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BRAVO

THE MAGAZINE OF THE OPERA LEAGUE OF LOS ANGELES

THE OPERA LEAGUE RETURNS WITH SELECT IN-PERSON EVENTS AND VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

On Sunday, September 12, the Opera League hosted a seminar on Verdi's *Il Trovatore*, which would open LA Opera's 2021-22 season six days later.

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AND... *WE'RE BACK!*

By TOM LADY and BILL GREEN



operaleague.org

From the President



Photo by Stephanie Girard

Getting High on Opera

I write this note as I fly 35,000 feet above the earth!

No, no, no, I am not part of the Virgin Galactic mission to suborbital space. I am on an international flight heading back from Munich to Los Angeles.

I have just concluded a month-long tour of Europe's opera houses experiencing fascinating performances in Munich, Salzburg, Florence and Madrid.

Highlights included a new production of *Tristan und Isolde*, Marlis Petersen in the title role of *Salome* and the all-star concert celebrating the tenure of Munich's general director, Nikolaus Bachler.

I will never forget the *Tosca* in Madrid, where the audience—and I—were captivated by the drama of Puccini's glorious music. Both Sondra Radvanovsky and Jonas Kaufmann were so overwhelmed with ovations they repeated their big arias. An historic double encore that made the papers the next day! It is moments such as these that enflame our passion for this art!

Initially, I was a bit apprehensive about traveling. Proof of vaccination was required to enter every country and performance, and mask mandates were in effect for transportation and indoor public spaces.

In the end it was well worth it. Opera League members know nothing compares to the communal bond of sitting in an auditorium with an audience, immersed in that unique suspension of time. It was both inspiring and powerfully emotional as we all experienced the cathartic energy of live performances.

That is why, dear Opera Leaguers, we are so excited for LA Opera's new season.

I am humbled and honored to be the Opera League's next president, following in the 40 year footsteps of a long line of remarkable leaders. As we look forward to a return to some degree of normalcy this fall, we will be offering members a variety of educational programs that will enrich your lives, and social events that will strengthen our bonds and comradery. As always, our programming includes no shortage of volunteer opportunities as we continue to support and collaborate with LA Opera.

I often tell people that, short of being a performer or member of the production, there is no better way to get an up-close, behind-the-scenes glimpse into what it takes to produce an opera than by joining the Opera League.

So as my plane starts its descent, after all I have experienced in Europe over the past month, I have come to understand with a renewed sense of purpose that the Opera League's mission is more vital than ever. We will continue to foster participation in, and awaken joy for opera—all for the benefit of our community's cultural, educational and musical life.

Thank you for your continued support, whether it be volunteer hours, membership dues or contributions. I look forward to seeing you at the opera!

Todd Calvin
PRESIDENT



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AND... WE'RE BACK!

CONTINUED FROM COVER

On the one hand, this was just another League seminar. It was held on a Sunday afternoon at the Colburn School's Thayer Hall, like so many previous seminars. And our special guest speaker was Simon Williams, UC Santa Barbara Professor Emeritus of Theatre and Dance, who has shared his deep knowledge and expertise at innumerable League seminars over the years.

On the other hand, it was also a bit of a milestone, as that seminar was the Opera League's first in-person seminar, and second in-person event of any kind, since February 2020.

"After 19 months, it felt wonderful to experience the camaraderie of our Opera League members," says Todd Calvin, Opera League president as of July 1. "[I]t was so uplifting to just be together on a sunny Sunday afternoon, enjoying our common love of opera and socializing once again amongst friends we have missed."

Another aspect this seminar shared with its pre-pandemic brethren? It would not have happened without the grit of the Opera League volunteers who showed up early to help get everything ready and welcome attendees.

So does this mean the League is diving back into the cultural waters with its full slate of programming? Alas, not quite, not as long as COVID's Delta variant continues to make mischief.

Yes, while we all yearn for the day when we can call curtains on the pandemic, your friendly neighborhood Opera League is moving forward with certain in-person events, with select volunteering, in line with local public health guidelines.

Here's how we're breaking it down.

SEMINARS

Our two fall seminars (September 12 and October 17) are 100% in-person. In terms of volunteering, we will need volunteers at seminars to assist with set-up, check-in, directions and general information.

SHOP AT THE OPERA

The Shop will be operating during all performances. This is a wonderful volunteer opportunity. Opera League members will receive details on volunteering via email, including COVID rules governing participation as a volunteer.

CAST DINNERS

The first cast dinners will be held outdoors. For the time being, Opera

League volunteers will not provide homemade food, as LAO will provide catered boxed meals while the League will supply bottled water and otherwise help organize and distribute both food and drink. For each opera, there are typically dozens of artists, oftentimes well north of 100, who need to be fed and watered during production tech week. We anticipate needing a small number of volunteers per dinner. Volunteers will be required to be vaccinated and tested according to LAO's protocols, details about which you will receive via email as cast dinner signups become available.

OVERTURES (A.K.A. PRE-PERFORMANCE LECTURES)

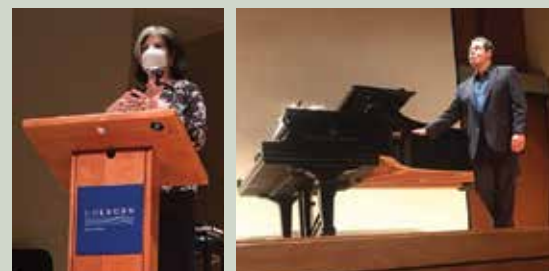
Until further notice, and as part of the Music Center trying to limit the length of time the venues are filled with people, Maestro Conlon's pre-performance lectures will be pre-recorded and broadcast on the Music Center Plaza as well as via a streaming link sent to ticket holders. An Opera League representative will likewise record our pitch and introduction to be edited into these talks.

EDUCATION, ARTIST SERVICES, LIGHT WALKERS

The Education events (e.g. Opera Prep, Opera Wise) will be virtual for the fall of 2021. LA Opera will use light walkers for *Tannhäuser* this fall, but not artist services until next year. LAO's primary mission is to produce grand opera live on stage, and the company needs to take every precaution to keep the artists and production personnel safe. A single outbreak could result in multiple performance cancellations. No bueno.

BOTTOM LINE

We have assured our friends at LA Opera that you, our dedicated League members and volunteers, stand ready to assist them in returning to full operations



whenever and however it makes sense to do so. Believe us when we say LAO is beyond ready and eager to welcome the League back to the volunteer stage as soon as public health guidelines allow. As always, keep your eyes peeled for updates via email and on operaleague.org.

ONE FINAL NOTE

Suffice it to say that this whole situation is quite fluid and could change at any time. The Opera League will continue to help you stay abreast of any updated health and safety protocols in line with LA Opera, the Music Center and Los Angeles County.

Meantime, if you have questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to reach out to us, either through our message center or email:

MESSAGE CENTER: 213.972.7220
EMAIL: info@operaleague.org

See you at the opera! 🌟

IS THERE A FIGARO IN THE HOUSE?

