



Back by Popular Demand

By Anne Russell Sullivan

Join us for our second full day Wagner “Ring” seminar featuring an exploration of *Götterdämmerung* and *Achim Freyer’s Wagnerian Vision* with an optional luncheon hosted by Patina.

Please mark your calendars for 9:30 am, January 30th, 2010, when our much beloved speakers Dr. Mitchell Morris, Dr. Simon Williams, and Dr. Michael Hackett will discuss the completion of Wagner’s Ring Cycle and explore the dynamic world and art of our Designer/Director, Achim Freyer. The day will conclude with a lively panel discussion and Q&A moderated by our own Dr. W. Allan Edmiston.

The festivities will begin at 9:30 am with morning refreshments. The program will start at 10 am and will be lead by Drs. Morris and Williams. They will cover *Götterdämmerung* and Wagner’s completion of the Ring Cycle.

An optional light salad luncheon will be available during the mid-day break.

The afternoon begins with Hackett on Achim Freier, and then on to our panel discussion.

This wonderful event will take place on the 5th floor of the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion.

Götterdämmerung is the fourth and final chapter in Wagner’s Ring Cycle. It chronicles the further exploits of the fearless, naïve hero, Siegfried, who, charmed by a potion to forget his past, falls victim to the hateful desires of Hagen. Hagen, son of Alberich, seeks to take revenge on Siegfried for the humiliation of his race and retrieve the all-powerful ring for himself.

Please make your reservations early as our last two seminars were packed to capacity.

See you there!

A rehearsal
photo of
Götterdämmerung



A *Not-Valentine’s Day* Musicale **THE GIRLS LEFT BEHIND**

By Thomas Shepard

Mark your calendars for our Post-Valentines Day celebration of a different sort. Sure, celebrating Valentines Day with the one you love is fine, we suppose, but after a while all that “loving-stuff” (as Marilyn Monroe called it in Billy Wilder’s movie “Bus Stop”) is, well, passé! HO-HUM!!! After all, how many sticky love duets can a fan swallow before going into sugar shock!?

So, for all of you who prefer to hear about love of the unrequited sort, we are sending you our own Opera League “Not-Valentine”. You are invited to join us on Sunday, February 21, 2010, at 2 o’clock pm in a celebration of those dames and damsels of opera who don’t live HAPPILY EVER AFTER!

The setting will be a fabulously elegant private home in Hancock Park (after all, we don’t want to carry the suffering theme too far). And the 2 pm time will allow for the maximum enjoyment of the view of the live swan out the windows of the sunroom.

Our entertainment will be provided by one of our favorite conductors and a soprano who is the very mistress of heartbreak. And after the program there will be the usual beverage, light fare and chat offered for your enjoyment.

A Special Announcement:

The feedback on the audience participation part of this past October’s Musicale was so tremendous that we are carrying the concept into our “Not-Valentine’s Musicale”. For this Musicale, we are inviting you to share the spotlight with the musical entertainers by sharing with us YOUR favorite “Girl Left Behind.” It can be as simple as standing up from your seat to tell us about your favorite character, opera plot, or the composer you feel writes with the most pathos about the subject. Or you can take the opportunity to tie into those men of opera who cause all the trouble in the first place!

We have so much passion for opera as a group that we want to hear more about what moves you as an individual. And for

a word from our president

Dear Members and Friends,

Happy New Year and a heartfelt thanks to all our marvelous volunteers who worked so hard to make our events successful this past year!

Our November seminar on *Tamerlano* and *Barber of Seville* Seminar was a great success. Mark Robson talked about *Tamerlano* from the perspective of a harpsichord player, as he was part of the orchestra. He demonstrated on one of the actual instruments used in the production, a beautiful harpsichord made by Curtis Berak, who was also in attendance. Dr. Michael Hackett discussed *Barber of Seville* and its literary source, the Beaumarchais play.

