

THE BOB COLE CONSERVATORY OF MUSIC AT
CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, LONG BEACH AND THE COLLEGE OF THE ARTS PROUDLY PRESENT:



THE OPERA INSTITUTE

OPERA SCENES

STAGE DIRECTOR: LIZBETH LUCCA
MUSICAL DIRECTOR: BRIAN FARRELL
PIANISTS: GUK HUI HAN, BRIAN FARRELL

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 16, 2019 8:00PM
SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 17, 2019 12:00PM

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WELCOME

... to Opera Scenes 2019 at The Bob Cole Conservatory!

This year LizBeth and I chose a program of Opera favorites. Five scenes are from two of Mozart's greatest operas: *Die Zauberflöte* and *Le Nozze di Figaro*. Technically, *Die Zauberflöte* is a Singspiel, which is a lighter operatic form that employs spoken dialogue instead of recitative. In the Act 1 duet, we will be performing the dialogue in English, but the duet will be sung in German. In the Act 4 scene from *Le Nozze di Figaro*, the arias and the long recitative will all be performed in Italian. The quick secco recitative from the opera buffa style of this period is quite a challenge, but our young singers have done an incredible job of learning it and making it their own.

Our other scenes include the definitive opera favorite, Puccini's *La Bohème*, Bellini's incredible *Norma*, Verdi's last opera, *Falstaff*, and Delibes' masterpiece, *Lakmé*. Two great American composers are featured in our program: Douglas Moore and Stephen Sondheim. Graduate student Stefan Jevtic will sing the beloved baritone aria, "Warm as the autumn light" from Moore's *The Ballad of Baby Doe*. To finish our program, the entire cast will perform "A Weekend in the Country" from Sondheim's 1973 hit musical, *A Little Night Music*.

It has been a joy for both LizBeth and I to work with singers from the incredibly talented pool of singers here at The Bob Cole Conservatory. I am always amazed at the dramatic ability, vocal talent, and dedication of our students.

In April the Opera Institute will produce Offenbach's *Orpheus in the Underworld* with dialogue and singing in English. This parody of classical mythology contains some of Offenbach's most famous melodies including the well known Can-Can music.

Please enjoy today's program, and many thanks for your support!

Sincerely,

Brian Farrell, music director
Opera Institute, Bob Cole Conservatory of Music

WHY ARE THERE NO SUPERTITLES? I WANT TO KNOW WHAT'S GOING ON!

I understand. However, the part of the brain that is asking that question and insisting on knowing what is going on is not the part that opera really speaks to. Opera is best served by listening and experiencing with the visceral, nonverbal part of us. After all, the literary precursors to *Tosca*, *La Traviata*, and *La Bohème*, do not have the power of their corresponding operas, which are still performed constantly around the world. Everyone is stirred by "O Fortuna" from *Carmina Burana*, but few could tell you the text of the poem. And of course, all the symphony, piano, and other instrumental music are powerful experiences and no one is asking: 'What's going on?'

On another note, the stories of operas are not complicated. A few succinct sentences in the program notes can tell you the context of the scene. The actors will bring you into the moment to moment progression of the story. Certainly, the fun of the dry recits are what the singers are doing with them, not the text. And some recits can go on forever. I once reduced the recit to Donna Anna's aria for a school show to "There is the murderer of my father" (chord, chord, aria). Many libretti are not great reading. Some lines are ludicrously simplistic or outdated. I did make an exception and used supertitles for *Roméo and Juliette*, since it was the Bard, keeping as close to Shakespeare's verse as possible. When I directed *Der Vampyr*, we used supertitles because it is an unfamiliar opera. Although, in that case we didn't translate everything, just pivotal plot points.

And there are always issues on the practical side. It is not as simple as: 'Let's do supertitles.' Inevitably, the supertitles will get off. We are left with "That's not what they are saying," followed by a dizzying visual as 5 slides go by to catch up to the singing. Sometimes you see the text, and yet there are three people singing. "Who is saying that?" And rarely does the stage director coordinate enough with the supertitle writer, so we have our moments of the supertitles saying "We sing and dance across the stage" as the two bohemians have been staged to sit without moving on the bed. That is not the laughter Puccini was hoping for.

My final objection to supertitles is that as the stage director I am responsible for everything visual on the stage; I am responsible for telling the story visually. Imagine, if you will, trying to tell someone a passionate story and every couple of sentences, they stop looking at you and look at something else where the story is written. Or, put in musical context, imagine you are listening to a great work of music but you are putting your hands over your ears every other phrase. Crazy making.

