



NEWSLETTER

Argo Gherardi, Editor

May, 2007

SAN JOSÉ STATE UNIVERSITY OPERA THEATER

GUILD SUPPORTS NEW VENTURE

All Guild members are invited and encouraged to join the SJOG Board in supporting the budding talent of the newly organized SJSU Opera Theater students in two one-act operas. Each 60 minutes long, *Roman Fever* by Robert Ward and *The Village Singer* by Stephen Paulus will be performed, with Michel Singher and Janet Averett conducting, and Daniel Helfgot directing. Performances begin at 8:00 PM in the Theater on San Pedro Square at 29 San Pedro Street, San José. The theater is intimate, seating only about 200 people, and performances will be Thursday, May 10 (opening), Friday and Saturday, May 11 and 12 at 8 PM, with a Sunday matinee performance at 3 PM May 13th.

Guild members are invited to attend a special pre-performance reception opening night at 71 Saint Peter, in San Pedro Square (a restaurant which is only about 150 steps from the theatre). The theatre is located just behind another restaurant across the street called Peggy Sue's. Price for the reception, which is a substantial buffet of warm and cold hors d'oeuvres – ample for a pre-theater light supper – is \$15 per person. There will be a no-host wine and beer bar provided at the restaurant.

Invitations have been sent out and included a form for ordering performance tickets separately, as well. There will be two ticket prices for each performance – general admission \$25,

and special preferred “donor seats” at \$50. Students can attend for \$10. Early ordering is suggested due to limited seating capacity for these performances. For further information, please call (408) 867-1225 or (408) 395-2035.

This is an exciting new venture which should attract all those interested in the development of young and exciting singers at San José State University. The Guild is proud to be sponsoring this event and we urge all members to support it.

CALL FOR MEMORIES

This year we will celebrate the 60th anniversary of our guild in the fall. For that event I would like to prepare a memory booklet with contributions from our members.

Please send me a paragraph describing your favorite or most memorable guild experience since you have been a member. Very early memories are particularly welcome.

The deadline is July 1, and you may send your paragraph by e-mail to mdfleck@ix.netcom.com or to my home at 1708 Cherryhills Lane, San José, CA 95125.

Many thanks for your contributions.
Myrna L. Fleckles, Historian

OPERA TRAVELERS IS A TRIP TO THE MET STILL IN ORDER?

by Mort Levine

No one disputes that long distance travel these days is a hassle. It isn't likely to change for the foreseeable future. The hassle argues against ranging far afield to catch the brand new or the rarely performed opera.

That question remains for us in the wake of the midwinter trip a few months back to New York to experience the premiere of *The First Emperor* by Chinese-American composer Tan Dun. A couple of days later, we enjoyed vivacious soprano Anna Netrebko in *IPuritani*, a rarely mounted Bellini bel canto masterpiece. There is always much that is rewarding to do in New York, and attending a clutch of six plays proved that point.

Within a few weeks after getting back home, we settled into our nearby AMC14 movie complex at Westgate to view the spectacular Julie-Taymor *Magic Flute* starring Nathan Gunn. Over the next couple of months, we were able to enjoy the movie screen size high definition video of both operas we had seen in New York.

This astonishing outreach effort launched by the Met's new general manager, Peter Gelb, is paralleled by television performances of the same operas on Channel 54. Thus, one might want to rethink the question posed by the headline above this column.

There is an electricity and a special ambience in a sold-out premiere live performance. Settling in for the Tan Dun opera in NY had all that going for it. The first scene was filled with exotic on-stage percussion of rocks, drums and a mesmerizing singer, Wo-Hsing Quo, in the Peking Opera style, telling us the story of the first emperor of China, who built the Great Wall.

At that point the blending of east and west began. Plácido Domingo in the title role struggled with a kind of Neo-Puccini score which grew wearisome. Its pentatonic lyricism taxed the audience as much as it did the famed tenor with a kind of warmed-over *Turandot*. There were also stretches of stirring martial-arts movie music which won the composer an Oscar for *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*.

