

Career Updates

by Susan English

Opera News has been chronicling the careers of numerous Merolini these past few months. Their December “Noteworthy & Now” segment noted that **Ailyn Perez** received the Sphinx Medal of Excellence, honoring artists of color, still early in their career stages, who have already demonstrated general excellence, as well as a commitment to leadership in their areas of classical music. Ms Perez will receive a \$50,000 grant with this reward to use toward the development of her career. She also made her debut as Giulietta in Bellini’s *I Capuleti e i Montecchi* at Opera de Oviedo. In this same segment *Opera News* considered the Houston Grand Opera’s *It’s a Wonderful Life*, featuring former Merolini **Patrick Summers** as conductor and former OSJ Resident Artist **Talise Trevigne** as the angel-figure named Clara in the opera.

Opera News’ January “Noteworthy & Now” considered **Thomas Hampson’s** (Merola 1980) busy January. He performed with Luca Pisaroni and the Borusan Istanbul Philharmonic Orchestra in Turkey, and then traveled to Munich, Germany for Bayerische Staatsoper to perform in Srnka’s *South Pole*. He then traveled to Hamburg’s Philharmonic for a concert with The Philharmonics. At the end of January, Hampson will sing Scarpia in *Tosca*, conducted by Placido Domingo at the Wiener Staatsoper.

Another segment of December’s *Opera News* considered Merolini **Bryan Hymel** and his love for his home town, New Orleans. Leaving his beloved city, he traveled to Europe. First, to Milan, where Mr. Hymel took the stage in Puccini’s *Madama Butterfly*, at the opening of the opera season at Teatro alla Scala.

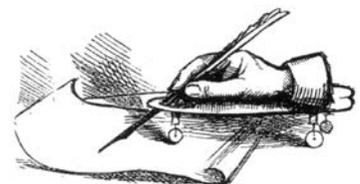
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Webmaster Needed

Our long term Webmaster is going to retire from the job. We have a fabulous web site and need a technically knowledgeable person to continue to run it. Please get in touch with the current Webmaster, Joan Shomler (membership@sjoperaguild.org) if you are interested.

The responsibilities include: monthly updates to the calendar (local events, lectures, news, etc.). If you look at the website (<http://www.sjoperaguild.org>), you will see it is in good condition, so keeping it up to date is what we need.

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The production, a reprisal of the original 1904 version, received a 14 minute ovation from the Milanese audience. *Bachtrack* praised the American tenor's performance as Pinkerton, his voice "ringing out thrillingly at the end, the naval officer discovering Butterfly's suicide and then, removing the child's blindfold, seeing his son for the first time on the dramatic closing chords." His spring will be busy: In April he will sing in *Carmen* at the Opera National de Paris, and in May he will sing the title role in *Don Carlo* at the Royal Opera House.

Another publication, *Departures*, featured a Merolini in their "Departures 100 – a compendium of the 100 people, places and things worth knowing about now." Listed among their 100 was **Nadine Sierra**, "At just 28, the Fort Lauderdale native has emerged as one of the most sought-after coloratura sopranos in the business." She will perform in *Die Zauberflote* at the Paris National Opera (January and February), and in *Idomeneo* at the Metropolitan Opera (March). In her debut at La Scala, she received an almost unheard of response – a mid-Rigoletto demand for an encore!

The San Francisco Opera featured numerous Merolini in their 2016 season. *Aida* brought **Leah Crocetto** (Adler 2009-2011) and **Brian Jagde** (Adler 2010-2012) together in the leads. *San Francisco Classical Voice* noted of Ms Crocetto's performance: "Soprano Leah Crocetto, making her role debut as Aida, turned in a tender, youthful, and beautifully sung performance. Superb and moving in "Ritorna vincitor!" (Return victorious), seductive in the Nile scene's "Là tra foreste vergini" (There where the virgin forests rise), her sweet lyric soprano made her a vulnerable Aida." Of Mr. Jagde they wrote, "He sounded best at the low end of his range." "Upcoming appearances

will include Maurizio in (*Adriana Lecouvreur*) at the Royal Opera House; and Froh (*Das Rheingold*) in his first appearance with the New York Philharmonic. Brian sings Pinkerton (*Madama Butterfly*) in house debuts at the Teatro Massimo and Washington National Opera; and performs for the first time at the Teatro Real as Macduff (*Macbeth*) and Oper Stuttgart as Cavaradossi (*Tosca*)."

Several current Adler Fellows sang in *Aida* as well. The *San Francisco Classical Voices* noted: "The three Adler Fellows in the cast were all standouts. **Anthony Reed** sang with considerable presence as the King of Egypt. Tenor **Pene Pati** was an unusually vivid and powerful Messenger, while **Toni Marie Palmertree** sang gorgeously as the Priestess." Mr. Pati will appear with the SFO next summer as the Duke of Mantua in *Rigoletto*.

