

## Adler Fellows To Perform at Fall Gala

by Corinne Elliott Carter



**Rhoslyn Jones, soprano**



**Elza van den Heever,  
soprano**



**Gerald Thompson,  
counter-tenor**

On September 28 the San Jose Opera Guild celebrates the Fall Gala Dinner at the Los Altos Golf and Country Club. Once again we will enjoy the delightful ambience and the quiet elegance of the country club.

San Francisco Opera Center's Adler Fellows soprano Rhoslyn Jones, soprano Elza van den Heever and counter-tenor Gerald Thompson, will entertain us after dinner. From this renowned San Francisco Opera Center, these singers may become the opera stars of tomorrow. With this illustrious cast you will be served a gourmet dinner of roasted chicken breast and halibut in the perfect setting overlooking an 18-hole golf course. Make your reservations early by calling Elliot Swanson at 408 378-4823. For details visit the San Jose Opera Guild website, [www.sjoperaguild.org](http://www.sjoperaguild.org). Invitations will be sent out in early September.

# OPERA TRAVELERS

## Los Angeles Opera comes of age with a spectacular *Grendel*

By Mort Levine

The opportunity to take a long weekend in Southern California in mid-June to blanket in two of the most unusual opera offerings in years was too good to skip.

The highlight of the Ojai Festival, inland from Santa Barbara, this year was the concert staging of *Ainadamar*, a wrenching retelling of an incident from the Spanish civil war back in 1936. Argentine composer Osvaldo Golijov was present to describe his motivation at a symposium the afternoon prior to the performance. The outdoor venue was excellent except for having the supertitles typeface too small for most of the audience. This is a revised score since the opera's premiere at Santa Fe a couple of years back.

Soprano Dawn Upshaw sang the lead role of Margarita Xirgu with great skill and passion. Contralto Kelly O'Conner brought the pants-role of Federico Lorca, the fated playwright, to a heightened dramatic pitch. Both were in the original production. Robert Spano's Atlanta Symphony and Chorus provided a rich tapestry of Hispanic and Flamenco music.

Two nights later at the downtown LA Music Center, it was time for an eagerly awaited world premiere of *Grendel*, which is the tale of the monster who is slain by Beowulf in the great mythological saga. It is told from the perspective of the monster and is mostly his internal monologues as he observes human foibles. The variety of dramatic action, visual, dance and vocal delights more than make up for this limitation.

This \$3 million production combined lots of Hollywood razzle-dazzle as General Director Placido Domingo tapped a rich vein of creativity in his backyard. Movie composer Elliot Goldenthal (*Frida*) and his life partner Julie Taymor (the *Lion King*) collaborated with librettist J.D. McClatchy and set designer George Tsybin and proceeded to enthrall and astonish the audience.

Lucky opera goers who saw the San Francisco Opera's *Dr. Atomic* last year may recall the singer who portrayed General Les-

lie Groves this time singing a powerful, yet at times wistful, title role. Bass-baritone Eric Owens deserves to go forward to a fine career following this tour de force role as Grendel.

The Taymor touch using a wide range of masks, sculptural forms of strange animals, shadow play using projections and elements of Japanese and Indonesian story telling gives an exotic and intriguing flavor.

The opera is a joint production with the Lincoln Center Summer Festival in Manhattan where it will be presented in mid-July.

Other singers who gave outstanding performances include Bay Area favorites Laura Claycomb, as the gorgeous Queen Wealthew, who awakens the first longings of human sexuality in the monster, and Denyce Graves, who demonstrates an amazing range as the dragon. This dragon is so big that mezzo Graves was able to make her entrance on a chaise emitted by a fiery breath of the dragon's tongue.

Conductor Steven Sloane deserves special mention as does the choreographic work of Angelin Preljocaj. Incidentally, by the opera's end when the monster is slain, we do feel a great deal of sympathy for his all too human frailties which echoes the way the movies left us with Boris Karloff's *Frankenstein* or *King Kong*.



