



NEWSLETTER

Joan Shomler, Editor

May 2015

Spring Lectures

by Steve Zilles

This summer the San Francisco Opera season begins with two lectures, both on works that are unfamiliar in San Francisco. The first lecture, on **May 26th**, will be by Timothy Flynn on *Les Troyens* (or in English, *The Trojans*) by Hector Berlioz. This opera, with a running time of 5 and ½ hours (with 2 intermissions) is a master work of Berlioz, sometime called the French “Ring”. The cast has more than 250 people. We see the fall of Troy and the great love of Dido and Aeneas in Carthage in the aftermath, destiny on the move with elaborate sets and wonderful music. This is a joint production with Covent Garden, La Scala and the Vienna Staatsoper. And, you can’t follow the singers without a program; that is, without the lecture. Come hear Timothy Flynn, an expert in 19th century French music and regular lecturer for the San Jose Opera Guild, help us understand the scope and sweep of Berlioz’s adaptation of Virgil’s epic poem, the Aeneid.

The second opera lecture on **June 2nd** is by Kip Cranna, the Dramaturg for San Francisco Opera. He will be introducing us to the brand new opera, *Two Women* (in Italian, *La Ciociara*) with music by Marco

Tutino who is joined on the Libretto by Fabio Ceresa. This story of a mother and her daughter looking for and having difficulty in finding safety at the end of World War II is based on the novel of the same name by Alberto Moravia. That was also the source for the Oscar winning 1960 movie starring Sophia Loren. Kip Cranna has been instrumental in helping bring a number of new operas to San Francisco Opera’s stage, managing the commissioning (or co-commissioning) of more than 20 operas. His deep involvement with new opera will bring insight into both the opera *Two Women* and to the process of bringing it to life.

Both lectures will be held from 10AM to Noon at the Addison-Penzak Jewish Community Center, 14855 Oka Rd, Los Gatos, CA 95032. **NOTE THE CHANGE IN VENUE FOR OUR SPRING LECTURES.** Attendance is free to members of the San Jose Opera Guild and the Jewish Community Center, and is \$10 for all other attendees. Coffee and tea will be available prior to the lecture and at a break in the middle of the program.☛

Please note the change in venue for our spring lectures from Saratoga to the Addison-Penzak Jewish Community Center, 14855 Oka Rd, Los Gatos, CA 95032

OPERA DISCOVERIES

The good, bad and ugly: setting, design will make or break many operas

By Mort Levine

The *Magic Flute*, which just completed a remarkable 31st season for Opera San Jose, featured the creative concept of veteran director Brad Dalton and young, imaginative set designer Ryan McGettigan. It proved to be one of the most outstanding offerings of that venerable but often problematic work.



Prince Tamino makes his transition from 'audience' to 'player' as he is pursued by a deadly serpent.

As we all know, opera is the blending of many talents: music, story, poetry, costumes, sets, lighting and more. In this OSJ production, the idea of placing the opening and finale of the work within the frame of a typical 18th century opera house proved fresh and stimulating. And for contrast there were the scenes in the temple where a 21st century technology of illuminated fibre optics in brilliant colors outlining and emphasizing the magical doings. It all came together to serve the efforts of the excellent singers and the orchestra in capturing the essence of this Mozart masterwork.

Most opera goers assume that the key creative pairing in any work is the composer and librettist. Memorable productions however require as close a collaboration between the stage director and the designer of the sets and often the lighting and costume designers as well.

Many of us who experienced the fabulous voices at San Francisco Opera during the second half of the 20th century can recall the Zeffirelli and Ponelle settings that almost always evoked applause for the set when the curtain parted. Often when these favorite stagings were retired to be replaced by a more "modern" director's vision, there was an audience backlash.

The rise of regie-theatre, where the directors rule, has often turned off audiences. Wagner's Ring Cycle is one where some of the loudest outcries take place. There was a series of Rings, especially in Europe, that set the work in the harshness of industrial exploitation of workers (Mime as CEO). Paris opera did a Ring that emphasized the pollution of the Rhine river. Gotz Friedrich did it with space ships and it has also been set in the California gold rush.

One recent controversial Ring setting turned out quite well. The magic of the Cirque de Soleil was applied by Robert LePage to the Met's last Ring with a series of giant planks on a huge drum that lent itself to every part of the cycle. Rhine maidens managed to be trapeze artists as well as vocalists in a high-tech combining of projections, lighting and other special effects



The three spirits and Pamina appear amidst the set's illuminated fiber-optic outlined mirrored palms.