Beginning January 1, there are some changes in membership benefits at the Associate Level. The Associate membership will now be for a single individual which includes a single ticket to the annual Insiders' Preview. Dues at all membership levels and other benefits remain the same.

There are many volunteer opportunities coming up, so include time to support Opera League activities this spring. In addition to our normal cast dinners, artist services, community and education events, we will need many members to assist us with the Concierge Service during the Ring Festival in April- June, and with the Opera America conference, also in June. More information about these events and how you can volunteer will be in the next issue of *Bravo*.



Judy Lieb, President

We hope to see you at upcoming League events during the next few months. Our all-day Ring Seminar will be on January 30 (see p. 1), the next not-to-be-missed Musicales will be on February 21 (see p. 1). Also, the Patron/Sustaining members event is planned for a date later in February. In early March we will hold our Backstage Magic event for Regular membership levels and above, and our Master Class is planned for later in March.

Mark your calendar for May 22-23 for our Tony Palmer film screenings at the UCLA Bridges Theater (see p. 6). And mark your calendar for the fundraising recital with Arnold Bezuyen, our Loge, on June 12. You can look for invitations for these events in the mail and on our website.

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



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

If you want to be eligible for last minute benefits and Opera League notices, please send your e-mail address to info@operaleague.org. We would love to have all members on our e-mail list! Send your "second member" addresses also!

Not-Valentine's Musicales—continued from page 1

those of you who have lots to say, use your imagination: feel free to get up in character and let us guess who you are. Or prepare a mini-presentation on the theme (up to 5 minutes—Opera Speakers Bureau, we know you can do that!) All this will be interspersed with the musical part of the program.

If you have any questions please feel free to contact our Musicales Chair, Thomas Shepard, by email: t.shepard@sbcglobal.net.

Member Profile: Eleanor Gnup

by Judy Lieb

The first opera that Eleanor Gnup saw was *Gianni Schicchi* at the Academy of Music in Philadelphia in the late 1940s. She has been 'hooked' ever since. She also sang with the University of Pennsylvania Chorus, performing in Beethoven's *Missa Solemnis* with the Philadelphia Orchestra and conductor Eugene Ormandy 1947.

Since that time Elle and her husband, Eddy, have traveled around Europe and the United States to see opera whenever they could. They have attended operas in Verona, Vienna, Bregenz, Glyndebourne, ENO, The Royal Opera, Paris, Munich, and the Polish National Opera. They have attended 23 Ring Cycles in Bayreuth, Seattle, San Francisco, Chicago, New York, Berlin, Flagstaff and Orange County. Of course, they are loyal subscribers to LA Opera and have been members of the Opera



League for more than ten years. She currently serves on the Opera League Board of Directors as Volunteer Coordinator.

Eleanor's favorite composers include Wagner (she and Eddy are, of course, "Ringheads"), Strauss, Mozart, and Janáček. Elle says that she and Eddy have learned the most about opera in an opera appreciation class she has attended for 29 years with instructor Bill Glassman.

Eleanor has recently made a remarkable recovery from a serious automobile accident last June, and we are so glad that she is able to once again attend LA Opera, a source of continued pleasure in her life.

The League is honored to recognize Eleanor Gnup for her wonderful spirit and valuable contributions to the Opera League of Los Angeles.

A Grateful Member

By Carlos Rodriguez

In the year 2000 I went skiing in Austria. Before the trip the trip leader asked if I would like to see an opera in Vienna. I agreed only because I knew that the Vienna Opera House is one of the most famous opera houses, and I wanted to see it. I was not really interested in opera. The opera we saw was *Lohengrin* and I was awed by its beauty. I bought a ticket for the next night and saw *Tales of Hoffman*. I was very intrigued because I enjoyed them so much.

When I returned to Los Angeles I started to attend the opera occasionally and realized how little I knew and wanted to learn more about it. In 2002, Sherwin Sloan was teaching a class on opera at UCLA and I enrolled. Some friends in the class told me about a weekend seminar of the Opera League and I attended. I was probably the only attendee who took notes at the seminar. I had attended several before I realized that if I joined, I would get notices of the seminars myself.

