



NEWSLETTER

Argo Gherardi, Editor

August, 2008

Opera Preview

New Season, New Artists

Save the date! Tuesday, August 26 begins the Downtown Preview and Lecture Series for Opera San José's 2008-2009 season. It will begin promptly at noon in the MLK Library on 4th St. in the room next to the Beethoven Center (5th floor). Park in the 4th Street Garage just across the street. Best availability of parking spaces is on the 5th floor of the garage

The preview will be on *Eugene Onegin*, and some of the new principal artists of Opera San José will be featured.

Fall Lectures

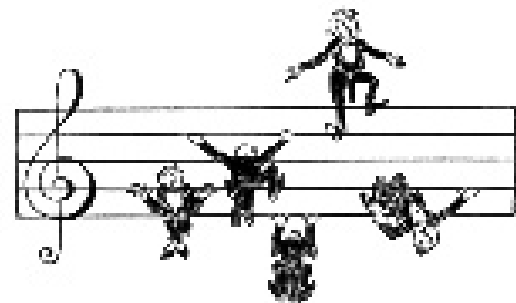
New Venue

Please note that the new fall season of lectures on seven San Francisco Opera performances and one West Bay Opera preview and one Opera San José season overview will be held at the L.D.S. church, 19585 Rose Ave., Los Gatos. Rose Ave. intersects with Los Gatos - Saratoga Rd. (Hwy 9) at the Monte Sereno city hall and post office on Los Gatos - Saratoga Rd. See Calendar in this newsletter for times and dates.

Opera in the Schools

Opera a la Carte is an educational program offered through the San Francisco Opera Guild. It is an engaging in-school program consisting of a forty-five minute adapted presentation of a main stage opera. Opera a la Carte reaches over 130 schools a year in the greater Bay Area, with eight to ten performances in the South Bay. It is a mini opera, sung in English and brought to the school by professional costumed singers, a pianist, and a docent. The singers rehearse and coach students who have already been prepared for their speaking roles by teachers in the schools. An assembly presentation to the whole school allows for appreciation of their fellow classmates, the professionals, and the opera. This fall will feature an adaptation of Puccini's *La Boheme*.

If you are interested in becoming a docent for Opera a la Carte to bring opera to third through eighth graders in our area, please contact Susan English at 408-395-1308.



OPERA TRAVELER

A major new local arts series begins here
this fall
by Mort Levine

A sizable number of music lovers who have experienced the High Definition full screen versions of operas brought to the comfort of a nearby local movie house are convinced it's even better than witnessing the performance "live". While the jury may still be out on that question, there is little doubt that the success of the concept is shaking up the traditional opera world.

Beginning September 22, Monday afternoon at 3:30 p.m., there will be 11 transmissions of exactly what the audience back in New York's elegant Metropolitan Opera House is seeing from about the 10th row center on the orchestra level. Those seats will cost you about \$250 a piece if you can get them. But at the exact same time, you can be seated at San Jose's Santana Row movie house for under 10 per cent of the Met's price.

The line up of operas on offer range from 18th and 19th century masterpieces by Gluck and Rossini to the 21st century creation by Bay Area composer John Adams of *Dr. Atomic*. This latter is in a new production which will be closely compared with the premiere which took place in San Francisco Opera two years back.

Except for the opener of the series, the remaining productions are mostly on Saturday mornings here at 10 a.m. because the New York matinees usually begin at 1 p.m. Eastern time. Exceptions are *Thais* at 9 a.m. and *La Cenerentola* which starts a 9:30 a.m..

Opening the series is a tour de force gala for the Met's prima donna Renée Fleming. She

will sing the soprano lead in a fully staged act from each of three opera show pieces: *La Traviata* (Act II), *Manon* by Massenet (Act III) and Richard Strauss' *Capriccio* (Final Scene). This event opens the season for Metropolitan Opera goers so it is likely to resemble the fashion conscious academy award shows except for what goes on the stage.

The series of 11 operas may also be repeated on the Sunday following if ticket sales warrant. That was the case in at least four of the eight shows given this past year. The tickets can be obtained at the Santana Row box office, but advance purchase might be advisable. The number of theaters which will be showing this series has been growing. There were about 600 worldwide last season. There are theaters in Redwood City and in the East Bay as well, and perhaps one day a Milpitas movie house will join in these offerings.

