



## NEWSLETTER

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Joan Shomler, Editor

August 2016

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### Fall Lecture Series

by Steve Zilles

The Fall Lecture Series of the San José Opera Guild begins on August 31st, this year. The five lectures will be on Wednesday morning from 10am to noon at the Addison-Penzak Jewish Community Center at 14855 Oka Road in Los Gatos. This is just off Lark Avenue near the interchange with Highway 17. There is also one presentation that will be on a Friday.

The first lecture in the series, August 31st will be *Andrea Chénier* by Umberto Giordano. This is an Italian verismo opera about the French Revolution and the Reign of Terror. It is loosely based on the life of the French poet, André Chénier (1762-1794) and involves his passionate relationship with a young Noblewoman, a relationship that the terror tears asunder. It gives the tenor magnificent lyric-dramatic music to demonstrate his skills. Our lecturer will be Dr. Kip Cranna who is the dramaturg for San Francisco Opera and last spoke to us on *Don Carlo*.

The second lecture on September 7th is a special treat. We have David Henry Hwang, the Librettist of *Dream of the Red Chamber* in conversation with Ken Scott. The *Dream of the Red Chamber* is a new opera by Bright Sheng which is based on what many consider to be the greatest Chinese novel (of the same name). It is set in 18th century China and brings to

*Please see Lecture Series on page 2*

### Career Updates

by Susan English

The summer season of the San Francisco Opera also included numerous Merola alumni in the three opera series. *Jenufa* was cast with five alumni: Julie Adams, Anthony Reed, Zanda Švēde, Toni Marie Palmertree, and Scott Quinn. Joshua Kosman noted in the San Francisco Chronicle: "Scott Quinn made a blunt but imposing company debut as his heedless rival, Steva. Of particular note among the various smaller roles were Matthew Stump's robust turn as the mill foreman." The Mercury News reviewed this opera noting: "Matthew Stump's Foreman made [an] impressive contribution. Company Adler fellows Toni Marie Palmertree, Anthony Reed, Zanda Švēde and Julie Adams excelled in supporting roles." Mr Quinn is also a former artist in residence at the Dallas Opera. He will appear in *The Makropulos Case* next season with SFO as Albert Gregor. Ms Adams is also scheduled to appear in San Francisco Opera's *The Makropulos Case*, as well as *Madame Butterfly*, and *La Bohème*.

*Don Carlo* included four Merola alumni in its well received production this summer. The San Francisco Classical Voice reviewed the opera under the title: "Powerhouse Cast Lifts SF Opera's Don Carlo." Noting the contributions of the Adler Fellows it continues: "The mezzo Nian Wang appeared in another

*Please see Career Updates on page 2*

life the characters of a love triangle: the first born son of a noble, high ranking family and his two possible brides, one his spiritual soul-mate, the other the ideal Chinese wife. Come, be one of the first to find out what happens to him and his family.

We have two presentations the week of 19-23 September. The first on Wednesday, September 21st is a lecture on Gaetano Donizetti's *Don Pasquale*. This is a fun, boisterous comedy with lots of wonderful music. It features the miserly Don Pasquale who is no match for his nephew Ernesto and his sweetheart Norina. It falls in the "be careful what you ask for, you may get it" category of stories. Deborah Rosengaus will be the lecturer. She teaches regularly at San Mateo Adult School and is a practicing mezzo-soprano who will appear in the *Cunning Little Vixen* by Janáček at West Edge Opera in August.

The second presentation that week will be on Friday, September 23rd in conjunction with the September Shabbat Lunch at the JCC. This will be an overview of the upcoming West Bay Opera season. Maestro José Luis Moscovich will introduce the operas: *Le nozze di Figaro* by Mozart (October), *Il Trittico (The Overcoat, Sister Angelica and Gianni Schicchi)* by Puccini (February) and *Salome* by Straus (May-June). This will be followed by selections by singers from the company. Plan to stay for the Shabbat Lunch at noon: \$6 JCC and Opera Guild Members or \$8.50 non-Members (with reservations by September 15th) and \$10 for purchase on day of event.

Our first lecture in October is on the 5th. We will hear about *The Makropulos Case* by Leoš Janáček. This is the story of Emily Marty, who does not look a day over 30, but is 300 years old. Come find out how she does it and does she still have what it takes. Prof. Richard Taruskin, who lectured on Janáček's *Jenůfa*

this spring will talk to us about this Janáček opera.

