

Our Next Opera League Seminar

By Anne Russell Sullivan

Hello Opera League members. I am thrilled to report that our very first Seminar of the season on September 5 was packed to the rafters with over 170 attendees. Our speakers on *Siegfried*, Mitchell Morris and Simon Williams, were wonderful, refreshments were delicious, and everyone had a terrific time.

If this is a trend I suggest that you all get your reservations in right away for our second seminar, Sunday afternoon, November 15, from 1-4 pm. Our Host, Dr. Allan Edmiston, has found two wonderful speakers for this seminar.

This time Mark Robson will be exploring an opera that will probably be new to most of us: Handel's *Tamerlano*. Championed and sung for us by our own Maestro Plácido Domingo, this should be a very exciting premiere for LA Opera.

The premiere performance in London in 1724 introduced the celebrated Italian tenor Francesco Borosini to the London stage. Borosini contributed much to this opera, introducing Handel to its theme and providing the idea of its tragic

conclusion. Most importantly, this was the very first opera to feature a tenor in the role of hero. Prior to this time, heroes' roles were written for soprano Castrati and, though hard to imagine today, the tenor voice as such was considered simply a paler version of the soprano register.

The story of *Tamerlano* is set in 1403 in Prusa (now Bursa, Turkey). A Tartar ruler, Tamerlane, falls in love with the daughter of his prisoner, the sultan of Turkey. She is in love with and is loved by a Greek Prince, who is a visitor in the Tartar King's palace. Although Tamerlane is betrothed to another, he intrigues to win the heart of his prisoner and to deceive his Greek friend. His immoral exercise of power leads to tragedy and despair.

In the second segment of this seminar, Michael Hackett will explore the intricacies of our December opera, Rossini's *Barber of Seville*.

As in September, we will begin at 1 pm, break for a short intermission with sweet refreshments about 2:30 pm, and then continue with part two of our afternoon. So please eat lunch before you arrive!!

Make your reservations today, and see you in November!



Photo: Edward Lieb

Opera League members in costume at the Halloween Musicale in 2006

By Thomas Shepard

Meryl Streep once said that it's often only after donning her costume for the first time that the character she's portraying reveals itself. We all love to dress up and live our fantasy for a few hours. Now here's your chance!

You are invited to attend a special "Halloween Musicale" at the home of Gordon and Sylvia Traub on October 25 at 2:00 pm.

If you've ever attended an event at the Traubs, you'll know that Sylvia suits up a fête like no one else. And as if that weren't exciting enough, here's how you can shine like an opera star yourself.

"Masquerade"

THE MUSICALE

In addition to our musical program, "Musicales" director Thomas Shepard is going to emcee our Opera League's very own version of the 50s hit TV show, "What's My Line." You—the audience—will get to quiz a succession of "famous folk from the world of opera."

Our contestants will be any member of the Opera League who has a passion for, and a certain extent of knowledge about their favorite singer or opera character. Contestants will impersonate that person or character to the audience. You will enter in character (and in any degree of costume you may so desire) and with the assistance of the moderator, you will be asked to answer a series of questions about "yourself" by the audience with the response of YES, NO, or I DON'T RECALL! (Just like on the original show . . . or maybe like a Senate hearing!) If at the end of a 5 minute period, your identity has not been correctly guessed, you will be awarded a special "winners prize"—free opera stuff!

Continued on page 3

a word from our president



Judy Lieb, President

Dear Members and Friends,

This season has started off with a 'bang'! Approximately 170 members and guests attended our *Siegfried* seminar on September 5. There were 11 Gatherings on *Elixir* and *Siegfried* in August and September. Artist Services volunteers and picked up, returned, and assisted artists. And our Hospitality volunteers hosted nine cast dinners for over 340 cast members.

Many thanks to LA Opera for the letter to current members extending a special payment plan to those wishing to purchase complete Ring Cycle tickets. If you have not purchased yours yet, now is the time!

League members are also planning for the upcoming *Ring Festival*, beginning in April and extending through June. More information about the events can be found at www.ringfestivalla.com. The Opera League's Concierge Service is up and running on our web site and committee members continue to refine the services that we will offer to our out-of-town visitors. Brita Millard is also finalizing the showing of Tony Palmer's films next May, and Dorothy Wait is working on a fundraising recital with Arnold Bezuyen, our *Loge*, in June. Just for fun, take a look at the *Cast Your Dream Ring* in this issue.

