



# NEWSLETTER

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Joan Shomler, Editor

November 2016

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## Career Updates by Susan English

In the August 2016 Opera News, two former Merolini are featured prominently — Dolora Zajick (Merola 1983) and Hadleigh Adams (Merola 2012). Their “Backstory” featured Ms Zajick’s progression from the cover of the magazine in 1988, the year of her Met debut, and noted she was one of the first Opera News Award honorees in 2005. She has recently sung as Ulrica in Verdi’s *Un Ballo in Maschera*, in Rome, Italy at the Teatro dell’ Opera di Roma. She will travel to Dallas, Texas to sing Mrs. Grose in Britten’s *The Turn of the Screw* in March.

Mr. Adams was featured in the “Sound Bites” segment of Opera News. F. Paul Driscoll wrote, “Adams is a deft actor whose work in a variety of roles at SFO was remarkable for its economy and intelligence...quoting Adams ‘I was onstage in seventy-eight performances in my two years (as an Adler Fellow)...and I learned a huge amount.’” Currently, Adams is singing Creon, Tiresias, and the Messenger in Stravinsky’s *Oedipus Rex*, with Esa-Pekka Salonen and the Philharmonia Orchestra, during their US tour.

Former Artist in Residence for Opera San José, Lori Phillips, was covering the role of Brunnhilde in *Gotterdammerung* with the

## Congratulations 2017 Board

Elections were held at the JCC on  
October 26, 2016

Members of the San José Opera Guild elected directors and officers at the general membership meeting held on October 26th.

The slate recommended by the Nominating Committee was unanimously elected. Serving on the Nominating Committee were Chair Diane Snow and her committee; Corinne Elliott Carter, Susan English, and Colette Siegel.

### Officers:

President: Peggy Heiman  
Vice-President: Jan Eurich  
Recording Secretary: Laurel Kaleda  
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Washington National Opera. Another OSJ alumnus and former Merolini, **Alex Boyer**, has been busy with the San Francisco Opera. He sang The Abbe in *Andrea Chenier*, and Voices of the Stone in the *Dream of the Red Chamber*.

Numerous Merolini also sang in these San Francisco Opera productions. Included in the cast for this world premiere of *Dream of the Red Chamber*, were **Pene Pati**, **Edward Nelson**, **Amina Edris**, **Toni Marie Palmer-tree**, and **Zanda Svede**. Karen Chia-Ling Ho sang Princess Jia. Ms Ho was recently featured in concert with the American Composers Orchestra in music by the Chinese composer Li Shaosheng and sang arias and duets with the Shanghai Symphony. She will make her Carnegie Hall debut this fall with the American Symphony Orchestra as Marie in Ernst Krenek's *Der Diktator*.

San Francisco Opera's *Andrea Chenier* also included many Merolini in the cast. Current Adler Fellows singing in this production included: Edward Nelson, **Matthew Stump**, **Brad Walker**, and **Anthony Reed**. **Catherine Cook** (Merola 1982) sang Contessa di Coigny. Ms Cook is featured in Composer David Garner's album, *Spoon River Songs*, which received a Silver Medal for Outstanding Achievement in the 2016 Global Music Awards. She holds the Frederica von Stade Distinguished Chair in Voice at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music.

Santa Fe Opera's 2016 season featured many Merolini in important roles in four of their five operas. *Romeo et Juliette*, by Gounod, starred Ailyn Perez (Merola 2005) as Juliette. Bachtrack noted: "Ailyn Perez was a charming Juliette who made the audience believe she was a teenager whose father did not yet allow

her a glass of champagne. Pérez's soprano has grown considerably since 2010, when I first heard her Juliette in San Diego. Now she has a lyrical opulence that blankets the audience with its beauty. She still displays serious coloratura in her Waltz Song, but at this time her Poison Aria is a dramatic gem as well." Opera Warhorses said of her performance, "Juliette is a role that displays Pérez' shimmering coloratura in the cleverly staged *Je veux vivre* and the lyric legato of the love duets." Ms Perez will sing Mimi in *La Boheme* this month at the Met, and in December will perform at Opera de Oviedo in Spain in *I Capuleti e i Montecchi*.

