

# BEL CANTO

Newsletter of the Manatee Opera Guild

December 2023

<https://manateeoperaguild.org>

## DECEMBER MEETING PICNIC AT THE OPERA

**December 6, 2023, at 10:30 a.m.  
Sarasota Opera Courtyard  
(if it rains—inside the Opera)**

This is our annual picnic. We meet in the Courtyard, have coffee, and a short business meeting. A Sarasota Opera artist(s) will entertain, followed by a lunch.

You are invited to bring your own lunch or to order a catered lunch with Cathy Knobel.

Catered Lunch from *Maximillian's Cafe*

### Sandwich choices:

Uptown Turkey—Honey Maple Turkey, bacon, avocado, lettuce, tomato, mayonnaise on multigrain bread.

- or -

Pressed Veggie - Spinach, mushrooms, red onion, tomato, feta cheese on Cuban bread with a splash of Italian dressing.

Accompanied by: Rotini Salad, bag of chips and a bakery treat.

Price: \$16.00

To order a catered lunch, please call Cathy Knobel by **December 3 (Sunday)**. If you leave a message, please be sure to tell Cathy which sandwich you want. Payment will be due on the day of the picnic.

941-706-2490 -- Land Line

941-666-3253 -- Cell

**Reservations due by December 3rd.**

## A MESSAGE FROM SYBLE

What an exciting November! Our Guild meeting featured all 5 of Sarasota Opera's Fall Resident Artists - a totally delightful treat. This is the first season that Sarasota Opera has had singers in residence for 7 weeks devoted to Outreach and our Guild had them perform at both our October and our November meetings. Sarasota Opera also offered two Puccini Concerts in November that were sold out. I hope each of you got to see this very special concert. When I saw it on Sunday afternoon, every person in that packed house walked out smiling. And of course the Youth Opera's performance of *The Little Sweep* was the highlight of the month. It is always heartwarming to watch 75 children in a fully orchestrated opera production being in an Opera House filled with families and children.

We have one more November event. - **Our November Prelude is later this week on Thursday November 30** at Westminster Towers. Martha Collins will be presenting Bizet's *Carmen*. Rosanne's presentations are always informative and memorable. You may know *Carmen* well, but I promise you will learn something new in this Prelude. Again what an exciting November!

**Our Holiday party is coming up this week on December 3.** It will be cohosted by Maryanne Hazen and Syble DiGirolamo at Maryanne & Ray Hazen's home. We will be entertained by our own member Maria Cora Gaffar and her friend Ferminita Francia with piano and singing of seasonal music. The party is limited to our Guild members and families. We are celebrating each other and our friendships. Sign up with Jean Roberts and bring a dish to share. Come join the fun!

Our December member meeting **will be held in the Courtyard at Sarasota Opera on Wednesday December 6.** Please note that this is NOT our

**normal date or location.** We all had such a delightful time at last year's December Courtyard meeting that we decided to do it again this year. An added plus is we now have a couple of new members who discovered us as they walked by while the singers were performing. We hope to see you in the Courtyard. Call Cathy Knobel at the numbers listed on page one.

**Our December Prelude is on December 8** at Westminster Towers. Jesse Martins will be presenting *Lucia Di Lammermoor*. Jesse will be conducting this Opera in the upcoming Winter Festival. The Prelude promises to provide not only an informative discussion of *Lucia* and its composer Donizetti, but also some interesting insights concerning conducting the Opera.

Lastly, we wish each of you a Holiday season filled with love and family and friendship. We are grateful to have you as part of our life and to share our love of Opera and special times with you.



Manatee Opera Guild Presents  
a multi-media talk on  
Donizetti's tragic  
opera  
*Lucia di Lammermoor*  
given by  
Maestro Jesse Martins  
of Sarasota Opera.

December 8, 2023  
9:30 coffee and pastries  
10:00 talk begins  
no reservations necessary  
\$ 5 at door  
Westminster Towers Auditorium  
1533 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue West  
Bradenton, FL 34205

## FINAL TUNE-UP FOR WINTER OPERA FESTIVAL

Elizabeth Aversa

This month we have our final “tune up” for this season of the Sarasota Opera. This column provides introductory information on the composers of the last two operas we will hear in 2024. Links to the operas, so you can take a peek before going to the opera house, are included. You can learn more about the scheduled operas at the Manatee Opera Guild's Preludes. Upcoming Prelude lectures will be at 10:00 a.m. on December 8, 2023, January 19, 2024, and February 16, 2024, all at Westminster Towers in Bradenton.