The fall season of lectures finishes on October 26th when Dr. Alexandra Amati-Campieri will talk about Women in Peril as seen in *Aida*, *Madame Butterfly*, *La bohème* and *Rigoletto*. In all these operas, love leads the heroine to an untimely death. See how their love and their peril (buried alive, suicide, consumption and voluntary murder) is expressed in music and how did that change from the 19th to the 20th century (or did it?).

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charming pants role as the page Tebaldo. Pene Pati sang Count Lerma with a sweet and sizable tenor, and bass Matthew Stump was a promising and resonant Monk. Toni Marie Palmertree sang the heavenly voice that welcomes the heretics into heaven at the end of the auto-da-fé scene." Ms Wang is scheduled to create the role of Bao Chai in the world premiere of Bright Sheng's *Dream of the Red Chamber* at the San Francisco Opera this fall.

*Carmen* rounded out the summer season for San Francisco. Brian Jagde (Merola 2009) sang Don Jose. Joshua Kosman reviewed the performance in the SF Chronicle. He noted: "But there were formidable contributions from the Adler Fellows — Edward Nelson (Moralès) and Brad Walker (Zuniga) as José's fellow military men, and soprano Amina Edris as Frasquita — as well as from Renée Rapiet, Alex Boyer and Daniel Cilli (an entertainingly twitchy bundle of nerves) as the rest of the smuggler gang." Both Mr Cilli and Mr Boyer are also former Resident Artists with Opera San José.

*Carmen* was also performed at Opera San José last season. Many former Resident Artists participated in this production. The

Please see Career Updates on page 3

opera was directed by former OSJ resident artist Layna Chianakas. The Mercury News noted of her direction: “For the most part, director Layna Chianakas keeps the action focused and fluid, and her staging yields a series of attractive tableaux.” The San Francisco Classical Voice echoed this in their assessment: “Stage director Layna Chianakas’ thoughtful production uses a lot of coordinated movement, especially for the chorus.”

Another former Resident Artist, Lisa Chavez, sang Carmen. The Mercury’s review called her singing, “sultry and disdainful.” Further noting, “From her first appearance as the seductive gypsy who prizes freedom above all else, Chavez sounded terrific. Singing her mesmerizing entrance piece, the ‘Habanera,’ her smoky, richly colored voice shaped the music in expressive, voluptuous phrases.” Daniel Cilli appeared in this production of Carmen as well. The Mercury noted: “There were fine contributions in subsidiary roles, including Daniel Cilli’s articulate Moralès.”

Former Merolini Patrick Summers is currently the artistic director of Houston Grand Opera. He is conducting each of Wagner’s four operas of the Ring Cycle: *Das Rheingold*, *Die Walkure*, *Siegfried*, *Gotterdammerung*, over the 2014 through 2017 opera seasons. In April he conducted *Siegfried*, his performance reviewed by Bachtrack as: “What is the Ring without a good orchestra? With conductor and HGO artistic director Patrick Summers on the podium it’s a question you won’t need to ask.” The Houston Press provided more substance to their review (expressing their dislike of the production, yet appreciation of Mr Summers.) “Fortunately, maestro Patrick Summers goes about his business — I hope with his eyes closed — and delivers a mighty

interpretation, regardless of the hideousness of the visual concept. The HGO orchestra has never sounded so lush, so much in love with the score. We may not like what we see, but what we hear is sublime and glorious. Wagner breathes deep and true, and that is a rare show by itself. Morris, Goerke et al. lead the way with banners unfurled. *Siegfried* triumphant!”

Recent Merolini Kihun Yoon (2015) is now a member of the Domingo-Colburn-Stein-Young Artist Program with the Los Angeles Opera. Earlier this season, he performed Ping in Turandot with Gustavo Dudamel conducting in Venezuela. Recently he sang Schau-nard in the LA production of *La Bohème*, also conducted by Dudamel. The Los Angeles Daily News noted: “The madcap crew of starving artists is rounded out by Nicholas Brownlee as the good-natured Coline and the robust singing of Kihun Yoon as Schau-nard.” This summer he will perform the leading role of Delirio in the American premiere of Gassmann’s 1769 comedy *L’Opera Seria* at Wolf Trap Opera, and next season he will return to the LA Opera as Sciarrone in *Tosca*.

