



## NEWSLETTER

Argo Gherardi, Editor

May, 2008

### LAST LECTURES

For 2007-08

#### San Francisco Opera Season

Learn about two unusual operas to be presented by San Francisco Opera. The lectures will preview operas in San Francisco Opera's summer season and will be held at the Saratoga Foothill Club, 20399 Park Place, Saratoga. The first lecture will be *Das Rheingold*, the Prologue opera of Richard Wagner's Ring Cycle, on May 27, 10:00 a.m. to 12 noon. Our speaker will be Perry Lorenzo, who comes to us from the Seattle Opera Company where he is Education and Outreach Director.

The second lecture will be the baroque Handel opera, *Ariodante*, on June 10, 10:00 a.m. to 12 noon. Our speaker will be Bruce Lamont, who is active in the Bay Area musical scene, having conducted for the Carmel Bach Festival and having directed the Philharmonia Chorale. Both he and Perry Lorenzo are long-time friends of the San José Opera Guild and have spoken to our members in past years.

The cost for each lecture is \$10 at the door. Please join the Guild and the Foothill Club for these last two lectures of the San Francisco Opera season.

**NOTE:** On the bright red bookmarks recently mailed, the date for the *Ariodante* lecture with Bruce Lamont at the Saratoga Foothill Club is incorrect. The correct date is June 10, 2008.

### IRENE DALIS VOCAL COMPETITION

Opera San José, in association with Arts Management Services of San Francisco, will present the second annual Irene Dalis Vocal Competition on May 31, 2008, 7 p.m. at the California Theatre. At the conclusion of the West Coast Auditions for Singers, the ten best singers will be chosen as the featured competition finalists.

Three major prizes will be awarded:

First Prize - \$15,000

Second Prize - \$10,000

Third Prize - \$5,000

An Audience Favorite Award (voted on by the audience during final intermission) of \$5,000 will also be presented, as well as an Encouragement Award of \$2,000 each to the remaining Finalists.

Tickets can be purchased by calling the OSJ Box Office (408 437-4450) and will also be available for purchase at performances of *The Magic Flute*.

General seating: \$50 per ticket

Premier seating: \$75 per ticket\*

Platinum seating: \$200 per ticket\*\*

\*Includes champagne reception on the California Theatre patio during the first intermission.

\*\*Includes the California Theatre's finest seating, an opportunity to meet and talk with the judges prior to the competition, champagne reception during the first intermission, and a champagne and dessert reception following the competition at the Hotel Montgomery.

# OPERA TRAVELER

Here's how you can create your own opera festival:  
four rare operas in one week, and now home to rest

by Mort Levine

With eight delightfully diverse operas shown this season at local movie theaters live and direct from the stage of the Metropolitan Opera in New York, one might well think that's enough of an opera fix. The Met season includes 28 different works, and thus there is a lot left on the plate for any hungry operaholic.

Skimming the Met's calendar shows that within a single week one might enjoy three of the rarer offerings and in the same time frame take advantage of a unique presentation by the Opera Orchestra of New York. They do three interesting works annually, almost never done fully staged, which outstanding singers wish to do without fully learning the roles. We thus were able to enjoy a fine concert version of Puccini's *Edgar* with top flight singers from the Met and other world wide venues.

The other three gems of the repertory which were magnificently presented on the Met stage included *Satyagraha*, Philip Glass's landmark tribute to Gandhi; *The Gambler*, a gripping Prokofiev take on a Dostoyefsky tale; and *Ernani*, offered for the first time in nearly 25 years, an early Verdi of great dramatic and melodic vigor.

By pure serendipity, these four operas represent four different eras of opera history and luckily they were seen in their chronological order. *Ernani* premiered in 1844; *Edgar*, Puccini's first complete opera in 1889; *The Gambler*, Prokofiev's first opera debuted in 1929; and *Satyagraha*, Glass's second in 1975. Each showed strong evidence of its creator's future work and deserved prominence.

