



NEWSLETTER

Joan Shomler, Editor

May, 2020

Covid-19 and the Shelter-in-Place orders have impacted our Spring program

Steve Zilles, President, San Jose Opera Guild

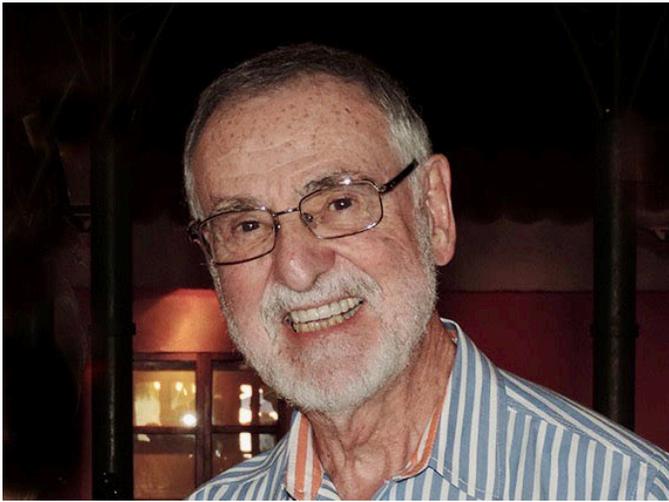
Normally at this time I would be writing about the Spring Lectures and inviting you to plan for the San José Opera Guild Champagne Brunch. The San Francisco Opera has cancelled its Spring Season and with it all the ancillary events. That means that our Spring Opera Preview Lectures have also been cancelled. In addition, the San José Opera Guild Board recognizes that gatherings are unlikely to resume soon and has decided to postpone our Gala Champagne Brunch until 2021. Because this event raises more than half of our income in any year, this impacts our ability to support the organizations to which we donate every year. These include Opera San José, the Merola Opera Program, West Bay Opera, the San Francisco Opera Guild Education program, the San Jose State Music and Dance program and Starting Arts, a K-12 school arts program. With performance opportunities impacted, these organizations need as much support as we can give them. Whether or not you have been a regular attendee of the Gala Champagne Brunch, I urge you to donate the cost of your Brunch ticket (or tickets), \$90 per person, to the San José Opera Guild. We are a 501c3 organization so all donations are tax deductible to the extent allowed by the law. Donations of any amount can be made using the SJOG Membership form, https://sjoperaguild.org/documents/Membership2020_cmp.pdf, and just using the Donation section of that form. (If you have not yet renewed your membership, you can do that at the same time.) The donated money will be used to continue our support to the above organizations and to keep artistic performance alive in the South Bay and Peninsula. In lieu of our being able to meeting in person, check the May Calendar (see page 3) for some alternative sources for opera enjoyment. ❀

Career Updates by Susan English

On February 1st, Vallejo Community Arts Foundation presented: *Three Tenors! The Next Generation*. According to San Francisco Classical Voice: “In the spirit of the original Three Tenors, taking opera outside the opera house, the Next Generation welcomes opera buffs and aims to introduce opera to a new audience.” From Opera Bobb, “In the tradition of the popular Three Tenors concerts that packed stadiums with music-lovers a few years ago, this concert of romantic Italian opera arias and sensuous Neapolitan songs is performed by three of today’s most promising young tenors: **Alex Boyer** (OSJ 2008-13), **Christopher Oglesby** (Adler 2019-20) and **Pene Pati** (Adler 2016-17.)”

Also in February, West Bay Opera presented Verdi’s *Macbeth*, and featured two of Opera San Jose’s former Resident Artists: **Christina Major** and **Krassen Karagiozov**. According to San Francisco Classical Voice: “Major entered the scene in Act 1 with guns blazing, with an ‘Ambizioso spirito’ ranging from forte to fortissimo and sporting miles-wide vibrato. It wasn’t a nuanced start, but it showed off crunchy low notes, a ringing top, and impressive agility. Her Lady Macbeth seemed determined and slightly unhinged. The nuance came later: in her sleepwalking scene, she shaped lines with wistful delicacy. She was

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Frederic Paul Heiman

March 23, 1939 – April 9, 2020

Los Gatos, California

Frederic Paul Heiman, 81, passed away at his home with his beloved wife of 41 years, Peggy, at his side. He was an engineer and physicist, who helped develop several technologies that are now a part of everyday life. Over Fred's 35-year career, he won numerous awards, and held over 50 patents. His life was filled with extraordinary richness of family, friends, travel and adventure, projects and inventions, sports cars, music and wildlife.