June 2016 Opera News devoted six pages to former Merolini Daniel Okulitch. They note he has “split his time pretty evenly between Mozart and contemporary opera, portraying some of the most memorable film characters of the past fifty years in adaptations for the opera stage. His resume includes the operatic avatars of the aforementioned master chocolatier (Willy Wonka) brought to life onscreen by Gene Wilder, Jeff Goldblum’s Seth Brundle in *The Fly*, Sean Penn’s Matthew Poncelet in *Dead Man Walking* (rechristened Joseph De Rocher in Jake Heggie’s opera) and Heath Ledger’s Ennis Del Mar in *Brokeback Mountain*.” While participating in the Merola

Please see Career Updates on page 4

program, a patron introduced Mr. Okulitch to Jake Heggie. According to Opera News, “That led to his first big leading role — De Rocher in the Canadian premiere of *Dead Man Walking*, at Calgary Opera in 2006.” July 2016 Opera News reviewed his performance in David T. Little’s new opera *JFK* at Fort Worth Opera: “Daniel Okulitch was hilarious as a lascivious LBJ who needed to be ordered sternly to keep his pants on, lest he introduce the room to ‘Jumbo;’ dressed in an outlandish white Western suit with sparkling red and blue stars.”

Bass Adam Lau (Merola 2011) has won the 17th annual Jensen Foundation Vocal Competition. He received \$15,000. He sang “O beauty, O handsomeness, goodness” (Claggart’s Aria) from Britten’s *Billy Budd* and “Quand la flame de l’amour” from *La joile fille de Perth* by Bizet. Finals judges were Susan Ashbaker, Peter Carwell and James Morris.

From the San Francisco Chronicle: The San Francisco Opera has established a memorial fund in the name of Brian Asawa, the celebrated countertenor who died at age 49. Asawa, who was living in Los Angeles at the time of his death, began his career — one that would find him in lead roles in major operas throughout the United States and Europe — in San Francisco, specifically with the Merola Opera Program. He was the first countertenor accepted into the program at a time when countertenors were hardly the norm. The fund will go toward incoming Merola Opera Program participants, according to a statement from the opera, with “a particular preference given to countertenors.” Those interested in contributing to the fund can do so by visiting the program’s website, [www.merola.org](http://www.merola.org), or by calling (415) 936-3111.📞

## David Gockley’s Celebration Concert by Susan English

On June 16 the San Francisco Opera celebrated its outgoing general director, David Gockley, and the outsized role he has played in the history of opera as art form. The San Francisco Chronicle provided two articles reviewing the evening. The first, by Joshua Kosman included:

The evening’s musical offerings — led from the pit by a four-man conductorial roundelay of John DeMain, Jiri Belohlávek, Patrick Summers and Nicola Luisotti — covered the range of Gockley’s musical interests.

There were selections from the new works he has commissioned or championed, including John Adams’ *Nixon in China* and Carlisle Floyd’s *Susannah* (both composers were in the house to garner well-merited applause). Eric Owens gave a jaunty account of “I Got Plenty o’ Nuttin’” from Gershwin’s *Porgy and Bess* — one of Gockley’s most notable pet causes — and Patricia Racette delivered a ravishing rendition of “Bill” from Jerome Kern’s *Show Boat*.

Beth Spotswood also contributed to the Chronicle with her assessment of the evening. She noted: “The evening’s performance featured a lineup of opera greats like Renée Fleming, Frederica von Stade and a very virile Michael Fabiano, the tenor who tore the house down. Gockley’s grand finale offered a packed stage performing ‘Make Our Garden Grow’ from Leonard Bernstein’s *Candide*, which ended when Gockley strolled onstage, grabbed a microphone and asked the crowd that he’d held rapt for three hours of opera, ‘Any questions?’”📞

## OPERA INSIGHTS

What do you do when protesters want to ban your opera as a racist “cultural appropriation”

by Mort Levine

Since 1884 *The Mikado* has been one of the most performed and lauded musical theatre masterworks. But in the past couple of years, as heightened sensitivity about ethnic stereotypes has teamed up with social media, the witty, melodic Gilbert and Sullivan operetta has come under withering fire. It’s been called “yellow face in your face” and a “historical relic that needs to be retired.”