There is, by the way, a distinct comfort advantage in viewing opera this way. The seats are much more comfortable and roomier than in virtually all opera houses, and you have your drink cup holders, and you can munch your popcorn, and you have broad arm rests. Also, new movie theaters have far better sight lines compared to opera houses.

For music lovers who like to schedule their arts intake way ahead, the dates and names of the upcoming HD simulcast Met operas are listed on the next page.

OPERA TRAVELER, continued
Simulcasts from the Met

Monday, Sept. 22, 3:30 p.m. season opening gala.

Saturday, October 11, 10 a.m. *Salome* by Richard Strauss.

Saturday, November 8, 10 a.m. *Doctor Atomic* by Adams.

Saturday, November 22, 10 a.m., *Le Damnation de Faust* by Berlioz.

Saturday, December 20, 9 a.m. *Thais* by Massenet.

Saturday, January 10, 2009, 10 a.m. *La Rondine* by Puccini.

Saturday, January 24, 2009, 10 a.m. *Orfeo ed Euridice* by Gluck.

Saturday, February 7, 2009, 10 a.m. *Lucia di Lammermoor* by Donizetti.

Saturday, March 7, 2009, 10 a.m. *Madama Butterfly* by Puccini.

Saturday, March 21, 2009, 10 a.m. *La Sonnambula* by Bellini.

Saturday, May 9, 2009, 9:30 a.m. *La Cenerentola* by Rossini.

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Career Updates

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Career Updates

The Second Annual Irene Dalis Vocal Competition was held at the end of May. The well attended event has been referred to as “Opera Idol” by some, with ten contestants vying for a total of \$50,000 in prize money and perhaps career breaks. This year’s winners were **Eugene Chan** winning \$5,000 and third place, **Arthur Espiritu** selected as second place and receiving \$10,000, and OSJ’s **Scott Bearden** garnering both first place (\$15,000) and the Audience Favorite Award (\$5,000). In the *San Jose Mercury News*, Richard Scheinin wrote of **Scott**, “...this man should be singing on major stages. He rocked the house with ‘Nemico della patria’ from Giordano’s ‘Andrea Chenier,’ then exploded into ‘L’onore! Ladri!’ from Verdi’s ‘Falstaff’.” Scheinin closed his review of the event with, “Hey, Metropolitan Opera: **Bearden’s** your man.”

Opera San José founder and General Director **Irene Dalis** will herself be spending some time in the limelight soon. On October 17, 2008, **Ms. Dalis** will be honored with a lifetime achievement award at the Silicon Valley Arts and Business Awards luncheon.

Opera San José’s alumni are in demand! **Ms. Irene Dalis**, OSJ’s General Director, notes that in the last few months, many opera companies have contacted her for the names of talented singers to audition for important parts in major opera houses in this country. Matthew Silvock, Assistant General Director of San Francisco Opera, asked **Ms. Dalis** for resources in casting *Lucia di Lammermoor*. OSJ artist in residence, **Cybele-Teresa Gouverneur**, auditioned for the role of Alisa. She was cast in the role, made her San Francisco debut,

Career Updates

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and received great reviews. Richard Scheinin wrote in the *San Jose Mercury News*, "...she was superb, her richly loamy voice entwining Dessay's luminous instrument during the famous [fountain] scene..."

Yet another example of how OSJ alumni are actively sought out by other opera companies is a call to **Ms. Dalis** from New York talent agent Robert Lombardo. As a result of auditions for General Director Eve Queler, **Layna Chianakas** will make her Carnegie Hall debut with the Chamber Orchestra of New York. She will sing Neris in *Medea*. **Layna** has also been selected as Voice Coordinator in the School of Music at San José State University.

Another General Director, Ian Campbell of the San Diego Opera, called **Ms. Dalis** to request a recommendation for a singer to cover Zurga in *The Pearl Fishers* in May. **Jason Detwiller** auditioned and got the job. In addition, next September, **Jason** will sing Germont in *La Traviata* in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho with Opera Plus. He will return to San Diego Opera next May to sing Yamadori in *Madama Butterfly*.