Fred was born in the Bronx and raised in Brooklyn, NY. Fred's first love was music, and he became a proficient trumpet player in his youth, playing gigs at weddings, bar mitzvahs and jazz clubs. The thrill of jam sessions soon gave way to the exhilaration of scientific discovery as he turned to science and technology, graduating summa cum laude from City College of New York with an undergraduate degree in electrical engineering.

In 1962, while pursuing his PhD in solid-state physics from Princeton University, and working at RCA Laboratories, Fred was the co-inventor of the first working MOS integrated circuit, incorporating 16 transistors.

After leaving RCA Fred became the head of Mars Electronics, a division of the Mars Candy Company. His team at Mars developed the first fully electronic coin mechanism for use in vending machines.

While working at Symbol Technologies in the early 1990's Fred led a team to create one of the first mobile handheld computers - complete with operating system, applications, wireless connectivity and a built-in bar code scanner. It was called the "integrated scanning terminal," and was a precursor to smart phones, which would be introduced 15 years later. At this time, Fred became a prominent figure in the creation of the 802.11 IEEE standard for LAN communications, later known as Wi-Fi. Fred and Symbol wrote the first Wi-Fi specification, developed the first Wi-Fi chips and released the first products. He retired from Symbol in 1999.

Fred met and married Peggy, the love of his life, in Philadelphia and they embarked on their life of adventure. In 1983 they moved to California, where both worked at Intel Corporation. Life in California led to a love of scuba diving and underwater videography. Fred and Peggy traveled the world in search of sea creatures large and small. Fred garnered recognition from the international underwater photography community, including the Stan Waterman Award for Excellence in Underwater Videography. Fred developed a passion for wildlife, ultimately traveling to over 60 countries to film and photograph most of the major animal species in their natural habitats. Fred's YouTube channel includes many of his wildlife and underwater films, with one "Lions of the Kalahari" garnering over 1.2 million views.

Music never left his life, and it was opera that fueled his passion in his retirement years. Fred and Peggy used their skills to film every opera produced by Opera San José to create promotional videos and commercials. Fred served as Vice President of the Board of Trustees, as well as Chair of the Long-Range Planning Committee. Fred was the Treasurer of the San José Opera Guild from 2017-2020.

Woodworking became a passion of Fred's during his retirement. He challenged himself, using his love of art and technology to design and build intricate, original pieces, which fill the homes of his beloved family.

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Fred was first and foremost, the patriarch and leader of his extended family. He led by example, with kindness, generosity, warmth and compassion. Graced with many talents and a wellspring of love, Fred leaves behind a beautiful legacy of technological innovations, wood sculptures, wildlife videos and records of annual family get-togethers.

He will be greatly missed by his loving wife Peggy and their children; Susan Fitzgerald (Mike), Lynn

Newman (George), Rachel Heiman, Mitchell Levy (Alex), Stuart Levy (Christine), Lauren Skye (Eric) and his grandchildren, Claire (Christopher), Lily, Duncan, Sophie, Willa, Taylor, Madison and Ethan.

Family and friends will gather at a later date to remember and celebrate Fred's life. In lieu of flowers, please consider a donation in Fred's memory to Opera San José.

May Calendar by Connie Zilles

Due to the cancellation of all operas and related events, I am listing individual streaming sources and general sources of opportunities which can continue to fill our lives with beautiful music and interesting productions. We personally have been able to enjoy operas from The Met, Vienna, Munich, and Livermore, which have helped us immensely in this time of sheltering in place.