The huge investment in the opera was part of a commitment the Met has made to launching new works. The previous premieres which graced the Met stage included Tobias Picker's *American Tragedy*, based on the Theodore Dreiser novel of the 20s and the John Harbison work from the same period *The Great Gatsby*, the F. Scott Fitzgerald novel. Like many new operas, launched with great fanfare, these seemed to have sunk out of sight pretty quickly. One hopes that the Tan Dun might find a longer life now that the Met is rolling out its works nationwide by way of contemporary technology.

Tan Dun not only composed the work but conducted it at the Met. His collaborators are all top flight: Ha Jin, a remarkable novelist, did the libretto (in English, by the way) and a famed movie director, Zhang Yimou directed this production. Emi Wada did the astonishing costumes and Fan Yue the marvelous sets.

Elizabeth Futral, who was a principal in the recent *Streetcar Named Desire*, sang the Princess, who falls in love with a composer, Jianli, whom the emperor has ordered to compose a new national anthem that will unify the country. The composer is opposed to the brutal effort to change China and writes an anthem that reveals the plight of the people. This brings an order for his execution unless he changes the song. The princess commits suicide and her lover, crazed at her death, bites off his tongue and spits it at the emperor. After being slain by the emperor, Jianli's anthem rings out with the song of the enslaved people to achieve his ultimate revenge.

The work is masterful in its intricacy and represents a major new departure for the somewhat hidebound opera world. It is well worth witnessing with an open ear for some unconventional sounds as well as insights into a historically sweeping and dramatic episode in Chinese history.

THE DETWILERS' FAREWELL CONCERT

SUNDAY, JUNE 3, AT 3:30 PM

CRIBARI AUDITORIUM

Presented by

THE VILLAGES OPERA LOVERS CLUB

Baritone Jason Detwiler and soprano Michele Detwiler, stars of Opera San José these past five years, are leaving the Bay Area and will be appearing at the Villages for a farewell Concert sponsored by the Opera Lovers Club.

They, along with their opera friends, will perform opera arias as well as Broadway show tunes. They will talk about their lives as married opera singers and what it's like to sing for Opera San José.

The price is \$15 per ticket, and there will be an informal reception following the performance. Please RSVP by May 29th. Send a stamped self-addressed envelope along with a check made out to the "Opera Lovers Club" to: Dorothy Tarowsky, 9051 Village View Loop, San José, CA 95135.

The Cribari auditorium is at 5000 Cribari Lane, San José, CA 95135 inside the Villages Golf & Country Club.

For more information call (408) 531-8926.

DAVID GOCKLEY AT MONTALVO

Nearly a hundred opera enthusiasts gathered at Villa Montalvo on March 17 to partake of another informative program sponsored by your San José Opera Guild. David Gockely, general director of the San Francisco Opera, was the featured attraction, ably interviewed by Barbara Day Turner.

The former Houston Grand Opera's general director, in response to Maestra Day Turner's questions, touched first on the differences between his former and present companies; then went on to his plans for the future of his new administration; his enthusiasm for the newly appointed musical director; some of his views regarding operatic productions, and some of the more significant differences between European and American opera history. Mr. Gockely's forthright replies continued with questions from the audience.

Thanks to the efforts of an expert committee co-chaired by Mary Riley and Olga Nespole, attendees were well prepared for the Day Turner-Gockely exchange by a lovely champagne brunch prepared by the staff of Papillon Restaurant. The event was generously sponsored by Mary Riley and her sister, Jane Taverner. Need we say, "You should have been there?"

WEST COAST PREMIERE Lecture/Preview

Festival Opera in Walnut Creek will be presenting the West Coast premiere of Ned Rorem's opera, *Our Town*, in August. Our Guild was pleased when Festival Opera asked us to host a lecture/preview of the opera and an introduction to the music of Ned Rorem. The presentation, "A Sense of Ned Rorem," will take place on June 19 from 10AM to 1PM at the Los Gatos History Club, 123 Los Gatos Boulevard, Los Gatos. A lecturer will discuss Ned Rorem's music and singers will sing his songs and excerpts from the opera. Desserts will be served during the intermission. Admission for all is \$10.