Janet Del Sesto, General Director of the Boston Lyric Opera, also called **Ms. Dalis** to cast the Foreign Princess in *Rusalka*. **Rochelle Bard** will debut with the Boston Lyric next March in that role. Other upcoming performances for **Ms. Bard** include Micaela in *Carmen* with the Ash Lawn Opera in Charlottesville, and Hanna Glawari in *The Merry Widow* in Round Top, New York at the Altamura Center for Arts and Cultures. She will also compete at that Center in the finals for

the Altamura/Caruso International Competition in August.

Two more OSJ alumni will perform in early August with the Midsummer Mozart Festival. **Christina Major, Isaac Hurtado**, and artist in residence, **Khori Dastoor**, will perform in the semi-staged opera, *The Abduction from the Seraglio*, at the California Theatre. The Artistic Director will be George Cleve and the Stage Director will be Barbara Herox. Also in August, OSJ's alumnus **Andrew Eisenmann** will appear in the world premiere of Lesley Dill's and Richard Marriott's *Divide Light*. This will take place Aug. 13, 8:00 p.m. at the Montalvo Arts Center in Saratoga.

Another August performance by an OSJ alumnus will be **Christopher Bengochea's** appearance with the San José Chamber Orchestra's Opera Gala Concert as tenor soloist. In September, **Christopher** will perform the world premiere of Alva Henderson's *From Greater Light*, and in October he will cover the role of Pinkerton in *Madama Butterfly* for the Atlanta Opera. OSJ alum, **Adam Flowers**, will sing Pinkerton in September at Opera in the Heights, in Houston, Texas.

Dual alumnus of OSJ (2001-2003 and 2005-2006) and San Francisco's Merola (2000), **Kirk Eichelberg** will sing in Walnut Creek in August. He will perform the role of Bottom in *A Midsummer's Night Dream* for Festival Opera. In October, he will sing Fernando in *Fidelio* with Opera Company of Philadelphia.

Career Updates

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Laura Claycomb (1989 and 1990 Merola alumna) has been enjoying some very positive reviews. The San Francisco Classical Voice said that in her solo performance with the San Francisco Symphony she, “achieved what relatively few singers can - the absolutely right, exquisitely radiant, soaring tone that grants transcendent comfort...she delivered one of the finest renditions of ‘Ihr habt nun Traurigkeit’ that I have ever heard...” The *Pittsburgh Tribune-Review’s* music critic gave a glowing review of Laura’s *Giulietta* with the Pittsburgh Opera in May. Mark Kanny wrote, “Claycomb seized the opportunities of bel canto style to evoke our deepest sympathies for her character. The beauty and sorrow of her singing in the recitative and aria that open the second scene of Act 1, ...by itself would be worth the price of admission.”

San Francisco Opera’s Summer Season brought many Merola alumni back to the Bay Area. In Wagner’s *Das Rheingold* this past June, **Mark Delavan** made his first appearance in any *Ring Cycle* opera. Joshua Kosman in the *San Francisco Chronicle* quotes **Delavan**, “This is more than just a homecoming. I consider this the company where I started, and for me, coming back here to Wagner and the ‘Ring’ is like coming full circle - pun intended.” Richard Scheinin reviewed the opera in the *San Jose Mercury News* with, “And the cast, which includes the noted baritone **Mark Delavan** in his debut as Wotan, the thieving and power-lusting chief of the gods,...with barely an exception is brilliant.”

Two well known Merola alumnae joined to create another of San Francisco’s summer

operas, Handel’s *Ariodante*. **Susan Graham** (1987 Merola) sang the title role. Joshua Kosman wrote in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, “mezzo-soprano Susan Graham added one more entry to her long list of triumphs with the company, turning in a performance marked by nobility and technical bravura.” **Ruth Ann Swenson** (1981 & 1982 Merola) sang *Ginevra*. Kosman noted, “[she] delivered stream after stream of sinuous melody and sparkling passagework...the energy and ebullience of her singing conquered everything.” **Ms. Swenson** received the San Francisco Opera Medal to mark her 25th anniversary with the company after the final performance of *Ariodante* on July 6.

