



NEWSLETTER

Joan Shomler, Editor

November, 2018

SJOG Election Day

Board of Directors and By-laws changes

November 14, 2018

Members of the San José Opera Guild will elect directors and officers at a general membership meeting to be held at 10:00am, November 14, 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	Collette Siegel
Tony Nespole	Phyllis Whitney
Monika Restifo	Connie Zilles
Hannelore Romney	

By-laws changes

There are three proposed bylaws changes that are needed to allow us to conduct business with our reduced-size board, they are:

- 1) to set the quorum requirement to $\frac{1}{2}$ of the number of current board members;
- 2) to explicitly allow e-mail ballots as well as votes taken at board meetings;
- 3) that we have only one officer position for Secretary. The board recommends the approval of these changes at the Membership Meeting.

Career Updates

by Susan English

The Santa Fe Opera's 2018 season featured Merolini in four of the five operas presented. In *L'Italiana in Algeri*, **Daniela Mack** (Merola 2007) sang Isabella. BWW Review wrote of her performance: "Argentine mezzo Daniela Mack completed this opera's trio of leading characters. Since the opera was updated from 1805 to the 1920s, she was a liberated woman who flew her own plane and landed it in an area of Algeria that had been invaded by the Turkish army. Mack cut a sexy, charismatic and energetic figure on stage. Her fast but clean coloratura was impressive, especially at the extremes of her range. She sang with a lean tone and dark vocal colors that made her voice unique." The Santa Fe New Mexican reviewed her performance with: "Her rapid-fire coloratura was usually stunning, especially at the top and bottom of her range, where the tone behind the fireworks projected most forcefully. A highpoint of the evening — but there were so many — was her spot-on rendition of the scintillating Act Two aria "Pensa a la Patria." Ms. Mack's upcoming engagements include Rosina in *The Barber of Seville* with Boston Lyric Opera, Sesto in *La Clemenza di Tito* with Opera de Oviedo, and Dorabella in *Così fan Tutte* with Lyric Opera of Kansas City.

SFO's *Madama Butterfly* featuring **A. J. Glueckert** (Merola 2010) as B. F. Pinkerton. BWW Review considered his performance with: "A. J. Glueckert, was a huge voiced Pinkerton and Nicholas Pallesen a resonant Sharpless. Together they sang of whiskey and their love of "America," ... Sharpless

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and Pinkerton's musical harmonies were true... Glueckert used his heroic tenor to show a certain degree of charm and a great deal of arrogance." Opera Warhorses noted of his performance: "He was an ardent Pinkerton, appropriately smug in his opening aria *Dovunque al mondo*, vocally expressive in the first act love duet with Butterfly, and affecting in his last act aria, *Addio, fiorito asil*." Mr. Glueckert's upcoming engagements include three operas at Oper Frankfurt – Don Jose in *Carmen*. Count Vaudemont in *Iolanta*, and Flamand in *Capriccio*.

Two Merolini were featured in SFO's production of *Candide*. **Alek Shrader** (Merola 2007) sang *Candide*. Opera Warhorses wrote: "The title character, *Candide* – is played by Oklahoma tenor Alek Shrader ...Bernstein has written luscious melodies for *Candide* which perfectly fit Shrader's warm, lyric tenor voice. Highlights include Shrader's affecting performances of *It Must Be So* and the fantasy Ballad of El Dorado with Lillian Hellman's charming lyrics *Up a seashell mountain, across a primrose sea*. Reviewer James Sohre praised his performance with: "In the title role, Alek Shrader is giving his finest performance I have experienced to date." Mr. Shrader's recent roles were *Candide* with the Washington National Opera and *Benedict* in *Beatrice and Benedict* with Seattle Opera. Upcoming roles include Count Almaviva in *The Barber of Seville* with Michigan Opera Theatre and Emperor Tito in *La Clemenza di Tito* with Opera de Oviedo.

