



## NEWSLETTER

Argo Gherardi, Editor

February, 2009

# Message from the President

2008 was an excellent year for the Guild, in so many ways, because of the interest and participation of our members. We made an excellent transition to a new venue for our San Francisco Opera lectures and increased the attendance at our downtown lectures for Opera San José. Attendance at our two fund-raising social events was gratifying, especially in today's economy, demonstrating that our members recognize the importance of contributing to the Arts in troubled times.

There is no doubt that our costs are rising, and that interest on our bank accounts is declining. The Board of Directors, however, is committed to maintaining dues at their current level and to planning fund-raising social events that are appropriate. Our path to survival in this economy depends on all of us. To that end please make every effort to bring in new members. Consider, also, adding the San José Opera Guild as a recipient for your tax-free donations in 2009. Be assured that the Board of Directors will be scrupulous stewards of the results of your generosity. We have no paid staff. Much of our printing of necessary documents is donated by board members, and we carefully evaluate all proposed expenditures.

We anticipate that 2009 will be yet another year to remember with joy and satisfaction because each member made an effort to add to our success.

# Critics and the Internet

By Mort Levine

Our opera and classical music critics are a vanishing breed as newspapers cut back, but useful websites are rising.

Readers of our daily newspapers are witnessing a major meltdown of arts coverage. These are definitely not good times for critics. They are being edged out by hard-pressed newspaper managements, either in-

duced to leave through a "buyout" or simply laid off. A sizable number are eking out a living doing freelance reviews for their old employers or have gravitated to a new phenomenon: the arts website.

The Bay area has at least two such excellent websites. Each can claim a retired music critic as its progenitor. The San Francisco Chronicle's ex-critic, Robert Commanday, began his San Francisco Classical Voice.org website ten

years ago when he saw the handwriting on the wall. Arts coverage was shrinking in print, and staffs were beginning to do the same. What was a slow erosion then has turned into a nationwide avalanche today. Hardly any US daily papers have escaped.

The other important local website was started when San Jose Mercury's fine opera and classical music and dance reviewer, Paul Hertelendy (artssf.com), took an early retirement a decade ago. His site, SF Music and Dance, is a highly personalized take on opera and the other arts in our region.

When Richard Scheinin, the San Jose Mercury's current music and opera critic, spoke to a Foothill Club group last year, he lamented the reduction in space and staff which has led to many omissions in coverage. In the ensuing twelve months, readers of the Mercury can see that the situation has gotten worse as the paper downsizes.

For opera goers and classical music attendees, the vanishing critical writing leaves a void. But for arts organizations and presenters it can be disastrous.

The movement to the world wide web for this kind of information and informed opinion is a hopeful sign. By enlisting a cadre of ex-critics and talented musician-writers, these sites offer a bonanza of reviews, background news and features as well as complete future concert calendars. For example, SFCV.org has since its inception run reviews of 49 operas, 58 symphonies, 104 chamber music groups, 26 chamber orchestras and 47 new music events plus a raft of festivals. These totals were as of last year. Since their new design a couple of months back, SFCV is doing even more.

The opera fans of New England now have a similar Classical Voice and so does North

Carolina, South Florida and the twin cities in Minnesota. Its a major movement that has really taken off.

It is premature to say daily newspapers are about to disappear, nor is the commitment to cover at least some of the arts events going to vanish from print media. But the trend lines are clear whether you're in Kansas City, Seattle, Miami or Boston. And San José has joined the list as well.

Websites can take up the slack but they haven't yet created a stable long term financial model other than the founder working endless hours without pay. One possible idea for the future was put forth by a music critic for New York magazine, Justin Davidson. His suggestion is that independent, ultra-local websites should be constructed with the shared support of all of the arts organizations in a region. A small stipend from each could provide seed money, mailing lists, advertising and enough money to hire an editor who had the experience of a former newspaper cultural writer abetted by freelancers. Museums, orchestras, opera companies, dance and performing companies could benefit greatly from such an informative and critical resource.

It, of course, is going to have to have a guarantee of editorial independence--which might well frighten some groups away.

