



## NEWSLETTER

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Joan Shomler, Editor

August, 2019

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### The Fall Opera Preview Lectures at the San José Opera Guild

by Stephen Zilles

The Fall season of Opera Preview Lectures begins, once again, in late August with our first lecture on **Wednesday, August 28**. Tim Flynn, our expert on French Romantic Music of the 19th Century, will be speaking to us on Charles Gounod's *Romeo et Juliette*. This is one of Gounod's best known works and it features a series of duets, one the famous "balcony scene" between the two named characters with the spice of an extra bubbly waltz thrown in to stir our hearts. The story is taken from Shakespeare, but after the opening grand ball, it is edited to focus primarily on Romeo and Juliette with only enough of the other scenes to keep the plot (and Romeo's banishment) moving along. Come, learn more about this hit Shakespearian opera.

Our next lecture, a week later, on **Wednesday, September 4** is a shift in direction. Many of you will recall that Herman Melville wrote *Moby-Dick*, but do you know he also wrote a short story, *Billy Budd*, about a tragic court martial in the British Navy at a time when mutiny was threatening in the fleet. This story was set in the compelling opera of the same name by the 20th Century composer, Benjamin Britten. The opera has some of Britten's finest music as it depicts the destruction of the handsome young sailor Billy Budd and the inability of Captain Vere to save this persecuted young man because of his responsibility to duty in a time of trouble. Jonathon Khuner will provide the background on this chilling drama and music that moves it.

In late September, our focus shifts to the West Bay Opera Season Preview on **Friday, September 27**.

Maestro José Luis Moscovich, the General Director of West Bay Opera, will outline the coming season and company singers will provide highlights to entertain us. This season West Bay is focused on three well known Verdi operas: *Nabucco*, *Macbeth* and *La Traviata*. *Nabucco* is an early Verdi opera whose success largely began Verdi's wonderful career. The story tells of Israel's interaction with the Babylonian King, Nebuchadnezzar II, with a love triangle thrown in to complicate things. Its most famous piece of music is the chorus "Va, pensiero, sull'ali dorate" that played such an important role in Italy's fight for independence between 1815 and 1871. *Macbeth* is Verdi's setting of Shakespeare's Macbeth, a play of outrageous opportunism and the ensuing vengeance it promulgates. The opera is wonderful for its portrayal of Lady Macbeth as both instigator and victim of her acts. Finally, *La Traviata* tells of the forced abandonment of a dying courtesan in her only moment of love and her tragic death as a result. These moving operas make a great overview of Verdi's wonderful body of work. This presentation is coupled with the September Shabbat Lunch at noon at the JCC and you are invited to attend. Cost is \$6 JCC and San José Opera Guild members, \$8.50 non-members. RSVP to [cherie@apjcc.org](mailto:cherie@apjcc.org).

In October, we have a new lecturer, Roger Pines, who is the dramaturg at Lyric Opera of Chicago. On **Wednesday, October 23** he will be speaking to us on Giacomo Puccini's opera *Manon Lescaut*. This is the other version (Massenet's was first) of the story

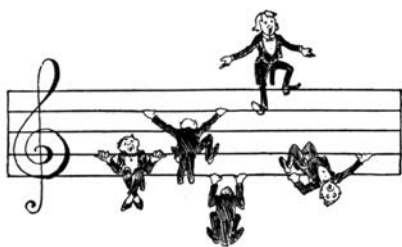
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Continued from page 1

of Manon, the one where she dies in a “desert outside New Orleans” (after being deported from France). But, that is getting ahead of the story which tells of the interactions between a young clergyman, des Grieux, the beautiful young girl Manon and the older rich gentleman who makes Manon his mistress. When Manon abandons the old man, he has her arrested and she is sent, in disgrace, to New Orleans (followed by des Grieux). This is the opera that catapulted Puccini to success as a composer so it will be interesting to hear the background for this powerful dramatic composition.