This *Candide* also featured **Kevin Burdette** (Merola 1998-1999) in four roles! From Opera Warhorses: "Of the several performing editions of *Candide*, the Santa Fe Opera has chosen the Scottish Opera/Old Vic version, in which four characters are played by the same artist – Voltaire, the extreme optimist Pangloss, the extreme pessimist Martin and Cacambo, who becomes *Candide*'s servant in the protagonist's later adventures... Multi-talented Tennessee bass-buffo Kevin Burdette assumed all four roles." This review went on to note: "Since his hilarious debut in another

zany 1950s American comic opera, he has become Santa Fe Opera's "go to" bass-baritone in comic roles and contemporary works. Burdette has sung in nine different operas at the Santa Fe Opera, appearing in six of the last eight seasons...Burdette is especially noted for buffo roles with their broad comedy and tongue-twisting vocal lines, to which he adds an extraordinary athleticism." The reviewer ended his praise of Burdette with, "I was pleased to see Burdette assume the lead bass roles of Voltaire and Pangloss, and his successful characterizations of the lively Cacambo and the grumpy Martin." James Sohre noted of his performance: "The party trick of having one performer quadruple as Voltaire, Pangloss, Cacambo, and Martin held no challenge for the versatile baritone Kevin Burdette. Moving effortlessly between the four, Mr. Burdette found a highly distinctive accent and demeanor for each, modulating his well-schooled vocalizing to create a slightly different sound as required. As the more-often-than-not narrator, he kept the evening's pace on sure and fleet footing." Mr. Burdette will sing *Spinellocchio* in *Gianni Schicchi* at The Metropolitan Opera.

SFO's *Ariadne Auf Naxos* also featured **Kevin Burdette** as Major-Domo, along with **Bruce Sledge's** performance, "Tenor Bruce Sledge showed dramatic versatility as The Tenor/Bacchus — he was the perfect divo in the Prologue, whose hefty voice complemented Echalaz's voice well in the final scene." Opera Today offered more praise with: "Bruce Sledge brought a highly attractive, clarion tenor to the role of Bacchus. Mr. Sledge's generous, freely produced tone was wedded to a rock solid technique that allow him to assay a very pliant reading of this notoriously difficult sing. I have rarely heard anyone craft such gorgeous, arching, urgent phrases in this part. I hope he paces himself in his career to be around for many years, because this repertoire needs him now." This reviewer also wrote of Mr. Burdette's role with: "In a spoken role, Kevin Burdette provided a Masters Class in condescension as the

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amusingly smug Major-Domo.” Mr. Sledge’s upcoming engagements are with The Metropolitan Opera in *The Magic Flute*, *Pigoletto*, and *La Clemenza di Tito*.

The *Doctor Atomic* cast in Santa Fe included two Merolini as well. **Daniel Okulitch** (Merola 2002) sang General Graves and **Meredith Arwady** (Merola 2002-2003) sang Pasqualita. The Los Angeles Times review noted: “With a cavernously deep mezzo-soprano, Meredith Arwady, Kitty’s Tewa housekeeper, channels the spirit of the land. Daniel Okulitch’s fearsome Grove.. brought believable traces to their characters.” Opera Today’s James Sohre noted of Ms. Arwady’s singing, “(her) powerful, rich contralto always adds immeasurably to any show, and her secure reading of Pasqualita was no exception.” She will be traveling to Opera de Montreal to sing Erda in *Das Rheingold* and Kathy Hagen in *Champion*. Opera Warhorses wrote of Mr. Okulitch’s performance: “Canadian baritone Daniel Okulitch is a master of creating vivid portraits of outsized characters Okulitch gave a nicely sung, but searing portrait of General Groves, who represented the interests of and demanded adherence to the timetable of the American war department.” Mr. Okulitch has just completed singing Ennis Del Mar in the New York City Opera’s production of *Brokeback Mountain*. He created the role in the 2014 world premiere. The August Opera News wrote: “Okulitch delivered the final monologue with reserves of beautiful tone that pierced the heart.” Classical Voice North America noted: “Baritone Daniel Okulitch was stunningly effective in the demanding role of Ennis, which he also sang in the original Madrid production. A consummate actor, he was riveting, always convincing, with rustic good looks.” Mr. Okulitch’s upcoming engagements include the title role in *Don Giovanni* with Mani-toba Opera and *Messa di Gloria* with San Diego Opera.