San José Opera Guild Newsletter

Publisher: San José Opera Guild

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Published, quarterly in Feb., May, Aug., and Nov. by  
San José Opera Guild,  
P.O. Box 33025,  
Los Gatos, CA 95031-3025.

# Career Updates

*The Met: Live in HD* began in September 2008 with the Opening Night Gala, witnessed by nearly 90,000 worldwide, in addition to the live audience in New York. More people than ever before are able to experience Met performances, and have the opportunity to see, hear, and appreciate many Merola alumni. In November, John Adams' *Doctor Atomic* was broadcast with 1983-1984 Merola alumnus **Richard Paul Fink** as Edward Teller.

Also in November, the Met presented *La Damnation De Faust* by Berlioz. Merola alumna **Susan Graham** sang Marguerite in this new production. In *The New York Times* (11-10-08), Anthony Tommasini noted that she was..."an inspired choice...(bringing) a lovely blend of rapturous richness and elegant restraint" to her role. Director Robert Lepage created an innovative combination of music and technology that the Met called "a marriage of traditional stagecraft and visionary technology." **Ms Graham** will be singing *Seven Early Songs* by Berg with the St. Louis Symphony in January and will return to New York to perform at Marilyn Horne's 75th Birthday Gala. At the end of January, she will be singing Berlioz again, this time *Sheherazade Les Nuits d'Ete*, with the Orchestre National de Lyon in France.

The Met's *La Damnation De Faust* also featured Merola alumnus **John Relyea**. He sang Mephistopheles. Tommasini (11-10-08) noted he was "commanding...mixing stentorian power with wily, seductive lyricism." **Mr. Relyea** will sing with the London Symphony Orchestra in January, and then travel to Seattle to sing Duke Bluebeard in *Bluebeard's Castle*

in February and March.

Massenet's *Thais* was broadcast in December and January, and featured 1980 Merola alumnus **Thomas Hampson** as Athanael opposite Renee Fleming's Thais. Tommasini (12-10-08) noted **Mr. Hampson** sang the same role opposite Ms. Fleming with the Chicago Lyric Opera (and has recorded the opera with her) and was "in top form." **Mr. Hampson** will sing the title role in *Eugene Onegin* with the Met this month and next.

The San Francisco Opera has also showcased many Merola alumni this season, particularly in Mussorgsky's *Boris Gudunov*. 2006 Merola alumna and second year Adler Fellow **Ji Young Yang** sang Xenia in *Boris*. (She also sang Gianetta in *The Elixir of Love*, and Adina in *The Elixir of Love for Families*.) **Catherine Cook**, also a former Adler Fellow, sang the role of Innkeeper in *Boris*. Another former Adler Fellow, **Matthew O'Neill**, sang *Missail*.

San Francisco Opera's production of *Idomeneo* featured 1986 Merola alumnus **Kurt Streit** in the title role. **Mr. Streit** has been in Europe in December, singing Alfred in *Die Fledermaus* with the De Nederlandse Opera in Amsterdam, and Beethoven's *Ninth Symphony* with Sinfonieorchester Berlin. In March he will perform in Handel's *Partenope* with Theater an der Wien in Vienna, Austria, and in Haydn's *Orlando Paladino* with the Berlin Philharmonic in Germany.

The West Coast premiere of Jake Heggie's *Three Decembers* was presented by Cal Per-

## Career Updates

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formances and the San Francisco Opera. This chamber opera featured just three singers including Former Adler Fellow **Kristin Clayton**. In the San Francisco Chronicle's music review (12-13-08) Joshua Kosman noted that **Ms Clayton** brings "plenty of sympathy and vocal color" to her role. The Opera Tattler (12-12-08) noted that "Soprano Kristin Clayton had a lovely iciness to her voice..." and her duet "at the end of Act I was lovely."