Our final lecture of the Fall is on **Wednesday, November 6** when Simon Williams will talk about Engelbert Humperdinck’s opera, *Hansel and Gretel*. You might think of this as a child’s story, and it is and it isn’t. It isn’t, because the music is inspired; Humperdinck was a disciple of Wagner’s, and he had worked with Wagner in Bayreuth between 1880 and 81. The work was conducted by a young Richard Strauss at its premiere. Yet, it is because the libretto was written by his sister (based on the Grimm Brothers’ fairytale) for her children. Simon Williams, whose professional specialty has been the history of productions of musical theater and of Richard Wagner, is sure to bring out the best of this opera, which is traditionally played at Christmas time.

All of the lectures and presentations will be at the Addison-Penzak Jewish Community Center at 14855 Oka Road in Los Gatos which is just off Lark Avenue between University and Route 17. The lectures will begin at 10am. Come a little early and enjoy a cup of coffee and conversation with fellow opera lovers.☺



## Merola 2019 is Full of Promise

By Janos Gereben

May 13, 2019

The premiere of Jake Heggie’s commissioned opera, *If I Were You*, is the obvious headline for the Merola Opera Program’s upcoming 62nd season, but there is so much more to this gathering of explosive young operatic talent in and around San Francisco’s War Memorial.

In fact, if you ask Heggie, he too will make the same point:

I’ve been an avid fan of the Merola Opera Program for 25 years, since I moved to San Francisco. Every summer, I look forward to being dazzled anew by young singers on their way to extraordinary careers.

Getting to hear them in multiple venues in a variety of rep is a big part of the fun. This summer offers an array of opera scenes in the Schwabacher Summer Concert at the SF Conservatory, master classes with great teachers and coaches, the Merola Grand Finale at the War Memorial Opera House, and of course the world premiere of Merola’s first commissioned opera, *If I Were You*.

These performances are also a great way to get connected to a wonderful community of opera lovers who care deeply about the future of the art form.

In 1957, the same year when Kurt Herbert Adler’s title changed from SF Opera’s artistic director to general director, he turned his ongoing West Coast Opera Auditions into the formal Merola organization — named for his predecessor, Gaetano Merola — to help young artists launch their careers.

Through his extraordinary stewardship of the company for over a quarter century, Adler thrust this far-away regional company into the ranks of the world’s leading opera companies and also guided the Merola program, which produced some 1,300 alumni. They include such stars as Susan Graham, Joyce DiDonato, Patricia Racette, Deborah Voigt, Dolora Zajick, Mark Delavan, Thomas Hampson, and many more.

Now, Merola 2019 provides an all-expenses-paid, 12-week summer opera training program in San Francisco for 29 young artists from Canada, South Korea, New Zealand, Colombia, Brazil, Australia, and 12 states.

Before the opening public performances in July, Merolini will be coached, trained in operatic repertory, foreign languages, diction, acting, and stage movement; they rehearse, participate in master classes, and receive private coaching.

There are performances open to the public and events for members only. There are various ways of supporting the program and becoming a member.

Opening the season will be the Schwabacher Summer Concert, on July 11 and 13 in the S.F. Conservatory of Music. Merolini will perform semistaged scenes from *Lucia di Lammermoor*, *Il trovatore*, *Faust*, *Die schweigsame Frau*, and *La rondine*, conducted by Craig Kier from the University of Maryland, and directed by Jose Maria Condemi, a Merola alumnus from 1999/2000, and now Director of Opera and Musical Theater at the S.F. Conservatory of Music.

What are the singers' expectations as the program begins? Mezzo Brennan Blankenship, from Klein, Texas, will have an important role in *If I Were You*, and she is thrilled by the chance to create the character of Brittomara in the world premiere: "The shape-shifting devil's music and text are sultry, ominous, and filled with hidden meaning, making her a cryptic siren with moments of wry humor and frank honesty. Finding the nuances of such a complex character is both a joy and a challenge."