By GARY W. MURPHY



LA OPERA YOUNG ARTIST ALUM NICHOLAS BROWNLEE STEPS INTO THE TITLE ROLE OF *THE MARRIAGE OF FIGARO* AT SANTA FE OPERA

Nicholas Brownlee had just returned to his home in Karlsruhe, Germany after a month in the States and was preparing to spend the early summer singing Zemlinsky's *Der Zwerg* in Amsterdam. Then the phone rang. It was David Lomelli, Chief Artistic Officer at Santa Fe Opera. "How do you feel about singing Figaro in Santa Fe this summer?" he inquired. At the 11th hour, the original singer was forced to withdraw from *The Marriage of Figaro* production due to COVID-19 visa issues, and Santa Fe Opera needed a quick solution. "By the way," he added, "rehearsals start in ten days." Suffice it to say *Der Zwerg* was put on hold.

Friends for many years and both former LA Opera Young Artists, Lomelli and Brownlee already had a strong rapport. On the other hand, as Brownlee says: "I hadn't sung Figaro

in quite a long time, and I don't really do Mozart anymore because my voice is big. But anytime I can get back to it is a good day because it's so nice to sing Mozart. It's like eating Wheaties. So, I broke out my score, dusted it off and took a look at it and jumped in. I coached it two hours every day for seven days to get it back in my voice, and then got on a plane June 11 and started rehearsals the next day."

Brownlee's repertoire had not included Mozart for almost six years, as he has been performing Wagner and Strauss in such roles as Kurwenal (*Tristan und Isolde*), Jokanaan (*Salome*) and the title character in *The Flying Dutchman*. Brownlee says gear shifting into Mozart can be a struggle. "It's difficult to sing that lean, to sing that honest and that transparent. Ask any musician, from a pianist to a

horn player to a singer, Mozart is the hardest. In Wagner, you can ride the orchestra to the end of the piece, but Mozart takes so much meticulous effort to sing it beautifully and unaffectedly so you can get out of the way of the music, which is very important and very difficult.

"It's been interesting coming back to Mozart performing with a cast of Mozart specialists and Harry Bicket conducting," Brownlee continues. "It's challenged me in a very specific way and a very fun way to bring what I bring as an artist with my loud voice to fit that in, because let's just face it: I'm the *Marriage of Figaro* puzzle piece that is a little bit misshapen because of the situation where the company needed an American with a passport, and I rose to the challenge. I certainly enjoyed it."

Brownlee was certainly primed for the challenge, as he was a Santa Fe Opera apprentice during the 2014 and 2015 seasons, an experience he credits with launching his professional career. He describes 2014 as “a typical first year for an apprentice,” singing in the choral operas and understudying some roles, while 2015 was “totally wild.” He adds: “I was in all the operas, and covering more roles, and took over *The First Soldier* in *Salome* from someone who dropped out just before the season began. I set the Santa Fe Opera record for apprentice overtime pay that year, and I think it still stands.”

“It’s difficult to sing that lean, to sing that honest and that transparent. Ask any musician, from a pianist to a horn player to a singer, Mozart is the hardest.”

With his popular podcast “Hook, Push & Pray” on pause for the moment, and with no immediate plans to return to Los Angeles, Santa Fe Opera most likely will be his U.S. home for the next few years.

“When I return to Santa Fe Opera next season, I’ll sing Kurwenal in *Tristan und Isolde*, which is right up my alley, and the following year I’ll be singing something really exciting that I can’t talk about just yet, but it will be great!” 🌟

WHAT’S OLD IS NEW AGAIN: **BRAVO** *Live!* **LIFTS OFF**

By TOM LADY

If you have visited the Opera League website recently (operaleague.org), you may have noticed something familiar, yet new, among the featured articles.

The familiar would have come from seeing pieces of content labeled “BRAVO,” much like the publication you are holding in your hands. The new would have been the exclamatory “Live!” coming after it.

Late last year and into this year, as the Opera League was getting ready to mark its 40th anniversary in 2021, and with the pandemic necessitating virtual events, members of the Opera League Board of Directors began brainstorming how to refresh our programming slate. They came up with the idea of recorded sessions that would be a bit of “behind the scenes”. This would include interviews with LA Opera stage crew and staff as well as artists. While the Opera League was quite successful in pivoting our gatherings to the virtual space, gatherings are not recorded due to the copyrighted material that is typically shown. This new series, however, would generate material that was not only new and interesting, but also recorded and published.

The result: BRAVO Live!

“We wanted to take the same interview format we have with *BRAVO*, and make it virtual, and of course live,” says Marion Joy, one of the two board members who co-captains the series. “We just thought it would be fun to watch the interviews happen, the dynamic interplay, especially when it comes to the heavy hitters in the opera world whom we strive to feature each time.”

“And just like *BRAVO*, we also want each episode of BRAVO Live! to teach viewers something new,” says board member and Marion’s fellow co-producer Patsy Burke. “Help enlarge the opera world for them just a bit more each time.”

“That’s why a lot of people join the Opera League in the first place,” Marion adds. “They’ve always wanted to learn more about opera, and so that’s what we always strive to do with everything we produce.”

For the first episode that dropped in March, the Opera League’s head of Education, Larry Verdugo, conducted a wide-ranging interview

with Mexican-American mezzo-soprano (and longtime League member) Jessica Gonzalez-Rodriguez. They covered her journey to becoming a singer, her involvement in educational initiatives with the Opera League, and how she pivoted her performance slate for the pandemic.

The second episode, released in August, saw Larry interviewing Opera Leaguer Lynne Mitchell, veteran leader of the League’s light walking team, and LA Opera Stage Manager Lisa Kable Blanchard. The conversation brought a unique perspective to what goes into staging opera scenes that most operagoers may not be aware of or take for granted.

Coinciding with episode two’s release was the launch of the Opera League’s brand-new YouTube channel, where you will find both episodes, and all future episodes, of BRAVO Live! Just go to youtube.com and do a search for “opera league.”

Speaking of the future, what can we look forward to with the new series?

“We’re planning three episodes of BRAVO Live! for the coming season,” Marion says. “For the first one, later this fall, we’ll delve into more of light walking, but this time as it interrelates to the prompt box. Yes! That little ‘bump’ on the stage no one notices. What’s it like to be the person down there?”

“Let’s not forget BRAVO Lyte,” chimes in Patsy.

“Oh yes, BRAVO Lyte, that’s still in the planning stages,” Marion says. “But these will be little mini-episodes, bite-size videos featuring Opera Leaguers and LA Opera staff with a focus on the opera crew, those folks behind the scenes we never see, but without whom no opera company could possibly function.”

“We’re planning six BRAVO Lytes this season,” Patsy adds. “Sprinkled in between the longer BRAVO Live! episodes.”

“And don’t forget, if you miss any of these on our website and social media, they will live forever on the Opera League’s new YouTube channel,” Marion says.