Richard Strauss' *Capriccio* was performed at the Santa Fe Opera with **Susan Graham** (Merola 1987) singing Clairon. Bachtrack noted: "The show's "star power" was provided by New Mexico mezzo-soprano Susan Graham in the role of Clairon, a stage actress who had previously been romantically pursued by Olivier and who now was the object of attraction of Countess Madeleine's brother, the Count. Graham was mesmerizing in a part that enlisted both her sultry mezzo and her prowess as an actor – yet another triumphant performance from this operatic super-star."

The third opera featuring Merolini was SFO's *La Fanciulla del West*. Two Merolini were cast in the opera **Mark Delavan** sang Jack Rance. The title role (Minnie) was sung by **Patricia Racette** (Merola 1988). Opera Warhorses reviewed the opera on the opening night of the season praising Ms Racette. "New Hampshire soprano Patricia Racette is universally acknowledged as one of opera's great contemporary singing actresses. In the past decade she has shown an affinity for Puccini's strongly-etched heroines. I would argue that her Minnie is among Racette's finest portray-

Please see Career Updates on page 3

als. She has the requisite voice for the role – power that gleams at the top of her range, with a middle voice that has the flexibility to express a range of emotions – vulnerability, anger, empathy, and, ultimately, resignation to love.” Of Mr. Delavan they noted: “New Jersey baritone Mark Delavan was a formidable Jack Rance, the sheriff whose public position and private desires have become disturbingly intertwined, especially when the outlaw he seeks to apprehend becomes his rival for the woman he desires. Delavan excels in the dramatic baritone roles of Wagner, Verdi and Puccini. He provided a wide-ranging display of the dramatic possibilities of this role. Never a snarling villain, Delavan’s nuanced Rance is at once ardent and insecure in his pursuit of Minnie’s hand. His portrait is one of a tough but honorable lawman, who is willing to resort to frontier ‘summary justice.’”

Two more Merolini were cast in the fourth of Santa Fe’s five opera offerings, Don Giovanni. Cast in the title role was **Daniel Okulitch** (Merola 2002). The Huffington Post reviewed his performance with: “The show burst into energy as Daniel Okulitch bounded onstage after having happily raped Donna Anna. Okulitch, this month’s cover boy on Opera News, is one of the treasures of the contemporary opera world. Not only is he completely at home in the standard repertoire — I have seen him as Figaro, Almaviva, Don G — he is one of the go-to bass baritones for new music, having originated leads in *The Fly*, *Brokeback Mountain*, and *JFK*, to name a few. I feel that with this performance of the Don he is at the very height of his enormous powers. I’ve never seen — and I’ve seen many — a Don so elegant, so comfortable in his awful skin, so to the manor born, who, and most importantly,

can still sing like a dream. As the cognoscenti know, in this opera Giovanni doesn’t actually get any women except for Anna, when he also, oh by the way, kills Anna’s father. I loved how bemused Okulitch seemed as each attempt at seduction went awry. Never mind, you could see him thinking: I have another 3000 girls at my fingertips. Onward and upward.”

Donna Anna was sung by **Leah Crocetto** (Merola 2008). Opera Warhorses reviewed her performance with, “Michigan soprano Leah Crocetto sang the role of Donna Anna with power and grace. In her final aria, Non mir dir, Crocetto displayed the mastery of coloratura that Santa Fe Opera audiences will recall from her 2012 Rossini opera seria. At this point in her career, Crocetto is moving into such dramatic soprano roles as the title role in Verdi’s *Aida*, that she is scheduled to perform at the San Francisco Opera.”✿

## **SJOG Newsletter**

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## CALENDAR

By Connie Zilles

November 12, 13, 17, 20, 22, 27, Opera San José presents Barber of Seville by Rossini, California Theatre, 8pm except Sundays at 3pm. Tickets: 408-437-4450 or [www.operasj.org](http://www.operasj.org). Introduction to Opera Talks 1½ hours before the opera performance.

**November 18**, San Jose State Opera Program, 7:30 pm, San Jose State University Music Building Concert Hall, No Reservations Required. Tickets are \$10.00 at the door.

**February 10, 2017** Opera San José, On the stage of the California Theatre, The General Director's Dinner on the set of the new production *Silent Night*, \$500 per place, black tie optional.