Protesters effectively cancelled performances in New York and brought out Asian-American protesters in Seattle. When the highly regarded bay area Lamplighters Musical Theatre announced its current season, those same rumbles came flowing forth on the internet. The very traditional performing group, now in its 64th season grew alarmed when one of their four regional venues held up their rental lease agreement. Their shows go forth in sequence at the Mountain view CPA, the Leshner Center for the Arts in Walnut Creek, at the Yerba Buena theatre in San Francisco and the Bankhead Theatre in Livermore.

Heeding the alarm bells, Lamplighters sought a solution rather than a confrontation.

They found it in the way opera producers have done throughout the centuries. Verdi moved his tale of regicide at a royal Swedish Masked Ball to colonial Boston. There were dozens of other ways to dodge censors of the past and the new kinds of politically correctness of today.

This Mikado is now dubbed *The New Mikado*. It is set in the early Renaissance in Northern Italy. The Mikado now becomes Il Ducato,

a duke of Milan who likes to sing and apply punishments to the deserving, as much as his Japanese counterpart. Yes, and he has “A Little List,” whose lyrics have always been updated topically as they have since Gilbert first penned it.

The shift westward of some 8,000 miles didn’t require very much in the way of change to the full libretto. In fact, a word count of the changes show that only 1.7% of the text is different. *The Mikado* was written as a satire on upper class British society and its foibles. However, its universality has permitted it to be performed worldwide in many languages. Over its 132-year life, Mikado has occasionally brought out protests. At least twice Japan’s ambassadors to Great Britain lodged objections citing the divinity of the emperor. And it has been done with a re-set staging. There are periodic revivals of *The Hot Mikado* with its all African-American cast.

The essence of the work is the combination of the rich, melodic genius of Sir Arthur Sullivan’s tuneful score and the comic inventiveness by his collaborator.

Now, with Lamplighters’ re-do, we get to enjoy this work through a new, but still exotic, lens. They won’t be wearing obi and kimono. There will be richly colorful robes as well as tights and codpieces.

You can judge for yourself if all this works when the curtain goes up in Mountain View for three performances Saturday, August 13 at 2 p.m. and 8 p.m. and Sunday, August 14 at 2 p.m. If you miss that, drop in at the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts in San Francisco or the Livermore Bankhead Theatre later in the month. §



## OSJ Summer Training Program

Opera San José has completed its first Summer Training Program for young singers, ages 20 through 28, who live in the bay area. Eighteen participants attended classes weekdays June 20th through July 1st, and the program concluded with an opera scenes performance July 2nd in OSJ's rehearsal hall.

The new Summer Training Program offers a unique training opportunity for singers who have strong vocal technique and a clear commitment to developing a career in opera. This two-week program encompasses individual coaching sessions and tailored group workshops enabling singers to develop their vocal and dramatic skills in a professional environment with unprecedented access to the wealth of expertise provided by Opera San José, insight into the world of professional opera, and valuable opportunities for dialogue with key people from within the industry.

For instruction, program director Layna Chianakas selected clinicians locally and from across the U.S. with expertise covering many areas of concern to young singers including performance anxiety, acting for singers, stage makeup, 17th and 18th century period movement, dance, audition techniques, and musical theatre. There were two vocal master classes and a session on working with management from the aspect of a long-established New York-based manager.

Many sessions were held daily. Each morning began with an hour of yoga instruction followed by another hour of movement/alignment. Other sessions were one-time classes on skills such as interpretation of songs for recital and conducting for singers (who must follow conductors with precision). Three hours each afternoon were dedicated to staging opera scenes directed by Sandra Bengochea. The

scenes were presented in performance July 2 for the donors who sponsored the summer training program, guests of the singers, OSJ trustees, and others who had an interest in observing these young people in performance.

Opera San José General Director Larry Hancock commented: I am very excited about this because these two weeks of sessions offer unique training to singers who are ready to appear on our stage in either chorus or small roles. I established this program because I continually found that singers were arriving at rehearsals with no knowledge of how to move on stage, organize a costume while walking, sitting, or climbing steps, and other technical skills that stage directors have no time to address during rehearsals. OSJ had begun giving such grooming to singers when the company was founded, but over the years the company has been engaging far more experienced singers who are already professionals, reducing the need for training in the basics.