The Metropolitan Opera is streaming opera archival performances: New York's Metropolitan Opera free streaming. Each opera starts at 3:30 pm Pacific time and is streamed for 23 hours. You can start it at any time during that 23 hours and even pause it and then continue but within the 23 hour time. Each day at 3:30 a different opera is streamed and the earlier operas disappear.

Vienna Staatsoper is streaming archival performances on demand. After registration at www.staatsoperlive.com at the bottom of the page, a subscription can be booked free of charge until further notice.

Bayerischestaatsoper is offering a limited number of performances on their stream, currently, *Die Frau Ohne Schatten* and *The Elixir of Love*.

Livermore Valley Opera has uploaded some of their performances to youtube.com. In particular, they have posted there excellent production of *A Florentine Tragedy*, a rarely seen opera

by Zemlinsky, an early 20th century composer from Vienna.

San Francisco Symphony will broadcast archived performances on Tuesdays on KDFC-FM and you can find the schedule here: <https://www.kdfc.com/radio/programs/san-francisco-symphony-broadcast/>

KDFC has also recently established a new blog, called Play on California, that is updated daily with information on music that you can tune-into or watch for active California musicians and musical organizations.

A wonderful general source is OPERA America, <https://www.operaamerica.org/applications/schedule/index.aspx> This source is updated regularly and is divided into live stream, on demand, audio and multiple offerings. All the information is on one page with a direct link at each item to the source.

This source was the first place I saw the announcement of Opera San José's planned free streaming of *Idomeneo* which will be offered from April 18 to May 18th.

Another wonderful source is Opera Bobb. It is a large site and contains much information including lists of the opera houses that are streaming in both Europe and in the U.S. It also contains information on how to stream and suggestions of upcoming streams of interest. ❀

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partnered well with Krassen Karagiozov (Macbeth), whose baritone boasts creamy legato and crisp diction. He delivered ‘Mi si affaccia un pugnal?’ with the measured, semi-heroic posturing of a war hero...” Joshua Kosman also reviewed their performances. Of Christina he wrote: “Yet it was Major’s singing, even more than the grim subject matter or the sepulchral lighting scheme or the spooky plunges into the netherworld of the witches, that made a listener’s skin tingle with shivers of awestruck delight. This was not a woman you would ever make the mistake of turning your back to unguarded.” He went on to consider Krassen’s performance with: “She had a capable partner in Karagiozov, one who brought darkly gleaming tone and a robust presence to the role. Macbeth’s combination of fortitude and doubt came through repeatedly, especially in the final aria, which Karagiozov delivered with finely rendered artistry.”

Mid-February brought the opening of Opera San José’s production of Verdi’s *Il trovatore*. Opera Today reviewed the performances noting the contribution of Merolini **Eugene Brancoveanu** (Merola 2004). “Eugene Brancoveanu is a mellifluous, malevolent Count di Luna. His baritone is a marvel of tonal beauty, buzzing with virility, and eminently flexible. Mr. Brancoveanu invests the many repetitive confrontational declamations with admirable delineation, and he avoids the trap of barking the accented scale and arpeggiated passages. He displays enviable ease in the upper reaches of the part and finds some welcome brighter swings in the Count’s mostly dark intentions.” The review ended with an endorsement of OSJ: “This winning mounting of *Il trovatore* is not only top professional quality, but it is also excellent entertainment value at Opera San José’s reasonable pricing. Come to the California theatre early and you may also get treated to a pre-show pops recital on the historic organ in the atmospheric lobby.”