So with all of that, it is probably appropriate that we congratulate Marion, Patsy and the rest of the BRAVO Live! team for pulling off this initiative with one word (and you knew this was coming): Bravo! 🌟

THINKING LIKE JOE

THE OPERA LEAGUE'S FIRST IN-PERSON EVENT IN A YEAR AND A HALF WAS BOTH A MUSICAL AND LITERARY SHINDIG CELEBRATING A CERTAIN ENTREPRENEUR WHO DID BUSINESS HIS WAY AND "BEAT THE BIG GUYS."

By TOM LADY



"I'm originally from Alhambra," declared LA Opera Resident Conductor Grant Gershon. "And I can't remember a time when there wasn't a Trader Joe's."

On the last Friday in August, late in the afternoon as the setting sun lit up the San Gabriel Mountains with one last warm burst before calling it a day, Opera League members and friends gathered in Pasadena for our first in-person event since before the pandemic: **The Opera League Celebrates Trader Joe.**

Ostensibly this event was a book signing for Trader Joe founder Joe Coulombe's posthumous memoir, *Becoming Trader Joe: How I Did Business My Way and Still Beat the Big Guys*, published in late June. His widow Alice Coulombe, Opera League co-founder and first president, was on hand with coauthor Patty Civaleri to sign copies of the book that guests could purchase onsite from representatives of Pasadena's own Vroman's Bookstore. A reception before the event featured

Trader Joe's wine and munchies for guests to enjoy, courtesy of Alice.

Of course, given the context in which we were congregating, masked and vaccinated as we were, stickers on our shirts announcing our temperature, the event was so much more than a book signing. The atmosphere all but palpitated with a celebratory vibe as people reconnected with friends and fellow Opera Leaguers in person for the first time in what seemed an age. "I'm so happy to see everyone," one of the attendees, a veteran Leaguer, said to me more than once, Trader Joe pinot in hand. Others throughout the event expressed variations of the same sentiment.

After reading the *Los Angeles Times* review of *Becoming Trader Joe* back in June, Opera League Vice President Gary Murphy conceived of organizing an event to bring us all back together again.

"I had this crazy idea of putting together a book signing for *Becoming Trader Joe* and asked Alice if she would like to sign copies of Joe's book for Opera League members," says Gary. "Alice loved the idea and thought it would be great fun, especially

if we had singers perform some of Joe's favorite arias as Leaguers sipped Trader Joe chardonnay and snacked on chocolate-covered pretzels and Trader Joe's pot stickers...With COVID-19 beginning to wane, and with health protocols strictly in place, I thought now might be the time to welcome back our League members to a live event...And when Grant Gershon agreed to play piano and bring three singers [sopranos Elissa Johnston and Elizabeth Anderson and bass James Hayden], I knew we had created a special event that truly celebrated both Joe and Alice Coulombe."

Continuing his narrative above, Grant said that in the 1980s, around the time he joined the nascent LA Opera company, he was invited to perform in a private concert at the Coulombe residence in Pasadena. "You don't understand. Going to the home of Trader Joe to play for him was like..." He searched for a powerful metaphor. "...going to Valhalla!"

All of us coming back together again in a space that did not include Zoom was also something special, cherished and never to be forgotten. 🌸



PEERING INTO THE SOUL OF MUSIC

CONDUCTOR AND BAROQUE MASTER HARRY BICKET RETURNS TO LA OPERA By GARY W. MURPHY

Internationally renowned as an opera and concert conductor of distinction, Harry Bicket made his LA Opera debut in 2001 with an unforgettable *Giulio Cesare* production that introduced not one, but three countertenors to Los Angeles audiences, a first. His follow-up opera for the company was an equally stunning Pierre Audi staging of Monteverdi's *L'incoronazione di Poppea* in 2006 that featured a variety of baroque instruments including the visually arresting theorbo, whose long neck jutted upwards from the orchestra and reached above stage level.

In 2020, Maestro Bicket was to bring The English Concert to LA Opera for its company debut with Handel's *Rodelinda*, but that plan fell victim to the pandemic.

Now, the maestro is back for real. Harry Bicket returns to the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion with another Handel masterpiece, *Alcina*, for two performances on November 2 and 5.

In between recent back-to-back productions of *The Marriage of Figaro* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* at Santa Fe Opera, where Maestro Bicket serves as artistic director, he took some time to chat with the Opera League's *BRAVO* magazine about the upcoming concert performances of *Alcina*, and what makes baroque music still resonate today.

BRAVO: WHY DO YOU THINK BAROQUE MUSIC REMAINS POPULAR WITH TODAY'S AUDIENCES?

HARRY BICKET: Baroque music is above all immediately accessible. It is melodic, tonal, dance-like and wears its heart on its sleeve.

BRAVO: WHEN LAO PRESENTED *L'INCORONAZIONE DI POPPEA* IN 2006, AUDIENCES WITNESSED AN UNUSUAL ORCHESTRA PIT, ACTUALLY HALF A PIT, IF I RECALL, THAT WAS ALSO PART OF THE PRODUCTION. JUTTING UPWARDS WERE LONG-NECKED INSTRUMENTS THAT WE DISCOVERED WERE THEORBOS (WERE THERE THREE?), VIOLONES AND OTHER UNUSUAL STRING AND BRASS INSTRUMENTS. SHOULD WE EXPECT TO SEE A VARIETY OF BAROQUE INSTRUMENTS ONSTAGE FOR *ALCINA*?

HB: For *Alcina*, we will have two harpsichords, one theorbo and a typical Handel orchestra that includes strings, oboes, bassoons and horns. But these are period instruments, so that the woodwinds are wooden and have fewer keys on them, and the horns have no valves, only crooks which allow them to play in several different keys.

BRAVO: HEARING AND PLAYING BAROQUE MUSIC ON THESE PERIOD INSTRUMENTS CERTAINLY RESONATES WITH BOTH MUSICIANS AND AUDIENCES. WHY IS THAT?

HB: Baroque music inhabits a special sound world of gut strings, wooden wind instruments, "natural" trumpets and horns. Baroque composers wrote these masterpieces with this sound in mind and would have been perplexed by the modern cousins that you hear in most orchestras today. As performers, playing this music on these instruments provides a window into the soul of the music, where it's not just the notes that create the emotion but also the very sound produced by the players.

BRAVO: WE RECENTLY CELEBRATED HANDEL'S 335TH BIRTHDAY. *ALCINA* WAS A HIT WHEN IT PREMIERED IN 1735 AT THEATRE ROYAL, COVENT GARDEN, YET IS RARELY PERFORMED IN THE 21ST CENTURY. AS A MASTER INTERPRETER OF HIS WORK, DO YOU HAVE A BIRTHDAY WISH FOR HIM?

HB: I think performing *Alcina* is a very appropriate birthday present for Handel, though he would probably be a bit mystified as to why we are still performing his music three hundred years later! In the 18th century everything was about "new" music, and you were only as good as your most recent opera.

Fortunately for all of us in the 21st century, Handel's music remains as fresh and "new" today, with much thanks to the Maestro of the Baroque, Harry Bicket. 🌟



This fall, to celebrate Halloween, they are partnering with LA Opera on the company's *Get Out* in Concert at the Theatre at Ace Hotel, joining the LA Opera Orchestra to provide live musical accompaniment to the 2017 horror masterpiece, *Get Out*. LAO will have four screenings, Friday through Sunday, October 29-31.