The newly formed Membership Committee has met and is planning strategies to retain current members and attract new ones, as well as revising our membership documents. One of the best ways to gain new members is for our current members to talk about the League with other opera lovers and friends. Consider giving a membership to a friend or music student as a gift or a thank you!

We hope to see you at upcoming League events such as local Gatherings, the Musicale on October 25, the Seminar on November 15, and of course, at the opera!

You can contact any member of the Board or request more information via email at info@operaleague.org or leave a message on our 24 hour message line at 213.972.7220. Since we do not have paid staff, an Opera League volunteer will respond to your inquiry in a timely manner.

All the Best,
Judy

Executive Committee

Judy Lieb	President
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Anne Russell Sullivan	Social Chair

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Steve Kohn	Fund Raising/PR
Joe Lee	Backstage Magic
Edward Lieb	Bravo Editor
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Rebecca Bowne	Boutique
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24-hour League Message Line: 213.972.7220

Visit us at www.operaleague.org

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CA 90049-0933

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Editor	Edward Lieb
Printer	Licher Direct Mail
Newsletter Design	Bacall:Creative

As your League evolves electronically, we need your current email address so you can be kept up to date. So please send your e-mail address to info@operaleague.org. And, since we would love to have ALL members on our email list, send us your "second member" address also!

Please note that we have a new post office box address:

PO Box 49933
Los Angeles, CA 90049-0933

Member Profile: Nina Haro

Nina has been an Opera League member for 11 years and served on the Board of Directors for six years. Nina started her volunteering odyssey with Larry Rappaport's Opera Shop and the LA Opera Costume Shop, where she scheduled fittings by mail and phone, and organized computer information and "running packets" for costume rentals of various operas. Since then, her volunteer activities have increased to include:

- Secretary, Board of Directors
- Volunteer Hours Coordinator
- Lightwalking
- Artist Services
- Boutique
- Cast Dinners
- Seminars
- Patron and Sustaining Event Chair
- Co-Chair of the Patron Dinner



Nina Haro

Nina says that her favorite opera "has always been *The Magic Flute*, although, in general, my favorite composer of operas is Verdi." Her favorite singer historically is Roberta Peters. Nina just found out that Ms. Peters never even went to high school as she was already in intensive training to be a singer! Some of her favorite singers in the present are Juan Diego Florez, Jessica Rivera, Susan Graham, David Daniels, Joseph Calleja, and of course, Plácido Domingo.

Nina opened La Cabaña Restaurant over 46 years ago and has graciously hosted several League events, especially the annual "Artist Services Awards & Recognition Dinner."

We take great pleasure in recognizing Nina Haro for all her valuable contributions to the Opera League of Los Angeles.

Put Your Imagination and Sense of Humor to Work!

By Diane Gray

"Cast Your Dream Ring" is a fun way to support the upcoming LA Opera Ring Cycle and Ring Festival in Los Angeles.

You can cast your "Dream Ring" in the significant roles with actors, opera singers of the past, animated characters, literary characters, composers, or anyone else that comes to mind!

Examples are: Wotan – Harrison Ford; Brunhilde – Angelina Jolie; Fricka – Meryl Streep, and so on. You may also want to include Loge, Fricka, Fafner, Erda, Alberich, and Mime.

This is just for pleasure—no winners.

Entries will be posted on the Opera League website and must be submitted by December 1 by email only to: info@operaleague.org.

Please include your name and contact information in the email. Also, include how you want to be credited on the website, i.e., full name, initial, or first name.

The idea for "Cast Your Dream Ring" was submitted by the late Dale Ross.

Masquerade, continued from page 1



It's simple. It's fun. It's all about play! You don't have to be an expert. (Our emcee will be on hand to help you wiggle out of any stupefying questions!)

So, if you think you would like to play dress-up for Halloween and take advantage of this chance to identify with your most beloved personalities of the fabulous world of Opera,

please contact Thomas Shepard by email at t.shepard@sbcglobal.net or by phone at 323-313-6499 and tell him: "I want to be a Prima Donna!" The deadline for potential contestants is October 14, 2009.