Another SFO opera that featured numerous current Adlers was *Madama Butterfly*. Suzuki was sung by **Zanda Svede** (who our Opera Guild sponsored as a Merolini.) The *San Francisco Chronicle's* Joshua Kosman noted of her performance, "Mezzo-soprano Zanda Svede's sensitive, vocally resplendent performance as the maid Suzuki was only the latest step in this Adler Fellow's methodical, thrilling march toward greatness." Ms Svede will sing Maddelena in the summer's production of *Rigoletto*. The *San Francisco Classical Voice* considered additional Adlers in this opera with: "Other Adler Fellows made smaller, excellent contributions as Kate Pinkerton (**Julie Adams**), the Imperial Commissioner (**Matthew Stump**), and Prince Yamadori (**Edward Nelson**)." Mr. Nelson will sing the role of Steward in Jonathan Dove's *Flight* with Opera Omaha, Schaunard in *La Boheme* with

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Cincinnati Opera, and the title role in Thomas Ambroise's *Hamlet* with West Edge Opera.

Joyce DiDonato (Merola 1997) has created a CD and concert project titled "In War and Peace: Harmony through Music." As reviewed by Rupert Christiansen in *The Telegraph*, it purports, "The world's problems are manifold. But, mezzo star Joyce DiDonato tells us, if we listen carefully opera can help us solve them...Joyce DiDonato is in her prime. A beautiful, vivacious mezzo-soprano from Kansas City, the 47-year-old has dazzled at the Last Night of the Proms, won a brace of awards for her recordings, enjoyed standing ovations everywhere from Carnegie Hall to Covent Garden and sent critics scrabbling for superlatives. The only way from such an eminence is down, so it's fortunate that hers is not a head that is easily turned or distracted."

Ms DiDonato brought her project to the Bay Area recently. In a review by *The Mercury News* Georgia Rowe noted, "Joyce DiDonato, Dec. 2, Stanford University's Bing Concert Hall: It was one of those moments that seem to stop time: As part of her semi-staged 'In War and Peace' concert, the great mezzo-soprano sang Purcell's 'Dido's Lament.' The aria's repeated lines of 'Remember Me' have rarely sounded so touching, or so meaningful." Upcoming performances for Ms DiDonato listed on her web site include: "She makes her much anticipated debut in the title role of *Semiramide* in a new production at the Bavarian State Opera under Michele Mariotti; the title role in *Ariodante* on tour with the English Concert and Harry Bicket; *Dido (Les Troyens)* under John Nelsons in Strasbourg; and *Sesto (La Clemenza di Tito)* under Nézet-Séguin in Baden-Baden."

Upcoming opportunities to see and hear former Merolini and OSJ Resident Artists locally include February 11-26, 2017: Julie Adams (current Adler) will be making her OSJ debut as Anna Sorensen and **Christopher Bengochea** (OSJ Resident Artist 2005-2008) will be performing Kronprinz in *Silent Night*; March 11, 2017: Met HD Broadcast of *La Traviata* featuring Thomas Hampson (Merola 1980) as Giorgio Germont; March 25, 2017: Met HD Broadcast of *Idomeneo* featuring Nadine Sierra (Merola 2010) as Ilia; April 22, 2017: Met HD Broadcast of *Eugene Onegin* with **Anna Netrebko** (Merola 1996) as Tatiana; May 6 Met Radio Broadcast of *Cyrano de Bergerac* with **Patricia Racette** (Merola 1988) singing Roxane; and June 24, 2017: Festival Opera in Walnut Creek featuring **Alex Boyer** (Merola 2007 and OSJ Resident Artist 2008-2013) singing Canio and **Hadleigh Adams** (Merola 2013) singing Silvio in *Pagliacci*.📍

SJOG Newsletter

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P.O. Box 33025,
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President: Peggy Heiman
Editor: Joan Shomler
Calendar: Connie Zilles
Career Updates: Susan English
Opera Discoveries: Mort Levine
Publicity: Jan Eurich 408-243-9793

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CALENDAR

By Connie Zilles

February 8, 7pm, “Opera on your Doorstep” with Brad Wade, Free Lecture on the new opera *Silent Night*, Italian-American Heritage Foundation, 425 N. 4th St. San Jose, no reservations, just show up.

February 9, 7:30pm, “Opera on your Doorstep” with Brad Wade, Free Lecture on the new opera *Silent Night*, Sheppard Mullin law firm, 379 Lytton Ave, Palo Alto, to reserve a seat email Jim Stauffer at ifs.fosi@gmail.com

February 11, 12, 16, 19, 24, and 26, Opera San Jose presents *Silent Night* by Puts and Campbell, California Theatre, 8pm except Sundays at 3pm. **Opening Night Reception Feb. 11, 11-12pm**, \$25, Tickets: 408-437-4450 or www.operasj.org. Introduction to Opera Talks 1½ hours before the opera performance.

February 9, 8pm, West Bay Opera preview, of *Il Trittico*, Palo Alto Art Center, 1313 Newell Road, Palo Alto, Free

February 17, 19, 25 and 26, West Bay Opera, presents *Il Trittico* by Puccini, 8pm except Sundays at 2pm, tickets 650-424-9999 or order online www.WBOpera.org. Student, senior, and group discounts.