Recently the DC6 Singers took a break from their busy schedule to sit down with *BRAVO* so we could get to know them a bit more.

BRAVO: TELL US ABOUT YOURSELVES. WHERE ARE YOU FROM, AND WHY ARE YOU CALLED THE DC6 SINGERS?

DC6 SINGERS: It's kind of a classic L.A. story of being in the right place at the right time.

The DC6 Singers are a collective of singers originally formed in Pasadena in 2013 to breathe the new life into classic Beatles and Motown tunes, but in our own, non-traditional a capella style. Our former music director, Dereau K. Farrar, had just started working with, at the time, a very new Pasadena-based orchestra called MUSE/IQUE, led by artistic director, the incomparable, Rachel Worby.

Interestingly, we received our name as the result of a performance trip to Washington, D.C. with MUSE/IQUE where we were featured singers for the U.S. State Department's International Women of Courage Awards Ceremony in March 2014.

Some of the singers in our collective are native to the Los Angeles area, but most of us are transplants from the East Coast, Midwest, and Northern California.

BRAVO: YOUR BIO STATES YOUR MAIN GENRES AS GOSPEL, A CAPPELLA AND MOTOWN. IS LA OPERA YOUR FIRST OPERA-RELATED PROJECT? IS THERE ANYTHING DIFFERENT OR UNIQUE ABOUT THIS PARTNERSHIP COMPARED TO THOSE FROM OTHER GENRES?

DC6: That's right, our core performance goal as the DC6 Singers is to give our audiences an a capella gospel Motown experience. However, the singers in our collective come from varying musical backgrounds and genres, including opera and classical, so we've been lucky enough not to be pegged into any one genre. This has allowed us to lend our vocals to live and recorded performances for musical styles ranging from super pop, EDM and classical to Latin and R&B.

One of our favorite things that we have been able to do to date was getting to perform as an opening act for a private book signing for the launch of the late Jessye Norman's autobiography, *Stand Up Straight and Sing!* Given how much of an icon she was in the opera community, and especially as a performer of color, it was great to get to talk

THEY'LL GIVE YOU THE FEELS

AN INTERVIEW WITH THE DC6 SINGERS

By TOM LADY

The DC6 Singers are a sextet of Los Angeles-based gospel and Motown a capella singers: Jyvonne Haskin, Jantré Christian, Tia Simone, Margaret Best-Collins, Matt Bloyd and Ronnie Ohannon.

with her and learn more of her experiences as an internationally renowned singer.

We are excited for the collaboration with LA Opera and hope that this is the start of many more performances that bridge a gap between opera and other genres.

BRAVO: FOR FOLKS WHO'VE ALREADY SEEN *GET OUT*, WHAT WILL YOU BRING THAT WILL MAKE THE MOVIE NEW AGAIN?

DC6: If you've never attended an in-concert version of one of your favorite movies with live orchestra and/or singers, we highly recommend putting that closer to the top of your to-do list. Seeing a movie with live music provides a unique viewing experience just like going to see a live performance.

Yes, there will be four screenings [of *Get Out*] between October 29th and 31st, but no two will be exactly alike—that's the beauty and awe of live performance. Your readers have no doubt seen Mozart's *The Magic Flute* or Vivaldi's *Four Seasons* performed at least a half-dozen times and likely still anticipate the next live engagement. With *Get Out* in Concert, you can expect to be further engulfed into this harrowing tale as composer Michael Abels conducts his brilliant soundtrack in a live performance that highlights all the "feels" he and the director wanted you to experience. The DC6 Singers will be adding our signature sound along with the LA Opera Orchestra allowing the listener to hear from the main character Chris' African ancestors, and trust us—there's nothing like hearing it live!

BRAVO: I LOVED YOUR "IN A MINUTE! (... OR TWO)" COLLABORATION WITH MUSE/IQUE WHERE YOU COVERED ARETHA FRANKLIN/CAROLE KONG'S "NATURAL WOMAN". WHEN IT COMES TO NEW VERSIONS OF OLD CLASSICS, HOW DO YOU DECIDE WHAT TO TACKLE?

DC6: Aww, thank you! We adore Aretha Franklin, and the musical genius she and Carol King brought to this song is incomparable.

When we decide to add any song to our repertoire, but especially classics like

"Natural Woman", we first approach it by asking ourselves if can we translate this song into a style that fits us, keeps the composer's original intent but gives the listener something new to latch onto. It's also important to pull in classics that are going to resonate with our audience. One benefit for us as a group singing such singular Black music as gospel and Motown, the fact that all American music has its roots in African American music has really opened the breadth of classics for us to choose from, like The Beatles, Adele, Paul Simon and Queen.

BRAVO: THE PANDEMIC HAS FORCED MANY OF US, INDIVIDUALS AND BUSINESSES ALIKE, TO GROW AND EVOLVE AT AN ACCELERATED PACE. IN TERMS OF GETTING YOUR PERFORMANCES TO THE WORLD, WAS THERE ANYTHING NEW THAT YOU TRIED DURING THE PANDEMIC, INITIALLY AS AN EXPERIMENT, THAT YOU WILL NOW CONTINUE DOING EVEN AS WE (SLOWLY) EMERGE BACK INTO THE SUNLIGHT?

DC6: In short, yes, OMG, absolutely yes. It's wild to think how so many of us took digital communication for granted until we were forced to solely rely on it from the isolation of our shelter-in-place homes. Virtual choir videos were new to the DC6 Singers, but we'll likely continue doing them in the future. Outside of a hologram, these "singer-in-a-square-in-a-square" videos have been great collaboration tools allowing us to still work together even when in different cities. That being said, making one is a lot more challenging than it looks. All our technical skills increased exponentially as we had to learn about microphones, sound recording software and the equipment needed to create professional quality recordings from a home recording studio. Plus, we've all really improved our lip syncing, videographer and video editing skills.

One surprising thing to come out of the pandemic is it really emphasized just how much work goes into performing live. Generally speaking, the work a singer puts into playing their vocal instrument is heavily

overlooked in comparison to their fellow instrumentalist musicians. But the breath control to extend the duration of a note, change its tone and volume, blend with the other singers to produce a unified sound let alone the physicality of vocal placement to achieve a specific quality of sound let alone all the standing. A typical day in the life of a working musician pre-pandemic could have you traversing all of L.A. County going to various rehearsals, recording sessions and likely culminating with a live performance. After everything came to a screeching halt, our first pandemic live performances were beyond exhausting. So it really gave many of the DC6 Singers greater appreciation for the act of live performance and all the hard work they put into making it look easy.

BRAVO: GIVEN THE MOMENTOUS EVENTS OF THE PAST YEAR AND A HALF, HOW DO YOU HOPE THE MUSIC WORLD, AND THE OPERA WORLD SPECIFICALLY, EVOLVES WITH THE RAPIDLY CHANGING TIMES?

