



## NEWSLETTER

### ELECTION INFORMATION

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November 2009

## From the President

My term as President of the Guild will end on January 31, so this will be my last opportunity to communicate with you via our quarterly newsletters. That said, I want to pay tribute to our outstanding Board of Directors.

As you know, I was suddenly thrust into office, when Ann Haggerty passed away in November of 2007, and words cannot describe how helpful, supportive and loyal the Board of Directors has been. Without their support, assistance and guidance we would not have had such stimulating lectures, both in Los Gatos and in downtown San José; such fun-filled and successful fund-raising social events; and such productive board and committee meetings. Their diligence, participation, attention to agreed-upon tasks and “can do” attitude are unparalleled. They have made our Guild a sustainable, contributing force in the promo-

tion and appreciation of opera. I will leave office with a feeling of tremendous gratitude for their efforts in behalf of the Guild.

### ATTENTION, ALL MEMBERS !!!

If you wish to receive the Guild’s newsletters and other member communications, please remember that it is your responsibility to notify our Membership Chair, Joan Shomler, of any change of street address, telephone number, or e-mail address. She maintains the database and constantly updates the Member Communications Committee regarding changes. She can be reached at <membership@sjoperaguild.org>, or by checking your membership roster for street address. Send her any changes in writing by e-mail or regular mail.

The Guild is charged for any mail that is undeliverable. Please do your part to see that these charges do not occur. ###

## Opera Travelers

By Mort Levine

Sometimes the edgy, unusual opera isn’t very far away:  
*A House in Bali* mixes East and West and much more.

On a recent Saturday night, the choice was between San Francisco’s *Il Trovatore* and a strange opera at UC Berkeley’s Zellerbach Hall which took you back to the 1930s in Bali. It didn’t even require a coin-toss. We’ve seen more than our share of *Trovatores* but the intriguing new work of composer Evan Ziporyn,

*A House in Bali*, won out.

In a recent interview with the San Jose Mercury, SFO’s General Director, David Gockley, defended the rather pedestrian lineup of productions this season (the first full schedule which is his responsibility) on a couple of grounds. One was the financial problems fac-

# Opera Travelers

## continued from p.1

ing the company which saw a cut in budget from \$69 million to \$63 million, a \$25 million hit to the SFO endowment, and word from big donors that they were cutting back this year. His second reason was that he's seen research suggesting new and younger audiences preferred the old tried and true repertory rather than cutting edge offerings in the Pamela Rosenberg vein.

That made it even more likely that the Balinese excursion was going to be our choice. And while it turned out to be a fascinating concept with an impressive musical score conducted by the composer, its staging left much to be desired. The simple story-line follows a trio of Americans sharing a house in the exotic Indonesian island. The characters are based on a real menage a trois which linked famed anthropologist Margaret Mead (sung by vigorous soprano Anne Harley), Canadian composer Colin McPhee (performed by Marc Molomot, a counter-tenor with a wide range of voices), and painter Walter Spies (tenor Timur Bekbosunov was somewhat tentative in this ambiguous role). In the opera Spies is arrested and shipped out by the Dutch authorities. In real life he was rounded up in a crackdown on homosexuality and ultimately lost his life when a ship of deportees was sunk.

As in Benjamin Britten's *Death in Venice*, there is a cloying eroticism and implied homosexual attraction, but this aspect is played down in the opera. There is, however, a full measure of strange and exotic demons from the mythology of the Balinese which is rendered in wild dances to gamelan accompaniment.

The music is woven by a seven member ensemble called the Bang on the Can Allstars which began in San Francisco and has made a strong base in New York. This contemporary Western sound is intertwined with the gamelan which is performed by a 18-member Gamelan Salukat troupe of percussion and horn players who also are dancers. They all come from one village in Bali.

The main character without a singing role is Sampih, a 13-year-old, Nyoman Usadhi, who becomes a houseboy for the Americans and turns into an astonishing dancer.

There were troupes of additional dancers, ornate costuming, masked characters and a constant choreographic movement throughout the two acts. The cross cultural convergence drew introspective arias from the two male opera singers, but Margaret Mead simply kept discovering revelations in behavior that she recorded in her notebooks with little attempt to develop an understandable character.

The large stage was dominated by a modular house going up and then being torn down. Since much of the action took place behind walls, the director, Jay Scheib, chose to have a couple of video cameramen shoot instantly and display instantly on a large screen above the house to help the audience follow the tangled story. That couldn't be possible in the 30s but nobody seemed concerned.