The vocal talents in each of the productions were world class. Marcello Giordani, one of the top Italian tenors, proved totally capable in the title role of *Ernani* but also a couple of days later was outstanding in the title role of *Edgar*. In *Ernani* his soprano love interest was Sondra Rodvanovsky, who happened to have two other pursuers for her hand, baritone Thomas Hampson and veteran bass Ferruccio Furlanetto. The melodrama was energized by the three male leads.

In *Edgar*, Giordani again was augmented by three other excellent performers. In this somewhat implausible plot, he has a rival, robust baritone Stephen

Gaertner. The two female leads included Jennifer Larmore, an experienced talented mezzo with a beautiful voice that didn't quite match the power of her rival, the wide ranging soprano Latonia Moore, who continually reached the rafters of Carnegie Hall. Larmore was Tigrana, an aptly named siren who dooms men to a life of debauchery whereas Moore was the high minded and pure Fidelia who gets knifed by Tigrana in the grisly opera climax.

Individual voices and aria set-pieces in *The Gambler* and *Satyagraha* were less important than the total ensemble, a characteristic of 20th century opera. Much of the cast in the Russian work came along with Conductor Valery Gergiev from his Mariinsky theater in St. Petersburg. Tenor Vladimir Galouzine was the protagonist Alexei, a young tutor whose attraction to Polina, sung by Olga Guryakova, drives him to a gambling compulsion and madness.

*The Gambler* is staged in a casino which finally is symbolized by a gigantic surrealistic roulette wheel on which Alexei finally spins out of control having broken the bank with money showering the stage. One of the singers taking the role of a gambler is Kirk Eichelberger, whose fine bass-baritone highlighted a number of Opera San José productions in recent years.

*Satyagraha* is a Sanskrit word which means the force of truth. The Glass opera is entirely in Sanskrit but with projected translations periodically on the back of the stage. The action is not in a linear mode of a coherent narrative. Instead, it is a series of scenes in which important aspects of Gandhi's work, mostly in South Africa before going back to India, are highlighted with dramatic action. Poet Constance DeJong did the libretto by extracting segments of the sacred Hindu poem, the *Bhagavad-Gita*. Each of the sung words hits on a note which combines with the minimalist musical form of Glass in the 70's, and produces a hauntingly hypnotic kind of languor in the audience.

This production is spiced by a staging which employs supersized puppets created out of simple materials like sticks, newsprint and scotch tape. The

## OPERA TRAVELER, continued

materials suggest the poverty of the masses Gandhi was attempting to rally.

The Gandhi role was portrayed with great effectiveness and dignity by Richard Croft. His tenor voice reached its vocal heights with a final aria based on a simple ascending scale repeated 30 times. It climaxed a 3 hour and 45 minute performance which saw the audience burst in some of the loudest cheers and applause we've experienced in an opera house. A magical night of music drama.

New York in April is a pleasant time to visit. The ample offerings in theater, concerts and museums all make for a very full schedule. But then springtime here at home has a wide range of outstanding cultural offerings. Hardly time to rest up.

## SJOG VOCAL COMPETITION A SUCCESS

The annual Guild Vocal Competition took place on Sunday, April 20th, 2008, at 1 PM in the School of Music Concert Hall of San José State University. The competition was organized by Professor of Vocal Music, Erie Mills. It included nine sopranos, who sang two operatic arias in different languages. The three judges for the event, Conductor Barbara Day Turner, Debra Lambert, Chair of the Department of Music and Vocal Arts at Notre Dame de Namur University, and Marc Jacobs, former director of opera at New York City Opera, Madison Opera, and Los Angeles Opera, were unanimous in their selection of the winners. Third place winner of \$200 was Maria Cammisa. Second prize, \$300, was won by Michelle Hennessy. Katie Dukes took the \$500 first prize. Both second and first place winners are members of Mu Phi Epsilon, a music organization, with Dukes serving as current president, and Hennessy incoming president of the SJSU chapter.