April 15, 16, 20, 23, 28, 30 and May 30, Opera San Jose presents *La Bohème* by Puccini, California Theatre, 8pm except Sundays at 3pm. Tickets: 408-437-4450 or www.operasj.org. Introduction to Opera Talks 1½ hours before the opera performance.

Besides our wonderful live opera performances by Opera San José and West Bay Opera we have the following simulcasts and movies presentations.

Met Opera HD performances,

Antonín Dvořák's — *Rusalka*

Saturday February 25, 2017

Encore — March 1, 2017

Giuseppe Verdi's — *La Traviata*

Saturday March 11, 2017

Encore — March 15, 2017

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's — *Idomeneo*

Saturday March 25, 2017

Encore — March 29, 2017

Peter Tchaikovsky's — *Eugene Onegin*

Saturday April 22, 2017

Encore — April 26, 2017

Richard Strauss' — *Der Rosenkavalier*

Saturday May 13, 2017

Encore — May 17, 2017

Opera in Cinema

February 12 & 14 *La Forza del Destino* (Verdi) — Bayerische Staatsoper, Munich (2014)

March 12 & 14 *Les Contes D'Hoffman* (Offenbach) — Opera de Paris (Opera Bastille) (2016)

April 9 & 11 *I Due Foscari* (Verdi) — Teatro alla Scala, Milan, Italy (2017)

May 14 & 16 *MacBeth* (Verdi) — Gran Teatre del Liceu, Barcelona (2017)

SAVE THE DATE SATURDAY, APRIL 22, 2017

Champagne Brunch and Opera Entertainment at La Rinconada Country Club.

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, with an exceptional music program by Opera San José Resident Artists.

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, shown at Century 20 Oakridge, Santana Row 6, and AMC Cupertino. Simulcasts \$24, adults, \$22 seniors. (Prices may vary.) Simulcasts are at 9:55am except for *Der Rosenkavalier* which is at 9:30. Encores are all at 6:30pm. For more information contact <http://www.metopera.org>.

OPERA DISCOVERIES

Women as opera composers? They are now coming along in significant numbers

by Mort Levine

A glance through the index of any comprehensive guide to operas past and present reveals that easily 99 per cent were composed by men. Its a subject rarely discussed.

Musicologists can cite woman classical composers as far back as Hildegard von Bingham, hundreds of years ago but today's crop of women operatic composers suggest that things have only begun to change in the past five years.

Historically there have been only a few exceptions. One example was Maria Antonia Walpurgis, eldest daughter of the Elector of Bavaria in the 18th century, a patron of the arts, a singer and a poet. She also wrote music and libretti to two opera seria works mounted at courts around Europe.

Another was Pauline Viardot, member of a sort of "first family" of opera. Her dad, Manuel Garcia, was the first Count Almaviva in Rossini's *Barber of Seville*. Her sister was famed soprano Maria Malibran. Pauline was the lover of Russian novelist Ivan Turgenev who wrote the libretti to her several operettas performed in Baden Baden and other German cities in the 1860s.

The woman composer who may have raised the most fuss about opera composition being male dominated was Ethel Smyth, talented musician and sworn enemy of all the constraints of Victorian society. She wrote three operas in Germany after musical studies in Leipzig, one of which *The Wreckers*, has been performed in England in recent years. She wound up in prison for throwing a brick through the Home Secretary's window during a London suffragette march.

Today's women composers are tossing bricks through the glass wall of nearly all-male opera composing.

On December 10, 2016 local opera fans saw on Live HD film the first female-written opera presented by the Metropolitan in 113 years. The work, *L'Amour de Loin* (Love from afar), is a magical work by Finnish composer Kaija Saariaho. This work premiered in Santa Fe several years ago and has won plaudits in several European productions.

Santa Fe Opera also premiered Jennifer Higdon's *Cold Mountain*, from a major Civil War novel. Other contemporary women who have written operas already presented or in progress include Bora Yoon (*Sunken Cathedral*, 2015); Olga Neuwirth, composer of four operas since 1998 (currently working on *Orlando*), Unsu Chin (*Alice in Wonderland*, 2007), Kamala Kankaram, four operas since 2012 (*Looking at You*, 2016). Meredith Monk (*Atlas*, 1991) and Lisa Bielawa with five operas since 1996 (*Virgo*, 2016). Tania Leon is working on her second opera, *Little Rock Nine*, and Anna Clyne is currently completing her first opera *Eva*.

Premiering last September in Philadelphia was an epic work by Missy Mazzoli based on the 1996 film by Lars von Trier, *Breaking Waves*. The searing story came to a New York stage this month at an opera festival. The saga is of a devoted wife who follows her husband's orders after he is paralyzed in an accident, to have sex with other men. She lives in a deeply religious small Scotland town which brings down humiliation, violence and her tragic demise. Perhaps women composers have a way of using music in a more nuanced way to tell such complex, tragic tales. We wait in anticipation. ☺



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. 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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