

## Napa Music Industry: The Opera House Vision And Tradition

Commentary By Dalton J. Piercey 11-17-2016



*I grabbed my 56-ounce framing hammer scaling the ladder down, went out of the Exchange and to the dark building. Tore open the plywood and the two of us, Veronica Di Rosa and I walked into the dark building, the Opera House.*

My offering for the community is my story from the late summer of 1981. I worked for CDM Manufacturing here in Napa. They had won the contract to re-enforce the Main Street Exchange. There was an existing building next to the Exchange sitting between the IXL Clothier and the Exchange. The building was empty and dark.

We had rolled the steel wrecking ball in for the preparation of destroying that building. In the finalization of steel re-enforcement of the Main Street Exchange I was left on site by myself with a few instructions including don't talk to the crazy lady with the dog.

At lunch time the crazy lady with the dog appeared talking to me as I sat up on the south west corner of the Exchange. She was asking to go into the building next door. I said that I was instructed not to talk to her and please go away. She was appalled by my response and began to plead to me to let her into the building next door. Finally, she held her hand up to me and said, Can't you see that I am crying? Will you please let me into the building?

I was struck by the crying it was genuine. I grabbed my 56-ounce framing hammer scaling down the ladder, I went out of the Exchange and walked to the dark building. Tore open the plywood and the two of us, Veronica Di Rosa and I walked into the dark building the Opera House. The wall on the north side of the building it was leaning inward. As I can best recall I believe we ascended some stairs to the main floor which graded downward.



There was materials and wire from the building lying all about. The chairs in the center of the floor were stacked like a pyramid. There was about two feet of water at the stage on the floor. There was a hole in the ceiling letting the sunlight through.



We looked up to the stage and saw a Vaudevillian depiction of the Lady Of The Valley at the rear. I recall that the wall was brick. As well I recall there was a small alcoved stage to the south east wall in the lobby area. That may be what is referred to as a melodeon where another musician would sing or perform an instrument. That would have been seen in Victorian theaters in San Francisco.

Veronica said this is the Opera House. I became Veronica's first volunteer to save the Opera House. However, I was young and had dreams of Winter-Land North with Rock Bands. Eventually we parted ways.

I have always visited the Opera House as it has gone through changes in these past years. Recently I had returned after the City Winery's departure. I came by to see the Blue Note. The downstairs area of the Blue Note is very appropriate and done well. So I won't give critical review to the Blue Note as they are the new tenant and deserve our thumbs up for bringing their prestigious organization to Napa.

However for these past years I have been contacting the Opera House to come and attend at least one board meeting.



Because in my last attendance for a show it was during the City Winery period. I saw the appearance of the Opera House that brought me to realize that I was wrong in my support of City Winery. With that realization I concluded that they beat the Opera House up as if it were a bar.

My point I offer most humbly comes from having worked in the theaters at Sonoma State University. The real issue is about tradition. This is what I intended to bring to a Napa Valley Opera House board meeting for five years. Yet my inquiries have been refused.

Let me say that I believe the Opera House is not an element of modernization. It is a thing of beauty from the past. Of vaudeville, orchestras, operas and musicals combined with small dramas and stories. It is that for which our predecessor's had formulated to stimulate the mind with entertainment and performances of those days of the past.

In my recent visit, the ballroom floor has remained, there appears to be the use of comfortable chairs. However my impression was that of the upstairs auditorium at Napa Union High School. One of the alcove entrances to the stage has a piece of plywood with a wine barrel sitting in front and the floor is worn in specific places. There are paint flaws all about and a once beautiful room for performance appeared tacky. I searched for the light on the stage that always remains on at night in theaters. That is tradition. I found none.

I am suggesting a different direction though it must begin with Traditions.

*Dalton*



#### *Supporting Links:*

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Napa\\_Valley\\_Opera\\_House](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Napa_Valley_Opera_House)

<https://napavalleypresents.org>

[https://](https://www.jamcellarsballroom.com)

[www.jamcellarsballroom.com](https://www.jamcellarsballroom.com)

<https://www.bluenotejazz.com/napa/>