And for the rest of you, please exercise your Halloween spirit by coming in costume, a mask, or at least a new hair-do!—all optional, of course. But by all means: COME!!!

National Opera Week, November 13-22

"Opera America" has announced that National Opera Week will be November 13-22, 2009. These dates coincide with the National Endowment for the Arts Opera Honors, the Richard Tucker Awards, and the Opera News Awards. LA Opera is planning some events for National Opera Week around Tamerlano and Barber of Seville.

Because organizations such as ours have been asked to also participate, the League has scheduled our November 15 Seminar and several cast dinners during that week and is considering other ways in which we can participate. As event plans are finalized, we will list them on the website at www.operaleague.org.

calendar

October

Musicale: Masquerade

Sunday, October 25, at 2 pm.

See the Invitations page

Opera for Educators

Saturday, October 3, 8 am to 4 pm (Siegfried)

Dorothy Chandler Pavilion, 4th floor

Contact: Wendy Van Haerlem

Opera Talk at Julienne's

Monday, April 6, 7 pm

Contact: Julie Campoy

Opera 101

Saturday, October 17, 8 am to 4 pm

Dorothy Chandler Pavilion, 4th floor

Contact: Wendy Van Haerlem

November

Seminar: Tamerlano and Barber of Seville

Sunday, November 15 at 1 pm

See the Invitations page

Opera Talk at Julienne's

Monday, November 2 at 7 pm

Contact: Julie Campoy

Opera for Educators and LA Opera 90012

Tamerlano

Saturday, November 7, 8 am to 4 pm

Dorothy Chandler Pavilion, 4th floor

Contact: Wendy Van Haerlem

Opera for Educators

Barber of Seville

Saturday, November 21, 8 am to 4 pm

Dorothy Chandler Pavilion, 4th floor

Contact: Wendy Van Haerlem

Senior Center Dress Rehearsal

Friday, November 27

Dorothy Chandler Pavilion

Contact: Wendy Van Haerlem

November, continued

Cast Dinners

Wednesday, November 11, arrive 4-5 pm (Tamerlano)

Monday, November 16, arrive 4:30-5:30 pm (Tamerlano)

Friday, November 20, arrive 4-5 pm (Barber)

Sunday, November 22, 4:30-5:30 pm (Barber)

All at the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion, 4th floor

Contact: Laurel Howat

December

Opera Talk at Julienne's

Monday, December 7 at 7 pm

Contact: Julie Campoy

Student Matinee

Barber of Seville

Tuesday, December 8, meet at 8 am

Dorothy Chandler Pavilion

Contact: Wendy Van Haerlem

Contact Information

Education:

Wendy Van Haerlem

phone: 714.998.4815

email: vanhaerlem@pacbell.net

Cast Dinners:

Laurel Howat

phone: 562.984.4393

email: ldhowat@aol.com

Opera Talk at Julienne's:

Julie Campoy

Reservations are required.

2649 Mission St., San Marino

\$10 for program and beverage,

an extra \$10 for the "Light

Supper Box"

phone: 626.441.2299 ext 20

email: julie@julienne.biz

Antelope Valley

No Gatherings scheduled for these operas. You are encouraged to attend another location

Beverly Hills

Elixir

Tamerlano and Barber of Seville

Sunday, November 22, 10 am

2816 Tilden Avenue, Los Angeles

Mimi Rotter 310.479.0259

Anne Russell Sullivan 323.697.9733

Claremont

Tamerlano, Sunday, October 25, 2-5 pm
Barber of Seville, Sunday, November 1, 2-5 pm
150 N. Mountain Avenue, Claremont
Patricia O'Donnell 909.447.5038

Hollywood/Hancock Park

No Gatherings scheduled for these operas. You are encouraged to attend another location

Orange County

Tamerlano and Barber of Seville

Sunday, November 1, 2-4:45 pm

19 Bella Rosa, Irvine

Claire Chambless 714.533.4186

Sandy Persky 714.969.0589

San Fernando Valley

Tamerlano and Barber of Seville

Sunday, November 8, 3-5:30 pm

17140 Marilla Street, Northridge

Jackie Johns 818.980.5743

San Gabriel Valley

Tamerlano

Thursday, October 15, 7-9:30 pm

Barber of Seville

Tuesday, November 10, 7-9:30 pm

5278 La Canada Blvd., La Canada

Michael Sholer 818.502.1988

Santa Clarita

Tamerlano

Monday, November 2, 7 pm

Barber of Seville

Monday, November 23, 7 pm

23710 La Salle Canyon Rd, Newhall

Kathy Crandall 661.255.9661

South Bay

Location, date and time to be arranged.