Santa Fe Opera’s Apprentice Program For Singers was begun in 1957, funded by John Crosby, the opera company’s first General Director. This

year’s program featured 44 participants, from an application pool of over 1,000 with an acceptance rate of 3.8 percent. The web site describes the program’s start with: “a program for young singers who were in transition from academic to professional life, the Apprentice Program for Singers began. More than 1,500 aspiring singers have participated in the program. Many are professional performers; others are teachers and coaches at major opera companies and universities. In 1965, the Apprentice Program for Theater Technicians was added, and it too has become an important training tool.” This past season, twelve former Apprentice Singers were featured in principal roles. Opera Today considered the impact of this program when writing about their contribution to *Doctor Atomic*. “The biggest star of the night might just have been the Young Apprentice Opera Chorus, meticulously groomed by chorus master Susanne Sheston. From the very first choral statements they served notice that they were here to make thrilling music, flawlessly articulated, and dramatically compelling. Their high caliber contribution would be welcomed at any opera house in the world.”

Merolini **Brian Jagde** (Merola 2009) just completed singing Jose in *Carmen* in the Arena di Verona Opera Festival. Concerto Net reviewed him with: “the best of the cast is, without a shadow of a doubt, Brian Jagde’s Don José, with an excellent ring and projection, as well as beautiful intentions in the soft singing. He is preferred in the scenes that need more drama and, even as an actor, he gives his best (however all in the context of a totally positive performance) in the last two acts.” He will be singing Cavaradossi in San Francisco Opera’s new production of *Tosca* this fall. Mr. Jagde was reviewed by Bachtrack when he sang that role in Teatro di San Carlo: “Brian Jagde is an American tenor with a well-focused voice and strong top register...Jagde gave it his all as the heroic Cavaradossi. His arias “Recondita armonia” and “E lucevan le stelle” resonated effortlessly in the house...” Mr. Jagde will reprise

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this role at the Royal Opera House this December. Following *Tosca*, he will travel to Dresden to sing in his role and house debut in *Il Tabarro* and *Cavalleria Rusticana*, then to Barcelona for his role and house debut in *La Gioconda*, then to Paris to sing in *La Forza del Destino*.

San Francisco Classical Voice considered the three recent offering from West Edge Opera noting of the company: "That's why I'm so enamored with West Edge Opera's recent programming choices. The company has been bravely tackling the kinds of works that are making a stir across the Atlantic, but rarely get produced in the U.S. After staging British composer Thomas Adès's *Powder Her Face* (1995) two years ago, the festival featured Francesconi's equally provocative *Quartett* (2011) this season, which opened at Richmond's Craneway Conference Center on Saturday in its West Coast premiere." *Quartett* engages **Hadleigh Adams** (Adler 2013-2014) as Viscount de Valmont, and Joe Cadagin writes in SFCV: "As Valmont, Adams slowly descended into lecherous madness over the course of the evening. By the end of the opera, he was half-dressed and drunkenly teetering on a single high heel. I'm beginning to suspect Adams doesn't sign a contract unless it stipulates that he appear shirtless in the production, but at least the barihunk has a brawny voice to back up his toned physique."

West Edge Opera has engaged several Merolini in their recent performances. August brought *Pelleas and Melisande* to the stage in Richmond. San Francisco Classical Voice noted: "*Pelléas & Mélisande* was a brave and daring undertaking for this small, intrepid company. At once powerful and fragile, emotionally loaded and occasionally static, the opera calls for a sophisticated blend of assets. Many of them came across here." Two Merola alumni sang including **Efrain Solis** as Golaud, and **Philip Skinner** as King Arkel. Also in August, West Edge presented *Mata Hari* which SFCV considered with: "Almost all of the afternoon's vocal performers impressed, with Molly Mahoney as the prison nun delivering a tremen-

dous take on a character even more changeable than Hari herself. Michael Grammer, **Daniel Cilli** (OSJ 2006-2010), and Daniel Yoder all offered sculpted and confident renderings of the soldiers."