Another mezzo from Texas (Amarillo), Cara Collins, has the same role in another cast, and she too refers to the "dark, menacing" nature of the character. She says "The message in this opera is powerful and needs to be heard. I want people to walk away and value who they are as individuals after hearing Fabian's story."

Young artists face many challenges, and Stefan Egerstrom, a bass from Brooklyn Center, Minnesota, who is singing the Schwabacher concerts, is open about dealing with them: "I will most defi-

nately have to get out of my own way this summer. It's very tempting to think 'I have to prove to myself and everyone else that I belong here.'"

"Self-doubt can really get in the way of personal growth, so it's important for me to just be in the moment. If I'm only focused on never making a misstep, then I'm not allowing myself the freedom to flourish."

Tenor Nicholas Huff, from Kenosha, Wisconsin, has the main role of Fabian in one of the two casts, and he says "I've done new and recent operas before, but the chance to create a new role in this world premiere will be an incredible opportunity."

"Singers often have to access their creativity for a role within the framework of well-established precedents and periods of style — which are beautiful, but can feel limiting. In contrast, putting together a new work like this, especially one by such a masterful composer of our time, feels like everything is new."

For soprano Elisa Sunshine, from San Clemente, California, singing in Heggie's opera completes a cycle: "I am beyond excited to be surrounded by experts in the field of opera. It's like being given free rein in a library filled with the world's most enriching books; whose generous brain can I pick first?"

"One of these brains undoubtedly belongs to Jake Heggie. It was one of his song cycles, *Eve-Song*, that made me fall head over heels in love with classical music. Being involved in one of his opera premieres is a dream come true."

Like Egerstorm, Sunshine also thinks about psychological challenges: "Erasing old programming, addressing negative self-talk, and giving myself permission to conquer technical, musical, and performing challenges always starts with me and myself. I am incredibly grateful to have the opportunity to face these challenges under the expert guidance of the team at Merola."

The other new Merolini in *If I Were You* are:

- Michael Day, tenor, from Rockford, Illinois
- Edith Grossman, mezzo, from Elma, New York

## San Francisco Opera Guild's Education Programs

One of the signature programs the Guild offers is Opera à la Carte, which Chapters support with docents and scholarships. This signature program serves more than 100 Bay Area schools each year. Students perform alongside professional singers in a rousing 45-minute adaptation of one of the world's most beloved operas. Masterfully designed, the English-language production features three professional singers, a pianist and a docent who, along with the students, bring the wonder of opera to life. Students rehearse speaking roles under the guidance of the artists, don specially designed costumes and perform for the entire school community. Schools may also choose to involve a chorus, giving students a chance to sing along with the professionals. This fall's Opera à la Carte presentation will be *The Pirates of Penzance* by Gilbert & Sullivan.

Each program costs the San Francisco Opera Guild about \$1,250 per school, \$425 of which is charged to each school. Schools that cannot afford the fee may apply for a full or partial scholarship. These schools do a fabulous job in their on-site preparation and enthusiasm, and it is so rewarding to be able to enrich the lives of their students with music.

Anyone who would like to help fulfill a school's request for this year's program or wishes to be a docent, please contact Monika Restifo at [monimartin@sbcglobal.net](mailto:monimartin@sbcglobal.net), or Susan English at [suenglish@yahoo.com](mailto:suenglish@yahoo.com) ☺



- Edward Laurenson, baritone, from Auckland, New Zealand
- Anne-Marie MacIntosh, soprano, from Langley, British Columbia, Canada
- Timothy Murray, baritone, Whitefish Bay, Wisconsin
- Rafael Porto, bass-baritone, from Sao Paulo, Brazil
- Brandon Scott Russell, tenor, from Springfield, Missouri
- Esther Tonea, soprano, Buford, Georgia
- Patricia Westley, soprano, Santa Barbara, California