# SINGER WRITES HOME

Hello Folks and Friends,

This past Saturday, the 6th of May, I went with the Zurich Opera Chorus and Orchestra to Rome where we sang for Pope Benedict at St. Peter's Basilica in Rome, in celebration of the 500th Anniversary of the Swiss Guard at the Vatican'. A quickie--flew in the night before, up the next morning at 5:30, bussed to a 7:30am rehearsal for a 9am service, then bussed directly to the airport and flown back to Zurich just in time for that evening's performance of La Bohème.

Joined by choruses from two other Swiss Cantons (provinces), and lead by Franz Welser-Moest, we sang selections from Mozart's Coronation Mass, "Ave Verum Corpus" and "Laudamus Te". An Italian choir sang [a] Gregorian chant which we "answered" at intervals. The sound delay there is 3 seconds, and [it was] a juicy pleasure to experience our voices.

Seated behind the alter, we only got one full frontal of the Pope when, during our last piece, he descended the steps and left, nodding to us and the soloists before making his way around to the front door and out accompanied by applause and flash bulbs.

From beginning to end, the flashing and clicking of camers, clapping upon arrival and departure (even during the music!), and low murmuring, crying babies, etc., this was the most human of church services I've witnessed.

The service was conducted in the four languages of Switzerland: French, Italian, German, Romansch, and, of course, in Latin. Many of my colleagues were impressed by how much gentler the Pope has become since attaining office. Originally rather conservative, it was evident from his sermon (spoken in three languag-

es--I understood the German part the best), that he is determined to be a representative of holiness and humanity, not only the head of the Catholic Church.

This being my first time in Rome and in St. Peter's, the very first glimpse inside was breathtaking. Beams of sunlight streamed down from the high windows as if direct from heaven. The atmosphere was jovial--already full of chatting people at 8am. . . .

We were televised live for Swiss television and will receive a DVD of the taping. This truly was a church gig to remember. With no time for sight-seeing, except for the night-owls who insisted on seeing something of Rome in the middle of the night, I will definitely be back, but what a first impression!

love,  
Emily [Emily Stern]



# CAREER UPDATES

Soprano Laura Claycomb (Merola Opera 1989-90) sang the role of Queen Wealtheow in Los Angeles Opera's world première of *Grendel* by Elliott Goldenthal June 1-17. The opera, which is based on the ancient Beowulf story, was called "a dazzling display of musical and theatrical inventiveness" by the San Francisco Chronicle. The opera was also the centerpiece of the Lincoln Center Festival Series at the New York State Theater in July. Also in June (19 and 25), Ms. Claycomb joined Marc Teichotz (guitar), Peter Grunberg (piano) and Nina Kotova (cello) for two nights of intimate chamber music at the Florence Gould Theater in the Legion of Honor in San Francisco. The program included the west coast premiere of Ms. Kotova's song cycle, *Lyrice*, which she composed for Ms. Claycomb and herself.

Soprano Lori Decter (Opera San José 2001-06) made her international debut as Fiordiligi in *Così fan tutte* in June with Bangkok Opera. Performances were at the Thailand Cultural Center on June 22, 24 and 25. On opening night, she performed for the Thai royal family, joining them after the performance for their traditional post-performance opening night dinner. Also making her Bangkok Opera debut in *Così fan tutte* was soprano Sandra Rubalcava (Opera San José 2001-2005), who performed the role of Despina.

Mezzo-soprano Patrice Houston (Opera San José 1997-99) has just sung Azucena in *Il Trovatore* (July 17-24) with Summer Opera Theatre Company of D.C. In September (17-24), she'll perform the same role with San Francisco Lyric Opera. Ms. Houston was the Opera Guild's vocal award winner for the 1997-98 school year.

Soprano Eilana Lappalainen (Opera San José 1988-92) sang the title role in *Salomé* with the Michigan Opera Theater in Detroit to rave reviews in June. In June and July, she sang Donna Anna in *Don Giovanni* in Greece, followed by a musical theater concert in the Greek Islands. In July, she sang Silvia in Mascagni's *Zanetto* in Palermo, Italy. In the fall, she'll sing the title role in *Madama Butterfly* at Rimrock Opera in Billings, Montana.