June’s edition of *Opera News* featured an article about another Merola alumnus (2003), **Vale Rideout**. This summer he is in Central City, Colorado appearing as the Male Chorus in Britten’s *The Rape of Lucretia* and as Sam in Floyd’s *Susannah*. Mark Shulgold with the *Rocky Mountain News* noted, “Special praise is reserved for the two remarkable chorus singers: up-and-coming tenor **Vale Rideout** and soprano Melina Pyron...Vocally and dramatically, their contributions cannot be properly measured.”

Three Merola alumnae are participating in the Grand Teton Music Festival this summer in Wyoming. *Opera News* notes that Music Director Donald Runnicles has created a concert arrangement of *Der Rosenkavalier* which features Merolini **Elizabeth Bishop**, **Twyla Robinson**, and **Jane Archibald**.

Calendar

AUG. 1, 3: The MIDSUMMER MOZART FESTIVAL will present Mozart's *The Abduction from the Seraglio* at 7:30 p.m. at the California Theatre, 345 So. First St., San Jose. Tickets \$20-\$50. Information: (415) 392-4400 or www.midsummermozart.org.

AUG. 1, 3: The MEROLA OPERA PROGRAM will present Mozart's *Don Giovanni* at 8 p.m. Friday, 2 p.m. Sunday in the Cowell Theater at Fort Mason Center, San Francisco. Tickets \$25-\$60. Information, (415) 864-3330 or www.merola.org.

AUG. 16: The MEROLA OPERA PROGRAM will present the Merola Grand Finale at 7:30 p.m. at the War Memorial Opera House, San Francisco. Tickets, \$15-\$45 concert, \$40 post-concert reception. Information (415) 864-3330 or www.merola.org.

AUG. 17: SAN FRANCISCO OPERA singers will perform in a free outdoor concert at 2 p.m. at Sig-mund Stern Grove, San Francisco.

AUG. 26: THE SAN JOSE' OPERA GUILD and OPERA SAN JOSE' will present a preview of Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin* at noon in the Beethoven Center at the Martin Luther King Library, 4th and San Fernando Sts., San Jose. Admission, free.

SEPT. 2: THE SAN JOSE' OPERA GUILD will present a preview of Verdi's *Simon Boccanegra* at 10 a.m. at the LDS church, 19585 Rose Ave., Los Gatos. Cost, \$10; SJOG members, free.

SEPT. 5: The SAN FRANCISCO OPERA will present Opera Ball 2008 and the annual Bravo Club Gala featuring pre-performance cocktails, a gourmet dinner and dancing in conjunction with the opening night performance of Verdi's *Simon Boccanegra*. Reservations (essential), (415) 565-3204.

SEPT. 5-27: The SAN FRANCISCO OPERA will present Verdi's *Simon Boccanegra* at the War Memorial Opera House, San Francisco. Tickets, information: (415) 864-3330 or www.sfopera.com. Free preview 55 minutes before each opera except opening night.

SEPT. 6: Soprano Angela Gheorghiu will perform with the San Francisco Opera orchestra at 7:30 p.m. at Zellerbach Hall, UC Berkeley. Tickets \$35-\$100. Information, (415) 864-3330 or www.sfopera.com.

SEPT. 6-21: OPERA SAN JOSE' will present Tchaikovsky's *Eugene Onegin* 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. Free previews 1 hour before each performance except opening night.

SEPT. 7: The San Francisco Chronicle will present SAN FRANCISCO OPERA IN THE PARK at 1:30 p.m. in Sharon Meadow, Golden Gate Park, San Francisco.

SEPT. 9: The SAN JOSE' OPERA GUILD will present a preview of Wallace's *The Bonesetter's Daughter* at 10 a.m. at the LDS Church, 19585 Rose Ave., Los Gatos. Cost, \$10; SJOG members, free.

SEPT. 13-OCT. 3: The SAN FRANCISCO OPERA will present the world premiere of Stewart Wallace's *The Bonesetter's Daughter* at the War Memorial Opera House, San Francisco. Tickets, information: (415) 864-3330 or www.sfopera.com. Free previews 55 minutes before each performance.

SEPT. 16: The SAN JOSE' OPERA GUILD will present a preview of Korngold's *Die Tote Stadt* at 10 a.m. at the LDS Church, 19585 Rose Ave., Los Gatos. Cost, \$10; SJOG members, free.

