

BEL CANTO

Newsletter of the Manatee Opera Guild

April 2023

<https://manateeloperaguild.org>

APRIL MEETING “WELCOME NEW MEMBERS”

Menu:

Pasta Primavera with Shrimp

or

Vegetarian Pasta Primavera

Peanut Butter Cheesecake with Oreo Crust

Reservations Due Friday, April 14

Name(s): _____

Phone Number: _____

Number of Reservations @\$30 per person: _____

Menu choice (circle): Shrimp Vegetarian

Mail Check(made out to MOG) and Reservation Form to:

Cathy Knobel

787 Benjamin Franklin Drive

Sarasota, FL 34236

or contact Cathy at 941-706-2490

or knobelwd@aol.com

Speaker: Stephanie Sundine

Learn more about Ms. Sundine on page 4.



PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE

The opera season and our MOG 2022-2023 year has almost ended. We can proudly say that it has been a great year, in terms of member participation in meetings and events, in a variety of top-notch events, and in money raised for Sarasota Opera. To date, we have given \$25,000 to the opera as well as \$3,000 to a rising opera star, SarahAnn Duffy. I am so proud to be a member of such a fantastic organization. My thanks to all of you!

It seems just a short time ago that we opened the current year with our September meeting where the dynamic duo of Martha Collins and Maestro Jesse Martins talked about the rewards and challenges of the Youth Opera. At our meeting in October, we enjoyed the music of five Studio Artists, and in November, the principals from the fall production of *The Secret Marriage*. Also in November, we had our wonderful *On Stage Concert*, featuring a string quartet from Sarasota Orchestra. December brought our picnic meeting in the Courtyard of Sarasota Opera with arias by Heather Johnson. We also enjoyed a holiday party at the home of Maryanne Hazen with great food, great company and music from the GS Duo.

January’s meeting featured 3 Studio Artists. In February, we celebrated Angela Korsmo, our 2023 MOG Sweetheart, and heard a selection of arias chosen by Angela and sung by five artists from Sarasota Opera. We also presented all the Apprentice Artists to a Manatee County audience at the Manatee Performing Arts Center, and held a spectacular fashion show. March brought our brunch and presentation of the Helen Jepson Deller Award to Ms. SarahAnn Duffy. At April’s meeting, we will be welcoming our newest members — “the class of 2023.”

Before you go into estivation*, please consider renewing your membership for next year. You will find the membership form on the last page of this newsletter. Can we count on you to continue all our good works? (Members who joined in February or later are already members for next year.)

*estivation: state or condition of torpidity or dormancy induced by the heat of summer

BAD GIRLS IN OPERA

By Elizabeth Aversa

Opera is full of troublesome characters, and more than a few are women. This month we take up the issues of what characteristics make a girl “bad,” how bad girls differ from bad boys, and why we are drawn to them. We will look at some examples worth hearing.

What makes a bad girl bad?

Bad girls in opera — as in theatre, film, and fiction — tend to be too independent, sexually provocative, pushy, obsessed, jealous, or just plain mean. They disregard propriety and snub authority. They will go to any length to achieve what they want and they show their displeasure when what they want is denied. Some are simply unstable and out-of-control. Hanna Woodside states, “Bad girls eliminate the damsel in distress cliché. We’re used to seeing women as victims — helpless souls who need saving (usually by a guy). But bad girls aren’t running from the Bad Guy; they *are* the Bad Guy. That’s refreshing.”

Why are we drawn to bad characters?

Travis Langley, writing in *Wired Magazine*, tells us there are several reasons we are drawn to villains. First, he says, is “wish fulfillment.” Sigmund Freud would suggest that people are inherently antisocial and out for themselves, governed by an undisciplined id. We may be “born to be bad,” but society holds us back from doing the things we might like to; so we fulfill our darker desires through the characters who actually *do* bad things.