### **Giuseppe Verdi (1813-1901), composer of *Luisa Miller***

Verdi was born on October 9/10, 1813, in La Roncole, Italy, near Busseto. He showed talent at an early age and was a working musician by his teenage years. Verdi's first opera, *Oberto*, was produced at La Scala in 1839. It was a success and received more than a dozen performances.

Sadly, in 1840, Verdi faced tragedy—his young wife Margherita and his two children died and Verdi suffered severe depression as he had also completed an opera that was not a success. At the age of 27 he vowed he would no longer compose. Fortunately, a mentor encouraged him and he wrote *Nabucco*, the opera that established his reputation.

*I Lombardi (The Lombards)* was completed in 1843 and *Ernani* (which was performed here in 2023) premiered in 1844. Among other works of the 1840s is the opera we will hear in 2024, *Luisa Miller*.

In 1851, Verdi began a relationship with one of his star sopranos, Giuseppina Strepponi, and they lived together prior to marriage. Verdi was stressed by this "scandalous" affair and he was, at the same time, under censorship from Austria as they occupied Italy and wanted to control the arts. Nonetheless, Verdi's “big three,” among his most popular operas, were composed in Verdi's stressed mid-career. They are *Rigoletto* (1851), *Il Trovatore* (1853), and *La Traviata* (1853).

Twenty years later Verdi, a late middle-aged man, was recognized as *the* major Italian composer. The operas of his last 30 years include *La forza del destino*, 1862; *Don Carlos*, 1867; *Aida*, 1871; *Otello*, 1887; and *Falstaff*, 1893; all still part of the repertoire.

Verdi was interested in politics and the unification of Italy, and in 1859 he was elected to the provincial council. He participated and then declined to run again due to leadership changes. Later, though, he was elected to the parliament for the new kingdom of Italy. He did not actively participate in political matters, but rather lent his name to the causes that were dear to him. His operas were considered by many to include political statements or messages and, in fact, to be “Risorgimento Works.” He was an Italian nationalist throughout his life.

Verdi died on January 27th, 1901, aged 87, with his adopted daughter Maria and the soprano Teresa Stolz, at his bedside. It was reported that “On February 26th, Verdi and his wife’s coffins were moved to the newly completed Casa di Riposa per Musicisti (Musicians’ House of Rest) in what amounted to a state funeral. Some 300,000 people crammed the streets of Milan as the immense funeral carriage, drawn by six horses, passed in slow procession, followed by a cortège of leading politicians and dignitaries, foreign representatives, and officials from numerous Italian cities. Six carriages bore wreaths and floral tributes. As the procession left the cemetery, ‘Va, pensiero’ was sung by a chorus 800 strong, conducted by Toscanini, and when the cortège reached the Casa di Riposa, it was greeted by the ‘Miserere’ from *Il Trovatore*.”

Verdi left the world 28 beautiful operas and numerous other works.

Here is a link to the full opera *Luisa Miller* recorded in 2008, with French and English titles. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XbmHdrLqjuA>

### **Franz Joseph Haydn (1732? – 1809) Composer of *Deceit Outwitted***

Franz Joseph Haydn was born in 1732 in Rohrau, Austria. Musically gifted from an early age, by 1740 he was a soprano in the choir of St. Stephen’s Cathedral in Vienna. He studied singing and composition under several local tutors. Soon he was a singing teacher himself, and he served Countess Thun as her harpsichordist and vocal teacher.

While a chorister, Haydn boarded with several families where he was not always well-treated, so in 1749 (at age 17) he went out on his own as a freelance musician. By the mid-1750s he was kapellmeister (music director) for Count Karl Joseph of Morzin. At the time it was usual for families of considerable means and palaces for their residences to employ music directors who

composed and directed orchestra performances specifically for them and their guests. Haydn stayed with Count Morzin until 1760 when the count fell on hard economic times and dismissed Haydn and his musicians.

In 1761 he moved to be assistant music director, and later kapellmeister, for the House of Esterházy in Eisenstadt, Kingdom of Hungary. It was in the employ of Esterházy that Haydn composed his operas. These were often written for special occasions – a relative’s name day, a visit of a dignitary, and one for the opening of the Esterháza Opera House (1768). Many were short and the styles changed as the Prince’s tastes evolved.

By the 1790s Haydn was well established, and on his return from a stay for over a year in England and receipt of an honorary doctorate from Oxford he stayed briefly in Bonn. There he recognized the talent of a young Ludwig van Beethoven and became his teacher for a brief period.

Haydn resigned his post at Esterháza in 1802 and died in 1809 in Vienna.

Haydn is considered to be the father of the classical symphony (he composed 108), and he is also famous for his 53 piano sonatas and 80 string quartets. In addition, he composed 14 masses, and 3 oratorios. Although he is less known for his operas, his output was notable: he composed 15 of them.