Please call for information

Ifang Hsieh 310.279.9927

Southeast

Location, date and time to be arranged.

Please call for information

Carlos Rodriguez 562.692.5577

Ventura County

Tamerlano

Sunday, November 22, 2 pm

520 San Clemente Way, Camarillo

Ann Randall 805.445.8250

Westside

Tamerlano and Barber of Seville

Monday, November 9, 7:15-9:45 pm

425 South Burlingame, Brentwood

Monika Whitaker 310.826.4743

Chuck or Alice Bragg 310.454.9662

invitations

Please note that this is the **ONLY** invitation you will receive for these events.

A Special Halloween Musicale "Masquerade"

Sunday, October 25, at 2 pm

**At the home of
Gordon and Sylvia Traub**

Tickets at the door: \$45 (or a voucher for a Member)
Mailed reservations must be received by October 21.
Online reservations must be received by October 23.

Second Opera League Seminar Tamerlano and The Barber of Seville

Sunday, November 15, 1-4 pm

**At the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion,
5th floor salon**

135 North Grand Avenue (Enter under the outside stairs
on Grand, then take the elevator to the 5th floor)

**Speakers: Mark Robson
and Michael Hackett**

Moderator: Dr. Allan Edmiston

Light refreshments will be served during the break.
Tickets at the door: \$35 (or a voucher for Members)
Mailed reservations must be received by November 11.
Online reservations must be received by November 13.

EVENT ORDER FORM

Remember, you can order tickets for any Opera League event using our web site. Bring up www.operaleague.org, log in with your User Name and password, then click on the "Order Tickets Here" link.

When ordering by mail, use this order form to check the number of tickets you wish to order. Enclose your check, credit card info, or voucher(s) for the total amount. Make your check out to the **Opera League of LA**. Enclose a *self-addressed stamped envelope* so the tickets and other information may be mailed back to you. *Sorry, no refunds!*

Mail to: The Opera League of LA, P.O. Box 49933, Los Angeles, CA 90049-0933.

Musicale Tickets

___ x Member (or voucher) @ \$35 \$ _____
 ___ x Non-member @ \$45..... \$ _____
 ___ x Student member @ \$10..... \$ _____
 Total \$ _____

Seminar Tickets

___ x Member (or voucher) @ \$25 \$ _____
 ___ x Non-member @ \$35..... \$ _____
 ___ x Student member @ \$10..... \$ _____
 Total \$ _____

Name(s) _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Telephone _____ E-mail _____

Credit Card (circle) M/Card Visa AmEx Total amount \$ _____

Credit Card # _____ Expiration Date _____

Signature _____

Questions? Call the Opera League 24 Hour message line at 213.972.7220 or e-mail OLLA at: info@operaleague.org.

The Problem of Siegfried

By Edward Lieb

For our first seminar of the season we had two outstanding speakers: Dr. Simon Williams, who is chair of the Department of Dramatic Art at UC Santa Barbara, and Dr. Mitchell Morris, who teaches musicology at UCLA.

Dr. Williams talked to us about the theatrical problems in the opera, *Siegfried*. He said that this opera, even though it is the most troublesome of the four “Ring” operas, has great moments of drama.

The story is about the growth of Siegfried, from youth to manhood, from weakness to strength. Siegfried’s actions in the first part of the opera are those of a “natural” man—a man who is at one with nature, a person unspoiled by civilization, and who is therefore a *superior man* in the minds of many Romantics of the period. But something goes wrong. He becomes figure of aggression, more of a bully than a “perfect man”. It is interesting that, at the time of writing, there was NO PROBLEM with the character of Siegfried. In fact, he was favorably compared with other great heroes from Greek and other literature. Today however, we do have a problem with his behavior.