Renowned composer, Ned Rorem, based his opera on what has been called the quintessential American play, *Our Town*, by Thornton Wilder. Rorem and his librettist, J. D. McClatchy, worked to "retain the drama's ability to emotionally connect the audience to each character. The clean lines of this fundamental story of life and love have been preserved in an intimate, accessible chamber opera." (Festival Opera's website)

For information and tickets visit www.festival-opera.com. For more information about the opera and its premiere at Indiana University in 2006, visit www.music.indiana.edu/publicity/opera/2005-2006season/ourtown/intro.html. The website features interviews with the composer and librettist and reviews of the premiere. The official Ned Rorem website can be found at www.nedrorem.com.

HIGH ON A WINDY HILL

When Sandra Rubalcava and Christopher Bengochea were traveling in Europe recently, Sandra said that she had a “sneaking feeling that Chris was going to ask the big question [propose marriage] while we were in France. He could have chosen anywhere fancy in Paris: the Eiffel Tower, the Louvre, etc.” He, however, had other plans. He wanted to follow seven generations of family tradition in which the men had proposed to their prospective brides on a high mountain top in the Basque region at a statue of the Virgin Mary. Christopher told Sandra that only one person at a time could visit the statue. He went on to place the engagement ring at the foot of the statue and then told Sandra it was all clear to proceed. She found the ring and her response when he got down on one knee and proposed was, “Of course, Dummy.” Then they both sobbed out of happiness with the sound of the wind and the bells of the sheep as they grazed on the mountainside.

CAREER UPDATES

The Merola Opera Program’s 50th Anniversary Gala will be May 19 at the Regency Center in San Francisco. Merola alumna, **Elizabeth Caballero**, will be among the Merola alumni to sing. She is also scheduled to perform a solo recital on May 20 at St. John’s Presbyterian Church in Berkeley as a part of the Centennial Concert Series. Another Merola alumna, soprano **Michèle Bogdanowicz**, will have a busy spring. She will sing Zerlina in *Don Giovanni* with the Pacific Opera Victoria in Victoria, British Columbia in April. Then in May, she’ll sing the same role with the Orchestra London, in London, Ontario. April will bring **Nikki Einfeld** to Berkeley to sing with The Berkeley Symphony Orchestra. Then this alumna will travel to Opéra Français de New York to perform in *Castor et Pollux*.

In response to calls for information about their careers, several singers responded with enthusiasm. **Dan Montez** reports that he has just celebrated his tenth anniversary as General Director of Taconic Opera. He recently directed productions of Boito’s *Mefistofele*, and *Don Giovanni*. Upcoming activities include a solo recital, conducting a Brahms *Requiem* with full orchestra, and directing Verdi’s *Otello*. He and his wife, Melissa, continue to homeschool their three children, Kessa (11), Kyliya (7), and Cade (4).

Two alumni of both Opera San José and Merola will also have busy springs. **Mel Ulrich** has just completed singing Penny Bank Bill in *The Rise*

and Fall of the City of Mahagonny with the Los Angeles Opera. He’ll be singing Joseph DeRocher in *Dead Man Walking* at the Staatsoper in Dresden, Germany in April. **Kirk Eichelberger** performed with Symphony Silicon Valley in Verdi’s *Requiem* in March. On April 20 he’ll perform as Narrator in *River of Mercy* with the Oakland East Bay Symphony. He’ll then perform with the San Francisco Choral Society on April 21 and 22 as a soloist in the *B Minor Mass*. In May and early June, Kirk will sing Alaska Wolf Joe in *The Rise and Fall of the City of Mahagonny* at the Spoleto Festival in Charleston, South Carolina. In August he will sing the role of Dr. Gibbs in the West Coast premiere of *Our Town* with Festival Opera.