Bass-baritone Jesse Merlin (Opera San José 2002-06) moved to Hollywood after leaving Opera San José, and immediately landed the lead role – President of the United States – in the world premiere of *The Beastly Bombing*, a comic operetta, to be performed at the Steve Allen Theater on July 28 and August 25, to be followed by a six-week run at venues yet-to-be-decided. In December, he'll return to the Bay Area to sing Marquis d'Obigny in *La Traviata* with Martinez Opera. In February, 2007, he'll make his Sacramento Opera debut as Zuniga in *Carmen* alongside longtime colleague Joseph Wright (Opera San José 2001-2006) as Escamillo.

Baritone Douglas Nagel (Opera San José 1988-92) has just completed his first successful season as Education Consultant for Opera San José, touring local schools with his 35-minute version of *La Bohème*. Plans for next season include a mini-version of *Madama Butterfly* as well as an original opera, *The Night Harry Stopped Smoking*. In the fall, his Billings, Montana opera company, Rimrock Opera, will be featuring former Opera San José soprano Eilana Lappalainen as Madama Butterfly, with Opera San José conductor Antonio Quartuccio at the podium.

Baritone Joseph Wright (Opera San José 2002-2006) sang the title role in the west coast premiere of Anthony Davis' *X: The Life and Times of Malcolm X*, with Oakland Opera Theater in June. In June, he also sang excerpts from *Carmen*, *Tannhäuser* and *Un Ballo in Maschera* with Silicon Valley Symphony in a program called "Great Scott n' the Wright Stuff." In July, Mr. Wright debuted as Crown in a concert version of **Porgy and Bess** with the Mendocino Music Festival. In February 2007, he'll sing Escamillo in *Carmen* with Sacramento Opera alongside former Opera San José artists Layna Chianakas as Carmen and Jesse Merlin as Zuniga.

# FALL OPERA LECTURES BEGIN SEPTEMBER 5, 2006

San José Opera Guild has presented previews of the San Francisco Opera Season for over fifty years. This coming fall is no exception. Six of the productions offered by the San Francisco company will be featured from September to November beginning with Verdi's *Un Ballo in Maschera* on Sept. 5, at the Los Gatos History Club. Our speaker will be Julian Budden, internationally renowned musicologist.

Sept. 19 brings a presentation by West Bay Opera. Season Highlights will be discussed by General Director José Luis Moskvich, with artists from the company.

On Sept. 26 Alexandra Amati-Camperi, Director of the Music Program, University of San Francisco, will preview another great Verdi favorite, *Rigoletto*. She has specialized in the Italian bel canto tradition, and is the recipient of many awards.

The month of October will be busy with three lectures. On Oct. 3, *Tristan und Isolde*, Richard Wagner's great love story, will be presented by Simon Williams, Professor and Chairman of the Department of Dramatic Art, UC Santa Barbara; author of books on Wagner; co-editor of *A History of the German Theatre*.

Oct. 10 will find Larry Hancock, Director of Production & General Manager, OSJ, with Opera San José artists, returning again this

year with a program of highlights of the OSJ Season.

Our final October Lecture will be Oct. 24 with Erie Mills as speaker. She is Professor of Music at San José State University, teacher of voice, and herself a coloratura soprano who has performed to critical acclaim on the stages of the world's great opera houses. She will speak on that perennial comedy favorite, Rossini's *Barber of Seville*.

Our Fall Season concludes with two November lectures. On Nov. 7 Puccini's *Manon Lescaut* will be presented by Heather Hadlock, Assistant Professor of Musicology, Stanford University, a specialist in French and Italian romantic era opera and song.

The Nov. 14 preview of Bizet's *Carmen* draws our Fall Series to a close. Our speaker will be D. Kern Holoman, Professor of music, UC Davis; Dean of Humanities, Arts, and Cultural Studies; Conductor of UCD Symphony Orchestra; author of books on musical topics.