A reception, provided by members of the Opera Guild Board, followed in room 161 in the music building, giving the sizable audience an opportunity to meet the singers and offer their congratulations and complimentary comments for their performances. This event, always a singular delight to Guild members,  
MAY, 2008

## FREE DRESS REHEARSAL

### *ARIODANTE*

On Thursday, June 12 at 6:00pm at the San Francisco Opera House, there will be a free dress rehearsal for *Ariodante* for all Guild members. Tickets are required.

Each Guild membership is entitled to two tickets, on a first-come, first-served basis, since we will receive a limited number of tickets sometime in May.

Please send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to Myrna Fleckles at 1708 Cherryhills Lane, San Jose, CA 95125 no later than June 1, if you wish to attend.

Tickets will be mailed to you in the order that requests are received.

bers, served also as a reminder of our decade long cooperative relationship with member Erie Mills, who will be retiring from the teaching staff of San José State shortly. She will be sorely missed by all of us in the San José Opera Guild, who wish her luck in her continuing career as a vocal music teacher and diction coach.

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## THIS COULD BE THE LAST SJOG NEWSLETTER YOU WILL RECEIVE

Have you been on our mailing list since 2005 and haven't JOINED or RENEWED your membership in the Guild? Then, this may indeed be your last newsletter.

Please go to the form on the back page of this newsletter to JOIN or RENEW.

## CAREER UPDATES

The Metropolitan Opera National Council has announced its 2008 Finalists and they include Adler Fellow Mezzo-Soprano **Daveda Karanas**, and Tenor **Rene Barbera**. **Rene** is an incoming Merola participant. **Daveda**, a 2007 Merola alumna, will be appearing in San Francisco Opera's *Boris Godunov* as Nurse this fall.

The Los Angeles Opera has featured many Merola alumni in its 2007-2008 season. Last fall, Puccini's *La Bohème* included both Merola and Opera San José alumni. **Laquita Mitchell** a 2002 alumna of the Merola program sang Musetta, while fellow Merola alumnus, **Oren Gradus**, sang Colline. In the same production, **Brian Leerhuber**, a two-season participant in Opera San José's Apprentice Artists Program, sang Schaunard.

In January and February, the LA Opera also featured Merola alumni. **Matthew Moore**, a 2007 Merola alumnus, performed as Steersman in Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde*. In late February and early March, **Matthew** sang the Herald in Verdi's *Otello*. This production featured former Merola alumnus and Adler Fellow **Mark Delaven** as Iago. Also in February and March, the Recovered Voices Project presented two Merola alumnae in the two one act operas representing the 2008 offering of the Project. In Alexander Zemlinsky's *The Dwarf (Der Zwerg)*, **Elizabeth Bishop**, Adler Fellow and 1986 Merola alumna, sang Frau Marthe Rull, while **Melody Moore**, 2005 Merola alumna sang Eve. The second one act opera, Viktor Ullmann's *The Broken Jug (Der Zerbrochene Krug)* featured **Elizabeth** as Third Maid, and **Melody** as First Maid.

Coming this June, 1988 Merola alumna **Patricia Racette** will sing Magna in Puccini's *La Rondine* with the Los Angeles Opera. She was reviewed by John von Rhein in the Chicago Tribune as, "a singing actress of a rare order - a performer who invests herself so completely in the roles she portrays and inhabits them with such musical and dramatic strength that they speak to her audience with startling conviction." Having just completed singing Ellen in the Metropolitan Opera's *Peter Grimes*, she will join the Dussel-

dorfer Philharmoniker to sing Mahler's *Symphony No 8*, then to Bayerische Staatsoper to sing Cio-Cio San in *Madama Butterfly*, before coming to Los Angeles in June. She will be joined in the LA production of *La Rondine* by another Merola alumnus, **David Pittsinger**, who will sing Rambaldo.

**Laura Claycomb**, 1989 and 1990 Merola alumna, continues to have a busy schedule. She will be the soprano soloist with the San Francisco Symphony for Brahms' *Requiem* on May 22, 23, and 24, 2008. Michael Tilson Thomas will conduct. In July, she will travel to the Santa Fe Opera to perform as Polissena in Handel's *Radamisto*.