Second, he relates our interest in villains to Abraham Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs. Regardless of what level of need is unmet (from food and shelter to self-esteem and fulfillment), he suggests, “people who are unable to overcome social shortcomings fantasize about obtaining any means, good or bad, to satisfy every need or greed.” We enjoy watching what they do to obtain their goals. Consider, for example, Delilah in Saint Saëns’ *Samson & Delilah*. She is compelled to do anything to discover the source of Samson’s strength. Listen to Shirley Verrett as Delilah:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sq3H42NjmIU>

Others suggest that we envy the freedom and power that villains appear to have. Eleonora Marcone says, “It is not so much about the character, it is the attraction to something that you know you are not supposed to be doing. And those characters who still commit terrible things come off as courageous and strong-minded in our brains because they do not play by a rule-book.” A good example of this is Lady Macbeth in Verdi’s *Macbeth*. Lady Macbeth is power hungry & obsessed with gaining the throne for her husband. Here Sondra Radvanovsky shows just how strong-minded this bad girl is.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KZHD-y3Q0-w>

According to Elise Banfield, a professor of psychology, we may be attracted to bad characters because we fear them and what they do. Fear and anxiety produce endorphins and adrenaline, both of which are associated with excitement,

arousal, and even love. We probably have considerable anxiety about the actions of Salome in Richard Strauss’ opera *Salome*. Taking after her wicked mother Herodias, young Salome is demanding and evil. She wants Jochanaan (John the Baptist) who rejects her seductive ways. When her stepfather Herod asks her to dance for him, she does so on his promise that she can have whatever she wants. She demands, and receives, John’s head on a platter. Here Deborah Voigt sings the finale of *Salome*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aWOi-l4HF6U>

Next, we may like bad characters because they are struggling between what is legal and what is ethical; we easily relate to their struggle. Puccini’s *Tosca* is a good example as she is faced with the dilemma of sleeping with Scarpia to save Mario’s life or killing Scarpia. Stabbing Scarpia is bad, but under the circumstances, did she have a choice?

Angela Gheorghiu is *Tosca* here. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VRPDuYxIAC>

We may sympathize with a person who does something evil and then turns her life around. The bad girl may be no less bad, but she’s trying! Norm illustrates this: as high priestess of the Druids, she has broken her vow of chastity and has two children with the Roman Pollione who is now in love with Adalgisa. Although she considers infanticide, she eventually makes a generous peace with Adalgisa; Pollione burns at the pyre with her. Here Sonya Yoncheva sings “Casta Diva.” <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dv80ttaqfmo>

Richard Wagner has redemption as a theme in at least two operas. Bad girl Brunnhilde defies her father Wotan in *The Ring* and finds herself banished to a rock surrounded by fire. By the end of the fourth opera in *The Ring Cycle* the defiant Valkyrie returns the cursed ring to the Rhine and destroys Valhalla, bringing peace to the world. Dame Anne Evans sing the immolation scene from *Götterdämmerung* here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bhdVNvd7yKo>

In his Easter opera *Parsifal*, Kundry, who exhibits a split personality, is directed by the sorcerer Klingsor to seduce Parsifal, and bring down the Knights of the Grail. When the innocent Parsifal rejects Kundry and is inducted into the Knights of the Grail, she changes her ways and repents for earlier sins (among them mocking Christ on the cross), is baptized by Parsifal, and is granted her wish to die. Here is Kundry, sung by Waltraud Meier. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FBiYjSHRFrI>

Finally, the Queen of the Night in Mozart’s *Magic Flute* is definitely one of the baddies. She wants to rule over the realm but Sarastro, high priest of the temple of wisdom, does not want that. He kidnaps her daughter Pamina, and Tamino, who is in love with Pamina, vows to free her. The Queen implores Pamina to kill Sarastro by threatening to disown her — a very unmotherly deed. Here Diana Damrau sings the famous aria. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YuBeBjqKSGQ>

Of course, there are others whom we could include in our list of less than stellar female characters: Carmen, Lucia di

Lammermoor, and the Princess in *Sour Angelica* come to mind. Minnie, who cheats at cards in Puccini's *La fanciulla del West*, and Maria, the *Daughter of the Regiment*, break a few rules, but they are hardly evil.

