

BEL CANTO

Newsletter of the Manatee Opera Guild

January 2024

<https://manateeoperaguild.org>

MEMBERSHIP MEETING
JANUARY 17, 2024
PALM AIRE COUNTRY CLUB

Coffee and Conversation at 10 a.m.
Business Meeting at 10:30 a.m.
Sarasota Opera Singers at 11 a.m.

Followed by an optional luncheon.

Luncheon Menu

Sauteed Chicken à l'Italiana — chicken topped with spinach, ricotta and parmesan cheeses, served with green beans and tomato risotto

-or-

Caribbean Salad — marinated mahi-mahi, mango, mandarin oranges, strawberries, sweet red peppers, toasted almonds with a mango-vanilla vinaigrette.

Dessert: Carrot cake

**To make reservations for lunch, please call,
write or email Kathy Knobel at:**

787 Ben Franklin Drive #8

Sarasota, FL 34236

knobelwd@aol.com

941-706-2490 or 941-666-3253 (cell)

Luncheon is \$35 per person. Please indicate your choice of entrée when making your reservation.

Reservations must be received by January 12.

A MESSAGE FROM JEANNE

Our December picnic moved indoors due to a windy and chilly day, but it was warmed by our camaraderie and some superb singing.

Tenor Geoffrey Agpalo, a Chicagoan and graduate of Northwestern University and the University of Central Florida, has sung with Sarasota Opera (Nemorino in 2020's *Elixir of Love* — in a season cut short by Covid). He has also performed with Opera Maine, Michigan Opera Theatre, Opera Theatre of Saint Louis, Chicago Folks Operetta, Chautauqua Opera, Central City Opera, Chicago Symphony Orchestra, and the Lyric Opera of Chicago. He is the recipient of the William Matheus Sullivan Musical Foundation Career Grant. He is a permanent member of the Lyric Opera Chicago Chorus. Mr. Agpalo was generous with his talent and his charm. He was in excellent voice as he presented a varied program including a moving tribute to his Philippino heritage and a touching rendition of “Una furtiva lagrima” from *Elixir of Love*.

Our January Prelude is on *Luisa Miller*, given by Stephanie Sundine, stage director of the opera. It will take place at 10 a.m. on January 19 in the auditorium of Westminster Towers, 1533 4th Avenue West, Bradenton, (coffee and pastries at 9:30 a.m.). Ms. Sundine has had a rich life in opera, including soprano roles with major US opera houses and in Europe. She now devotes her time to directing opera, mainly with Sarasota Opera, and developing new talent. She will give us an insider's view of this less-well-known opera by Verdi.

Don't forget that at 3 p.m. on January 4 (just a few days away), we will be presenting the movie *Carmen Jones*, also in the Westminster Towers auditorium.

I wish you all a very **Happy New Year** with many thrilling opera experiences!



TRIBUTES

From Valerie Giuliani in memory of **Jimmie and Lucy Giuliani**.

From Sheila and Joe Varady in memory of **Dave Luce**, a charming friend with a lovely sense of humor.

From Juanita Connell in memory of **Dave Luce**.

From Bill and Ginny Anderson in loving memory of a very special friend, **Dave Luce**.

From Elizabeth and Rocco Aversa and Linda Buchhart in Honor of **Jeanne Yeagle** for her hard work in spite of her loss of Dave.

From Gretchen Littlefield and Bev McRae Kudos to **Linda Buchhart** for her help in setting up for the On Stage Concert — sustaining physical injury (requiring surgery) while doing so!

From the Board of MOG in memory of **Jeanne Auten**.

NEW MEMBERS

Please welcome these new members:

Janis Rauch
 7914 Tybee Court
 University Park, FL 34201
 941-351-6863, 941-413-9795 (cell)
janisart7847@gmail.com

Kathleen Ulman
 5540 Country Club Way
 Sarasota, FL 34234
 617-962-9678
kathyulman@verizon.net



Geoffrey Agpalo with Jesse Martins.

Rich DeGennaro, Maestro DeRenzi, Maryanne Hazen, Richard Russell, and Jesse Martins, all smiling after a \$6,000 gift from MOG.



HAPPY NEW YEAR – HAPPY ENDINGS

Elizabeth Aversa

As we greet one another this season “Happy New Year” is heard all around. For me I wish you, dear readers, a most happy 2024, a year filled with good health, much happiness, and great music! The upcoming Sarasota Opera Winter Festival calendar promises that our “great music” wish will be fulfilled.

But since “happy” is the operative word this time of year it is appropriate to start the year’s columns off with some cheerful operas – the ones with happy endings in which all the principals are still standing as the final curtain falls. In other words, here are four examples of operas where we laugh a lot - and nobody dies!