Vehicles of all sorts get tossed in as directorial touches. Leather-clad Thomas Hampson opened an SFO *Don Giovanni* on a motorcycle. James Schaaf's *Barber of Seville* rode in

on a Vespa scooter. At Opera San Jose's *Hansel and Gretel*, director Layna Chianakas had the witch riding around the stage on a Segway.

The Met's *Rigoletto* of last year was set in Las Vegas with all the neon trappings.

And there was Eurotrash where that continent's opera houses put a premium on directors and designers with the most outrageous concepts. Director Ernst Schrader and designer Michael Raffaelli reset *Ballo in Maschera* to the 1830s south with the plantation owner singing the role of the slain king. Ponelle transferred *Salome* to a bizarre Indian setting.

Despite these excesses, the idea of bringing to opera top theater directors and visual artists has led to number of extremely successful director-designer achievements. Painter William Kittredge (an astonishing *Nose* by Shostakovich at the Met); Painter David Hockney contributed some remarkable setting for SFO such as a dazzling *Magic Flute* and stark black and white *Rake's Progress* and Julie Taymor's treatment of Philip Glass' *Satyagraha* at the Met, just to list three.

Now we must all hold our breath for the Met's 2017-18 season when the daring Catalan director Calixto Bieito makes his debut with a *Forza del Destino*. His past productions included a sexually-graphic harem for *Abduction from the Seraglio* and a *Masked Ball* in Barcelona where the plotters meet in a grimy men's room.♣



The slain serpent regains its head to join the cast for bows.
Photos by Bob Shomler

Fundraiser at La Rinconada Country Club

By Corinne Elliott Carter

The annual San Jose Opera Guild fundraiser at La Rinconada Country Club, a springtime champagne brunch, conjures up a bubbly mix of opera lovers and others who came to enjoy good food and friends.

This sumptuous buffet and the picture perfect golf course was an incredibly lovely setting. You knew this is exactly where you wanted to be at that moment.

Peggy Heiman, president of the Guild, chaired the committee who selected scores of some very exciting items for the silent auction and raffle. The San Jose Opera Guild, an independent guild, in turn gives financial support with this money to local opera companies and outreach programs for education. Many thanks to all who attended this event; it surpassed all expectations.

Opera San Jose General Director, Larry Hancock was present. Four of Opera San Jose's resident artists performed after brunch, each brilliant in arias performed by Lisa Chavez, Kirk Dougherty, Mathew Hanscom and Isabella Ivy.

Photos of this memorable event are available on Facebook accessible through the San Jose Opera Guild website. Planned events for the coming 2015-16 season are listed on the Guild website. Make note of our 2016 Fundraiser; you won't want to miss that one.♣

Your membership includes free lectures. The Spring Series begins this month. If you have not renewed your membership for 2015, consider doing it now!

Career Updates

by Susan English

New Orleans Opera showcased numerous Merola/Adler alumni in their recent production of *Lucia di Lammermoor*. Laura Claycomb (Adler 1993) sang Lucia. William Burden (Merola 1991) sang Edgardo, Casey Cande-bat (Merola 2012, 2014) was Normanno, and Michael Chioldi was Enrico. Their website includes many pictures of the production, as well as audio/video clips of Ms. Claycomb.

Brian Jagde (Adler 2010-2012) got a call recently to step in to the character of Cavarados-si in *Tosca* at the Lyric Opera of Chicago. As an up-and-coming lyric tenor superstar, Jagde has already been debuting around the world in leading roles: at the Metropolitan Opera as Count Elemer in *Arabella*, as Don José in *Carmen* at Opéra de Limoges, as Cavaradossi at Santa Fe Opera and Deutsche Oper Berlin, as Alfredo in *La Traviata* at Opera Grand Rapids, as Rodolfo in *La Bohème* with Lorin Maazel and the Münchner Philharmoniker, to name a few.

After *Tosca* in Chicago, Jagde will have a solo recital in Davis, California. He will then travel to London and make his Covent Garden debut as Pinkerton in *Madama Butterfly*. The rest of the year is packed with trips to Valencia, Santa Fe, and Minnesota in new roles and opera house debuts.

Opera News featured **Amanda Majeski** (Merola 2008), noting she made “a headline-grabbing Met debut on opening night of the current season, when she sang Countess Almaviva in Richard Eyre’s new production of *Le Nozze di Figaro* — after stepping in for an indisposed colleague during rehearsals and moving up what had been her scheduled company debut by ten weeks. Despite the pressure,

Majeski scored a hit by keeping her cool...” She will sing Marta in *The Passenger* at Lyric Opera of Chicago and in May, June, and July she will perform as the Marschallin in *Der Rosenkavalier* at Oper Frankfurt.