Opera San José's alumnus, **Scott Bearden** continues to be busy and in the news. Richard Scheinin titled his February 4, 2008 article in the San Jose Mercury News, "The Baritone Who Brought Domingo to Tears" to describe **Scott**. He went on to review **Scott's Rigoletto** on February 12, 2008 saying "Baritone **Scott Bearden** is the heart and soul of Opera San José's exuberant new production of Giuseppe Verdi's '*Rigoletto*.'" In March, **Scott** followed his *Rigoletto* with an appearance as baritone soloist with the Symphony Silicon Valley in Beethoven's *9th Symphony*. George Rowe reviewed the performances in the Mercury News noting "Among the soloists, baritone **Scott Bearden**...was a standout." Asked by Scheinin if his career has turned a corner, **Scott** answered "Nothing's guaranteed, except that I get to audition with Los Angeles and Washington National Opera."

**Cynthia Clayton**, an OSJ alumna, sang the title role in Utah Opera's *Tosca* in February. **Cynthia** will make her debut with the Houston Grand Opera as Mimi in *La Bohème* in May. In a previous production, the New York Times called **Cynthia** "a becoming Mimi, by turns shy, sweet and flirtatious..." She will perform on May 1 and 3, 2008 in Houston. Another OSJ alumna, **Barbara Divis**, just completed singing Mimi with Opera Idaho. **Barbara's** schedule notes she followed her Mimi by singing Nedda in *Pagliacci* with Opera Santa Barbara. In April, **Barbara** sang Micaela in Bizet's *Carmen* with the Austin Lyric Opera, in Austin, Texas.

OSJ alumna **Christina Major's** April was filled with singing solos. On April 6, she appeared as a soloist in Mendelssohn's *St. Paul*, in Dallas, Texas. **Christina** then traveled to the Florida Bach Festival for April 12 and 13. There, she was a soloist for Mahler's *Symphony No. 2*. In early May, she will continue her soloist work with the Greenville Symphony in South Carolina, singing Mahler's *Symphony No. 2*. In August, **Christina** will return to California to be a part of the Midsummer Mozart Festival. She will sing Konstanze in Mozart's *Die Entführung Aus Dem Serail* on August 1, at the California Theatre in San José. She will repeat this role August 3, at Herbst Theatre in San Francisco. These performances will be conducted by George Cleve.

Another OSJ alumna, **Susan Gundunas**, is returning to California to perform. She will be the soprano soloist in the world premiere of *Divide Light*, a new opera based on the works of Emily Dickinson. This opera is scheduled to premiere at the Garden Theatre at Montalvo Arts Center on August 13, 2008. The opera was composed by Lesley Dill, Daniel Levi, and Tom Morgan.

Baritone **Jason Detwiler** will also be returning to perform in California. This OSJ alumnus just completed singing Silvio, in *I Pagliacci* and Gobineau, in *The Medium* with the Syracuse Opera in New York. On June 1, **Jason** will be a soloist in a concert to be presented in San Francisco by the Wagner Society of Northern California. In July, he will sing John Proctor in *The Crucible* with Trinity Lyric Opera in Castro Valley.



MAY 1-4 OPERA SAN JOSE' will present the last three performances of Mozart's *The Magic Flute* at 8 p.m. Thurs. and Sat. and 3 p.m. Sunday at the California Theatre, 345 So. First St., San Jose. Free previews, 1 hour before each performance. Tickets \$66-\$88. Information: (408) 437-4450 or [www.operasj.org](http://www.operasj.org).

MAY 1: The PHANTOMS OF THE OPERA GUILD will meet at 5:30 p.m for happy hour, 6 p.m. dinner at a downtown restaurant prior to attending a performance of *The Magic Flute* at the California Theatre. Information, (408) 356-7651. Single persons interested in attending the opera with others are welcome.

MAY 2-11: THE SAN FRANCISCO OPERA will present Antoine de Saint-Exupery's *The Little Prince* in conjunction with Cal Performances at Zellerbach Hall at the University of California, Berkeley. Tickets, information (415) 864-3330 or [www.sfopera.com](http://www.sfopera.com).