1989 and 1990 Merola alumna, **Laura Claycomb** has won the heart of Classical Voice's Janos Gereben. In a glowing review of the San Francisco Symphony's production of Mahler's *Eighth Symphony* in November, Gereben wrote "This fervent disciple of Laura Claycomb waited an hour and a half for the invisible soprano...to sing Mater Gloriosa's two lines. Komm! Hebe dich zu hohem Sphären (Come! Rise to higher spheres.) Indeed Komm, Komm, let her sing more! **Ms Claycomb** will be singing Tytanya in Britten's *Midsummer Night's Dream* with the Houston Grand Opera in January. In February, her web site shows her singing as a soloist in *Pitie*, "music based loosely on Bach's *St. Matthew Passion*," in Barcelona, Spain, and in Rome, Italy.

2007 Merola alumnus **Alexander Boyer** has become an Artist in Residence with Opera San José this year. His first appearance with OSJ was in Donizetti's *Elixir of Love*. Richard Scheinin noted in the Mercury News, "tenor Alexander Boyer is terrific in his company debut. Saturday, he was sweet-voiced through and through, with a winningly bashful boyishness. His *Una furtive lagrima* (A furtive tear),

Nemorino's most famous number, was a plea from the heart." **Mr. Boyer** is also an alumnus of the Santa Fe Opera Program.

**Adam Flowers**, OSJ alumnus, is working with the San Francisco Opera Guild's Book to Bravo! program this year. A team of teaching artists help students create an original opera based on a myth or folk tale, writing music and libretto, then performing their opera. Later this year, **Mr. Flowers** will sing Rodolfo in *La Boheme* with the Sacramento Opera.

Another OSJ alumnus, **Jesse Merlin**, will have a busy January. He will sing the Priest in *The Cunning Little Vixen* with the Long Beach Opera. Then in February and March, he will tour with Opera a la Carte in the *The Mikado*, *The Gondoliers*, *HMS Pinafore*, and *The Pirates of Penzance*. This tour will take him through CA, NY, NJ, TX, and AZ.

**Jason Detwiler**, OSJ alumnus, will be singing with the Boise Philharmonic at the end of January as a soloist in Einhorn's *Voices of Light*. In March he will sing Figaro in *Il Barbieri di Siviglia* with the Virginia Opera. Another OSJ alumnus, **Nmon Ford**, has just completed performing with the Virginia Opera. He sang in a new production of *Il Trovatore*. In January, Mr. Ford will travel to Ancona, Italy to sing with Teatro delle Muse in the title role of Emperor Jones.

**Kirk Eichelberger**, an alumnus of both Merola and OSJ, has just completed singing Ferrando in *Il Trovatore*, with the Manitoba Opera in Canada. He will travel to Vancouver, British Columbia to perform Sparafucile

## Career Updates continued from P. 4

in *Rigoletto*, in March.

OSJ alumna, **Rochelle Bard**, will be singing Hanna Glawari in *The Merry Widow* with the St Petersburg Opera in Florida in January. Fellow alumna, **Barbara Divis**, will be singing Micaela in *Carmen* with Opera Santa Barbara this month.

**Scott Bearden**, recent alumnus of OSJ, will sing Iago in Act I of *Otello* with the Oakland East Bay Symphony in March. April will take him to the Knoxville Opera to sing Tonio in *I Pagliacci*.

## Calendar

JAN. 27: THE SAN JOSÉ OPERA GUILD and OPERA SAN JOSÉ will present a free preview of Mozart's *Così fan Tutte* from noon to 1 p.m. in the Beethoven Center at the Martin Luther King Library, 4th and San Fernando Sts., San José. Speaker Larry Hancock will be joined by Opera San José artists.

FEB. 7: The METROPOLITAN OPERA LIVE IN HD series will present *Lucia di Lammermoor* by Donizetti at 10 a.m. (1 p.m. Eastern time) in movie theaters throughout the Bay Area. Repeats 7 p.m. FEB. 18. Tickets, (\$22-\$24), information: [www.fathomevents.com](http://www.fathomevents.com) or check local theater listings.

FEB. 7: THE WAGNER SOCIETY OF NORTHERN CALIFORNIA will present a lecture, *Louis Spohr's 'Tristan Chords' and Leitmotifs* at 1 p.m. at the Jewish Community Center of San Francisco, 3200 California St.,

## Calendar, continued

San Francisco. Wagner Society members free, guests, \$10. Information, (415) 421-4412 or [www.wagnersf.org](http://www.wagnersf.org).