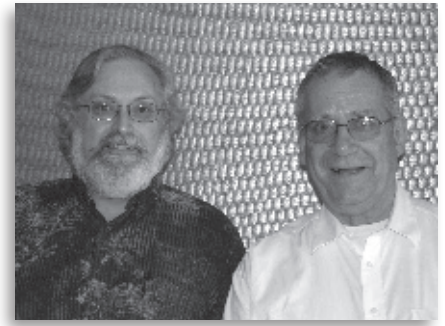
Dr. Williams pointed out that it is very difficult to make a “perfect” character interesting dramatically. We are much more interested in complex, even flawed, characters (like Wotan). In this opera, Wotan is in his human disguise as “The Wanderer.” (Wotan is roaming around the world in human form seeking wisdom.) And because of Wotan’s complexity, he is perhaps the most interesting character in the opera. And he reaches his greatest moment in his conversation with Erda when he finally faces the fact that the gods will die and he must leave his heritage to Siegfried and Brünnhilde.

Dr. Morris demonstrated the significant change in the music between Acts 2 and 3. Most know that Wagner put aside his composition of *The Ring* at the end of Act 2 of *Siegfried* to compose *Tristan* then *Meistersinger*. And the amazing thing is, that when he did return to compose Act 3, he managed to keep it similar to the first two acts, yet infuse it with his increased ability to write very complex harmonies. He still uses *leitmotifs*, those

reoccurring themes. But now they are much less regular, more symphonic, and with much less obvious musical structure.

Dr. Morris played examples from Act 3 to illustrate the very different style of composing, noting how a scene will begin in a quite regular fashion, then gradually shift into another more complex structure.

This is most apparent in the final duet between Siegfried and Brünnhilde. The scene begins very slowly as Brünnhilde wakes up, then veers off into something new—BIG melody with shimmering strings, heavy horns, crescendos, plus CONTINUOUS musical development. Their final duet, “Laughing love, laughing death,” is sort of a second look at the end of *Tristan*. But in this opera, the lovers face LIFE rather than oblivion.



Dr. Morris and Dr. Williams

A Second “Opera Talks” Venue

By John Spear

A tentative date of Monday, October 26, will see the start of a new “opera talks” series starting in the Long Beach area. A fine new neighborhood restaurant called ViNo & CuciNa has just opened in Lakewood Village at 4501 E. Carson St., Long Beach. The owners have shown interest in hosting an opera talk series (a la “Opera Talks at Julianne’s”), and the first occurrence is set for 6:45 on Monday, October 26. The tentative part is whether they will have the new addition to their restaurant approved by the city at that time. If so, we would have the extra room all to ourselves.

A fee will cover finger food and a beverage. There is a good amount of street and off-street parking.

For more information and tentative reservations, contact John Spear at either (714) 899-9960, or john.spear@earthlink.net.

A Look Forward to the Next Season

By Janet Ciriello

Early in January, 2010 we will have the pleasure of an afternoon gathering to hear Plácido Domingo and James Conlon announce plans for Los Angeles Opera’s 2010-2011 season.

Invitations will be extended to all League members to come to this annual festive and informative event. The location and the date will be forthcoming shortly.

This annual Preview gives us all the great opportunity to be together and to hear about the company’s plans as well as to enjoy some musical entertainment.

So save the early days of January for this happy event, and do your skiing or sun seeking a bit later in the month!



Plácido Domingo and James Conlon speaking at a previous “Preview”

Photo: Edward Lieb

The Stuff That is Made From Dreams

By Bob Bernard

He supervises workers toiling long hours far from the light-of-day, but with management skills far kinder than that of Mime. He oversees the construction of magnificent stage edifices, but without the contractual nit picking of Fasolt or Fafner. He communicates with artistic deities, but is not encumbered with the fruitless obsession of an Alberich.

He is Jeff Kleeman, Technical Director of Los Angeles Opera (LAO). Mr. Kleeman joined LAO just as it was being formed in the spring of 1986. He began as a Special Effects Coordinator, while still finishing his studies at the California Institute of the Arts (CalArts) in Valencia. Following that, he became, first, Assistant Technical Director and then Technical Director in 1990.



