

BEL CANTO

Newsletter of the Manatee Opera Guild

January 2022

<https://manateeoperaguild.org>

LUNCHEON RESERVATIONS

Please send your reservations with a check (made out to MOG) for \$25 per person to

Jean Roberts
222 12th St West
Apt 302
Bradenton, FL 34205
730-0135
jeanrob222@gmail.com

Menu

Tuscan Salad with Roasted Chicken

*Combination of Mixed Greens & Romaine,
Roasted Chicken, Sundried Tomatoes, Cucumber,
Toasted Walnuts, Portobello Mushrooms,
Grilled Asparagus, Goat Cheese
& White Balsamic Vinaigrette*

A non-garlic, grilled vegetable entree over bow-tie pasta is always available.

Please note your choice on your reservation.

Reservations are due by January 14.

Reservation for Luncheon January 19, 2022

Name: _____

Phone Number: _____

Number of Reservations: _____

Entree selection: please circle

Tuscan Salad

Vegetarian

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Happy New Year! Just as 2021 was better than 2020, let us all be optimistic that 2022 will continue to bring us better news, and an end to the Covid pandemic. We want to go on with our lives—the joys of meeting in person and attending the performances that bring so much enrichment to our lives.

Martha Collins did a fantastic job with her Prelude to *Daughter of the Regiment*, the second of Sarasota Opera's four masterworks in the Winter Festival. Martha's talks are animated, informative, and just plain fun. I am happy to report that we had an almost full house at her December presentation. Thank you Martha, and thank you to Elizabeth Aversa, our Education Chair, and to her husband, Rocco.

Our meeting in December was such a success. We had three *guests*, and now we have three *new members*! So, bringing your friends and acquaintances to the meetings does increase our membership. Plus, we were privileged to have back in our midst, tenor **Matthew Vickers**. Matthew, you may remember, was our 2016 Helen Jepson Deller Award winner. And, in that same year, he was called upon to take the lead role in *La Battaglia di Legnano* at the last moment when the principal singer took ill. He wowed the audience then, and he wowed us at our meeting when he sang a selection of Neapolitan songs and his favorite arias.

We have some major events to attend in the new year. Soon, you will be getting your five tickets to the **Stars of Tomorrow Concert** that takes place in early February. You can sell your extra tickets. You can give them away to friends. Or, you can return them, unused. For newer members who have never attended a Stars Concert, it is a full program of arias, duets, and ensemble pieces and choruses done by the Apprentice Artists of Sarasota Opera. These are generally people who have completed their undergraduate degree in voice performance, and most are working on their masters degree. They sing beautifully. They are here at Sarasota Opera because they have great potential, and to hone their skills with full days of lessons and practices. They are generally singing on the Sarasota Opera stage in choruses, but at this concert, they get to really shine!

Later in February, on the 16th, we will have a short meeting, followed by our **Sweetheart of Manatee Opera Guild** event. We moved the Saints Luncheon to February to accommodate all our members, even our snow bird members, who often had to miss the Saint's Luncheon because they hadn't arrived here yet. Our sweetheart this year is **Maryanne Hazen**, our Treasurer and our Web Master. She has previously served as Membership Chair. Maryanne also does beautiful flower arrangements for many of our functions, and is involved in food preparation and serving at the *Stars of Tomorrow Concert*. She also helps out with many other jobs for MOG. Thank you Maryanne! And, members, please come out to show your appreciation of Maryanne's many gifts to the Guild.

MORE OPERAS FOR 2022 WINTER-SPRING FESTIVAL

By Elizabeth Aversa

In September 2021 we introduced “fun facts” about three operas that would be heard in the Sarasota Opera House during the 2021-2022 season: *The Silken Ladder*, *Tosca*, and *The Daughter of the Regiment*. We promised to cover the last two operas of the season (*The Pearl Fishers* and *Attila*) in a subsequent *Bel Canto*, and so here is delivery on that promise.

Once again, the stories of the operas will not be told in detail here, rather, informational factoids about the composers, librettists, and the operas will be shared; more in-depth coverage will be left to our Prelude speakers. Links to music to accompany your reading are included. The next steps, of course, are to join us for the upcoming Preludes, secure your tickets, and come to the operas. The two operas discussed here should not be missed!

1. George Bizet’s “other opera”

The Pearl Fishers (*Les Pêcheurs de Perles*) is not as renowned as the composer’s biggest hit, *Carmen* – one of the most popular works in the entire operatic repertoire. But despite *The Pearl Fishers*’ lukewarm reception at the September 1863 premier in Paris, it is now performed regularly in houses around the world.

The opera in three acts is set in Ceylon in legendary time and involves Zurga, king of the pearl fishers; Nadir, his friend; Leila, a high priestess with whom both men are in love; and Nourabad, a Brahmin priest. It is a story of friendship, loyalty, love, and the tension between a woman’s sacred oath as a high priestess and her secular love of a man.

The composer Georges Bizet was a true child prodigy. His first opera was written when he was a student in the Paris Conservatory, to which he had been admitted at age nine. *The Pearl Fishers* premiered when he was not yet twenty-five, and he died at age thirty-six, only three months after the premier of *Carmen*. There are other operas by Bizet, but many were left unfinished. The literature tells us that important musicians of his day greatly admired Bizet: Liszt, Massenet, and Saint-Saëns were among them. However, audiences were sometimes not so favorably impressed, and Gounod, who had

influenced Bizet’s music, is said to have accused the young composer of plagiarism.