### Singers appearing in the Schwabacher concerts:

- Salvatore Atti, tenor, Buffalo, New York
- Jeff Byrnes, baritone, Baton Rouge, Louisiana
- Alice Chung, Loma Linda, California
- Anna Dugan, soprano, Cranford, New Jersey
- Andrew Dwan, bass-baritone, Mountain View, California
- Chelsea Lehnea, soprano, from Chattanooga, Tennessee
- Amber R. Monroe, soprano, Youngstown, Ohio
- Laureano Quant, baritone, Barranquilla, Colombia
- Hyeree Shin, soprano, from Cheon-an, South Korea
- Victor Starsky, tenor, from Richmond Hill, Queens, New York

### Apprentices:

- Greg Eldridge, stage director, from Melbourne, Australia
- Andrew King, coach, from Syracuse, New York
- Christopher Koelzer, coach, from Sunnyvale, California
- Nicholas Roehler, coach, from Allentown, Pennsylvania
- William Woodard, coach, from Normal, Illinois

Janos Gereben appreciates news tips, corrections, and words of encouragement at [Janosg@gmail.com](mailto:Janosg@gmail.com).

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## Career Updates

by Susan English

In June, Left Coast Chamber Ensemble presented two world premiere operas at Z Space. A “micro opera,” *From the Field* focused on Dorothea Lange, and another short opera, *Artemisia*. Both featured the lives of two women artists. **Nikki Einfeld** (Merola 2003) sang Dorothea Lange and sang a supporting role in *Artemisia*. As reviewed by Joshua Kosman in the SF Chronicle: “A splendid cast, led by conductor Matilda Hofman, gave the piece its level best... it included mezzo-soprano Betany Coffland as Artemisia and soprano Marnie Breckenridge as Susanna — both of them vividly dramatic and musically alert — tenor Jonathan Smucker and baritone Igor Vieira as an assortment of villainous men, and soprano Nikki Einfeld as a supporting figure in one of the paintings.” Operawire noted of her performance, “A petite and powerful presence, Einfeld moved through the stages of discovery and revelation of the problem with tenderness and toughness.” **Ms. Einfeld** recently sang with Calgary Opera, reviewed in the Calgary Herald: “Nikki Einfeld, the production’s Gilda, gave a very strong performance, beautifully capturing the girlishness of Rigoletto’s love-smitten daughter. Vocally, she has exactly the right type of voice for the role — sweet, silvery, and with an ability to easily soar to the heights and project well into a large hall. There was sentiment enough in her singing, but the humorous, playful element, frequently missed, gave the moment a dimension it often lacks. She was also a fine partner in the many duets this opera contains, especially the duet with oboe accompaniment in the third act.” Upcoming Bay Area performances include *Carmina Burana* with the San Francisco Symphony and a semi-staged production of *L’Enfant et les Sortilèges*.

Former Opera San José Resident Artist, **Betany Coffland**, sang the role of Artemisia Gentileschi in the “micro opera” by Laqura Schwendinger and Ginger Strand. San Francisco Classical Voice wrote of her performance, “Betany Coffland brings nuance to every side of Artemisia — the

wronged, the hard-working, the headstrong...” Operawire noted, Artemisia was “performed by Bethany Coffland, with solid, thought-provoking and ardent singing and acting...” Opera News has noted of **Ms. Coffland** as “extremely fine” and “a joy to watch.” She will be featured as the alto soloist in Beethoven’s 9th Symphony at the Mendocino Music Festival.