SEPT. 19-27: SAN FRANCISCO LYRIC OPERA will present Verdi's *Aida* at 7:30 p.m. Friday and Saturday, 2 p.m. Sunday at the Cowell Theatre, Fort Mason, San Francisco. Tickets (\$32 general, \$18 students), information (415) 345-7575 or www.fortmason.org/boxoffice.

SEPT. 20: OPERA SAN JOSE' will celebrate its 25th anniversary with a gala dinner, concert and reception featuring company artists past and present.

Calendar

Continued from page 6

Dinner begins at 5 p.m. at the Fairmont Hotel. The concert begins at 8 p.m. at the California Theatre. For tickets to the dinner, concert and reception (\$350), call (408) 437-4450; order concert and reception only tickets (\$150) online at www.operasj.org.

SEPT. 22: The METROPOLITAN OPERA LIVE IN HD series presents the Met's opening night gala featuring scenes from Verdi's *La Traviata*, Massenet's *Manon* and Stauss' *Capriccio* at 3:30 p.m. (6:30 p.m. Eastern time) in movie theatres throughout the Bay area. For tickets and information, check local theater listings.

SEPT. 23: The SAN JOSE' OPERA GUILD will present a season preview by WEST BAY OPERA featuring musical selections by West Bay Opera singers at 10 a.m. at the LDS Church, 19585 Rose Ave., Los Gatos. Cost, \$10; SJOG members, free.

SEPT. 23-OCT. 12: The SAN FRANCISCO OPERA will present Korngold's *Die Tote Stadt* at the War Memorial Opera House, San Francisco. Tickets, information, (415) 864-3330 or www.sfopera.com. Free previews 55 minutes before each performance.

SEPT. 30: The SAN JOSE' OPERA GUILD will present a season preview by OPERA SAN JOSE' featuring musical selections by Opera San José artists at 10 a.m. at the LDS Church, 19585 Rose Ave., Los Gatos. Cost, \$10; SJOG members, free.

OCT. 7: THE SAN JOSE' OPERA GUILD will present a preview of Mozart's *Idomeneo* at 10 a.m. at the LDS church, 19585 Rose Ave., Los Gatos. Cost, \$10; SJOG members, free.

OCT. 11: The METROPOLITAN OPERA LIVE IN HD series presents *Salome* by Richard Strauss at 10 a.m. (1:00 p.m. Eastern time) in movie theatres throughout the Bay area. For tickets and information, check local theater listings.

OCT. 14: THE SAN JOSE' OPERA GUILD will present a preview of Mussorgsky's *Boris Godunov* at 10 a.m. at the LDS church, 19585 Rose Ave., Los Ga-

tos. Cost, \$10; SJOG members, free.

OCT. 15-31: The SAN FRANCISCO OPERA will present Mozart's *Idomeneo* at the War Memorial Opera House, San Francisco. Tickets, information, (415) 864-3330 or www.sfopera.com. Free previews 55 minutes before each performance.

OCT. 17-19; 24-26: WEST BAY OPERA will present Bizet's *Carmen* 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.

OCT. 21: THE SAN JOSE' OPERA GUILD will present a preview of Donizetti's *Elixir of Love* at 10 a.m. at the LDS church, 19585 Rose Ave., Los Gatos. Cost, \$10; SJOG members, free.

OCT. 22-NOV. 15: The SAN FRANCISCO OPERA will present Mussorgsky's *Boris Godunov* at the War Memorial Opera House, San Francisco. Tickets, information, (415) 864-3330 or www.sfopera.com. Free previews 55 minutes before each performance.

OCT. 28: THE SAN JOSE' OPERA GUILD and OPERA SAN JOSE' will present a preview of Donizetti's *Elixir of Love* at noon in the Beethoven Center at the Martin Luther King Library, 4th and San Fernando Sts., San Jose. Admission, free.

OCT. 29-NOV. 26: The SAN FRANCISCO OPERA will present Donizetti's *The Elixir of Love* at the War Memorial Opera House, San Francisco. Tickets, information, (415) 864-3330 or www.sfopera.com.

NOV. 8-23: OPERA SAN JOSE' will present Donizetti's *The Elixir of Love* 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. Free previews 1 hour before each performance except opening night.

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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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