Late this month and next, **Laura Claycomb** will be performing as Anne Truelove in a new production of *The Rake’s Progress* in Brussels with Théâtre Royal de la Monnaie. Later in May, she’ll reprise this role at Opéra National de Lyon. She has created a Backstage Chatter Page at lauraclaycomb.com to keep her fans up to date on her travels which extend to the Congo, Mali, and then to Vienna.

Lori Phillips lists her upcoming performances as follows: Leonora in *Fidelio* with the Portland Opera, the title role in *Tosca* with Opera Birmingham, and Lady Macbeth in *Macbeth* with Arizona Opera. She will then travel to Canada to sing the title role in *Ariadne auf Naxos* with the Vancouver

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Opera.

In a letter to one Guild member, **John Bellemer** reports: “an exciting step in my career ... will be debuting at the Teatro di San Carlo in Naples, singing the role of Toni in Henze’s *Elegy for Young Lovers*. I am also singing my first Belmonte with Teatro Lirico di Cagliari in the fall and I am so very excited about that. I will also be singing Zemlinsky’s *Florentine Tragedy* and *Bohème* this summer.” This follows his performances in Vancouver, where he sang Macduff in *Macbeth* with Jane Eaglen and Greer Grimsley, and in Grand Rapids, where he sang Roméo.

This same member received a note from **Robert McPherson** with reviews of his performance in Rossini’s *Otello* with Opera Orchestra of New York. One review from the New York Times said, “The surprise of the evening was the young tenor Robert McPherson, who brought a robust voice, agility and confidence to the major role of Iago.” Another review, from Classics Today, stated, “More stunning was tenor Robert McPherson as Iago... (he) has a remarkable sound and technique - the coloratura is spotless.”

Eilana Lappalainen writes from Bern, Switzerland, where she is rehearsing a new opera by composer Christian Jost. The opera, *Der Vipern*, will premiere on April 15, with performances through May 25. She continues, “April 26th I perform *Zanetto* in concert form with the Martinou Philharmonic (Czech Republic) as well as duets from *Norma* and *Anna Bolena* and arias from *Aida*. This performance of *Zanetto* will be repeated on June 4 at Carnegie Hall with Jennifer Larmore. Then we travel to Greece with the performance in July, as well as a studio recording in early August. Hope...that everyone is in good spirits in San José!”

Having just completed recitals in Sacramento, Davis, and Los Angeles, **Kerry Walsh** is preparing for a performance of excerpts from *Rio de Sangre* by Don Davis with the VOX Contemporary Opera Showcase at the Skirball Theatre at NYU. This summer she will perform excerpts from *Weaverworld*, an opera in progress by Gerard Pape. These performances will be in Paris and other European locations.

“By the time this newsletter goes out, I will have finished *Dido and Aeneas* with Santa Cruz Chamber Orchestra,” writes **Jason Detwiler**. On May 5, Jason will be a soloist in Beethoven’s *Ninth Symphony* with the Vallejo Symphony Or-

chestra. In June, the Detwiler family will be moving to Boise, Idaho as Michele’s final season with Opera San José as a Resident Artist comes to a close. Jason, Michele, Annah, and Josiah will be relocating to the capital of Idaho where Jason’s parents live, “where housing is cheaper and the great outdoors call us to put our roots down. It’s a great place to raise our family and call ‘home base’ in our travels as singers.” He also writes: “And please express our continued gratitude for the gracious support of the guild during our residences with Opera San José.”

Finally, Wagner fans won’t want to miss **Thomas Truhitte** on May 19th. He will be in recital to honor Richard Wagner’s 194th Birthday at the Century Club of California. Details can be obtained from the Wagner Society of Northern California at wagnersf.org.

San José Opera Guild
May, 2007 Issue

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Career Updates

Susan English

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P.O. Box 33025,

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CALENDAR

APRIL 21-MAY 6: OPERA SAN JOSÉ WILL PRESENT PUCCINI'S *MADAMA BUTTERFLY* AT THE CALIFORNIA THEATRE, 345 SOUTH FIRST STREET, SAN JOSÉ. TICKETS \$65 TO \$85. INFORMATION: 408-437-4450 OR HYPERLINK "[HTTP://WWW.OPERASJ.ORG](http://www.operasj.org)" WWW.OPERASJ.ORG.