Another opera had its world premiere at Z Space. *Abraham in Flames*, a 70 minute opera based on a story by Iranian poet Ahmad Shamlou deals with the biblical story of Abraham’s trial by fire. As reviewed in the SF Chronicle: “In this elusive but arresting new chamber opera by librettist and creator Niloufar Talebi and composer Aleksandra Vrebalov, the interior workings of a young girl’s consciousness play out like the random motion of microscopic or even subatomic particles.” **Nikki Einfeld** sang Fear, and was joined by fellow Merolini, **Kirk Eichelberger** (also OSJ 2001-03, 2005-06), countertenor **Ryan Belongie**, (Adler 2010-11) and **Renee Rapier**. According to Joshua Kosman: “And best of all — for the audience, if not the protagonist herself — there is Fear, who bursts on stage trailing a cloud of shopping bags and anxiety. As portrayed with ferocious determination by the dynamic soprano **Nikki Einfeld**, Fear tries to keep the world in line with dubious guidelines (“Keep your feet on the ground!” “What you need is grit and pluck!”) that serve only to quash Girl’s spirit. If all of this makes “Abraham in Flames” sound like an arty version of the Pixar movie “Inside Out,” then my work here is done. The echoes of that color-coded creation are hard to avoid, even in this comparatively dark-hued and inscrutable conception.”

Kosman also reviewed the third world premiere opera produced at Z Space: “*Today It Rains*, the compelling and often beguiling new chamber opera that received its world premiere on Thursday, March 28, from Opera Parallèle.” It is based on a 1929 train ride from New York to Santa Fe by Georgia O’Keefe, and was composed by Laura Kaminsky. Phillip Campbell, in Bay Area Reporter, commented on the Merolini in the cast: “Mezzo-soprano **Blythe Gaissert** navigated the

arduous central part of Georgia O’Keeffe with a mixture of flinty determination and confused vulnerability. Her extended arias were stand-alone scenes themselves, and when she stepped off the train at the end, her epiphany was convincing.” Operawire’s review noted: “**Gaissert** sang with an earthy and warm voice, especially at the finale.”

Our San José Opera Guild supports many organizations that promote the operatic arts, with a special focus on education. San José State University’s Opera Theater is one of these organizations. In May the Schools of Music and Dance joined forces to present Leonard Bernstein’s *Mass*, at the Hammer Theater. According to San Francisco Classical Voice: “Overall, San José State gets a high grade for undertaking this large-scale extra-credit project.” The production included many vocal music students, concert choir, dance students, and the student orchestra of SJSU. Also featured were the Vivace Youth Chorus, directed by Peggy Spool. OSJ Former Resident Artist, **Sandra Bengochea**, directed the production. Ms. Bengochea is currently the Voice Area Coordinator and Director of Opera Theater at SJSU. She is also an instructor of voice at Stanislaus State.

Opera San José’s production of *Madama Butterfly* in April tapped the talents of three Merolini. **Dennis Doubin** (Merola 2008 — Apprentice Coach) was brought in for two performances to conduct. **Phillip Skinner** sang The Bonze. Upcoming events include singing Scarpia in *Tosca* with Sacramento Opera, Arkel in *Pelleas et Melisande* with West Edge Opera, and Henry in *Howard’s End*, America at Z Space. Suzuki was sung by **Renee Rapier**. She will reprise the role with Tulsa Opera, and sing Jezbaba in *Rusalka* with Opera Steamboat.

The April Schwabacher Recital Series brought four 2018 Merolini to perform at the Taube Atrium Theater. Joshua Kosman reviewed this performance, noting: “Tenor **Zhengyi Bai**, who emerged as the star of the evening, deployed a bright, ravishingly clear tone that carried his selections aloft with disarming ease, as well as an alluringly strong lower register that provided a solid foundation throughout.” Kosman goes

on to note: “Mezzo-soprano **Ashley Dixon** and bass-baritone **Christian Pursell** both sang with full-bodied power, and soprano Patricia Westley brought fluency and tonal grace to her assignments.” New Zealand native **Patricia Westly** will be singing the role of Selena in the world premiere of *If I Were You* this summer. Opera News took notice of **Christian Pursell** in their “Sound Bites” feature. They write: “Whatever he sings, Pursell’s diction is a model of clarity, and his intriguingly dark voice is beautifully projected, as witness his firm, committed work in several small roles in *Fellow Travelers*, which he sang at Cincinnati Opera’s world premiere, in 2016, and at the New York premiere, as part of the 2017 Prototype Festival.” He will cover the roles of Escamillo in *Carmen* and Zoroastro in *Orlando* at the San Francisco Opera this summer.