This new program is designed to fill this void for our local singers. While it is hoped that some of these singers will find a place on Opera San José's stage in the future, no matter where they go from here they will be better prepared to compete in auditions and they will be ahead of the game should they find themselves cast in any staged production. ♪

Published in February, May,  
August and November  
by the San José Opera Guild,  
P.O. Box 33025,  
Los Gatos, CA 95031-3025  
President: Peggy Heiman  
Editor: Joan Shomler  
Calendar: Connie Zilles  
Career Updates: Susan English  
Publicity: Jan Eurich 408-243-9793  
[www.facebook.com/sjoperaguild](http://www.facebook.com/sjoperaguild)  
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## CALENDAR

BY CONNIE ZILLES

### AUGUST

**August 20, Saturday** at 7:30pm, Merola Grand Finale, War Memorial Opera House, SF, \$25.00/\$35.00, students \$15.00. Post-concert reception \$50.00. Tickets available at S.F. Opera Box Office 415 864-3330 or at [www.sfopera.com](http://www.sfopera.com)

**August 14 & 16** Camera 3 — *Rigoletto* from the Opera National de Paris

**August 31**, San José Opera Guild lecture, Kip Cranna will lecture on *Andrea Chenier* by Umberto Giordano.

### SEPTEMBER

**September 7**, San José Opera Guild lecture, David Henry and Ken Smith will lecture on *Dream of the Red Chamber* by Bright Sheng.

**September 10, 11, 15, 18, 23, 25**, Opera San José presents *Lucia di Lammermoor* by Donizetti, California Theatre, 8pm except Sundays at 3pm. Free pre-performance talks 1½ hours before the opera performance. Tickets: 408-437-4450 or [www.operasj.org](http://www.operasj.org).

**September 18 & 20** Camera 3 — *La Traviata* from the Festspielhaus Baden-Baden.

**September 21**, San José Opera Guild lecture, Deborah Rosengaus will lecture on *Don Pasquale* by Gaetano Donizetti.

**September 23, Friday**, San José Opera Guild, Season Overview of West Bay Opera with West Bay Opera's General Director José Luis Moscovich and singers. Shabbat Lunch to follow. Information on signing up for the luncheon will be available closer to the event.

### OCTOBER

**October 5**, San José Opera Guild lecture, Richard Taruskin will lecture on *The Makropulos Case* by Leoš Janáček.

**Saturday, October 8**, 9am, Encore **October 12**, 6:30pm Met Hd. **Wagner's, Tristan and Isolde.**

**October 14, 16, 22, 23**, West Bay Opera presents *Le Nozze di Figaro* (The Marriage of Figaro) by Mozart, 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](http://www.wbopera.org).

**October 16 & 18** Camera 3, — *Fidelio* from the Salzburg Festival, Austria.

**Saturday, October 22**, 9:55am, Encore **October 26**, 6:30pm, Met HD, Mozart's *Don Giovanni*.

**San José Opera Guild's Lectures:** Wednesdays, unless noted, at the JCC of Silicon Valley, 14855 Oka Road (cross street Lark Avenue) Los Gatos. 10 am to noon. SJOG and JCC Members free. Non-members \$10.

**Camera 3 Cinema**, located at 288 S. Second Street, San Jose: a series of operas from European opera houses in HD. There is an opera scheduled each month, Sundays at noon, and Tuesdays at 7:15pm. Tickets are \$18.50 and free parking is available. For ticket information, <http://www.cameracinemas.com>.

**Metropolitan Opera Live in HD**, showing at Oakridge Century 20, Santana Row 6, and Cupertino 16. Simulcasts \$24, adults, \$22 seniors. (Prices may vary.) For more information contact <http://www.metopera.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. The Guild helps sponsor singers each year at Opera San José, the Merola Opera Program, as well as San Jose State Opera Workshop.

Throughout the year, the Guild sponsors lectures and previews to coincide with the San Francisco Opera, West Bay Opera and Opera San José's seasons.

*Names* \_\_\_\_\_

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Memberships	Dual	\$70
	Single	\$50
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