Another Opera San José alumni recently sang in OSJ's *The Abduction from the Seraglio*. **Michael Dailey** sang Pedrillo. His upcoming engagements include: Mozart's *Litaniae de venerabili altaris sacramento* and Part's *Berliner Messe* with Sacramento Choral Society and Orchestra. He will also sing Leonard Bast in the world premiere of *Howard's End America* with Earplay and RealOpera. **Rebecca Davis** (Merola 2010) sang Konstanze in this same OSJ production of *The Abduction from the Seraglio* with Mr. Dailey. Staatsoper Hannover has cast her in three upcoming productions: the title role in *Madama Butterfly*, Erste Dame in *Die Zauberflöte*, and Helena in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.

Laura Claycomb (Merola 1989, 1990) recently performed with the Dallas Opera. Opera Warhorses' review noted: "Texas lyric coloratura soprano Laura Claycomb assayed the role of Donna Anna, her role debut. It proved to be a distinguished performance, exhibiting the vocal control one requires singing Mozart's operas. In the rapid-fire cadenzas of Non mir dir one got a hint of Claycomb's coloratura prowess, suggesting to me that an artist like Claycomb, who triumphs in the title role of Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor*, can also be a great Donna Anna." Ms. Claycomb will be featured by Southwestern University's Sarofim School of Fine Arts' Music Department in recital with pianist Keith Weber in November.

Save the Date:
Sunday June 9, 2019
SJOG Annual Champagne
Brunch and Opera
Entertainment

A Visit to Starting Arts

Colette Siegel, SJOG Board member

This September Steve Zilles, Joan Shomler and I were invited to visit Starting Arts in San Jose. We received a warm welcome from the director Ann Watts and her assistant Jake Lake.

Starting Arts Opera Assembly is unique in promoting theater and opera in the Bay Area. This next year they will produce a performance of Mozart's *The Magic Flute* choosing children (at least a dozen) from Title One schools plus children of other schools. Of course there will be professional singers as well.

Starting Arts has wonderful facilities including a theater (at least 70 seats), a huge props and costumes warehouse and more!

The program is led by director Ann Watts and Jake Lake, who was artistic administrator for Opera San José from 2012 to 2016. He received a bachelor degree and a Master of Music in vocal performance from San Francisco Conservatory of Music.

Michael Taylor will direct their latest opera, *The Magic Flute*.

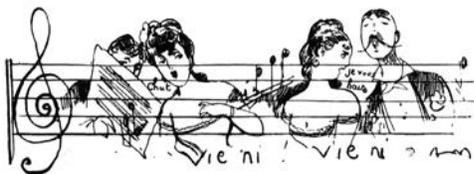
We spent two wonderful hours and were very impressed by the professionalism and enthusiasm of Starting Arts!

SJOG supports Starting Arts. For more information, please check out their website at www.startingarts.com

Special Lecture, November 14

Steve Zilles, Lecture Committee Chair

The final lecture of 2018 on Wednesday, November 14, is *It's a Wonderful Life*, music by Jake Heggie with the libretto by Gene Scheer who will be our speaker. The opera is based on the beloved 1946 movie directed by Frank Capra and starring Jimmy Stewart. It tells the story of George Bailey in Bedford Falls, NY and the angel Clara who is sent to be his Guardian Angel and show him the value of his life when he is on the verge of suicide. The opera gives this story, which many have seen in one or more of its frequent pre-Christmas performances, new depth and meaning. In particular the role of the Guardian Angel, Clara (instead a male Clarence in the film) is expanded and that helps us understand her difficulties in dealing with the situation. The music is romantic with references to the jazz and dance crazes of the "20s".



SJOG Newsletter

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Merolini Shine at Plácido Domingo's Operalia

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By Janos Gereben, September 4, 2018

At the 26th-annual Operalia world opera competition Sunday in Portugal's Teatro Nacional De São Carlos, mezzos ruled at an unusual final concert without a single soprano. The final competition was streamed free by Medici.TV to a large worldwide audience.