How do these ladies differ from opera's bad boys? Jenna Guillaume writes that female villains do not get the level of devotion that males do; there is something like a "boys will be boys" attitude among audiences. But Hanna Woodside says, "Female villains are often way more sophisticated than their male counterparts...using sly manipulations and twisted game-playing to their advantage — which is really enjoyable to watch." Let's face it: as Aylar Reimova tells us, "Bad girls are found to be more interesting than the good girls who play by all the rules."

Regardless of how bad they are or how much we come to love them, opera's bad girls are an interesting lot and they provide some of the most memorable music in the repertoire.

See you at the opera next season — when we'll hear two of our favorite bad girls: Carmen and Lucia!

SARASOTA OPERA ANNOUNCES 2023-2024 SEASON

2023 Fall Season

The Music of Giacomo Puccini

November 10 at 7:30 pm
November 12 at 3:00 pm

The operas of **Giacomo Puccini** are some of the most popular in the repertoire. Soloists from Sarasota Opera, partnering with the Sarasota Orchestra, conducted by **Victor DeRenzi** will present favorite selections from these great works.

The Little Sweep by Benjamin Britten

Libretto by **Eric Crozier**

Sarasota Youth Opera production
November 4 at 5:00 pm
November 5 at 12:30 pm

Sarasota Youth Opera will present a revival of our acclaimed production of Britten's charming opera-The Little Sweep. A group of children, with the help of a kind nursery maid, work to free a young chimney sweep apprentice from his cruel master. Last seen in 2018, this enchanting work, which was written to introduce young people to opera, will be sure to delight children and adults alike.

The 2024 Winter Opera Festival, running from February 17 through March 24, 2024, will feature four productions.

The festival will open on February 17 with *Carmen* by Georges Bizet, a company favorite, last seen in 2018. Gaetano Donizetti's brooding masterpiece *Lucia di Lammermoor*, last given in 2012 will return on February 24. Giuseppe Verdi's *Luisa Miller*, last performed nearly 25 years ago will open on March 9. The festival will conclude with the Sarasota Opera premiere of Franz Joseph Haydn's *Deceit Outwitted (L'infedeltà delusa)* a charming comedy, which has not had a fully staged production in the U.S. by a professional *American Opera Company* since 1971.

Subscriptions for the 2023-2024 Season will be available for renewal on Monday, March 20th online at SarasotaOpera.org and in the Sarasota Opera Box Office. Single tickets for the 2023-2024 Season will go on sale

You are Invited

SARASOTA OPERA GUILD
ANNUAL PICNIC
AND INSTALLATION OF OFFICERS
Wednesday, April 26, 2023
Oscar Scherer State Park
1843 S. Tamiami Tr. - Osprey
Lake Osprey Pavilion 2

4:00 - Social Gathering
4:45 - Installation of SOG Board Officers
5:00 - Dinner - Catered by Sonny's BBQ

Bring your own beverage
(iced tea, water, lemonade and glasses will be provided)

Oscar Scherer State Park is located on the east side of Tamiami Trail, north of the intersection of 681 and Tamiami Trail, and South of Historic Spanish Point. Follow signage inside to Lake Osprey Pavilion 2.

There is a \$5 park entry fee per car for up to 8 - \$4 per car for 1 person
PLEASE BRING CASH FOR FEE

SOG Annual Picnic - April 26, 2023
PLEASE MAKE YOUR RESERVATIONS BY APRIL 20th

Please make check payable to SOG and mail to:
Richard Schworm
3344 Lake Pointe Blvd.
Sarasota, FL 34231

Name(s) _____
Phone _____ Email _____
Number of reservations _____ @ \$40
Total enclosed \$ _____

For more info., call Karen Iezzi/Bob Heck
941-388-0895; kriezzi1939@gmail.com

on September 1, 2023. For more information on the 2023-2024 season, please contact the Sarasota Opera Box office at (941) 328-1300, visit us in person at 61 N. Pineapple Avenue in Downtown Sarasota, or online at SarasotaOpera.org.