San José Opera Guild also co-sponsors an opera preview series in downtown San José at the San José Museum of Art. The fall offerings there will be Sept. 5, at noon, Gounod's *Roméo et Juliette*, and *The Barber of Seville*, by Rossini, to be given at noon on Nov. 14. Larry Hancock and singers from Opera San José will present the one hour opera previews, 12-1

p.m., free for all who wish to attend these popular events.

Watch for our next SJOG newsletter for Opera Previews of 2007, from both San Francisco Opera and Opera San José



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# CALENDAR

AUGUST 12-AUGUST 20: FESTIVAL OPERA will present Mozart's *Don Giovanni* at Dean Lesher Regional Center for the Arts, Walnut Creek. Tickets \$36 to \$100. Information: 925-943-SHOW (7469) or "<http://www.festivalopera.com>" [www.festivalopera.com](http://www.festivalopera.com).

AUGUST 19: The MEROLA OPERA PROGRAM will present the Merola Grand Finale at 7:30PM at the War Memorial Opera House, San Francisco. Tickets \$35. Information: 415-864-3330.

SEPTEMBER 5: SAN JOSÉ OPERA GUILD LECTURE. Julian Budden will lecture on Verdi's *A Masked Ball* at 10AM at the Los Gatos History Club, 123 Los Gatos Boulevard, Los Gatos. Members, free; non-members, \$10. Lunch will be offered after the lecture for \$10 per person.

SEPTEMBER 5: SAN JOSÉ OPERA GUILD'S DOWNTOWN LECTURE/PREVIEW. Larry Hancock will lecture on Gounod's *Roméo et Juliette* at noon at the San José Museum of Art, Wendel Center. Artists from Opera San José will sing excerpts from the opera. Free admission. Co-sponsored by Opera San José and the San José Opera Guild. Information: Gerry Pighini 408-275-6199 or "<mailto:MrPio@msn.com>" [MrPio@msn.com](http://MrPio@msn.com).

SEPTEMBER 8- SEPTEMBER 29: The SAN FRANCISCO OPERA will present Verdi's *A Masked Ball* at the War Memorial Opera House, San Francisco. Tickets \$25 to \$245. Information: 415-864-3330 or "<http://www.sfopera.com>" [www.sfopera.com](http://www.sfopera.com).

SEPTEMBER 9-SEPTEMBER 24: OPERA SAN JOSÉ will present Gounod's *Roméo et Juliette* at the California Theatre, 345 South First Street, San José. Tickets \$65 to \$85. Information: 408-437-4450 or "<http://www.operasj.org>" [www.operasj.org](http://www.operasj.org).

SEPTEMBER 9-OCTOBER 13: The SAN FRANCISCO OPERA will present Strauss' *Die Fledermaus* at the War Memorial Opera House, San Francisco. Tickets \$25 to \$245. Information: 415-864-3330 or "<http://www.sfopera.com>" [www.sfopera.com](http://www.sfopera.com).

SEPTEMBER 19: SAN JOSÉ OPERA GUILD LECTURE. David Ostwald will give a preview of West Bay Opera's 2006-2007 season at 10AM at the Los Gatos History Club, 123 Los Gatos Boulevard, Los Gatos. Artists from West Bay Opera will sing excerpts from the operas. Members, free; non-members, \$10.

SEPTEMBER 26: SAN JOSÉ OPERA GUILD LECTURE. Alexandra Amati-Camperi will lecture on Verdi's *Rigoletto* at 10AM at the Los Gatos History Club, 123 Los Gatos Boulevard, Los Gatos. Members, free; non-members, \$10.

SEPTEMBER 28: SAN JOSÉ OPERA GUILD'S FALL GALA.