MAY 4: THE SAN JOSE SYMPHONIC CHOIR will perform opera favorites with the Mission Chamber Orchestra at 2:30 p.m in the Heritage Theatre, Campbell. Tickets \$20 general, \$17 seniors/students, \$5 child, information (408) 995-3318 or [www.sanjosesymphonicchoir.org](http://www.sanjosesymphonicchoir.org).

MAY 4: POCKET OPERA will present Mozart's *Bastien and Bastienne* and Schubert's *The Conspirators* at 2 p.m. in the Florence Gould theater at the Palace of the Legion of Honor, 100 34th Ave. at Clement St., San Francisco. Tickets, \$34-\$37 general, \$31-\$34 seniors, \$20 youth/students. Information, (415) 972-8934.

MAY 10: SAN JOSE' STATE OPERA WORKSHOP will present in the concert hall of the School of Music and Dance at 7:30 p.m. scenes from Greek tragedy to contemporary comedy. Tickets, \$15 general, \$10 students at the door. Information, (408) 924-4674

MAY 13-JUNE 17: OPERA SAN JOSE'

## CALENDAR, CONTINUED FROM P. 5

will offer an opera history course at 7:30 p.m. on Tuesday evenings at Opera San José headquarters, 2149 Paragon Drive, San Jose. Cost, \$60. Information, (408) 437-4450.

MAY 15: THE WEST BAY OPERA GUILD will present a preview of Wagner's *Der fliegende Holländer* at 8 p.m. at the Palo Alto Art Center, 1313 Newell Rd., Palo Alto. Admission, free.

MAY 23-25; MAY 30-JUNE 1: WEST BAY OPERA will present Wagner's *Der fliegende Holländer* at 8 p.m. Friday and Saturday, 2 p.m. Sunday at the Lucie Stern Theatre, 1305 Middlefield Rd., Palo Alto. Tickets, \$50 general, \$20 youth/student, information (650) 424-9999 or [www.wbopera.org](http://www.wbopera.org).

MAY 24, 31; JUNE 1: POCKET OPERA will present Donizetti's *Don Pasquale* at 2 p.m. in the Florence Gould theater at the Palace of the Legion of Honor, 100 34th Ave. at Clement St., San Francisco. Tickets, (\$34-\$37 general, \$31-\$34 seniors, \$20 youth/students. Information, (415) 972-8934.

MAY 27: THE SAN JOSE' OPERA GUILD and the SARATOGA FOOTHILL CLUB will present a lecture by Perry Lorenzo on Wagner's *Das Rheingold* at 10 a.m. at the Saratoga Foothill Club, 20399 Park Place, Saratoga. Admission, \$10 at the door.

MAY 30-JUNE 7: SAN FRANCISCO LYRIC OPERA will present Benjamin Britten's *The Turn of the Screw* 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](http://www.fortmason.org/boxoffice).

MAY 31: OPERA SAN JOSE' will present the 2nd annual Irene Dalis Vocal Competition at 7 p.m. at the California Theatre, 345 So. First St., San Jose. Tickets, (\$50-\$200), information (408) 437-4450 or [www.operasj.org](http://www.operasj.org).

MAY 31: WEST BAY OPERA will benefit from *Gentry Magazine's* over-the-top Gala celebration at

the Sheraton Palo Alto featuring gourmet delicacies, live entertainment and dancing. Tickets (\$100-\$150), information (650) 424-9999.

JUNE 1: THE VILLAGES' OPERA LOVERS CLUB will present soprano Rochelle Bard and baritone Kenneth Mattice in a farewell concert at 3:30 p.m. in the Cribari Auditorium at The Villages. Admission, \$15. Reserve by May 23 by sending a check made out to Opera Lovers Club and a self-addressed, stamped envelope to Dorothy Tarowsky, 9051 Village View Loop, San Jose, CA 95135.