Steven Winn, writing for SFCV titled his review: “Philharmonia Baroque’s *Saul* is Profoundly Moving.” Two Merolini performed in this presentation by Philharmonia Baroque Orchestra and Chorale. **Daniel Okulitch**, (Merola 2002) sang Saul. According to Winn his performance “began rather rigidly but grew more vivid, nuanced, and gripping as the evening progressed.” Singing the role of David was countertenor **Aryeh Nussbaum Cohen** (Merola 2016) Winn noted he, “captivated from his first self-effacing air” and his “supple expressiveness lit up register changes, the highest and lowest notes, and precisely furred ornaments.” He further praised Mr. Cohen with, “Here was singing of a high order, not because of pyrotechnics — the aria is daringly understated — but in the sheer, heart-sure conviction of every word and liquid phrase he sang.” Joshua Kosman also reviewed *Saul*, noting of Mr. Cohen: “the extravagantly gifted young countertenor whose every appearance only serves to add luster to an already remarkable level of accomplishment. At 25, an Adler Fellow with the San Francisco Opera, he seemed poised to redefine what’s possible for singers of this distinctive voice type.”

Yet more praise for **Mr. Nussbaum Cohen** came from his performance as Medoro in San Francisco Opera’s summer production of Handel’s

*Orlando*. Joshua Kosman’s review included: “By now, Bay Area audiences should be accustomed to reading the praises of countertenor Aryeh Nussbaum-Cohen. He sang Medoro with buttery tone and lovable earnestness. Especially gorgeous was his smoothly sung Act 2 aria of aching nostalgia (Verdi allori).” Opera Tattler wrote of his performance: “countertenor **Aryeh Nussbaum Cohen** is a tender Medoro. Nussbaum Cohen has a brilliant, strong, and smooth voice, one can hardly believe he is only twenty-five. His trio with the sopranos at the end of Act I (Consolatio bella) was memorable as was his Act III aria Vorrei poterti amar.” Operawire also praised **Mr. Nussbaum Cohen** with: “Medoro, sung by Aryeh Nussbaum Cohen, offered a lustrous voice.” It is no surprise that Encore (San Francisco Opera’s playbill) featured this talented second-year Adler Fellow with a full-page story in their summer program.

Yet another local opera company has begun utilizing alumni from the many talented former singers. According to the Opera Modesto web site, they presented *Carmen* with “The role of Don José will be performed by Modesto’s own operatic tenor, **Christopher Bengochea**.” (Former Opera San José Resident Artist.) Roy Stevens, General and Artistic Director writes an invitation to Bay Area opera lovers: “Modesto is not very far for most of them. Easily done for a Sunday matinee. In fact, for many, it is a far easier drive than going to downtown San Francisco or San Jose. We also have a nice hotel (Doubletree) within walking distance of the theater, plus excellent restaurants and bars, all within a couple blocks of the genuinely excellent Gallo Center for the Arts. The Rogers Theater, where this production takes place, is regularly showered with sincere high praise by visiting high level artists, including Rene Fleming.”

Our Guild helped sponsor **Zanda Svede** as a Merolini in 2013, and her career continues to build. In August, she will travel to Germany to sing Zenobia in *Radamisto* with Oper Frankfurt. Later this season she will again join the ensemble at Oper Frankfurt and make her house debut as Dryade *Ariadne auf Naxos*; later she will sing the

title roles of *Xerxes* and Barrie Kosky’s *Carmen*. She travels to Seattle Opera to sing further performances of *Carmen* in Paul Curren’s production before the end of the 2018 season.