Several former Merolini will be joining Santa Fe Opera’s summer training program: **Ade-laide Boedecker** (Merola 2014), **Daryl Freedman** (2013), **Cynthia Hanna** (2007), **Cooper Nolan** (2011) and **Benjamin Werley** (2014).

Issachah Savage (Merola 2013) made his role debut as Siegmund when he stepped in for a sick Clifton Forbis on February 7th in the Canadian Opera Company’s *Die Walküre*. Musical Toronto had this to say about the performance, “[he] has secured his reputation as a major contender for star status among dramatic tenors worldwide.” Bravo, Issachah! **Jose Maria Condemi** (Adler 2002) has been named the new Director of Opera at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music, beginning July 1, 2015. He made his SFCM debut directing Donizetti’s *L’Elisir d’Amore* with performances on April 2 and 4. Mr. Condemi will also direct *Carmen* in April 2016 with Lyric Opera of Kansas City. That production will feature Guild sponsored Merolini, now Adler Fellow **Zanda Svede**, as Carmen. **Janai Brugger** (Merola 2010) will join them in this production as Micaela.

Jonathan Michie (Merola 2011) has had a busy 2015. In February he sang Papageno in *Die Zauberflöte* with the Los Angeles Opera. Travelling to Germany in May, he will sing Hiram Otis in the premiere of Gordon Getty’s *The Canterville Ghost* with Oper Leipzig. Also in Leipzig, he will perform Dr. Malatesta in *Don Pasquale*, and Silvio in *Pagliacci*.

Opera Lite, a new series presented by Festival Opera, showcases familiar opera arias combined with lighter fare: popular songs and Broadway show tunes. Designed to be both an introduction to opera for newbies and fun for opera enthusiasts, it debuted on March 19, 2015 at the Walnut Creek Marriott, 2355 North Main St., Walnut Creek. The first Opera Lite was a concert called, “Music of the Night”, and featured OSJ alumnus **Christopher Bengochea** and piano accompanist, **Simona Snitkovsky**.

Also in March a new dramatic musical work based on Nobel Prize winner **José Saramago’s** novel *Death with Interruptions* with libretto by UC Berkeley historian **Thomas Laqueur**, and music by **Kurt Roth** was presented. Soprano **Nikki Einfeld** (Adler 2004-05), tenor **Christopher Bengochea** (OSJ 2005-08), baritone **Daniel Cilli** (OSJ 2006-10), were joined by the Volti San Francisco choir.

Another former OSJ Resident Artist, **Jesse Merlin** is currently performing in *Re-Animator the Musical*. Reviewed in the New York Times: “This New York Musical Theater Festival production is an import from Los Angeles, and its bona fide B-movie pedigree shows in inventively funny special effects by Tony Dublin, John Naulin, John Buechler, Tom Devlin and Greg McDougall, and in costumes by Joe Kucharski. One particularly ghastly highlight involves a man carrying

around his severed head. That head belongs to the spindly, sonorous Jesse Merlin, who shines as a lecherous medical school professor. ...” The production moves to the Edinburgh Festival Fringe. Upcoming engagements will feature Merlin in a small part in Clint Eastwood’s upcoming film *Jersey Boys*. He continues to perform with the Opera à la Carte touring company, having recently appeared as the Major General in *The Pirates of Penzance*.

Lori Phillips, former OSJ Resident Artist, has just completed singing Senta

in *Der Fliegende Holländer* with Victorian Opera in Melbourne, Australia. Reviews noted: “American soprano Lori Phillips sings the role of Senta with steely intensity, colouring the drama with a luscious, full-bodied sound. Phillips keeps her facial expressions pared back, focusing all expression through her voice. Playing a young woman who is unhealthily obsessed with a ghostly legend, Phillips avoids histrionics and melodrama, maintaining a demure, introverted feminine presence.” In another review from The Sydney Morning Herald: “American soprano Lori Phillips was a first-rate Senta, with a beautiful tone and clear diction.” ♣



Christopher Bengochea and Daniel Chilli in *Madama Butterfly*
Opera San Jose 2007
Photo by Bob Shomler

CALENDAR

May

There are no scheduled **MET HD** Opera Simulcasts in May, June or July, but for Opera in Cinema see below:

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. 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, Cinema Cinemas.

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

MAY 16th, 8pm. Irene Dalis Memorial Concert, tickets \$25 - \$200, portions of ticket prices are tax-deductible. California Theater. The concert will feature current and former resident artists performing arias and ensembles accompanied by the OSJ orchestra. This concert will serve as the company's primary fundraiser for the 2014-2015 Season. Tickets: Box Office: 408 437-4450 or www.operasj.org

MAY 22, 24, 30 and 31, West Bay Opera *Faust* by Gounod, 8pm except Sunday at 2pm, tickets 650-424-9999 or order online www.WBOpera.org. Student, senior, and group discounts.