Was the entire effort worthwhile? The critical reception was definitely mixed, but there is hope for another run possibly at the Ravinia Festival in Chicago next summer. Maestro Zipporyn might want to do some revising during the interim. ###

# **SJOG ELECTION**

## **NOVEMBER 3, 2009**

**The election will be held at the general meeting of Guild members at the Church of the Latter Day Saints, 15985 Rose Ave., Los Gatos, at 10:00 A.M. Lecture to follow.**

On September 9, 2009, the Board of Directors of the San Jose Opera guild accepted the recommendations of the Nominating Committee, as follows:

### **2010 OFFICERS**

President - Susan English	Corresponding Secretary - Nina Gherardi
Vice-President - Olga Nespole	Treasurer- Elliot Swanson
Recording Secretary - Margaret Boddy	Parliamentarian - Myrna Fleckles

### **DIRECTORS RETURNING FOR THE 2010 TERM**

Margaret Boddy	Corinne Elliott Carter
Wendy Dewell	Susan English
Jan Eurich	Myrna Fleckles
Nina Gherardi	Argo Gherardi
Gretchen Gregersen	Peggy Heiman
Olga Nespole	Mary Riley
Hannelore Romney	Joan Shomler
Jack Silveira	Ginger Stoddard
Alice Swanson	Elliot Swanson
Doug Turner	Elaine Veloz
Phyllis Whitney	Conne Zilles
Steve Zilles	

### **NEW DIRECTORS**

Edna Herman  
Augusta Wilson

Serving on the Nominating Committee were Margaret Boddy, Susan English, Jan Eurich, Peggy Heiman (chairperson), and Elaine Veloz. Please plan to attend and cast your vote.

<p><b>IN MEMORIAM</b> <b>GERALD PIO PIGHINI</b> <b>B. OCTOBER 11, 1933 D. AUGUST 31, 2009</b> <b>FOR DEDICATION TO OUR GUILD AND PROMOTION OF OPERA.</b></p>
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# Career Updates

Former Artist in Residence with Opera San José, **Jason Detwiler**, is preparing to perform Valentin in *Faust* this month with Opera Idaho in Boise, Idaho. In November he will travel from Boise to Sun Valley, Idaho to sing in concert. In December **Mr. Detwiler** will repeat his travels, from Opera Idaho where he will perform Melchior in *Amahl and the Night Visitors*, back to Sun Valley as a soloist in a Christmas concert.

Another former OSJ Artist in Residence, **Christopher Dickerson**, is traveling this fall as well. Last month he sang Timur in *Turandot* with the Kalamazoo Symphony, and this month he will sing Colline in *La Bohème* with the El Paso Opera.

**Jonathan Hodel**, also an OSJ alumnus, just completed singing Canio in *I Pagliacci* and Luigi in *Il Tabarro* in Houston, Texas with Opera in the Heights. He will return to this opera company to sing Ricardo in Verdi's *Un Ballo in Maschera* in January and February next year.

OSJ alumna, **Talise Trevigne**, performed Lori Laitman's *Four Dickinson Songs* in the inaugural concert of the Rising Stars Series at The Granada in Santa Barbara last month. Next month she will be featured as a guest artist in New York City Opera's Reopening Gala. In December she will perform in Lisa Lim's *The Navigator* at L'Opera Bastille in Paris.

An alumnus of both the Merola program at San Francisco Opera and the Resident Artist program at Opera San José, bass **Kirk Eichelberger** was interviewed by mezzo-soprano Lisa Houston for *San Francisco Classical Voice*. In response to her question about how he prepares for his malevolent characters he noted, "At this point I really relish going to

that dark side and finding the real 'gross-out' factor, the things that will really make someone's spine shiver." **Mr. Eichelberger** seems to have captured the malevolence referred to in his recent performance as Mephistopheles in Gounod's *Faust* with Festival Opera. Joshua Kosman reviewed the opera in the *San Francisco Chronicle* (8-10-09). He noted, "The devil gets the best lines in many circumstances, but rarely so definitively as when he's portrayed by a singer like bass **Kirk Eichelberger**. His performance as Mephistopheles combined tonal suavety and power with a dark, sardonic edge that bespoke all sorts of demonic undercurrents; the duet with Marguerite in the cathedral was a tour de force of fiery bravado."

San Francisco Opera's season is off to a strong start, with many Merola alumni performing. The season's first opera, *Il Trovatore*, cast three Merolini. **Renee Tatum** (2008) sang Inez, and **Andrew Bidlack** (2007) sang Ruiz. **Mr. Bidlack** is also cast as Pedrillo in San Francisco's production of *The Abduction from the Seraglio*. **Quinn Kelsey** (2002) sang Count di Luna in *Il Trovatore* on October 4th and 6th. **Mr. Kelsey** will sing the Forester in *The Cunning Little Vixen* in November with Florence's Maggio Musicale Festival, and in March will sing Sharpless in *Madama Butterfly* with the New York City Opera.