*Deceit Outwitted (L'infedeltà delusa )* which will be performed in Sarasota in 2024 was his 6<sup>th</sup> opera, the first written for stage performance. It premiered on the name day of the Dowager Princess Esterházy in July 1773. Here is a link to the full opera with French surtitles. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5cdsLGkJHWg>

While you listen to the operas listed here, enjoy the upcoming holiday season as well. Meanwhile, we’ll see you at the Sarasota Opera House!

### **GETTING TO KNOW SARAHANN DUFFY**

Ms. Duffy has dazzled us with her beautiful mezzo soprano voice at our October and November meetings, and she was our MOG 2023 \$3000 Helen Jepson Deller Award winner last March. Unfortunately, at that meeting, she had to leave in a hurry, and couldn’t answer any questions. But, I was able to catch up with her, and ask her these questions. I hope that they cover what you would have asked.

Jeanne: *Can you describe your upbringing? Where you grew up, whether you have siblings, if anyone else in your family is musically talented, that kind of thing.*

SarahAnn: **I grew up in Westchester County in New York. My mother lives in Pleasantville and my father and stepmom lived in Cortlandt Manor. I have two step-siblings who are older than me. My father played the trumpet in**



**high school and college and was in fact first chair!**

**Aside from that, I am the only musician in my family and they are very supportive.**

*J: Did your schools, elementary thru high school, have good music programs? How were you exposed to music?*

**S: I am very lucky to have had great music programs**

**in school. I was a part of every choir I could, and my choir teacher encouraged me to pursue music. I was initially introduced to the arts through dance and danced competitively from ages 8-17. I also attended out of school theater programs where we performed musicals in the fall and spring in high school.**

*J: When did you realize that you had a special talent?*

**S: I realized that I had a special talent at my time in summer camp at age 9. I was attending a mom and pop dance studio where I participated in competitive dance, and I joined their summer camp where we learned how to audition to ultimately perform in the musical *Annie*. After auditioning, I was given the role of Annie, but was sure the director was mistaken. I had never sung for an audience before. Folks continually noticed my voice and I then began voice lessons in classical music. Once I heard an opera for the first time in high school, I never looked back.**

*J: Who were your mentors? Who has guided your career?*

**S: My first mentors were "Miss Rose" and "Mr. Mack" who noticed my talent in *Annie*. My biggest mentors right now are my current voice teacher, Nova Thomas, and my incredible mentors at Sarasota Opera, Maestro DeRenzi, Stephanie Sundine, Jesse Martins, Marco Nisticò and Martha Collins.**

*J: How did you get to Sarasota Opera?*

**S: I auditioned for Sarasota Opera in 2021 for their Apprentice Program that began in 2022.**

*J: What role would you like to perform?*

**S: I would love to perform the role of Rosina in *Il Barbiere di Siviglia* again. I absolutely love all facets of this spicy character and would love to sing that role again. I would also love to sing the role of Carmen.**

*J: How was your award money useful to you?*

**S: Because of this award money, I was able to take auditions and fly to cities as necessary for these auditions to further my career. In particular, I was able to fly to Cincinnati to audition for The Glimmerglass Festival, where I will be attending and singing this summer. I have also been able to update my website, media and continue lessons and coachings more frequently because of this generous award. I am incredibly grateful!**

## TRIBUTES

Tributes are a note of kindness and acknowledgement. As your own lives unfold this year and events of meaning arise, consider recognizing these with an MOG tribute.

In sweetest memory of my husband, **David Luce**.

In memory of **Dave Luce**, a kind and gentle man, who will be missed by all who knew him, from Jean Roberts.

Happy Birthday to **Carol Ann Heckman**. Many more!  
From Jeanne Yeagle

Happy Birthday to **Syble**, the moving force of MOG.  
And may you have many more. From Jean Roberts

Tribute Cards will be available to pick up at all meetings. You can also send your Tributes (minimum \$10) to: Tribute Chair, Linda Buchhart, 6350 29<sup>th</sup> Avenue W., Bradenton, FL 34209

## PLEASE WELCOME NEW MEMBERS:

Jolie Dunham  
14651 Westbrook Cir #302  
Bradenton, FL 34211  
941-465-0976  
[joliedunham@hotmail.com](mailto:joliedunham@hotmail.com)

Valerie Giuliani  
13132 Peregrin  
Bradenton, FL 34212  
815-274-8381  
[divavg@comcast.net](mailto:divavg@comcast.net)

Jim Murray  
1700 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue W, Apt. 608  
Bradenton, FL 34205  
941-782-3936  
727-340-3963  
[james192093@gmail.com](mailto:james192093@gmail.com)