 2016 season, at the JCC of Silicon Valley, 14855 Oka Road (cross street Lark Avenue) Los Gatos. Friday 10am to Noon. SJOG and JCC Members free. Non-members \$10. A Shabbat lunch will be served at noon. Seniors (55 and over) may attend the lunch. Reservations for lunch, \$6 for JCC / Opera Guild members, \$8.50 for non-members. Send check to Cherie Ravel, Suite 201, 14855 Oka Road, Los Gatos CA 95032.

## April

**April 17**, 7:30-9:30, **April 19** at 2:30pm, San José State University Theater Performance.

**April 18-26, May 1, 3**, Opera San José presents *The Magic Flute* by Mozart, California Theatre, 8pm except Sundays at 3pm. Introduction to Opera meets one and a half hours before the opera. Tickets: 408-437-4450 or [www.operasj.org](http://www.operasj.org).

**April 25**, 9:30 am, Metropolitan Opera HD Simulcast, *Cavalleria Rusticana* by Mascagni/ *Pagliacci* by Leoncavallo, (New Production), Encore **April 29** at 6:30pm, see February 14 for theater details.

**SAVE THE DATE !!!!!** Saturday, April 25, 2015, Annual San José Opera Guild Champagne Brunch at La Rinconada in Los Gatos. Plan ahead for April! ☺

## **SJOG Donates!**

by Susan English

As we ask you to renew your membership in the SJOG, you may be asking just what your membership pays for. The lectures for four of San Francisco Operas fall operas are free to our members, along with a season preview of both West Bay Opera and Opera San José. In addition, this year we will begin to offer SFO's two spring opera lectures at no cost to our members. Our Guild also donates to Opera San José's outreach, which typically provides two performances of the one-act opera in San Jose schools that can not typically afford assembly programs. Another opera company your dues support is West Bay Opera.

Additionally we currently provide support to San Jose University's vocal music program. This year this contribution will go directly into Opera Theatre's Tower Foundation account and the money is used for yearly productions. This year in the spring, April 17 @ 7:30pm and 18 @ 2:30pm at the San Jose Woman's Club, Offenbach's *Orpheus in the Underworld* will be performed. We hope many of the Guild members can come. This coming fall SJSU intends to perform Gluck's *Orfeo e Euridice*, with a small baroque orchestra.

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.

## Merola

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.

The training program begins with the selection process. Merola administrators received between 600 and 800 applications each year. This number is reduced to 400 based on the previous training, experience, and recommendations provided. 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.

The training continues with acting classes, classes in breathing, diction, exercise, stage movement and improvisation. Additional classes include Italian, how to deal with costumes (like hoop skirts and capes), and stage make up. All of these classes are in addition to learning the assigned roles in each season's operas, along with rehearsals. Each singer has one-on-one coaching with voice teachers. At the end of program, singers perform in fully staged operas.

There have been over a thousand young singers who have been trained as a Merolini over the past 54 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 Van-

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SAN JOSE OPERA GUILD

Donates from page 6  
 ess, '76; Deborah Voight, '85; Anna Netrebko,  
 '96; and many others. When attending operas  
 around the world look at the "bios" of many  
 singers and you will often find their training  
 in Merola listed. San Francisco's Opera Pro-  
 gram can be proud of the contributions it has  
 made to the art form. ♪

## Facts and Figures

by Wendy Dewell

### Where did our money come from in 2014?

- Fundraising 37%
- Member Dues 36%
- Board 15%
- Donations 9%
- Other 3%

### Who/What did our money support in 2014?

- San Francisco Opera 28%
- Opera San José 28%
- Lectures 11%
- San Jose State 7%
- West Bay Opera 6%
- Insurance 8%
- admin/other 12%

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

## Summer Opera Lectures,

May 26, June 2

by Steve Zilles

Our program of lectures on operas being pre-  
 sented at San Francisco Opera will continue  
 in late May and early June. On Tuesday, May  
 26th, we will have a lecture on *The Trojans* by  
 Berlioz that will be given by Timothy Flynn.  
 This provides a chance to become familiar  
 with an opera that is rarely performed, not  
 because it is uninteresting, but because it is  
 so expensive to put on the stage. On Tues-  
 day, June 2nd, Kip Cranna, the Dramaturg  
 for the San Francisco Opera, will give a lec-  
 ture on *Two Women*, a new opera by Marco  
 Tutino that is based on the novel *La Ciociara*  
 by Alberto Moravia. The story is perhaps bet-  
 ter known from the movie of the same name  
 starring Sophia Loren and for which she won  
 an Oscar. The composer belongs to a group of  
 neo-romantic 20th and 21st century compos-  
 ers. There are samples of music from his bal-  
 let, Riccardo III, at [http://www.allmusic.com/  
 album/tutino-riccardo-iii-mw0001842631](http://www.allmusic.com/album/tutino-riccardo-iii-mw0001842631).  
 Both lectures will be held at the Addison-  
 Penzak Jewish Community Center at 14855  
 Oka Road in Los Gatos and will begin at  
 10AM. [Note change of location for Summer  
 Lectures.] ♪



San José Opera Guild  
P.O. Box 33025  
Los Gatos, CA 85031-3025

## 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.

Names \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Memberships: Dual \$70  
Single \$50  
Organization \$75  
Donation \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
Total \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Please send check payable to:  
San José Opera Guild  
Attn: Membership  
P.O.Box 33025  
Los Gatos, CA 96031-3025

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Does your company have a matching grant program?  
Visit our website at [www.sjoperaguild.org](http://www.sjoperaguild.org)