FEB. 7-22: OPERA SAN JOSÉ will present Mozart's *Così fan Tutte* at 8 p.m. Tues.-Sat., 3 p.m. Sundays at the California Theatre, 325 So. First St., San Jose. Tickets, Information (408) 437-4450 or [www.operasj.org](http://www.operasj.org). Free previews one hour before each performance except opening night.

FEB. 8: The SAN FRANCISCO OPERA CENTER will present tenor Aleck Shrader in a Schwabacher Debut Recital at 5:30 p.m. in the Martin Meyer Sanctuary at Temple Emanu-El, 2 Lake St. at Arguello, San Francisco. Tickets, (\$20 general admission, \$10 students), information (415) 864-3330 or [www.sfopera.com](http://www.sfopera.com).

FEB. 12: THE PHANTOMS OF THE OPERA GUILD will meet at a downtown San José restaurant for dinner at 6 p.m., followed by the 8 p.m. performance of *Così fan Tutte* at the California Theatre. Information, Alice Skurko, (408) 356-7651.

FEB. 12: THE WEST BAY OPERA GUILD will offer a free preview of Gluck's *Orfeo ed Euridice* at 8 p.m. at the Palo Alto Art Center, 1313 Newell Rd., Palo Alto. Information, (650) 424-0000 or [www.wbopera.org](http://www.wbopera.org).

FEB. 15: The SAN FRANCISCO OPERA CENTER will present baritone Quinn Kelsey in a Schwabacher Debut Recital at 5:30 p.m. in the Martin Meyer Sanctuary at Temple Emanu-El, 2 Lake St. at Arguello, San

## Calendar, continued from P. 5

Francisco. Tickets, (\$20 general admission, \$10 students), information (415) 864-3330 or [www.sfopera.com](http://www.sfopera.com).

FEB. 20-MARCH 1: WEST BAY OPERA will present Gluck's *Orfeo ed Euridice* at 8 p.m. Fridays and Saturdays, 2 p.m. Sundays at the Lucie Stern Community Theatre, 1305 Middlefield Rd., Palo Alto. Tickets, information (650) 424-9999 or [www.wbopera.org](http://www.wbopera.org).

FEB. 22: CAMERA CINEMAS will offer a film of Gounod's *Roméo et Juliette* as presented at the Salzburg Festival in Austria at 11 a.m. at the Camera 7 Theater in the Pruneyard Shopping Center in Campbell. Repeats 7 p.m. Feb. 25. Tickets (\$20 for one, \$17 each for 3 operas or more) available at the Camera 7 box office.

FEB. 22: WEST BAY OPERA will hold an informal discussion with singers and directors of *Orfeo ed Euridice* immediately following the matinee performance.

MARCH 7: The METROPOLITAN OPERA LIVE IN HD series will present *Madama Butterfly* by Puccini at 10 a.m. (1 p.m. Eastern time) in movie theaters throughout the Bay Area. Repeats 7 p.m. March 18. Tickets (\$22-\$24), information: [www.fathomevents.com](http://www.fathomevents.com) or check local theater listings.

MARCH 8: CAMERA CINEMAS will offer a film of Verdi's *Otello* as presented at the Salzburg Festival in Austria at 11 a.m. at the Camera 7 Theater in the Pruneyard Shopping Center in Campbell. Repeats 7 p.m. March 11. Tickets (\$20 for one, \$17 each for 3 operas or more) available at the Camera 7 box office.

MARCH 8: The SAN FRANCISCO OPERA CENTER will present tenor James Benjamin Rodgers in a Schwabacher Debut Recital at 5:30 p.m. in the Martin Meyer Sanctuary at Temple Emanu-El, 2 Lake St. at Arguello, San Francisco. Tickets, (\$20 general admission, \$10 students), information (415) 864-3330 or [www.sfopera.com](http://www.sfopera.com).