This year our Guild is helping to sponsor another Merolini, **Rafael Porto**. From his extensive website: “Praised for his ‘warm, pure tones,’ the Brazilian Rafael Porto is quickly gaining attention as a young bass-baritone. This season Porto will be heard as Dr. Bartolo in *Il barbiere di Siviglia* with the Northern Lights Music Festival under the baton of Gavriel Heine of the Mariinsky Theatre; returns to Florida Grand Opera as Bartolo in *Le nozze di Figaro*, Johann in *Werther*, and covers Colline in *La bohème*. He also returns to Nashville Opera as Luther and Crespel in *Les contes d’Hoffmann*.” We will be watching his career! 🍷

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## SJOG Election Day

### Board of Directors

### November 6, 2019

Members of the San José Opera Guild will elect directors and officers at a general membership meeting to be held at 10:00am, November 6, just before our scheduled San Francisco Opera Guild Lecture at the JCC.

The following slate was recommended by the Nominating Committee and approved by the Board of Directors.

#### Officers

President	Steve Zilles
Vice-president	Jan Eurich
Secretary	Laurel Kaleda
Treasurer	Fred Heiman
Parliamentarian	Peggy Heiman

#### Directors

Susan English	Joan Shomler
Ingrid Kallman	Colette Siegel
Monika Restifo	Phyllis Whitney
Hannelore Romney	Connie Zilles

## SJOG Brunch Another Success!

by Jan Eurich and Peggy Heiman

June 9 was a glorious Sunday at the Saratoga Country Club, setting of the San José Opera Guild's Annual Champagne Brunch. The sun was shining, the tables glowed with multicolored tulips — and the event was sold out!

As champagne and mimosas were passed among the crowd, the guests were happily exploring the many interesting and exciting raffle and silent auction items on display. Raffle tickets were purchased and silent auction bids were made. Among the offerings were an antique Persian coin ring, an African safari for two, diamond pavé earrings from Joe Escobar, a sail on the bay on a 41ft Swan, a Hakone Gardens tour and tea ceremony, a dinner for 10, with wine, at Il Fornaio, wine and wine baskets, unique hand crafted jewelry, gift certificates to shops, restaurants and more! There was something for everyone's taste and budget. The door prize was a charming, framed antique embroidery piece, from Bosnia.



*Opera Guild President Steve Zilles  
and Guild-sponsored Merolini, Raphael Porto  
Photos by John Eurich*

In attendance, as the guest of Connie and Steve Zilles was the Guild-sponsored Merolini, Rafael Porto, a bass-baritone. He had flown the red eye from an engagement the evening before, in New York City, and, although, somewhat jet lagged, was delighted to be in attendance. He is originally from Brazil, but spent his formative years in Indiana. Later this summer, he will be singing

in the Merola Opera production of the new Jake Heggie and Gene Sheer opera, *If I Were You*.

Also in attendance, were Larry Hancock, outgoing OSJ General Director, Khori Dastoor, incoming OSJ General Director, and Ann Watts and Jake Lake from Starting Arts. The Board of Opera San José was well represented by its current president Gillian Moran and past presidents Richard Whitney, Michael Kalkstein and George Crow. Friends of Opera San José was represented by current president Bonnie Williams and past presidents Barbara Brosh and Rita Horiguchi. Of course, many members of the San José Opera Guild were in attendance, including current president Steve Zilles and past presidents Argo Gheradi, Susan English and Peggy Heiman.

After a luscious brunch of fruit and bagels with cream cheese and smoked salmon, eggs, bacon, sausages, French toast, cinnamon rolls, salad, coffee and tea, the guests were thrilled by a performance from Opera San José's Resident Artists: Kerriann Otaño, soprano; Dane Suarez, tenor; Mason Gates, tenor and accompanist Veronika Agranov-Dafoe. There were a few keyboard glitches (it was, after all, live theater), but the brunch guests were ultimately enchanted by the beautiful voices, in this intimate setting.