MAY 10-13: SAN JOSÉ STATE UNIVERSITY'S OPERA THEATER WILL OFFER TWO ONE-ACT OPERAS, ROBERT WARD'S *ROMAN FEVER* AND STEPHEN PAULUS' *THE VILLAGE SINGER*, AT THE THEATRE ON SAN PEDRO SQUARE, 29 SAN PEDRO, SAN JOSÉ. TICKETS \$25 AND \$50. SEE ARTICLE IN THIS NEWSLETTER FOR INFORMATION ABOUT AN OPENING NIGHT RECEPTION PRECEDING THE PERFORMANCE. TO ORDER TICKETS BY MAIL: SJSU SCHOOL OF MUSIC AND DANCE, ATTN: OPERA THEATRE, ONE WASHINGTON SQUARE, SAN JOSÉ, CA 95192-0095; TO ORDER BY PHONE, CALL 408-924-4654 EXT 1; OR BY EMAIL, HYPERLINK "[MAILTO:SJSUOpera@aol.com](mailto:SJSUOpera@aol.com)" SJSUOpera@aol.com. PROVIDE YOUR NAME, ADDRESS, PHONE NUMBER, NUMBER OF TICKETS NEEDED, DATE OF SHOW, AND CHECK OR CREDIT CARD NUMBER.

MAY 19 AND 20: OPERA SAN JOSÉ'S ANNUAL FUNDRAISER, OPERAFEST, WILL BE HELD AT NAPREDAK HALL, 770 MONTAGUE EXPRESSWAY, SAN JOSÉ. \$100 PER PERSON. INFORMATION: 408-437-4450 OR JERI WAXMAN AT 408-437-4463 OR EMAIL WAXMAN@OPERASJ.ORG.

MAY 25-27 AND JUNE 1-3: WEST BAY OPERA WILL PRESENT LEHÁR'S *THE MERRY WIDOW* AT THE LUCIE STERN THEATRE, 1305 MIDDLEFIELD ROAD, PALO ALTO. TICKETS, \$25 TO \$50. INFORMATION: 650-424-9999 OR HYPERLINK "[HTTP://WWW.WBOPERA.ORG](http://www.wbopera.org)" WWW.WBOPERA.ORG.

MAY 29: SAN JOSÉ OPERA GUILD AND SARATOGA FOOTHILL CLUB WILL CO-SPONSOR A LECTURE BY EVAN BAKER ON MOZART'S *DON GIOVANNI* AT 10AM AT THE SARATOGA FOOTHILL CLUB, 20399 PARK PLACE, SARATOGA. ADMISSION FOR ALL IS \$10. INFORMATION: JOY HULME, 408-741-1331.

JUNE 1: INAUGURAL IRENE DALIS VOCAL COMPETITION FINALS, 7PM, CALIFORNIA THEATRE, 345 SOUTH FIRST STREET, SAN JOSÉ. TICKETS \$50 IN ADVANCE FROM OPERA SAN JOSÉ, 408-437-4450. INFORMATION: HYPERLINK "[HTTP://WWW.OPERASJ.ORG](http://www.operasj.org)" WWW.OPERASJ.ORG.

JUNE 2-JUNE 30: SAN FRANCISCO OPERA WILL PRESENT MOZART'S *DON GIOVANNI* AT THE WAR MEMORIAL OPERA HOUSE, SAN FRANCISCO. TICKETS \$25 TO \$245. INFORMATION: 415-864-3330 OR HYPERLINK "[HTTP://WWW.SFOPERA.COM](http://www.sfopera.com)" WWW.SFOPERA.COM.