So I joined. After that, I started attending every weekend seminar and have done so for seven years. I have also attended many pre-opera seminars and musicales.

From these experiences I have received an extensive education in opera and have enjoyed operas much more than if I had not known so much about the composers, librettists, stories, and characters of the operas. My experience in Vienna has also sparked an interest in opera houses, and I try to visit different opera venues to compare and contrast them. My favorites so far are Vienna, Barcelona, and San Francisco, with Santa Fe being the most unique.

I owe my opera education to the Opera League, and I am very grateful to



Gathering participants meet Massimo Giordano last May

the League for what it has contributed to my experience. I have also enjoyed sharing my interest with others, and like volunteering with the League. My favorite activity is participating in the cast dinners, where we meet and interact with the stars of opera. Lately, I have been organizing gatherings in Whittier where I live, and want to develop a community of opera-lovers. We are a small group in Whittier, but we are a devoted group!

calendar

January, 2010

Opera 101

Saturday, January 16, 8 am to 4 pm
Dorothy Chandler Pavilion, 4th floor
Contact: Wendy Van Haerlem

Opera League Seminar "Ring"

Saturday, January 30
All day event, starting at 9:30 am
Lunch by reservation

Dorothy Chandler Pavilion, 5th floor
See the "Invitations" page

Opera for Educators

Saturday, January 30, 8 am to 4 pm
Dorothy Chandler Pavilion, 4th floor
Contact: Wendy Van Haerlem

February

Opera Talk at Julienne's

Monday, February 1, 7 pm
Contact: Julie Campoy

Younger Students Matinees

Thursday and Friday, February 4 and 5,
10-11:30 am
Dorothy Chandler Pavilion
Contact: Wendy Van Haerlem

Saturday Morning at the Opera

Saturday, February 6, 10-11:30 am
Dorothy Chandler Pavilion
Contact: Wendy Van Haerlem

A Not-Valentine's Day Musicale

Sunday, February 21, at 2 pm
At a home in Hancock Park
See the "Invitations" page

Insider Look at the 25th Season

In early February
You will receive the date and time info by mail.

March

Opera Talk at Julienne's

Monday, March 1, 7 pm
Contact: Julie Campoy

March, continued

Opera 101

Saturday, March 6, 8 am to 4 pm
Dorothy Chandler Pavilion, 4th floor
Contact: Wendy Van Haerlem

Backstage Magic

In early March.
Associate membership and above.
Dorothy Chandler Pavilion, Grand Hall
You will receive the date and time info by mail.

Master Class

Monday, March 22, 6 pm
Dorothy Chandler Pavilion, 4th floor

Cast Dinners

Friday, March 19
(*Götterdämmerung*), 5 pm
Sunday, March 21
(*Götterdämmerung*), 5 pm
Thursday, March 25
(*Götterdämmerung*), 6 pm
Saturday, March 27
(*Götterdämmerung*), 6 pm
Sunday, March 28 (*Stigmatized*), 5:30 pm
Monday, March 29 (*Stigmatized*), 6 pm
Contact: Laurel Howat

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 Talks 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

Because of the time until the next performances in 2010, there are no gatherings scheduled for January or February.

Antelope Valley

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

Beverly Hills

Mimi Rotter 310.479.0259
Anne Russell Sullivan 323.697.9733
Götterdämmerung and *The Stigmatized*
Sunday, April 11, 10 am
10430 Wilshire Blvd, Unit #504, Los Angeles

Claremont

Patricia O'Donnell 909.447.5038
Götterdämmerung
Sunday, March 7, 2-5 pm
530 West 11th Street, Claremont
The Stigmatized
Sunday, April 11, 2-5 pm
125 Princeton Avenue, Claremont