DC6: Music has always had the unique ability to unite and bring people together even if for a brief moment, and during the last 18 months, that has been even more important. In this time, we've seen the pandemic that has kept many of us separated, weather events that have caused so much destruction, as well as social and civic injustices that have highlighted the need for us as a society to have real conversations and action around racial and socioeconomic disparities. We are overjoyed at the number of organizations, music and non-music alike, that have stepped up during these times to foster healing and change, but specifically are overjoyed at how the music world is making it a priority to ensure that there is appropriate and visible representation at all levels. There is much work still to be done, but we are hopeful that during this unique moment in time, in which the pandemic has forced us to pause, reflect and focus on these issues, that it will bring about positive change for future generations.

You can find the rest of this interview on our website, operaleague.org. 🌟



IN THE PIT

STEPHEN PIAZZA, BASS CLARINET THE MIGHTY WINDS

By DIANE EISENMAN

In addition to playing bass clarinet for the LA Opera Orchestra, Stephen Piazza is the founder and music director of the Los Angeles Symphonic Winds, a leading force in Southern California's cultural community since 1983, and one of the most critically acclaimed and internationally recognized wind ensembles in the United States.

For over 35 years Stephen has also been a faculty member at Pierce College, for most of which time he was the department chair. And for nearly 25 years he has been conducting the prestigious Festival Wind Symphony at the Idyllwild School of Music and the Arts while also serving as director of the festival's wind program.

Recently we caught up with Stephen as the new season, and his schedule, get set to take off.

BRAVO: HOW AND WHEN DID YOU GET INTERESTED IN PLAYING THE BASS CLARINET?

STEPHEN PIAZZA: Although I was, like Mozart, born on the 27th of January (1950, not 1756), I was not especially interested in classical music early on. In fact, what I really wanted to be was a rock and roll sax player. "Rock Around the Clock", "Johnny B. Goode" and "Wild Weekend" were far more influential than Glazunov, Ibert and Ravel. I had to first successfully fend off my folks' desire for me to study accordion, however. When one of my dad's friends suggested that starting on the clarinet would help with my saxophone career, my fate was sealed—especially since his son had recently quit the clarinet and a free instrument was available. At USC, clarinet legend Mitchell Lurie urged me to study bass clarinet with Franklyn Stokes of the LA Phil, and I soon became quite proficient as a clarinet doubler (playing multiple instruments for a studio assignment).

BRAVO: WHERE DID YOU STUDY MUSIC?

SP: I began my clarinet studies at the age of 11 with a wonderful elderly gentleman at his small studio in North Hollywood. He wasn't a particularly good clarinet

player, but he was a wonderful and encouraging music educator. Two years later I began to study with the highly respected studio veteran and owner of Baxter Northrup Music, Ben Kanter. Over four years, Ben prepared me for auditions to a number of universities and conservatories. I eventually selected USC as my school over UCLA and San Fernando Valley State (now CSUN)—having been "de-selected" by Curtis and Juilliard. A few years after receiving my Master's degree in Music Performance from USC, I began to do regular sub-work with the LA Philharmonic, both on clarinet and bass clarinet. Thank goodness that the often-played "Le Sacre du Printemps" ("Rite of Spring") by Stravinsky calls for two bass clarinets!

BRAVO: WHAT DO YOU LOVE ABOUT PLAYING BASS CLARINET?

SP: Perhaps the part of being a clarinet and bass clarinet player that I love the most is the opportunities I have had to perform with some of the world's greatest musicians—both onstage and in the pit. Having worked with such artists as Pearlman, Harrell, Domingo and Fleming as well as conductors such as Conlon, Bernstein, Dudamel, Salonen,



Photo by Charles Hartmann

Previn, Guilini and Mehta, I've been blessed with insights into the highest levels of musical artistry and the transformational power of the performing arts.

BRAVO: WHAT ARE THE MOST DIFFICULT AND THE MOST PROFOUND OPERAS YOU HAVE PLAYED WITH THE LA OPERA ORCHESTRA?

SP: In the LA Opera Orchestra repertoire, I find all of the operas by Wagner and Strauss present technical and musical challenges that require much practice and contextual understanding for truly artistic interpretations. But regardless of how many times Tosca leaps from the Castle Sant'angelo, Mimi takes her last consumptive breath or Cio Cio San draws her suicidal sword, I continue to find myself moved by Puccini's profound sense of theatre, mastery of musical composition and his deep understanding of the tragedy and beauty of the human condition.

BRAVO: TELL US ABOUT THE LA SYMPHONIC WINDS, WHICH YOU FOUNDED AND HAVE CONDUCTED AROUND THE WORLD.

SP: Another important part of my musical life centers around conducting—both the Los Angeles Symphonic Winds and the Idyllwild Arts Summer Wind Symphony. The LA Winds consists of 95 skilled musicians who have traveled around the world as invited guests in China, Europe and Canada—as well as performing regularly in Southern California and touring here in the U.S. The sense of collegiality I feel when conducting my fellow musicians has been a constant source of joy and wonder for me. I may be the one waving the baton and sharing my interpretive ideas, but I try never to forget that it is my instrumental and vocal colleagues who turn the dots on the page into the sounds that touch our souls.

BRAVO: HOW HAS YOUR LIFE CHANGED SINCE THE PANDEMIC?

SP: Just as many of us have become more adept at communication skills in our newly virtual world, I have become increasingly familiar with the world of Zoom, livestreaming events and virtual performances. Even more impactful, however, was the fact that the pandemic deprived me of the profound sense of joy in sharing the music-making process with skilled colleagues and an appreciative audience. This led me to realize just how important these things are—not just to me, but to all of my musician and music-loving friends and acquaintances. "Getting back to normal" may be a worthwhile goal, but looking beyond normal to uncover what comes after will perhaps be the more elusive and more important challenge. 🌸

SOME SPANISH WINE WITH YOUR SPANISH OPERA QUIZ?

We are positively drunk with anticipation of soaking up opera in person for the first time in what seems a vintner's age. Indeed, it's quite possible that by the time you stimulate your brain buds with the below quiz, you will be on the cusp of stimulating all of your senses with LA Opera's season-opening production of *Il Trovatore*. That is, if you have not drunk it down already.

As the perfect pairing for Verdi's 15th century Spain-set melodrama of a troubadour and his brother and the woman between them—a lady-in-waiting in more ways than one—Mark Lyons, LA Opera's Associate Director of Communications and Publications, serves up this generous pour of a quiz.

1. The city of Seville seems to turn up on the opera stage all the time. Think *Carmen*, *The Barber of Seville*... Only one of the following masterpieces is not set in—or just outside—Seville. Which one? (In case you're curious, the libretto says that it's set in Naples, Italy.)

- A. *Così fan tutte*
- B. *Don Giovanni*
- C. *Fidelio*
- D. *The Marriage of Figaro*

2. *Il Trovatore* is based on a play by Spanish dramatist Antonio García Gutiérrez. Verdi would turn to the playwright once again for source material. Name the opera.

- A. *Don Carlo*
- B. *Ernani*
- C. *La Forza del Destino*
- D. *Simon Boccanegra*

3. It seems out of character for Richard Wagner to set an opera in Spain, doesn't it? And yet he did so, exactly once. Which opera?