In March, the Glyndebourne Opera Cup 2020 final competition was held in the UK. Drawing 209 applicants from 39 countries, this was the second iteration of a biennial competition for opera singers at the start of their professional careers, held in the Sussex opera house out of season. The winners were: First prize £15,000 and the offer of a role in an opera: Edward Nelson, baritone (31, USA) – Merola 2014 and The audience prize £5,000: Meigui Zhang, soprano (26, China) – Merola 2018. The Telegraph wrote of Nelson: “Edward Nelson, 31, grew up in a non-musical family, with the exception of his uncle who used to take him to concerts. Growing up he took part in a variety of performing arts including jazz, classical piano and musical theatre before dedicating himself to opera. He recently made an acclaimed European debut at Norwegian National Opera as Pelléas in Debussy’s *Pelléas et Mélisande* after learning the role in just four weeks.” Rupert Christiansen went on to report: “At tonight’s Glyndebourne Opera Cup final, Nelson performed two dramatic arias from Ambroise Thomas’ *Hamlet* before sealing his win with a spectacular performance of the show-stopping ‘Largo al factotum’ aria from *The Barber of Seville*.”

Another competition closer to home is The Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions. This is a program designed to discover promising young opera singers and assist in the development of their careers. This year’s semifinalists were chosen from more than 1,000 singers who participated in auditions held in 40 districts throughout the United States, Canada, Puerto Rico, and Mexico, and who then competed in the 12 regional finals. Some of today’s greatest singers got their start in the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions, including Renée Fleming, Susan Graham, Stephanie Blythe, and Nadine Sierra – all former Merola Opera alumni. The most recent finalists performed on March 1st and included Merolini **Xiaomeng Zhang**.

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The March edition of Opera News featured two Merolini in their News and Noteworthy section. **Rene Barbera** (Merola 2008) will sing Elvino in a new production of *Sonnambula* in Liege then travel to Palermo to perform in Rosini's *Sabat Mater*, then to Florence for Don Martino in Cherbini's *Lo Sposo di Tre e Marito di Nessuns*. Countertenor **Aryeh Nussbaum Cohen** (Merola 2016) made his role and house debut singing Tamerlano in Portland Opera's *Bajazet*. In April he will travel to Versailles for his French debut in both Pergolesi's and Vivaldi's *Sabat Mater*s. When he won as a finalist in the 2017 Metropolitan Opera's National Council Auditions, the New York Times said of his performance: "But there was only one complete artist. At just 23, Aryeh Nussbaum Cohen, a baby-faced countertenor from Brooklyn, already possesses a remarkable gift for intimate communication in a vast hall, combined with a voice of velvety gentleness — surprisingly penetrating given the tenderness of its texture — and a taste for adventure."

Interesting opera news articles found on the web by Susan English

Casting of SF Opera's 'Figaro' lays bare the racial fault lines in opera: <https://datebook.sfchronicle.com/music/casting-of-sf-operas-figaro-lays-bare-the-racial-fault-lines-in-opera>

Sheri Greenawald announces her retirement: <https://www.sfcv.org/music-news/sheri-greenawald-announces-her-retirement-as-head-of-merola-opera-program>

Pocket Opera charts an ambitious course since the retirement of its founder: <https://datebook.sfchronicle.com/music/pocket-opera-charts-an-ambitious-course-since-the-retirement-of-its-founder>

West Bay Opera has video clips of their 2019 productions available on their website www.wbopera.org.

Livermore Opera presented *A Florentine Tragedy* (Zemlinsky) & *Gianni Schicchi* (Puccini) – Two one-act works, both set in Florence and based on tales by literary giants (Oscar Wilde and Dante Alighieri.) These performances were directed by **Layna Chianakas** (OSJ 1995-97), with **Alexander Katsman** (Merola 1999, 2000) conducting. The combined cast featured local favorites **Anush Avetisyan**, **Ryan Bradford**, **Liisa Dávila**, **Michael Day** (Merola 2019), **Kirk Eichelberger** (OSJ 2001-03, 2005-06), **Bojan Knežević** (Adler 1995), **Deborah Martinez-Rosengaus**, **Robert Mellon**, **Talin Nalbandian**, and **Jonathan Smucker**. Joshua Kosman noted of these performers: "The three principals returned for "Schicchi," this time joined by a first-rate ensemble that included soprano Deborah Rosengaus and bass-baritones Kirk Eichelberger and Bojan Knežević as members of a greedy, grasping family waiting for their dead relative's will to make them rich." ❁



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An Invitation to Join or Renew

Membership year: February 1, 2020 to January 31, 2021

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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