MARCH 14: THE WAGNER SOCIETY OF NORTHERN CALIFORNIA will host discussions on Richard Wagner and his music by James Conlon, General Music Director of Los Angeles Opera and Dr. Katherine Syer, musicology professor at University of Illinois-Urbana, at 1 p.m. at the Jewish Community Center of San Francisco, 3200 California St., San Francisco. Wagner Society members free, guests, \$10. Information, (415) 421-4412 or [www.wagnersf.org](http://www.wagnersf.org).

MARCH 21: The METROPOLITAN OPERA LIVE IN HD series will present *La Sonnambula* by Bellini at 10 a.m. (1 p.m. Eastern time) in movie theaters throughout the Bay Area. Repeats 7 p.m. April 1. Tickets (\$22-\$24), information: [www.fathomevents.com](http://www.fathomevents.com) or check local theater listings.

MARCH 22: CAMERA CINEMAS will offer a film of Mozart's *Don Giovanni* as presented at the Salzburg Festival in Austria at 11 a.m. at the Camera 7 Theater in the Pruneyard Shopping Center in Campbell. Repeats 7 p.m. March 25. Tickets (\$20 for one, \$17 each for 3 operas or more) available at the Camera 7 box office.

APRIL 4: THE WAGNER SOCIETY OF NORTHERN CALIFORNIA will present

## Calendar, Continued from P. 6

a documentary film, *Baptism of Fire*, which documents Richard Wagner's great-granddaughter Katharina Wagner's preparations for her first Bayreuth Festival production at 1 p.m. at the Jewish Community Center of San Francisco, 3200 California St., San Francisco Wagner Society members free, guests, \$10. Information, (415) 421-4412 or [www.wagnersf.org](http://www.wagnersf.org).

APRIL 5: CAMERA CINEMAS will offer a film of Shostakovich's *Lady Macbeth of the Mtsensk District* as presented at the Italy's Grand Opera, Florence at 11 a.m. at the Camera 7 Theater in the Pruneyard Shopping Center in Campbell. Repeats 7 p.m. April 8. Tickets (\$20 for one, \$17 each for 3 operas or more) available at the Camera 7 box office.

APRIL 5: The SAN FRANCISCO OPERA CENTER will present New York Festival of Song's Steven Blier in a Schwabacher Debut performance, *Kurt Weill's Berlin*, featuring Adler Fellows Leah Crocetto, soprano, Renee Tatum, mezzo-soprano and Andrew Bidlack, tenor, at 5:30 p.m. in the Martin Meyer Sanctuary at Temple Emanu-El, 2 Lake St. at Arguello, San Francisco. Tickets, (\$20 general admission, \$10 students), information (415) 864-3330 or [www.sfopera.com](http://www.sfopera.com).

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APRIL 18-MAY 3: OPERA SAN JOSÉ

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APRIL 26: CAMERA CINEMAS will offer a film of Verdi's *Rigoletto* as presented at Italy's Grand Opera, Parma, at 11 a.m. at the Camera 7 Theater in the Pruneyard Shopping Center in Campbell. Repeats 7 p.m. April 29. Tickets (\$20 for one, \$17 each for 3 operas or more) available at the Camera 7 box office.

MAY 3: CAMERA CINEMAS will offer a film of Monteverdi's *L'Incoronazione di Popea* as presented at the Glyndebourne Festival in England at 11 a.m. at the Camera 7 Theater in the Pruneyard Shopping Center in Campbell. Repeats 7 p.m. May 6. Tickets (\$20 for one, \$17 each for 3 operas or more) available at the Camera 7 box office.

MAY 10: CAMERA CINEMAS will offer a film of Handel's *Giulio Cesare* as presented at the Glyndebourne Festival in England at 11 a.m. at the Camera 7 Theater in the Pruneyard Shopping Center in Campbell. Repeats 7 p.m. May 13. Tickets (\$20 for one, \$17 each for 3 operas or more) available at the Camera 7 box office.

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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.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Family Member \_\_\_\_\_

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Membership Individual	\$45
Levels: Under 30	\$30
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Organization	\$75
Donation	\$ _____
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ _____</b>

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