- A. *The Flying Dutchman*
- B. *Tannhäuser*
- C. *Lohengrin*
- D. *Parsifal*

4. Verdi's four-act Italian opera *Don Carlo* is set entirely in Spain. But his original five-act French version has one act that takes place in France. In this

version, where does the title character first meet his soon-to-be-stepmother?

- A. Paris
- B. Fontainebleau
- C. Lyon
- D. Marseille

5. In Act Two of *Tosca*, Scarpia offers what to the title heroine?

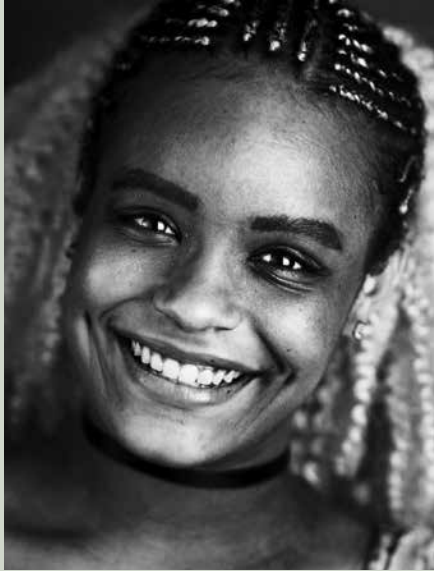
- A. Spanish wine
- B. Spanish lace
- C. A passport to Spain
- D. A Spanish fan

6. Which very prolific French composer wrote *Le Cid*, *Don Quichotte* and *La Navarraise*, all set in Spain? A hint: you're probably much more familiar with his beloved romantic tragedy about a French courtesan. (Not *Violetta* in *La Traviata*, though. The other one.)

- A. Jacques Offenbach
- B. Camille Saint-Saëns
- C. Jean-Baptiste Lully
- D. Jules Massenet

7. In the final act of *La Bohème*, the four guys have a few minutes of fun dancing around their garret apartment. Which Spanish dance step does Schaunard propose?

- A. Tango
- B. Fandango
- C. Flamenco
- D. Paso Doble



MY FIRST OPERA: JADE JAMES

By GARY W. MURPHY

Jade James is an alumna of the Theatre and Musical Theatre department from the Los Angeles County High School for the Arts (LACHSA) and studied dance at Santa Monica College. She was Movement Director for photoshoots featured in *Flaunt Magazine* and *Teen Vogue* and continues to create original content that she'd like to see in the world.

BRAVO: WELCOME, JADE. YOU'RE SUCH AN ACTIVE YOUNG WOMAN THAT I MUST ASK HOW YOU BECAME INVOLVED WITH THE OPERA LEAGUE?

JADE JAMES: My grandparents, Ben and Delores Kerr, are longtime Opera League and LA Opera supporters who have also been involved with African Americans for LA Opera (AALAO), an Opera League affiliate organization. They would open their home—where I lived as well—for many events, meetings and, most memorably, the recitals. Every June, they would host the AALAO Father's Day recital. When I was about four years old, they brought me to the stage to help welcome everyone to the AALAO Father's Day event at the house, and that quickly became a tradition for me, and I would do it every year. It also gave me the wonderful opportunity to spend the day with my grandfather as we prepared the raffle, wrap the CDs and prepare the gift tickets to an upcoming LA Opera performance. My grandparents love the Opera League. As a matter of fact, once they appeared on the cover of *BRAVO* [Issue 37 – Fall 2014], and my grandfather framed it, and it now hangs on the wall of his study.

BRAVO: DID YOUR GRANDPARENTS FIRST TAKE YOU TO THE OPERA WHEN YOU WERE A CHILD?

JJ: Yes, they took my mom and me to see *Cinderella* when I was really young, but I don't remember too much about it. I started to attend performances at the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion when my middle school class would be invited to attend special rehearsals, and I even got to perform onstage during the annual Holiday Celebration, so the Music Center is so special to me. One year my class was

brought to see Mozart's *The Magic Flute*, and I just loved it—the lighting, the costumes and makeup, it was all so lively! The production [by Gerald Scarfe] almost seemed as if it was designed for younger audiences. It was the first time I noticed the supertitles above the stage so we all could understand what was going on. I loved watching my classmates watch and read the libretto because it helped me decide who were the artistic ones that I could be friends with.

BRAVO: I WOULD THINK THAT PERHAPS MOZART WOULD BECOME ONE OF YOUR FAVORITE COMPOSERS?

JJ: Yes, I became a Mozart fan. There were two other Mozart moments for me. My mom was watching the movie *Amadeus*. I walked into the room to ask a question, and instead I sat down and watched the entire film with her and was completely taken aback learning about his life story and listening to his music. Another time, when I was four, my mother heard me singing a pop song that a four-year-old should not have been singing. At that point, my mother told me I could only listen to three radio stations: Radio Disney, K-Earth 101 and classical KUSC, which I listened to when I was studying or rehearsing and such. So, Mozart became part of my life for sure.

BRAVO: WITH ALL THAT'S GOING ON IN YOUR ACTIVE LIFE, DO YOU STILL FIND TIME TO VOLUNTEER WITH AALAO?

JJ: I try to find the time to help my grandparents when they need it, and attend the meetings and whatever needs to get done. We love having the Young Artists from LA Opera perform at AALAO events, as it makes it really special. Often, we'll want to start the evening with a jazz

combo so I can bring some of my friends in to perform as well.

BRAVO: HAVE YOU FOUND ANY OPERA HEROES YET?

JJ: I have to say that when soprano Angel Blue was in LAO's Young Artist program, she came to sing at our recital, and she just grabbed my attention. Everything about her was magnificent, not just her performance but her entire presence was just so special.

BRAVO: NOW THAT WE ARE GETTING BACK TO THE THEATRE AGAIN, WHAT ARE YOU EXCITED ABOUT FOR THIS UPCOMING SEASON?

JJ: Of course, the first thing is the opportunity to be together again for a live performance—respecting health protocols, naturally. Being in quarantine has allowed me to really remember what being at a live performance felt like and making those memories much more special. I'm curious about *Aida* which I've not seen yet so I'll get back to you and tell you what I think.

BRAVO: AS A DANCER WHO HAS APPEARED ONSTAGE AT THE DOROTHY CHANDLER PAVILION, HAVE YOU CONSIDERED AUDITIONING FOR OPERAS THAT UTILIZE DANCE, SUCH AS CARMEN OR LA TRAVIATA?

JJ: There was always music playing in our house so I started to dance when I was a girl, starting with tap and Russian ballet. Classical music was always around, and I loved to dance to it which then brought me closer to opera itself. To combine the two and dance onstage again at the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion? Wow, that would be amazing, a dream for me. I think I'm going to add that to my list. It would be really cool. ✨

THE LEAGUE GETS “COSÌ” WITH SAN DIEGO OPERA

By TOM LADY

Just as LA Opera has retaken the stage, ditto our cousins at San Diego Opera. So how about a jaunt down that-a-way to see what’s playing on their stage?