Hollywood/Hancock Park

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

Orange County

Claire Chambless 714.533.4186
Sandy Persky 714.969.0589
Götterdämmerung and *The Stigmatized*
Sunday, March 21, 2-4:45 pm
5305 Camino de Bryant, Yorba Linda

San Fernando Valley

Jackie Johns 818.980.5743
Götterdämmerung and *The Stigmatized*
Sunday, March 21, 3-5:30 pm
11615 Canton Place, Studio City

San Gabriel Valley

Michael Sholer 818.502.1988
Götterdämmerung and *The Stigmatized*
Tuesday, February 23, 7-9:30 pm
5278 La Canada Blvd., La Canada

Santa Clarita

Kathy Crandall 661.255.9661
Götterdämmerung
Monday, March 22, 7 pm
23710 La Salle Canyon Rd, Newhall
The Stigmatized
Monday, April 5, 7 pm
23710 La Salle Canyon Rd, Newhall

South Bay

Ifang Hsieh 310.279.9927
Götterdämmerung and *The Stigmatized*
Please call Ifang for the date, time, and location

Southeast

Carlos Rodriguez 562.692.5577
Götterdämmerung
Tuesday, March 23, 7 pm
12308 Norino Drive, Whittier

Ventura County

Ann Randall 805.445.8250
The Stigmatized
Sunday, March 14, 2 pm
520 San Clemente Way, Camarillo

Westside

Monika Whitaker 310.826.4743
Chuck or Alice Bragg 310.454.9662
Götterdämmerung (two meetings)
Monday, March 8, 7:15-9:45 pm
Monday, March 15, 7:15-9:45 pm
585 Almar Avenue, Pacific Palisades
RSVP required for either date

invitations

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

Third Opera League Seminar All-Day "Ring" Seminar

**Saturday, January 30, 2010,
9:30 am to 3:00 pm**

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

**Speakers: Drs. Simon Williams,
Mitchell Morris,
and Michael Hackett**

Moderator: Dr. Allan Edmiston

Salad luncheon by reservation

Tickets at the door: \$35 (or a voucher) for members,
\$45 for guests, Luncheon \$30

Your mailed reservations must be received by
January 25, 2010.

Online reservations must be received by
January 28, 2010.

A Not-Valentine's Day Musicale

"The Girls Left Behind"

**Sunday, February 21, 2010,
2 pm**

**At a home in Hancock Park
(Location information will be sent when you order
your tickets)**

Tickets at the door: \$35 (or a voucher) for members,
\$45 for guests

Mailed reservations must be received by Feb. 17, 2010.

Online reservations must be received by Feb. 19, 2010.



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.

Seminar Tickets

___ x Member (or voucher) @ \$35 \$ _____
 ___ x Luncheon @ \$30..... \$ _____
 ___ x Non-member @ \$45..... \$ _____
 ___ x Student member @ \$10..... \$ _____
 Total \$ _____

Musicale Tickets

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

Name(s) _____

Address _____

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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.

Save the Date for Tony Palmer

By Brita Millard and Edward Lieb

On May 22 and 23 of 2010, Tony Palmer, the British film director, author, and composer, in conjunction with The Opera League of Los Angeles, will be at the UCLA campus to present three of his more than 100 films together with The Opera League of Los Angeles:

“Parsifal-The Search for the Grail”, the Kirov production starring Plácido Domingo, Matti Salminen, etc., conducted by Valery Gergiev (Director’s cut).

LA World Premiere: “The Wagner

Family”, his new film about the ups and downs of the family, their struggles with the Bayreuth Festival, and the fights amongst themselves.

“Wagner”, his 1983 biography of Richard Wagner starring Richard Burton, Sir Laurence Olivier, Vanessa Redgrave, etc., conducted by Sir Georg Solti.

During this two day event, Tony will introduce and talk about each film, as well as being available for Q & A:

Saturday, May 22, 2010: “Parsifal-The Search for the Grail” (Director’s cut) at 11 am, and “The Wagner Family”



(LA World Premiere) at 5:30 pm.