San Francisco's production of *Il Trittico* included many Merola alumni. The Opera *Tattler* (9-16-09) noted, "The Adlers were out in full force and did very well." **Thomas Glenn** (2003) sang both the Song Vendor and Gherado. **Mr. Glenn** sang with the English National Opera last spring in both *Dr. Atomic* and *Così Fan Tutte*. This fall he will sing the

## Career Updates (continued)

Fisherman in *Le Rossignol* with the Atlanta Symphony. Former Adler Fellow, **Catherine Cook**, sang La Frugola, Monitor, and La Ciesca in the three operas. She is a member of the voice faculty at the San Francisco Conservatory of Music.

**David Lomeli** (2008), a first year Adler Fellow sang A Lover in *Il Tabarro* and Rinuccio in *Gianni Schicchi*. Recent and upcoming engagements include Rodolfo in *La Bohème* at Theatre Basel in Switzerland, the title role in Gounod's *Faust* with Madison Opera, and the Duke of Mantua in *Rigoletto* with Dijon Opera.

Additional Merolini singing in *Il Trittico* include former Adler Fellow, **Matthew O'Neil**, second year Adler Fellow, **Daveda Karnas**, and second year Adler Fellow, **Tamara Wapinsky**. Merola alumna **Meredith Arwady**, second year Adler Fellow *Daniela Mack*, and third year Adler Fellow **Heidi Melton** also sang various roles in this three opera package. In the San Jose Mercury review, the participation of the Merola alumni was noted with, "They acquitted themselves well."

Greater praise was reserved for the more notable Merola alumna and Adler Fellow, **Patricia Racette**. Joshua Kosman wrote in the San Francisco Chronicle (9-17-09): "Call it a trifecta, or a hat trick, or a triple whammy. Whatever the terminology, soprano **Patricia Racette** tackled all three soprano roles in Puccini's '*Il Trittico*'...and emerged triumphant." The San Jose Mercury News (9-16-09) noted that **Ms Racette** "simply burned with desire" as Giorgetta. **Ms Racette** will reprise *Il Trittico*'s three heroines for the Met this season. She will also portray the title role of Tosca

for Houston Grand Opera, and the title role of David Alden's production of *Kat'a Kabanova* for the English National Opera. The October edition of Opera News features **Ms Racette** on the cover of their eighth annual Diva Issue, and includes a feature article written by Scott Barnes.

Yet another Merola alumnus, **Patrick Summers**, was a part of *Il Trittico* as the Conductor. He wrote in the Encore Arts Program, "Puccini's *Il Trittico*, a longtime dream project of mine, has finally come to pass. I am honored to conduct it in my 'home,' San Francisco Opera, with this large and impressive cast...**Patricia Racette**, the soprano with whom I've had the longest and most rewarding association in my life." **Mr. Summers** is music director of Houston Grand Opera and principal guest conductor for San Francisco Opera.

Both **Patricia Racette** and **Patrick Summers** worked with the Santa Fe Opera this past summer. Again in **Mr. Summers'** words, "We were together for the world premiere of Paul Moravec's *The Letter*...and in a few months I will conduct her first stage performances of the title role of Puccini's *Tosca* at Houston Grand Opera." Another Merola alumna, **Mika Shigematsu** (1991-1992) joined them in *The Letter* as Chinese Woman, making her Santa Fe Opera debut.

Another Santa Fe Opera performance featuring a Merola alumna was *The Elixir of Love*. **Jennifer Black** (2001-2001) sang Adina. This fall **Ms Black** will sing Violetta in *La Traviata* for Greensboro Opera, and will cover the role of Michaela in *Carmen* at the Met.

**Continued on P. 6**

# Calendar

OCTOBER 16, 2009 3:30 -5:30 PM, THE MASTERS TEACH, A Master Class by Dr. Gregory Mason - Coach/Accompanist/Pianist, San Francisco Symphony/Sacramento Opera, Free and open to the public, SJSU Music Building, Concert Hall.

OCTOBER 27, Tuesday at 10 AM, Irene Dalis will speak on 'The Making of Opera San José', Saratoga Foothill Club, 20399 Park Place, Saratoga.

Founder and General Director of Opera San José, Miss Dalis will discuss her artistic training and 20 year career at the Metropolitan Opera. She returned to San Jose to create a resident professional opera company that is now in its 26th season. Her mission is to preserve opera as an art form through performance, education and outreach and to develop emerging artists for the national stage.