SAVE THE DATE !! **Saturday, April 22, 2017**, Annual San José Opera Guild Champagne Brunch at La Rinconada in Los Gatos. Plan ahead for April!

Besides our wonderful live opera presentations at the San Francisco Opera, Opera San José and West Bay Opera we have simulcasts and movies presented in our area.

**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>.

### NOVEMBER

**November 13 & 15**, Camera 3 — *I Capuleti e I Montecchi*, Bellini — Gran Teatro del Liceu, Barcelona, 2016

### DECEMBER

**Saturday December 10, 2016, 9:55am**,  
Encore **December 21, 6:30pm** — Met HD —  
Kaija Saariaho's — *L'Amour de Loin*

**December 11 & 13**, Camera 3 — *The Abduction from The Seraglio*, Mozart — Opera National de Paris, 2016

**December 18 & 20**, Camera 3 — *Fetez La Danse / The Nutcracker*, Berlioz,/Czerny/ Tchaikovsky — Opera National de Paris, 2012

### JANUARY

**Saturday January 7, 2017, 9:55am**, Encore  
**January 11, 2017, 6:30pm** — Met HD —  
Nabucco, Giuseppe Verdi

**Saturday January 21, 2017, 9:55am**, Encore  
**January 25, 2017, 6:30pm**, — Met HD —  
*Roméo et Juliette*, Charles Gounod'

## OPERA DISCOVERIES

West Bay Opera's most remarkable maestro sparking  
an added dimension to company's traditional mission

by Mort Levine

The richness of the Bay Area opera scene sometimes makes us complacent and we take for granted how good some of the companies right in our backyard are. Both West Bay Opera and Opera San José have leadership which is pushing the traditional envelopes of the standard repertory. There are new currents in programming the main stage productions such as the forthcoming *Silent Night* by young composer Kevin Puts at Opera San José or producing some of the iconic American musicals.

West Bay is taking a different direction while preserving its 60-year tradition of doing a serious job on major works despite limited budgets and a tiny stage. A major thrust by WBO's general director Jose Luis Moscovich is to focus on contemporary works by Latin American composers. The maestro is a graduate of the National Conservatory of Argentina in Rosario. He has had a busy, productive career as a conductor, teacher and administrator ever since coming to the US in 1981.

Now in his tenth season with West Bay Opera, Moscovich has enhanced the company's reputation for polished performances and balancing a mixture of the most popular works. They are currently offering a stunningly good *Marriage of Figaro* at Palo Alto. Imaginative projections seem to magically transform their small stage.

Moscovich's interest in Latin American opera will be manifest this coming month when he conducts the North American premiere of a one act chamber opera *Desperta al Sueno* (Waking into a dream) by composer Federico

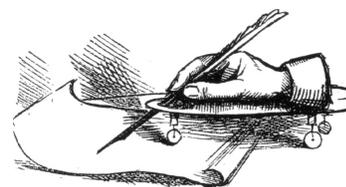
Ibarra with a libretto by David Olguin. It will be seen in a benefit performance at a small performing space in the WBO offices in Palo Alto at 8pm on Thursday, November 3. It will move to San Francisco for two shows at Z-Space, 450 Florida St. on Saturday, November 5 at 8pm and Sunday, November 6 at 2pm.

The benefit for West Bay Opera requires reservations and the donation per seat is up to you. Tickets for Z-Space can be obtained by calling 415-626-0453. The benefit reservation can be obtained by calling WBO at 650-424-9999 or at [wbopera.org](http://wbopera.org).

The one hour opera will actually premiere in Mexico at Guadalajara's Teatro Degollado on October 30.

*Despertar al Sueno* is a tonal work and is an updated version of the classic Bram Stoker novel *Dracula*. It is directed by Ragnar Conde, who has directed several works at WBO. The cast has five singers and music is a clarinet-cello-keyboard ensemble.

The maestro has deep roots in this musical tradition having conducted the San Francisco Camerata orchestra for nine years with a Latin American classical musical repertory. ❀



### Special thanks —

to our contributors: Susan English and Mort Levine for their articles; and Connie Zilles for the Calendar. ❀

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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. 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.

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Memberships	Dual	\$70
	Single	\$50
	Organization	\$75
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	Total \$	_____

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