Sunday, May 23, 2010: “Wagner” (starting at 11 am, with two Intermissions).

Please hold these dates and watch out for more details coming up in the next issue of “Bravo”.

The “Ring” Festival

By Ed Shaff

Now that the Holiday Season has come to a close, all eyes at the Opera League are looking forward to this coming spring’s “Ring Festival LA”, an exciting palette of events that are being planned by over 100 Ring Partners as well as LA Opera’s first full “Der Ring des Nibelungen” cycle of operas.

We have already had the opportunity to see the first three installments—*Das Rheingold*, *Die Walküre*, and *Siegfried*—

that were created for LA Opera by noted German opera and theatrical director, Achim Freyer. This spring the final production of this epic cycle, *Götterdämmerung*, will be unveiled.

In support of the three Ring cycles of May and June, LA Opera has brought together all the major art institutions of the city to create an Art Festival. It officially begins on May 15 and will run through June 30.

The Opera League will be hosting a “Ring Festival Concierge Service” in the plaza of the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion. We will also provide information (in various languages) on our Opera League web site.

And we will be hosting the “Tony Palmer Film Festival” on the UCLA campus. (For more information, see the article in this issue.)



Share Your Passion for Opera by Joining the LA Opera Speakers Bureau!

If You Love Opera – Talk About It!

LA Opera invites you to become part of the team of who introduce the exciting world of opera to young and old alike. Speakers address schools, civic, social, and philanthropic groups, as well as library audiences throughout Southern California.

LA Opera is forming a new class for a summer training session and we are looking for candidates. You don’t need to know a lot about opera – all you need is a love for the art form and a desire to share that love with others.

The summer 2010 Speakers Bureau training class begins in July and runs through August. Classes take place on Monday and Wednesday evenings, in addition to meetings on selected Saturdays. Deadline to apply is February 12, 2010.

For more information and an application, please call or e-mail LA Opera’s Education and Community Programs Department at (213) 972-8016 or kchrist@laopera.com.



Mavens in the Ravens



By Bob Bernard

Wagner designated Wotan's Ravens to be harbingers of woe, but, in LAO's production of *The Ring*, the Raven figures on either side of the stage are efficacious creatures, each containing a prompter who functions as an on-stage surrogate for Maestro Conlon.

That LAO uses two prompters follows from a domino-like series of realizations:

1. Maestro Conlon always uses a prompter, a policy particularly appropriate given the massive score for *The Ring*.
2. The original stage design made no accommodation for a centrally located prompter's box, being that the rotating disc protruded so far forward towards the orchestra pit.
3. Given the above, the logical decision was then made to have two prompters, one at either side of the stage.

The particular prompter box implementation that audiences saw for the first three *Ring* operas then followed from a resolution of 'artistic differences':

- An early idea of Designer Achim Freyer was to have the two prompters on station unadorned by any theatrical trappings whatsoever. This postmodern tactic was considered inappropriate for our audiences.
- Then, giving free vent to imagination, it was proposed to fly the Ravens (complete with prompter, score, and electronics) in from above. A spontaneous objection, "Over my dead body!" while lacking the reiterative poetic flair of the trisyllabic-prone avian in the Edgar Allan Poe ode to his lost Lenore, nevertheless 'carried the day'.
- A less ambitious — but still complex — concept would have had the Maven/Raven amalgam carried in by dancers. This also was discarded.
- The present design is largely task-oriented: The "box" contains the prompter, score, light, and monitor/speaker. The side facing the audience is a two dimensional Raven, having a one degree-of-freedom flappable wing controlled via a trick line by an off-stage prop person.

Each Raven has available a pair of frontispieces, one for pointing stage right (SR) and another for stage left (SL). These frontispieces were selected to be in harmony with Wotan's "wandering":

- Act #1, with Siegfried and Wotan presaging the search for Fafner, both Raven frontispieces pointed to SL.
- Act #2, with Alberich, Wotan, Mime, and Siegfried all in the vicinity of Fafner's lair, both Raven frontispieces pointed to stage center.
- Act #3, with Wotan soon to embark on his inevitable, sad return to Valhalla, both Raven frontispieces pointed to SR. Also in the third act, just as Wotan sang of his Ravens pursuing the Forest Bird, the wing of each Raven gave a single flap of its wing.