MAY 26, San Jose Opera Guild lecture, Timothy Flynn will speak on *Les Troyens* by Hector Berlioz 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. NOTE CHANGE IN VENUE OF SPRING LECTURE SERIES FROM SARATOGA TO THE JCC

June

JUNE 2, San Jose Opera Guild lecture, Kip Cranna will speak on the new opera *Two Women* by Marco Tutino 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. NOTE CHANGE IN VENUE OF SPRING LECTURE SERIES FROM SARATOGA TO THE JCC

SUMMER MEROLA EVENTS. Tickets available at S.F. Opera Box Office 415 864-3330 or at www.sfopera.com

July

JULY 9, Thursday, 7:30 pm, Schwabacher Summer Concert \$25.00/\$40.00, San Francisco Conservatory of Music, 50 Oak Street, SF

JULY 11, Saturday, 2pm, FREE Schwabacher Summer Concert, Outdoors at Yerba Buena Gardens, 750 Howard Street, SF. No tickets required.

JULY 23, Thursday at 7:30 pm and Saturday **JULY 25** at 2pm, *The Medium* and *Gianni Schicchi*, Cowell Theater at Fort Mason, SF. \$40.00/\$60.00

August

AUGUST 6, Thursday at 7:30 pm and Saturday **AUGUST 8** at 2pm, *Don Pasquale*, Cowell Theater at Fort Mason, SF. \$40.00/\$60.00

Joy Haws Hulme

Aug. 4, 1927 - Mar. 10, 2015

Joy Haws Hulme died peacefully of age-related causes on March 10, 2015. She was attended by her family and is survived by eight children plus 41 grandchildren and 52 great-grandchildren.

Born in Blackfoot, Idaho on August 4, 1927, Joy was the only child of Earl Hansen and Edna Findlay Haws. She grew up in southeastern Idaho, later moving to San Diego. In San Diego, Joy developed interests and talents in knitting and needlework, piano and opera. She later attended Brigham Young University.

Joy and Russell were married on June 6, 1949 in the Manti Utah Temple of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latterday Saints. After a few years in San Jose, they settled their family in Saratoga. All eight of their children graduated from Saratoga High School and Brigham Young University.

Joy was an exceptional teacher and communicator who shared her passions with peers, students, children and grandchildren alike. She taught constantly: literature, history and heritage clubs; knitting, crocheting and sewing; and on every family outing, teaching her children the history, people, flowers, birds and other facts of the places they visited.

Joy was both a giver and receiver of the power and richness that comes from a life immersed in music and the arts. She began playing the piano at age 5, and was an accomplished pianist and accompanist in her youth. With friends and family, they shared many nights at the opera and symphony at locations around the world, holding season tickets to the San Francisco Opera, San Francisco Symphony, Opera San Jose and San Jose Symphony for decades. Another of Joy's pastimes was knitting and needlework. In addition to finishing the detail of her own wedding dress, she knitted and finished hundreds of sweaters, blankets, pullovers, socks, scarves, vests, ponchos, hats, mittens and other articles.

NOTE: For over 40 years Joy served as a member, then lecture series director and president, of the San Jose Opera Guild. Because of Joy's passion for Bay Area opera, her family requests in lieu of flowers, donations be made in her name to the San Jose Opera Guild, P.O. Box 33025, Los Gatos, CA 95031.

A Remembrance of Joy

by Corinne Elliott Carter

Twelve children between us, Joy and I managed to get each of us into a seat in one of those luxurious opera boxes at the War Memorial Opera House. That's when in the '70s San Jose schools bused children to a live performance in San Francisco. Joy, a gracious woman and meaningful part of my beginnings with San Jose Opera Guild, gave much that I remember as significant. She filled her spacious patio with tables for the Membership tea, elegant and lovely as were her musical events in her home.

Joy's passing as have other early Guild members like Shirley Buckley, Chris Nicholson, Margaret Kendall offer me a retrospective look at the evolution of our Guild. Joy, the doyenne involved herself in Guild activities and set an elegant and decisive path that influenced my love for the Guild. ♡



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President: Peggy Heiman
Editor: Joan Shomler
Calendar: Connie Zilles
Career Updates: Susan English
Publicity: Jan Eurich 408-243-9793
www.facebook.com/sjoperaguild
www.sjoperaguild.org

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

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 to coincide with the San Francisco Opera and Opera San José's seasons.

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