APRIL SPEAKER STEPHANIE SUNDINE

Stephanie Sundine's career as a soprano took her to three continents and many of the world's leading opera houses, including the Metropolitan Opera, San Francisco Opera, Santa Fe Opera, New York City Opera, Canadian Opera Company, Opéra de Paris, Radio France, Deutsche Oper Berlin, Oper Frankfurt, Oper Leipzig, and Welsh National Opera in major roles in new productions with some of opera's most prominent directors and conductors.

Her repertoire as a singer extended from Mozart and Beethoven through Verdi, Puccini, Wagner, Strauss, Dvorák and Janáček. She performed several contemporary operas in national and international premieres. Her portrayal of Emilia Marty in Janáček's *The Makropulos Case* is commercially available.

Stephanie Sundine began directing opera in 1998 after retiring from her distinguished singing career. Her experience as a singer helps her create dynamic productions that are emotionally engaging.

Stephanie is known for creating detailed character development and providing lively, imaginative productions that offer dramatic insight into a work. She has directed in many regional theaters, including Atlanta Opera, Ft. Worth Opera, Madison Opera, Nevada Opera, Opera Boston, Opera Carolina, Opera Santa Barbara, Sarasota Opera, Utah Opera and Utah Festival Opera. She has also directed productions in several universities, including Indiana University Opera Theater and University of Utah.

Ms. Sundine has been an active dramatic coach for many years, assisting singers with role preparation and audition repertoire. She has been a guest stage director and acting teacher in the Boston University Opera Department and has given master classes at Catholic University, Southern Methodist University, and the University of Delaware, among others. She recently taught a two-week Acting Workshop for the Opera New Jersey Studio Artists. She has judged several competitions, including the Metropolitan Opera National Council Auditions.

As a dramatic coach, she has worked with many talented young artists as well as experienced professionals. Her experience first as a singer for 25 years, and more recently as a stage director for more than two decades, makes it possible for her to identify quickly what needs work and how best to tackle a singer's issues. She helps singers deal with stage fright, body language issues and overall

presentation, creating more expressive and confident performers.

She received a National Opera Institute Grant and a William Mattheus Sullivan Grant.

Text for this article is from Ms. Sundine's webpage: <http://www.stephaniesundine.com/> Photo on first page by Kassandra Devlin.

MARCH MEETING



Our charming Helen Jepson Deller winner, mezzo-soprano SarahAnn Duffy accepts check from MOG Treasurer Maryanne Hazen.

Members were captivated by Ms. Duffy's rich mezzo as she sang selections from her favorite operas at our March meeting.

Ms. Duffy has been a rising presence at Sarasota Opera, beginning in the 2022 Winter Festival as an Apprentice Artist, and as a Studio Artist in the Fall Season, covering the role of Fidelma in *Il Matrimonio Segreto*. In this 2023 Winter Festival, Ms. Duffy covered the role of Zerlina in *Don Giovanni* and sang the role of Kate Pinkerton in *Madama Butterfly*.

Later in April, Ms. Duffy will be singing the role of Rosina in *The Barber of Seville* at Opera NEO in San Diego. In July, Ms. Duffy will be a Studio Artist at Chautauqua Opera in New York State. She will be covering the role of Mrs. Lovett in Sondheim's *Sweeney Todd*.

We wish Ms. Duffy great success in her career.

Annual Membership Application

Name(s): _____

Address: _____

City, State and Zip: _____

Home Phone: _____

Cell Phone: _____

Email: _____

New Member _____ Renewing Member

I (we) can help the Manatee Opera Guild in these ways (please check all appropriate boxes)

Literature design

Event planning

Fundraising

Greeting

Developing membership

Photography

Writing

Hosting parties

Hospitality

Publicity

Refreshments

Serving on the Board

Soliciting advertising and gifts

Telephoning

Editing literature (newsletters, brochures, letters)

Setting up/cleaning up

Modeling at fashion show

Other talent _____

Membership Level:

- Single Regular** Membership \$40
- Single Sustaining** Membership \$50
- Couple Regular** Membership \$60
- Couple Sustaining** Membership \$70

Mail, with a check made out to
MOG to:

Jeanne Yeagle
1700 3rd Ave W, Apt 111
Bradenton FL 34205

Questions?: 941-755-7426