So, when first watching an opera without supertitles, the bossy brain will get cranky, but then it will go to sleep and allow one's visceral, conceptual creativity to enjoy the undiluted power of the music and the visual story of the opera.

LizBeth Lucca, stage director

PROGRAM

GIUSEPPE VERDI

Act 1—Scene 2 from *Falstaff* (1893)

Mistress Alice Ford: Jasmine Mangal
Mistress Meg Page: Rachel Steinke
Nanetta Ford: Rosalyn Sexton
Mistress Quickly: Nancy Morgan

In an attempt to bolster his finances, Falstaff has sent a letter to Mistress Page asking her to be his Lady. He sent the same letter to Mistress Ford. Without knowing at first of his subterfuge, each woman is eager to tell the other her exciting news. As they discover, each letter has the same handwriting, the same words, the same family seal, the same paper. The only difference between the two letters is the name of the addressee: “Here Meg” “There “Alice.” When they realize what this man has done, they are furious, berate him and his corpulence, and vow to get their revenge. The first step of their plot is to send Mistress Quickly to tell him Mistress Page would like to meet with him and accept his kind offer.

DOUGLAS MOORE

Act 1—Scene 2 from *The Ballad of Baby Doe* (1956)

Horace Tabor: Stefan Jevtic

Horace Tabor is attempting to describe to Elizabeth Doe how her singing has profoundly affected him. He is so enamored with her, he calls her “Baby” Doe.

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART

Act 2—Quartet from *Die Zauberflöte* (1791)

First Guard: Slater Astle
Second Guard: Elijah Cineas
Tamino: Dominic Preston
Pamina: Clara Kelly

Tamino has been preparing to undergo the trials of the Fellowship of the Sun. The two guards describe what is coming. The trial is fraught with danger, they say, and Tamino will be tested by fire, water, earth and air. Tamino bravely replies he has faced his fear of death and is ready to commence the trial. At this point we hear Pamina. She wants to join him in the trials and she has been deemed worthy. They are joyous that they are together again.

Act 3—Duet from *Le Nozze di Figaro* (1786)

Susanna: Liana Wopschall
Count: David Limon

Against all her wishes, Susanna has agreed to the Countess’ plan in which she hopes to trap the Count in an attempted infidelity and make him see the light of marital bliss. The plan required Susanna to give the Count a letter arranging to meet him that evening at the pine grove of the estate. To accept the assignation, the Count was to return the pin (*la spilla*) that sealed the letter to Susanna. (More of the infamous pin later.) Since Susanna has repeatedly and definitely rejected all previous invitations to be with him, he is suspicious of her sudden change of heart. In this duet he confronts her and she convinces him of her sincerity. At the same time she is calling to the god of love not to judge her too harshly. But because of her inattention and the Count’s advances, she sometimes answers his questions with the wrong answer and she must continually reassure him.

Act 1—Duet from *Die Zauberflöte* (1791)

Pamina: Anneka Remp
Papageno: Eric Kornwell

Papageno has been ordered by the Queen of the Night to help the prince Tamino find her daughter and rescue her from the evil Sarastro (spoiler alert: he’s not evil). Papageno has a small painted portrait of Pamina in order to identify her. All goes according to plan, but Papageno is suddenly struck by his sadness that he has no one. Pamina assures him the gods will find someone for him soon. They sing of that wonderful time when they will each have their special mate.

LÉO DELIBES

Act 1—Quintet from *Lakmé* (1883)

Miss Ellen: Clara Kelly
Miss Rose: Rosalyn Sexton
Mistress Bentson: Rachel Steinke
Gérald: Dominic Preston
Frédéric: Stefan Jevtic

This is set in India. Miss Ellen and Gérald, who are a couple, her companion, her chaperone, and his army buddy are taking a walk in the country. They reach the water at the riverbank and realize they are at a private area of the daughter of the local Brahmin high priest. They are at first reluctant to enter, but they explore as they discuss the country, religion, and the differences between women of various cultures and personalities.

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART

Act 4—Scene 1 from *Le Nozze di Figaro* (1786)

Barbarina: Gem Acabal
Figaro: Elijah Cineas
Marcellina: Nancy Morgan

The Count had told Barbarina to return the pin (*la spilla*) to Susanna, thus signalling his agreement to meet her that evening. Unfortunately, Barbarina has lost the pin and is desperately searching for it when Figaro and Marcellina come upon them. The incautious Barbarina reveals to Figaro that his wife has agreed to meet the Count in a romantic assignation at the pine grove. Figaro is furious, but tries to hide it in order to get as much information from Barbarina as possible. When she leaves, Figaro refuses the calm counsel of his newly-found mother, Marcellina, and leaves vowing revenge for all husbands. Marcellina tells us that she will warn Susanna as an action of solidarity for all women, who must endure the cruel behavior of their men.