Next February (exact date TBD) your friendly neighborhood Opera League will host an excursion down the coast to the so-cool-it’s-hot city of San Diego to catch a production of *Così fan tutte*, Mozart’s classic comedy of “mischief, mayhem and mistaken identities.”

The first time San Diego Opera has staged *Così* in 17 years, this production will feature an international cast of rapidly rising stars making their company debut, including mezzo soprano Samantha Hankey as Dorabella, baritones Reginald Smith, Jr. as Don Alfonso and Gihoon Kim as Guglielmo, and tenor Konu Kim as Ferrando. Singing Despina will be soprano Alisa Jordheim, who returns to the city of sun and fun after starring as Gilda in San Diego Opera’s 2019 production of *Rigoletto*.

Opera League members and their guests will most likely meet at Union Station in downtown Los Angeles. From there we will take either the train or a bus down the coast. Upon arriving in downtown San Diego, we will enjoy a nice meal, the price of which will be included when you RSVP, before adjourning to San Diego Civic Theatre.

The exact date and time and package rates will be announced via our website and eBlast as next February gets closer. However, since trips like these tend to sell out fast, if you already know you are interested, do not hesitate to reach out to our longtime special events maestro Brita Millard at bmillard_99@yahoo.com.

NOTE: All attendees will be required to be fully vaccinated. ☀

SPIRITUAL LOVE VERSUS EROTIC LOVE? WAGNER'S BACK!

By GARY W. MURPHY



For Southern California fans of Richard Wagner operas, the wait has been longer than, well, a Wagner opera. But the wait is finally over as Wagner’s 1845 masterpiece *Tannhäuser* returns to the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion for the first time since its 2007 company premiere.

LA Opera last presented a Wagner opera in 2013, when *The Flying Dutchman* alighted on the Dorothy Chandler stage. And before that, it was LAO’s debut production of the legendary *Ring Cycle* in June 2010.

Tannhäuser is a romantic opera that retells the mythological tale of the poet-singer who is torn between earthly passion and true love. The opera will run for six performances from October 16 through November 6 and feature heldentenor Issachah Savage in the title role, with LA Opera Music Director James Conlon as conductor.

Contemporary audiences may wonder if a mid-19th-century opera still resonates with today’s audiences. According to Maestro Conlon—who just renewed his contract with LA Opera through the 2024/25 season—it most certainly does. In a recent conversation with BRAVO, he said that *Tannhäuser* is infused with “big themes, one and all. Dated? Perhaps. Politically incorrect in our day? Possibly. Irrelevant? Not in the slightest.”

Maestro Conlon continued, “Wagner crafted several stories together to tell the tale he loves to tell, a more basic tale, and that is the conflict between spiritual and erotic love, a theme that is inescapable in 19th-century German literature. Dichotomy and inner struggle fueled the muses of the 19th century. Richard Wagner harnessed those muses and changed the artistic world. His music dramas thrived on those contradictions and struggles and left us with an artistic legacy that provoked and engendered other polemics and conflicts.”

With its magnificent overture, glorious “Pilgrim’s Chorus” and beautiful arias performed by several of today’s finest Wagnerian voices, we welcome *Tannhäuser*’s most timely return to Los Angeles. ☀

Would you like to dig into the inner turmoil of the poet-singer some more?

The Opera League, in partnership with The Wagner Society of Southern California, will present a seminar on *Tannhäuser* on Sunday, October 17 at noon at the Colburn School’s Thayer Hall. Go to www.operaleague.org to sign up now!



TEEING UP BETH LONG: THE OPERA LEAGUE'S NEW TREASURER

By
BILL
GREEN

Her path to becoming the head of all things finance and budget for the Opera League began with a round of golf.

Beth Long was enjoying another Tuesday on the links with her dear friend Marion Joy, Opera League board member and co-producer of the BRAVO Live! video series that you can find on the League website and YouTube channel. "Marion and I golf on most Tuesdays," Beth says. "And as we walk the fairways, we chat about many shared interests. I've known for a long time that Marion is an opera fan, but she had not mentioned the League before. As soon as she mentioned it, I knew I wanted to be a part of it, as I have so few friends who are opera lovers."

Since joining the League, Beth has been amazed at the myriad ways the all-volunteer nonprofit supports LA Opera specifically and the opera community in general. Above and beyond chairing the League Finance and Budget committees, she already has her eye on even more volunteer opportunities.

Like many an eager Leaguer, Beth eats up the opportunities the League provides to beef up her opera knowledge, including and especially the virtual gatherings. Virtual versions of one of the Opera League's flagship event series that are typically held in private residences during non-pandemic times, these virtual weekend gatherings have introduced Beth to the volunteer LA Opera-trained Community Educators and their wealth of opera knowledge.

Born and raised in Torrance, where she grew up in that South Bay city's Hollywood Riviera neighborhood, Beth's first encounter with the world of opera happened in seventh-grade Spanish. The teachers in her elementary school would

often share fun and interesting stories drawn from their life experiences, and so Beth's Spanish teacher shared his love of opera with his students.

Fast-forward to 2016. While traveling around Spain and Portugal, Beth grew wistful of that early burst of culture. She decided to attend a performance of Verdi's *Otello* in Madrid. She was hooked.

When she returned home, Beth subscribed to LA Opera while also embracing a newfound addiction to the Metropolitan Opera's movie theater screenings. When the pandemic threatened to lower the curtain on her new love, Beth did not miss a beat as she pivoted to streaming LAO and Met productions. "For whatever reason, I have always been drawn to the grandiose, big, bold, mental and emotional acts," Beth says. "I love that about opera. It is on a scale most of us don't experience."

Her favorite opera so far? "*Tosca*," she says. "Mainly because Scarpia is so unequivocally evil, with pride and no apology. Not a trait I admire, but one that interests me. I'm a big consumer of true crime. The motivations of the very good and very bad fascinate me."

Beth brings a moneybag-full of financial management experience to her role as League treasurer. This includes a bookkeeping stint that led to her earning a CPA. Most recently, she served as Chief Financial Officer of a family-owned capital management company.

Nor is she a stranger to volunteer work. Beth used to be one of the volunteer walking tour docents for the LA Conservancy, a stint that granted

her access to parts of downtown L.A.'s most historic buildings that would have otherwise been off-limits. This would include her favorite building, the Los Angeles Public Library.

Just to show you that life is a circle, Beth said it was thanks to the LA Conservancy that she was able to tour LA Opera's home base, the Dorothy Chandler Pavilion, when she and her husband Bob were considering that venue for their wedding reception. Beth and Bob recently celebrated 35 years of marriage.

Her other half also works in the nonprofit world. In fact, as president of a nationwide nonprofit with offices in all 50 states, Bob was asked in July 2019 to visit each and every office. Beth went with him. This meant traveling three to four days a week every week. By the time the pandemic arrived in March 2020, they'd visited 32 states. Beth loves to travel, but perhaps not that much. "Candidly, having to stay home was a welcome relief," she says.