JUNE 3: VILLAGES OPERA LOVERS CLUB PRESENTS "THE DETWILER FAREWELL CONCERT" AT 3:30PM IN THE CRIBARI AUDITORIUM, 5000 CRIBARI LANE, SAN JOSÉ, INSIDE THE VILLAGES GOLF AND COUNTRY CLUB. ADMISSION IS \$15 AND THERE WILL BE A NO-HOST BAR AND RECEPTION FOLLOWING THE PERFORMANCE. INFORMATION: DOROTHY TAROWSKY, 408-531-8926.

JUNE 5: SAN JOSÉ OPERA GUILD AND SARATOGA FOOTHILL CLUB WILL CO-SPONSOR A LECTURE BY BRUCE LAMOTT ON GLUCK'S *IPHIGÉNIE EN TAURIDE* AT 10AM AT THE SARATOGA FOOTHILL CLUB, 20399 PARK PLACE, SARATOGA. ADMISSION FOR ALL IS \$10. INFORMATION: JOY HULME, 408-741-1331.

JUNE 9-JULY 1: SAN FRANCISCO OPERA WILL PRESENT STRAUSS' *DER ROSENKAVALIER* AT THE WAR MEMORIAL OPERA HOUSE, SAN FRANCISCO. TICKETS \$25 TO \$245. INFORMATION: 415-864-3330 OR HYPERLINK "[HTTP://WWW.SFOPERA.COM](http://www.sfopera.com)" WWW.SFOPERA.COM.

JUNE 12: SAN FRANCISCO OPERA WILL HOLD ITS ANNUAL DRESS REHEARSAL FOR GUILD MEMBERS AT THE WAR MEMORIAL OPERA HOUSE, SAN FRANCISCO. THIS YEAR'S OPERA WILL BE GLUCK'S *IPHIGÉNIE EN TAURIDE* AND

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WILL BEGIN AT 1PM. IF YOU HAVE NOT ALREADY ASKED FOR TICKETS, CALL ANN HAGGERTY AT 408-395-1498. TICKETS WILL BE DISTRIBUTED AT THE MAY 29 OR JUNE 5 LECTURES AT THE FOOTHILL CLUB . IF YOU WOULD LIKE YOUR TICKETS MAILED, SEND ANN A STAMPED SELF-ADDRESSED ENVELOPE.

JUNE 14-JUNE 29: SAN FRANCISCO OPERA WILL PRESENT GLUCK'S *IPHIGÉNIE EN TAURIDE* AT THE WAR MEMORIAL OPERA HOUSE, SAN FRANCISCO. TICKETS \$25 TO \$245. INFORMATION: 415-864-3330 OR HYPERLINK "[HTTP://WWW.SFOPERA.COM](http://www.sfopera.com)" WWW.SFOPERA.COM.

JUNE 19: SAN JOSÉ OPERA GUILD AND FESTIVAL OPERA WILL CO-SPONSOR A LECTURE AND INTRODUCTION TO THE MUSIC OF NED ROREM. "A SENSE OF NED ROREM" WILL BE OFFERED IN PREPARATION FOR FESTIVAL OPERA'S UPCOMING WEST COAST PREMIERE OF ROREM'S *OUR TOWN*. THE PROGRAM WILL TAKE PLACE AT 10AM AT THE LOS GATOS HISTORY CLUB, 123 LOS GATOS BOULEVARD, LOS GATOS. ADMISSION FOR ALL IS \$10. INFORMATION: CORINNE CARTER, 408-378-4823.

JULY 22: SAN JOSÉ OPERA GUILD AND THE TOWN OF LOS GATOS WILL PRESENT OPERA IN THE PARK FEATURING SINGERS FROM OPERA SAN JOSÉ, 5-7PM, LOS GATOS CIVIC CENTER, MAIN STREET, LOS GATOS. ADMISSION FREE. A DINNER AT DIO DEKA AT HOTEL LOS GATOS WILL FOLLOW.



PLEASE VISIT OUR WEBSITE AT
SJOPERAGUILD.ORG

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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 its 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.

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Memberships: Family \$60
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Visit our website at www.sjoperaguild.org