JUNE 3: THE SAN JOSE WOMAN'S CLUB will present a luncheon and concert by Opera San José artists beginning at 11 a.m. at the clubhouse, 75 So. 11th St., San Jose. Tickets (\$35), information (408) 286-7892 or mail reservations to Maxine Lubow, 581 So. 13th St., San Jose, CA 95112. Proceeds benefit scholarships.

JUNE 10: THE SAN JOSE' OPERA GUILD and the SARATOGA FOOTHILL CLUB will present a lecture by Bruce Lamott on Handel's *Ariodante* at 10 a.m. at the Saratoga Foothill Club, 20399 Park Place, Saratoga. Admission, \$10 at the door.

JUNE 12: SAN JOSE' OPERA GUILD MEMBERS are invited to a dress rehearsal of Handel's *Ariodante* at 6 p.m. at the War Memorial Opera House, San Francisco. For details, see accompanying newsletter article on page 3.

JUNE 14, 15, 21: POCKET OPERA will present Donizetti's *Roberto Devereux* at 2 p.m. in the Florence Gould theater at the Palace of the Legion of Honor, 100 34th Ave. at Clement St., San Francisco. Tickets, (\$34-\$37 general, \$31-34 seniors, \$20 youth/students) Information, (415) 972-8934.

JUNE 15-JULY 6 THE SAN FRANCISCO OPERA will present Handel's *Ariodante* at the War Memorial Opera House, San Francisco. Tickets (\$15-\$200), information (415) 864-3330 or [www.sfopera.com](http://www.sfopera.com).

## CALENDAR, Continued

JUNE 17-JULY 5 THE SAN FRANCISCO OPERA will present Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor* at the War Memorial Opera House, San Francisco. Tickets (\$15-\$200), information (415) 864-3330 or [www.sfopera.com](http://www.sfopera.com).

JUNE 29: THE LOS GATOS ARTS COMMISSION will present Opera in the Park featuring artists from OPERA SAN JOSE' at 5 p.m. on the lawn in front of the library, Los Gatos Civic Center. Admission, free. A dinner at Dio Deka will be offered by the Guild following the performance. Invitations will be mailed to all Guild members.

JULY 6: MEROLA OPERA will present a SCHWABACHER SUMMER CONCERT at 2 p.m. at Yerba Buena Gardens, San Francisco. Admission, free. Information, [www.sfopera.com](http://www.sfopera.com).

JULY 8: MEROLA OPERA will present a SCHWABACHER SUMMER CONCERT at 7:30 p.m. at the Veterans Building, Herbst Theater, San Francisco. Tickets (price to be determined), information, 415-864-3330 or [www.sfopera.com](http://www.sfopera.com).

JULY 13, 19, 20, 27: POCKET OPERA will present Puccini's *La Bohème* at 2 p.m. in the Florence Gould theater at the Palace of the Legion of Honor, 100 34th Ave. at Clement St., San Francisco Tickets, (\$34-\$37 general, \$31-34 seniors, \$20 youth/students), Information, (415) 972-8934.

JULY 18, 20: MEROLA OPERA will present Britten's *Albert Herring* at 8 p.m. Friday and 2 p.m. Sunday in the Cowell Theater at Fort Mason Center, San Francisco. Tickets (\$40/\$60 general, \$25 students), information (415) 864-3330 or [www.sfopera.com](http://www.sfopera.com).

AUGUST 1, 3: MEROLA OPERA will present Mozart's *Don Giovanni* at 8 p.m. Friday and 2 p.m. Sunday in the Cowell Theater at Fort Mason Center, San Francisco. Tickets (\$40/\$60 general, \$25 students), information (415) 864-3330 or [www.sfopera.com](http://www.sfopera.com).

## *Ann Haggerty Memorial Fund*

The San José Opera Guild has received donations in the amount of \$3,400. In keeping with Ann's wishes and her enthusiastic devotion in support of opera, the board of directors voted to make the following contributions in her memory.

Opera San José - \$1,000  
West Bay Opera - \$1,000  
San Francisco Opera Guild's  
Opera à la Carte - \$1,000  
Peninsula Teen Opera - \$360  
Not yet allocated - \$40

The Guild thanks all who honored her in this way.

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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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