In addition to traveling, Beth is a voracious reader, and is especially fond of true-life adventure stories. *Endurance* by Alfred Lansing, which she calls "an astounding story of leadership in the Antarctic," as well as *The River of Doubt* by Candice Millard, "Teddy Roosevelt's harrowing journey in the Amazon to find the source of one of the mighty river's tributaries," are among her recent favorites. "I love acts of heroism, physical and moral," she adds.

In the meantime, Beth's love of travel has inspired her to pursue photography. If you would like to check out her portfolio, showcasing photographs from around the world, categorized for easy perusal, you can find it at beth-long.format.com. 🌸

YAPPING WITH A YAP: JACOB INGBAR, COUNTERTENOR

EVOLUTION OF A COUNTERTENOR

By JUDITH HYMAN

Not long ago I was invited to watch on LA Opera's website the recently commissioned music video of Gabriela Lena Frank's *The Five Moons of Lorca*.

I heard an amazing voice relating the heart-wrenching tale and quickly learned it was sung by our most recent addition to the Young Artist Program (YAP), Jacob Ingbar. Upon hearing this amazing, ephemeral voice, I was immediately captured by his unique sound, one not heard often, as Jake is a countertenor, in fact, our first YAP of that voice type. Baroque music often plays to his range, but contemporary music is incorporating this unique sound as reflected in the haunting *The Five Moons of Lorca*.



What makes this all the more remarkable is that, all through Jake's extensive musical training, he sang as a baritone, a long way from a countertenor. As a graduate student at Rice University, it was the sharp-eared diagnosis of Stephen King, Emeritus Professor of Voice who also coaches LAO's YAPs, that pinpointed the potential in his voice to sing as a countertenor. At LAO, Jake relishes King's ongoing tutelage.

At the age of four, Jake, the middle of three boys, was drawn to playing the cello, partly inspired by the instruments he saw in a big children's picture book. His family was not musical, but something drew him toward this instrument which is considered the most similar to the human voice.

In preparing him for this string instrument, his parents wisely introduced him to the Suzuki method, a means for young children to learn to play an instrument before knowing how to read. This is accomplished by listening to a specific recording of music, beginning with variations on a theme of "Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star," until the sound is internalized in the child's mind. The pre-reader can then reproduce the melody on his chosen instrument without reading music. I know how successful the Suzuki method is because I employed it with my own son when he was four.

Jake's interest in music continued all through his schooling, and eventually he discovered his voice. He was strongly influenced by the many Broadway shows he attended in the thriving musical community of his hometown of Minneapolis, and its sister city, Saint Paul. The Twin Cities have gained the reputation of a premier art center. Jake also listened to a lot of Bobby McFerrin and how McFerrin could use his voice as a sort of human orchestra. Jake's parents, both in medicine, recognized their son's gift and also exposed him to the Bernstein Saturday morning lectures.

Acting was definitely a drawing card for Jake, and he began to like the idea of using "my voice rather than lug around a heavy instrument." As his voice took over, the search began for a voice teacher, which brought him to Elizabeth Mannion, a celebrated American voice teacher (then semi-retired). Elizabeth had performed as an operatic mezzo-soprano at many opera houses throughout the world. Jake started taking lessons with her at ten years of age knowing nearly nothing about opera.

About that time, as a third grader, he had his first introduction with his New York grandma, "a huge music lover and supporter of the Met," Jake says. She brought him to Julie Taymor's Met production of *The Magic Flute*. After the performance, "she had pulled strings and arranged for me to go backstage. I was awed by the architecture of the theater, the sets and costumes."

"By high school," he continues, "I had moved to New York and lived with a host family, attending Juilliard of New York City. I was enthralled with the multiplicity of cultures, the international flavor."

For now, Jake is enjoying sunny Los Angeles and the diversity he finds living downtown, and the incredible instructors like Stephen King to whom he has access as a YAP. Having had the experience of "my voice finding me," Jake embraces the challenges ahead on his journey.

If you'd like to get to know Jake even more, check out LAO's Opera Happy Hour episode spotlighting countertenors. On the laopera.org homepage, click DISCOVER at the top right and then click into the LA OPERA ON NOW section on the next page, followed by LA OPERA ON NOW: ALL EVENTS. There you will find the May 4 podcast episode when host Jeremy Frank featured Jake as his special guest for "some musical conversation and specialty sipping vermouth (a rare cocktail to match his rare vocal Fach)." 🌸



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OPERA LEAGUE CALENDAR OF EVENTS

FALL 2021

Event details will be broadcast via operaleague.org with supporting eBlasts.

OCTOBER

GATHERINGS

Il Trovatore: Verdi's Recurring Themes

Saturday, October 2 at 1:30pm

LOCATION: Virtual (Zoom)

SPEAKER: Steve Kohn

SPONSOR: West San Fernando Valley
Gathering Group

HOSTS: Karen and Steve Kohn

Gathering Topic TBD

Thursday, October 28 at 7:00pm

LOCATION: Virtual (Zoom)

SPEAKER: TBD

SPONSOR: Hancock Park/Hollywood/
East San Fernando Valley
Gathering Group

HOST: Gayle Kirschbaum

RECITAL

African Americans for LA Opera

[AALA0] Present: An Afternoon with

Soprano Tiffany Townsend

Sunday, October 24 at 3:00pm

LOCATION: Dorothy Chandler Pavilion,
Fifth Floor Salon

VOCALIST: Tiffany Townsend, Soprano

ACCOMPANIST: Nicholas Roehler

SEMINAR

Tannhäuser

Sunday, October 17 at 12:00pm

LOCATION: Thayer Hall at the Colburn School

SPEAKERS: Katherine Syer and Michael Hackett

NOVEMBER

GATHERINGS

***La Cenerentola: It's Not the Same
Old Fairy Tale***

Sunday, November 7 at 1:30pm

LOCATION: Virtual (Zoom)

SPEAKER: Ron Streicher

SPONSOR: San Gabriel Valley Gathering Group

HOST: Michael Sholer

***The Chorus: Delivering the Dramatic
Sweep a Soloist Can't Provide Alone***

Sunday, November 21 at 1:30pm

LOCATION: Virtual (Zoom)

SPEAKER: Larry Verdugo

SPONSOR: Santa Clarita Gathering Group

HOST: Kimberlyn Jones

SPECIAL EVENT

Alcina: A Night at the Opera

Tuesday, November 2 at 7:30pm

LOCATION: Dorothy Chandler Pavilion

DECEMBER

GATHERINGS

Operatic Personalities

Tuesday, December 7 at 7:00pm

LOCATION: Virtual (Zoom)

SPEAKER: Steve Kohn

SPONSOR: South Bay Gathering Group

HOST: Laurel Howat

***Musical Theater: No, It's Not Opera,
but the Music Is Sublime***

Sunday, December 19 at 1:30pm

LOCATION: Virtual (Zoom)

SPEAKER: Steve Kohn

SPONSOR: Beverly Hills and Westside
Gathering Groups

HOST: Ruth Bachofner

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER

SPECIAL EVENT

Holiday Party

November/December TBD

LOCATION: Kendall's Brassiere