Plácido Domingo founded Operalia in 1993 to help launch the careers of promising young opera singers between the ages of 18 and 32. Out of some 1,000 applications annually, 40 are selected, who then participate in a week of activities with Domingo and others before competing in three rounds of performances.

Domingo, 77, continues nonstop activities as performer around the world, while also serving as general director of the Los Angeles Opera. The tenor (now baritone), who made his first professional appearance 61 years ago, will be hosted by the San Francisco Opera for a recital in the War Memorial Opera House on Oct. 21.

In Lisbon yesterday, Emily D'Angelo, 23, a tall Italian mezzo who lives in Canada, took most of the awards, including the top prize among women. American mezzo Samantha Hankey, 26, hailed for her Cinderella in last year's Merola Opera Program and a winner of the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions the same year, took second place, and shared the Birgit Nilsson Prize with D'Angelo.

D'Angelo sang "Dopo notte, atra e funesta" from Handel's *Ariodante*, and Hankey's final selection was the aria "Da, chas nastal!" from Tchaikovsky's *The Maid of Orleans*.

The third prize among women went to another Merolina (Class of 2013), Canadian mezzo Rihab Chaieb, 31. She sang "Mon cœur s'ouvre à ta voix" from Saint-Saëns's *Samson and Delilah*.

Men receiving the three top awards are all tenors who presented Russian repertory: Pavel Petrov, 27, from Belarus, first place; Migran Agadzhan-

yan, 26, from Russia, second place; and Arseny Yakovlev, 26, from Russia, third place.

Rolex (Operalia's sponsor) Audience Prizes went to D'Angelo and Luis Gomes, 31, a Portuguese tenor. D'Angelo, Petrov, and Gomes received Zarzuela Prizes; Josy Santos, 29, a mezzo from Brazil, received the CulturArte Prize.

Also among the finalists were German baritone Johannes Kammler, 30; Chinese tenor Long Long, 27; American baritone Sean Michael Plumb, 26; South African bass-baritone Simon Shibambu, 31; Swiss-French mezzo Marina Viotti, 32; and Colombian-American soprano Vanessa Vasquez, 28.

A prominent Merolina was among Operalia's four accompanists, who played in all the preliminary rounds before Domingo conducted the Lisbon Orchestra at the finals. Tamara Sanikidze was Merola apprentice coach in 2009; she and her sister, Nino Sanikidze, have been assisting Domingo for more than a decade. The other 2018 accompanists were Myra Huang and Israel Gursky.

San Francisco Classical Voice

<https://www.sfcv.org/>



November Calendar

by Connie Zilles

November 14, San José Opera Guild lecture, Gene Scheer discusses *It's a Wonderful Life* at the JCC of Silicon Valley, 14855 Oka Road (cross street Lark Avenue) Los Gatos. SJOG and JCC Members free. Non-members \$10.

November 17, 18, 20, 25, 30, Dec. 2, Opera San José presents *Pagliacci* by Leoncavallo at the California Theatre, 8pm except Sundays at 3pm. Tickets 408-437-4450 or www.operasj.org. Introduction to Opera Talks, 1½ hours before the performance.

The “World of Italian Opera” at the Italian American Heritage Foundation on **December 7** will feature a buffet dinner and the Opera San José singers performing various arias. This is a festive event that OSJ and the SJOG participate in annually. You can get details at www.IAHFSJ.org.

Other Opera Opportunities

Metropolitan Opera Simulcast in HD, Showing at Century Oakridge 20, 225-7340 or Santana Row 6, 554-7010. 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.

Marnie, Nico Muhly — November 10, 9:55am
Encore on November 14.

The Magic Flute, Mozart — December 1, 9:55am
Special Holiday Presentation, no encores.

La Traviata, Verdi — December 15, 9:45am
Encore December 19.

Adriana Lecouvreur, Cilia — January 12, 9:55am
Encore Jan 16.

Encores this year are at 1pm and 6:30pm. Please check with theaters concerning times.