GIACOMO PUCCINI

Act 3— Quartet from *La Bohème* (1896)

Mimi: Anneka Remp
Rodolfo: Slater Astle
Musetta: Lora Bashmakian
Marcello: Stefan Jevtic

Mimi has just discovered by eavesdropping that Rudolfo wanted to leave her because he couldn't bear the pain of watching her die from her illness. So she says a final goodbye with no hard feelings: "Addio, senza rancor." She then lists the little things she left in the flat that he should wrap up and leave with the porter for her to pick up. If he wants to keep the small bonnet he bought her on their first night together as a memento, that would be fine. Musetta and Marcello enter with their fiery love. Marcello is jealous that Musetta was flirting with another man. It ends with them calling each other names. After they leave, Mimi and Rodolfo exit together having decided winter is too depressing a time to break up. They will stay together until spring.

VINCENZO BELLINI

Act 2— Scene 1 - Duet from *Norma* (1831)

Norma: Jasmine Mangal
Adalgisa: Liana Wopschall

Norma has secretly broken her Druid vows, loved the local Roman commander, Pollione, and borne him two children. She finds out that Adalgisa, her handmaiden, is Pollione's current favorite, and in fact he is planning to go back to Rome with Adalgisa and to abandon Norma. She despairs and considers killing the children to save them from a life of slavery. Eventually, she begs Adalgisa to take the children into her household with Pollione. Norma will kill herself. Adalgisa tells Norma that she will never leave Gaul. Adalgisa agrees to go to the Roman camp and tell Pollione of Norma's grief, but her hope is to persuade him to return to Norma. She then renounces Pollione. They sing together, each expressing her own thoughts and feelings until Norma realizes that Adalgisa will give up Pollione and remain with her "Si fino all'ore estreme" / "Until the last hour."

WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART

Act 2—Duet from *Die Zauberflöte* (1791)

Papageno: Elijah Cineas
Papagena: Gem Acabal

Papagena is finally being united with Papageno for good. They are happy, happy bird creatures. They plan all the children they will have. "Boys," says Papageno. "Girls," say Papagena. "Whatever," they decide.

STEPHEN SONDHEIM

Act 1— “A Weekend in the Country” from *A Little Night Music* (1973)

Anne Egerman: Lora Bashmakian
Petra, Anne’s lady’s maid: Nancy Morgan
Fredrik Egerman: David Limon
Count Carl-Magnus Malcolm: Eric Kornwell
Countess Charlotte Malcolm: Rachel Steinke
Henrik Egerman: Slater Astle
Plus full cast

Backstory: Desiree Armfeld, the actress, has had a decades-old love affair with Fredrik Egerman (her daughter is named Fredrika). But she keeps choosing her career over marriage, and so, eventually he gave up waiting, and he recently has married the young Anne. Fredrik goes backstage to see Desiree at one of her shows. She tells him she is now ready to settle down with him. He ruefully announces he is married, although Anne has yet to show him any marital favors. In sympathy for his situation, Desiree gives him a fling in her dressing room. When her current lover Count Carl-Magnus comes in to visit, he finds Fredrik with no pants, dressed in her dressing gown. They explain it away innocently, blaming it on a stain on his pants.

Now we come to our scene today. Desiree has invited Fredrick, and his wife and family, to her estate in the country for a weekend. Anne is excited at the invitation until she realizes whom it is from and the probable seduction plot behind the invitation. When she asks her friend the Countess for advice, she persuades Anne to pick up the gauntlet and play the youth card. The Countess then manipulates the Count into inviting themselves to the weekend in the country.

STAGE DIRECTOR LIZBETH LUCCA

is the Artistic Director of Repertory Opera Company and has sung over 25 roles such as Princess Eboli (once understudying Delora Zajick), Amneris (at the John Anson Ford Theater), Azucena, Santuzza, the Witch in *Hansel and Gretel*, Marcelina, Zita, and Lady Macbeth. Reviews: “her frisky demeanor and melodious voice brought thunderous applause;” “a powerful and intriguing vocal presence as Amneris, singing with deep passion and believable jealousy;” “solidly dramatic;” “outstanding in her role.” In her most recent non-stage work, she played the Marasciella in Francis Ford Coppola’s *Distant Vision* in which she sang “Stride la vampa” while carrying a baby goat. She is the author of *Acting Techniques for Opera*, which is being used as a resource in Young Artist Programs, Universities and Continuing Education programs across the United States.

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