A conversation with Maven #2, Yulia Levin, delineated the thoroughness of preparation and performance stress that this pair of prompters undergoes. Ms. Levin, a native of Moscow, happened to LAO, first by way of Canada, where she emigrated with her mother, and then to the Manhattan School of Music in NYC, earning a Masters Degree in Vocal Accompaniment.

While still in New York, she auditioned for Maestro Domingo for admission to the Domingo-Thornton Young Artist Program, was accepted, and subsequently became a Pianist/Coach in the Program for the inaugural season of 2006/07, a position renewed for 2007/08. These two years and her experience last season as a rehearsal pianist for *Gianni Schicchi*, *Madama Butterfly*, and *Die Zauberflöte* provided a solid base for her to warrant a position as prompter for *The Ring* operas.

Wagner's operas are long, but the preparation that being a prompter for one of them entails is much longer. The prompters worked throughout the entire series of rehearsals:

- Staging (in the Gam Art Center, a remote locale)
- Stage Piano (in Music Center rehearsal room)
- Piano Dress Rehearsal
- Sitzprobe (sit-down rehearsal integrating orchestra & singers — in Grand Hall)
- Orchestra Technical Rehearsal
- Final Dress Rehearsal

Incorporated in the above is the gradual transition from Associate Conductor Andreas Heinzmann to Maestro Conlon, as well as the singers' gaining familiarity with stage direction. So, by having the singers and prompters track these changes in tempi, rehearsal hall sound quality, and orchestral involvement, the goal of achieving the best possible synchronization between orchestra and singers is attained.

Working as a prompter for a performance of LAO's *Ring* is akin to directing traffic at 1st and Grand at 5pm on a stormy weekday: it is noisy; the lights sometimes fail; there is a steep hill to contend with; and distractions abound!

- When rotating, the massive disc emits a harsh grating sound, sometimes interfering with the prompter-to-singer aural communication link.



Prompter Yulia Levin on-station (at stage right) with monitor, score, and auxiliary light.

Photo: Bob Bernard

Continued on page 8

Mavens in the Ravens, continued from page 7

- Two of the production’s 180 automated lighting fixtures, oriented to illuminate the prompters’ boxes from above, can become misaligned, diminishing the illumination of the score.
- The production’s fog machines efficiently produce the desired product volume, but, once generated, this dense mist has an indeterminate destination. Because gravity always wins, the fog oftentimes migrates to — and nestles into — the prompters’ boxes, obscuring visual links to singers and score.

Now, looking ahead to *Götterdämmerung*, we know that Siegfried, just prior to being struck by Hagen’s spear, will be distracted by Wotan’s Ravens. However, we may be sure that LAO’s Mavens in the Ravens will allow no distraction to deter them from their appointed tasks:

Acknowledgements:

Technical Director Jeff Kleeman and Design Manager Maiko Nezu made possible the photo opportunity with Ms. Levin.



And those Ravens, never flitting, still will be sitting, still sitting
On the pallid joists just above the orchestra’s door
And the prompters’ eyes will have the gleaming that is never dreaming
And the light o’er the scene streaming throws its shadow on the score
And the cues from out the pages that lie noted on the score
Shall be lifted — evermore!

We extend an enormous number of apologies to both the memory and heirs of Edgar Allan Poe.

Raven photo images excerpted from a photo by Monika Rittershaus for LAO.



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Los Angeles, CA 90012

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INVITATIONS ARE INCLUDED

- ★ Third Opera League Seminar
All Day “Ring” Seminar
January 30, 2010
 - ★ Musicale: “Not-Valentine’s Day”
February 21, 2010
- See p.5 for more information