OCTOBER 30 7:30 PM "TWO BY TWO," Layna Chianakas, Mezzo Soprano, Joseph Frank, Tenor, Gwendolyn Mok & Sharon Brook, Piano. Duets and songs by Schumann,

## Career Updates from p. 5

San Francisco Classical Voice noted "As always, there were Bay Area links...A pair of recent San Francisco Opera Adler Fellow alumni were featured in the *Don Giovanni* cast: **Lucas Meachem** in the title role, and **Elza van den Heever** as Donna Anna." **Mr. Meachem** will sing Valentin in *Faust* with the Lyric Opera of Chicago this fall, then will sing Figaro in *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* with the Los Angeles Opera in December. **Ms van den Heever** was featured in an article in the June edition of Opera News. She won first place in Seattle Opera's 2008 International Wagner Competition and will be singing at Dallas Opera in early 2010. ###

Massenet, Mahler, Britten and Mascagni. SJSU Music Building, Concert Hall, Cost: General - \$20, Students - \$10 with ID.

NOVEMBER 3: San José Opera Guild Lecture Series, *Otello* by Giuseppe Verdi, Lecturer Alexandra Amati-Camperi, Time 10AM, Location: Church of Latter Day Saints, 15985 Rose Avenue, Los Gatos, SJOG Members free and non-members \$10. For more information contact Steve Zilles 356-7692.

NOVEMBER 3: Opera San José Downtown Lecture/Preview by Larry Hancock with Artists from Opera San José singing excerpts from the opera *La Cenerentola* by Gioachino Antonio Rossini, Noon to 1pm, free admission, Beethoven Center, MLK Library, 4th & San Fernando

NOVEMBER 7: Metropolitan Opera Simulcast in HD, *Turandot* by Giacomo Puccini, live at CineArts Oakridge 20, 225-7340; Santana Row 6, 554-7010; AMC Cupertino 252-5960, and AMC Eastridge Mall 15, 274-2274. Simulcasts are at 10 AM and cost is \$24.00 for adults, \$22.00 for seniors. (The encores which occur later are at 6:30PM and cost \$22.00 for adults and \$20.00 for seniors).

NOVEMBER 11: Metropolitan Opera Encore in HD, *Aida* by Giuseppe Verdi. See theatres mentioned on November 7th.

NOVEMBER 14, 15, 19, 21, 22, 24, 27 and 29, Opera San José presents *La Cenerentola* by Gioachino Antonio Rossini, California Theatre, San Jose. Call 408 437-4450 or visit [www.operasj.org](http://www.operasj.org).

NOVEMBER 18: Metropolitan Opera Encore, *Turandot* by Puccini. See theatres mentioned on November 7th.

NOVEMBER 19: Metropolitan Opera Simulcast in HD, *Tales of Hoffman* by Jacques

## Calendar (continued)

Offenbach. See theatres mentioned on November 7th.

JANUARY 6: Metropolitan Opera Encore, *Tales of Hoffman* by Jacques Offenbach. See theatres mentioned on November 7th.

JANUARY 9: Metropolitan Opera Simulcast in HD, *Der Rosenkavalier* by Richard Strauss. See theatres mentioned on November 7th.

JANUARY 16: Metropolitan Opera Simulcast in HD, *Carmen* by George Bizet. See theatres mentioned on November 7th.

JANUARY 17: SJOG Winter Party, Plumed Horse, Saratoga. Lunch at 11:30, Program at 1:00, Opera San José singers. Invitations to follow at the end of December.

JANUARY 26: Opera San José Downtown Lecture/Preview by Larry Hancock with Artists from Opera San Jose singing excerpts from the opera *The Marriage of Figaro* by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, Noon to 1pm, free admission, Beethoven Center, MLK Library, 4th & San Fernando.

JANUARY 27: Metropolitan Opera Encore, *Der Rosenkavalier* by Richard Strauss. See theatres mentioned on November 7th.

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<p><u>Publisher</u> San José Opera Guild</p> <p><u>President</u> Myrna Fleckles</p> <p><u>Editor</u> Argo Gherardi</p> <p><u>Publicity</u> Elaine Veloz</p> <p><u>Career Updates</u> Susan English</p> <p><u>Calendar</u> Connie Zilles</p> <p>SJOG Newsletter is published four times a year in Feb., May, Aug., and Nov. by: San José Opera Guild P.O. Box 33025 Los Gatos, CA 95031-3025</p>
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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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Organization	\$75
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