Peggy Heiman and Jan Eurich, co-chairs of the event, want to thank all who contributed to the success of this day. The staff of the country club, from the event director, Sherry Stephens, to the set up crew, to the wait staff, helped make this event another one to remember!

Looking forward to seeing you all next year, on Sunday, June 14, 2020! Same time; same place. 🍷



*Brunch Co-Chairs:  
Peggy Heiman and Jan Eurich*



# August Calendar

by Connie Zilles

## Merola Summer Events

Tickets available at S.F. opera Box Office  
415 864-3330 or [www.sfopera.com](http://www.sfopera.com)

**August 1, 3, 4, 6, weekday evenings 7:30pm, Saturday and Sunday 2:00pm,** World premiere of *If I Were You*, by Jake Heggie and Gene Scheer, Herbst Theatre, 401 Van Ness Avenue, San Francisco, \$55/\$80/\$35. Performed in English with English Supertitles.

**August 17, Saturday 7:30pm,** Merola Grand Finale, War Memorial Opera House, \$40/\$50, Students \$25.00. Post-Concert Reception \$75.

## San José Opera Guild's Lecture Series

Please note: San José Opera Guild's Lecture Series meets on Wednesdays unless otherwise listed. Lectures are held at the JCC of Silicon Valley, 14855 Oka Road (cross street Lark Avenue) Los Gatos. 10am to noon. SJOG and JCC Members free. Non-members \$10.

**August 28,** Lecture with Tim Flynn on *Romeo et Juliette* by Charles Gounod.

**September 4,** Lecture with Jonathan Khuner on *Billy Budd* by Benjamin Britten.

**September 27, FRIDAY,** SJOG presents a Season Overview of West Bay Opera with WBO's General Director José Luis Moscovich and Singers at the JCC of Silicon Valley, Shabbat lunch to follow. Information on signing up for the luncheon will be available closer to the event.

**October 23,** Lecture with Roger Pines on *Manon Lescaut* by Giacometti Puccini.

**November 6,** Lecture with Simon Williams on *Hansel and Gretel* by Engelbert Humperdinck.

## Opera Performances

**September 14, 15, 19, 22, 27 & 29,** Opera San José presents *Die Fledermaus* by Johann Strauss, 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. 1 hour preview September 3, California Theatre.

**October 18, 20, 26, 27,** West Bay Opera presents *Nabucco* by Giuseppe Verdi in Italian with English titles, at the Lucie Stern Theater, Palo Alto, Friday at 8pm and Sundays at 2pm. \$70/65, Call 650 424-9999 or visit [www.wbopera.org](http://www.wbopera.org). Piano preview October 10, 8pm, Palo Alto Art Center.

**Metropolitan Opera Simulcast in HD** Showing at Century Oakridge 20, 408 225-7340 or Santana Row 6, 408 554-7000. Please confirm with theaters to verify that they will be showing a particular opera. (Prices may vary for the various HD operas.). For more information contact Met Opera Broadcasts.

**Saturday, October 12, 9:55am** *Turandot* by Puccini, Encore October 16.

**Saturday, October 26, 9:55am,** *Manon* by Massenet, Encore October 30.

**Saturday, November 9, 9:55am,** *Madama Butterfly* by Puccini, Encores November 13, 16.

Encores are generally the following Wednesday evening at 6:30pm but may vary. Please verify with the theater. ♪

## SJOG Newsletter

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San José Opera Guild  
P.O. Box 33025  
Los Gatos, CA 95031-3025

## 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 its founding. The Guild sponsors singers each year at Opera San José, the Merola Opera Program, San Jose State Opera Workshop and supports Starting Arts.

Throughout the year, the Guild sponsors lectures and previews to coincide with the San Francisco Opera, West Bay Opera and Opera San José seasons.

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