There is ongoing intrigue attached to a dispute between Bizet and his publisher regarding rights to publish, the loss of autographed scores after the composer’s death, and resultant revisions of the opera. A full orchestral score did not appear until 1893 (nearly two decades after Bizet’s death) and it was only in the 1990’s that the composer’s conducting score was found. These developments and discoveries continue to inform directors on mounting productions of *The Pearl Fishers* as the composer would have wished.

The late Milton Cross summed up the allure of this opera in the 1952 edition of his *Complete Stories of the Great Operas*:

“There is a wealth of pleasing melody in the score, with music of impressive impact and power underscoring the dramatic climaxes of the action.” (Cross, p. 413) He goes on to note that although the opera may be unfamiliar to many, the tenor aria sung by Nadir “Je crois entendre encore,” is well known. This writer would add that the duet of Nadir and Zurga “Au fond du temple saint” is another favorite. (Listen to the duet by clicking [here](#).)

2. *Attila*, librettists, and a political statement

Giuseppe Verdi’s *Attila* is an opera comprised of a prologue and three acts. It premiered at La Fenice in Venice in March 1846. The music is set to a libretto by Temistocle Solara with Act III completed by another favored librettist, Francesco Maria Piave. The opera is, as its title indicates, about Attila, king of the Huns. Attila, whose goal is for his hoards to conquer Rome and all of Italy, falls in love with an enemy woman, Odabella, who seeks (and finds) revenge with her sword. It’s a happy ending for Odabella (Italy is saved!) but not for Attila.

Verdi collaborated successfully with librettist Solera on *I Lombardi* and *Nabucco* before *Attila*. However, Solara moved away before *Attila* was finished, so Verdi engaged Piave, with whom he had previously worked, to complete Act III. In various articles about *Attila*, one finds that some authors credit Solera as librettist, some cite Piave as librettist, and some recognize both men for the work. Although the librettists’ names take second

billing to the composers', their contributions should receive proper recognition.

As to the political statement that was incorporated into this opera and evaded Italian censors, National Public Radio's World of Opera commentary (January 11, 2008) noted:

"Verdi's opera was billed as an historical drama depicting ancient events, while in fact it was a timely expression of one of the hottest political issues of the day — the push for Italian independence.

In 19th-century Italy, the movement was known as the *Risorgimento*, or Resurgence. The Italian peninsula had long been divided and ruled by the Austrian empire. The goal of the *Risorgimento* was to expel the Austrian rulers and unify Italy under one government.

Verdi was one of the movement's leading advocates and his many patriotic operas made him a national hero."

It should be added that this was not the only opera by Verdi in which a story of an historical event covered for a contemporary political message.

A short video provides an introduction to *Attila*. Enjoy it [here](#).

Four great operas are coming our way in the Sarasota Opera Winter/Spring Festival, so....

SEE YOU AT THE OPERA!

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.

To **Nikki Cecchetti** from **Katherine Martinez**:
"Congratulations on being cast for the role of Lauretta in the performance of *Gianni Schicchi* at Stetson's Opera Program."

To **Syble DiGirolamo** from **Elizabeth Aversa**:
"Congrats on the 11/5 party! Great Fun!"

To **Martha Collins** from **Jeanne Yeagle**:
"Thank you so much for two exciting Preludes!"

Tribute Cards will be available to pick up at all meetings. You can also send your Tributes (minimum \$10) to: Tribute Chair, Syble DiGirolamo at 3509 Little Country Rd. Parrish, FL 34219.

PLEASE WELCOME NEW MEMBERS:

Hodder, Louisa
4745 Independence Drive
Bradenton, FL 34210
378-0974
hodderl@aol.com

Benardo, Susan and Thomas
4607 Riverview Boulevard
Bradenton, FL 34209
779-4222
susbenardo@verizon.net



**MANATEE OPERA GUILD
CALENDAR 2021-2022**

Meetings

**Please remember to wear your mask at all times
in the meeting.**

- 10:00 Coffee and conversation
- 10:30 Business Meeting
- 11:00 Singers from Sarasota Opera entertain
- 11:30 Optional Luncheon (\$25 per person)

Dates

- January 19
- February 16 (Manatee Opera Guild Valentine Party celebrating our own member, Maryanne Hazen)
- March 16 (Spring Fling Brunch includes the Helen Jepson Deller and Deane Allyn Awards)

Preludes

All Preludes take place at Westminster Towers Auditorium
1533 4th Avenue West, Bradenton 34205
Refreshments at 9:30, Program at 10
\$5 at the door, no reservations

January 21 *The Pearl Fishers*
Peter Shimkin, Presenter

February 18 *Attila*
Phyllis Lowitt, Presenter

Board Meetings (All members are invited to attend)

First Tuesday
Location TBA
10 a.m.

- January 4
- February 1
- March 1
- April 5

**Stars of Tomorrow Concert
Featuring Apprentice Artists from Sarasota
Opera in solos, duets and choruses**

Neel Performing Arts Center at State College of Florida
February 6, 2022
1:30 pm
Tickets: \$15

Fashion Show

Lakewood Ranch Country Club
Date: March 2, 11:30 a.m.
Fashions from Evelyn and Arthur, Main Street, Sarasota

Three views of Matthew Vickers at our December meeting.



Martha Collins, left, informs and entertains at our December Prelude.