SEPTEMBER 30: The WAGNER SOCIETY OF NORTHERN CALIFORNIA LECTURE. Alex Ross will present his lecture, "Black Wagner: A Discussion of the Influence of Wagner's Music and Ideas on W.E.B. DuBois and other African-American Intellectuals of the

Harlem Renaissance." Ross has been the music critic of the *New Yorker* since 1996 and also writes for *The New Republic*, *London Review of Books*, and was a critic at *The New York Times* from 1992-96. The lecture will take place at 2PM in the Laurel Heights Conference Center, 3333 California Street, San Francisco. WSNC members, free; non-members, \$10. Information: 415-421-4412 or "<http://www.wagnersf.org>" [www.wagnersf.org](http://www.wagnersf.org).

SEPTEMBER 30-OCTOBER 29: The SAN FRANCISCO OPERA will present Verdi's *Rigoletto* at the War Memorial Opera House, San Francisco. Tickets \$25 to \$245. Information: 415-864-3330 or "<http://www.sfopera.com>" [www.sfopera.com](http://www.sfopera.com).

OCTOBER 3: SAN JOSÉ OPERA GUILD LECTURE. Simon Williams will lecture on Wagner's *Tristan and Isolde* at 10AM at the Los Gatos History Club, 123 Los Gatos Boulevard, Los Gatos. Members, free; non-members, \$10.

OCTOBER 5-OCTOBER 27: The SAN FRANCISCO OPERA will present Wagner's *Tristan and Isolde* at the War Memorial Opera House, San Francisco. Tickets \$25 to \$245. Information: 415-864-3330 or "<http://www.sfopera.com>" [www.sfopera.com](http://www.sfopera.com).

OCTOBER 10: SAN JOSÉ OPERA GUILD LECTURE. Larry Hancock will give a preview of Opera San José's 2006-2007 season at 10AM at the Los Gatos History Club, 123 Los Gatos Boulevard, Los Gatos. Artists from Opera San José will sing excerpts from the operas. Members, free; non-members, \$10.

OCTOBER 21: The WAGNER SOCIETY OF NORTHERN CALIFORNIA will sponsor a symposium, "Hearing the Light, *Tristan and Isolde*," from 10AM to 5PM, Saturday, October 21, in the Laurel Heights Conference Center, 3333 California Street, San Francisco. WSNC members, \$60; non-members, \$70. Registration includes beverages, box-lunch and post-symposium reception. Information: 415-421-4412 or "<http://www.wagnersf.org>" [www.wagnersf.org](http://www.wagnersf.org).

OCTOBER 24: SAN JOSÉ OPERA GUILD LECTURE. Erie Mills will lecture on Rossini's *The Barber of Seville* at 10AM at the Los Gatos History Club, 123 Los Gatos Boulevard, Los Gatos. Members, free; non-members, \$10.

OCTOBER 31 TO NOVEMBER 30: The SAN FRANCISCO OPERA will present Rossini's *The Barber of Seville* at the War Memorial Opera House, San Francisco. Tickets \$25 to \$245. Information: 415-864-3330 or "<http://www.sfopera.com>" [www.sfopera.com](http://www.sfopera.com).

NOVEMBER 7: SAN JOSÉ OPERA GUILD LECTURE. Heather Hadlock will lecture on Puccini's *Manon Lescaut* at 10AM at the Los Gatos History Club, 123 Los Gatos Boulevard, Los Gatos. Members, free; non-members, \$10. Lunch will be offered after the lecture for \$10 per person.

NOVEMBER 14: SAN JOSÉ OPERA GUILD LECTURE. Dr. Kern Holoman will lecture on Bizet's *Carmen* at 10AM at the Latter Day Saints Church, 15985 Rose Avenue, Los Gatos. Members, free; non-members, \$10.

NOVEMBER 14 SAN JOSÉ OPERA GUILD'S DOWNTOWN LECTURE PREVIEW. Larry Hancock will lecture on Rossini's *The Barber of Seville* at noon at the San José Museum of Art, Wendel Center. Artists from Opera San José will sing excerpts from the opera. Free admission. Co-sponsored by Opera San José and the San José Opera Guild. Information: Gerry Pighini 408-275-6199 or "<mailto:MrPio@msn.com>"MrPio@msn.



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c/o Argo Gherardi  
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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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