Photo: Lee Salem

Jeff Kleeman backstage with with Pau Gasol

Mr. Kleeman met L.A Laker Center-Forward, Pau Gasol, backstage following the opening night of *Tosca* last year. (Mr. Gasol was visiting LAO in reciprocation of Maestro Domingo's gift of a bottle of Moët et Chandon's Dom Pérignon to his fellow Spaniard.)

Most fortunately, Mr. Kleeman's experience with the many and varied prior productions of LAO has provided the foundation for his work on Wagner's *Ring*. For example, the huge, severely canted, 48,000 lb. rotating disc used for The Ring is a formidable challenge, but the *Lucia* production LAO rented from the Lyric Opera of Chicago sometime back rotated and weighed in at an even greater 64,000 lb. Also, David Hockney's *Tristan* was canted at a like 14 degrees.

One significant, new challenge the Ring's disc imposes is the requirement for the large number of lighting devices incorporated into its design. More than 180 automated lighting fixtures are mandated, and there are some 7,300 control outputs associated with the lighting system.

As an aside, LAO's Technical Staff and Crew, having constructed a stage representation of heaven and earth, have been — as the saying goes — 'moving heaven and earth in order to get the job done'. By the end of September there will have been NINE complete changeovers between the sets of

L'Elisir d'Amore and *Siegfried*, accommodating the rehearsal and performance repertorial requirements for the opening of LAO's 2009-2010 season. Most significantly, each time the Ring production is reset all of the 7,300 lighting control outputs must be successfully re-established.

LAO audiences have already experienced the use of a generous number of light tubes in *Die Walküre* and will have this experience amplified in *Siegfried* as, in addition to at least fifty light tubes, there will be a like number of floor tubes. The numerical delineation of the lighting task is awe-inspiring: there is an LED every ¾-inch and a typical light stick is five feet in length. Absolute control of any given light stick's hue is managed by means of hard wiring in an RGB lighting system.



Photo: Bob Bernard

Technician Jamie Ewing, adjusting an automated lighting fixture

Many of the light sticks will be switched on/off via remote control, and the floor tubes will be re-positioned for each of the three acts, using the degree-of-freedom we've grown accustomed to, made possible by Velcro.

The Ring's design has provided the motivation for a state-of-the-art improvement to the long-established trick of generating stage fog. In earlier times, fog was generated using either glycol, mineral oil, or CO2 based systems, often causing respiratory problems. LAO now uses a system that does the following:

- A volume of tap water is ultra-purified, using a process of Double Reverse Osmosis that forces the water through a semi-permeable (osmotic) membrane that eliminates the undesirable pollutants [Culligan now considers this to be S.O.P.]
- Volumes of Liquid Nitrogen are purchased [Nitrogen being colorless, odorless, tasteless, inert and, of course, completely safe]
- This purified water and Nitrogen gas are blended in a machine developed and manufactured by a Chicago company with the most appropriate name of **Interesting Products**.

Continued on page 8



Photo: Bob Bernard

Assistant Electrician Tony Bechtel, holding chains of LEDs [a.k.a. "Nibelungen Gold"]

Stuff From Dreams, continued from page 7

- This machine's output is processed through a German-made humidifier, and the humidifier's output is the fog that the audience sees. [LAO uses an aggregate of six pair of blenders and humidifiers for the Ring]

Director/Designer Achim Freyer's visions have included the very large and heavy (the turntable), the very bright and colorful (the light sticks), and the very dense and misty (the fog machine).

Shakespeare's Prospero made the apt self-description at the conclusion of *The Tempest*: "We are such stuff as dreams are made of", and Dashiell Hammett had his Sam Spade devolve this into "The stuff that dreams are made of", when speaking of the search for the Maltese Falcon.

Jeff Kleeman and his crew — to re-mold this phrase — have made manifest:

The stuff that is made from dreams.



Photo: Bob Bernard

Assistant Electrician (and Fog Czar) Tom Hodder, embracing two of **Interesting Products'** portions of LAO's Stage Fog system



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Los Angeles, CA 90012

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INVITATIONS ARE INCLUDED

- ★ Musicale: "Masquerade"
October 25, 2009
- ★ Second Opera League Seminar
Tamerlano and The Barber of Seville
November 15, 2009

See p.5 for more information