Così fan Tutte (*All Women are Like That*) is a fine example of opera buffa. The fun in this opera, by Mozart and first performed in 1790, is not unlike other operas of the genre in which humor comes at the expense of characters who are tricked, duped, or simply confused. This story has an old bachelor betting two young men who are betrothed to sisters that their ladies will not be faithful when the men are absent. The boys take the bet. Their old friend convinces them to pretend to leave town for military service but to dress up and return as Albanians – to seduce one another’s girl. Several disguises involving a maid and the boys, along with alleged marriage contracts between the pretend Albanians and the girls, lead to lots of laughs and some wonderful music. Here is the final scene of *Così*, where the deception is revealed and the maid Despina (who has been disguised as a notary) provides the moral of the story. The couples, after a few tense moments and threats, enjoy happy reunions and promises to remain faithful after this “life lesson.” From the Metropolitan Opera’s 1996 production: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sB9_GViV228

Another opera buffa is Rossini’s *The Barber of Seville*. This two-act romantic comedy premiered in 1816. It is another opera in which disguises play an important part in the plot. Here, Count Almaviva arrives to court his intended Rosina, a rich girl who is the ward of one Dr. Bartolo who has similar intentions toward her. Figaro, the famous barber, assists the Count in disguising himself first as an inebriated soldier and later as

Rosina’s “substitute” music teacher. The young lovers, with the help of Figaro, make elaborate plans to elope only to have the police arrive to arrest the so-called drunken soldier. Conveniently, the police withdraw upon learning the Count’s real identity. Their second elopement attempt is thwarted when the real music teacher shows up. A bribe convinces him that he really *is* ill, so he is no longer an impediment to the elopement. But Dr. Bartolo overhears the elopement plan and asks the police to arrest both the Count and Figaro. He also calls a notary to come marry him to his young charge. The notary marries the Count and Rosina; when Bartolo arrives with the police it is too late. All ends well, finally, since Bartolo is compensated, and everyone can rejoice at the outcome. The action is fast paced, the story is indeed a comedy, and the music is outstanding. Here are two videos from *The Barber of Seville*. First, here is Figaro’s famous aria <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x9fNzkEY9Ko>

For more listening and viewing pleasure, here is the whole opera with English surtitles. This is the 2022 Royal Opera production of *The Barber*, and it features stars including Joyce DiDonato, Juan Diego Flórez, Pietro Spagnoli, Alessandro Corbelli, and Ferruccio Furlanetto. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eG4V7GPvcvM>

La fille du régiment (*The Daughter of the Regiment*) is a fun opera comique composed by Donizetti and first performed in Paris in 1842. This opera tells of Marie, a young woman who has been raised from a foundling by the men of the 21st Regiment of the French Army. Marie is in love with Tonio, a Tyrolean soldier whose unit is fighting the French. Tonio once saved Marie’s life in the forest, and for his love of her he leaves his Swiss regiment to join the 21st. All appears promising, but, oops, this is opera.

Marie is recognized as the niece of a wealthy marchioness who takes her away to civilize her and to prepare her for marriage to the son of a duchess. Sulpice, a sergeant in the 21st who has raised Marie as a daughter, is her confidant and ally. Just as Marie is giving in to the idea of marriage to the duchess’ son, she hears the regimental music as Tonio and the men of the 21st arrive. The marchioness, who is actually Marie’s mother, saves the day by giving her blessing for the marriage of Marie to Tonio. Everyone rejoices in the end. Here is Juan Diego Flores singing Tonio’s famous

“Ah mes amis” with multiple high Cs. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iIv_0Kj9Gfw And here is the great Joan Sutherland (at age 60) singing the regimental song <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FsN91roh-r8> And last, here is the finale, in which the lovers (sung by Natalie Dessay and Juan Diego Flóres) are rejoicing at the permission to marry. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GAMH2_FHWE

No discussion of comedy in opera would be complete without including Verdi's *Falstaff*. This three-act opera, Verdi's only successful comedy and one of his final works, received its premiere in Milan in 1893. It includes deception, disguise, and trickery at their best! Sir John Falstaff, who is known for his trickery, theft, and other disrespectful behavior, sends love notes to two ladies – Mrs. Ford and Mrs. Page. The ladies learn that they've received *identical* letters, and they plot, with their friend Mrs. Quickly, to give Falstaff his due. Mrs. Quickly takes a message back to Falstaff telling him to visit Mrs. Ford at a certain time when her husband will be absent. Falstaff believes he's been successful in attracting the lady! As the confusion mounts, Mrs. Ford's husband, disguised as Mr. Brooks, seeks Falstaff's advice in seducing Mrs. Ford. Falstaff reveals his appointment with Mrs. Ford and her husband, not realizing that his wife was tricking Falstaff, shows concern at his wife's behavior.

Falstaff visits Mrs. Ford, but her husband arrives home unexpectedly and interrupts the meeting. Mrs. Ford and her friends hide Falstaff (an obese guy) in a laundry basket that, later, is thrown into the river. Meanwhile, there is a concurrent story that we've not discussed, involving two young lovers who get to marry at the end, and who, throughout the opera, provide another degree of intrigue and lovely music! Falstaff's drenched ego is hurt, but still, he persists! Mrs. Quickly convinces him to meet Mrs. Ford in the forest disguised as a huntsman. All those who have it in for Falstaff appear masked and frighten, tease, and torture him until he begs them to stop. Only then do they reveal themselves, after which Falstaff declares that the world is a joke and men are fools! Another happy ending! Here are three videos from *Falstaff*. Here is part of Act I, Scene 1 where Falstaff's unruly behavior is revealed. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fWX2BpWTRBE> In Act II, we see the search for Falstaff, the mistaken discovery of the young lovers, and Falstaff's fall into

the river. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=slzLOLr8By4> Here is the opera's finale from Glyndebourne. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HgQ7Sb64uOQ>

In summary- enjoy the happy endings and a great new year, too!



Please join us at the Stars of Tomorrow Concert

February 11, 2024

Manatee Performing Arts Center

Tickets: \$20 each

5 tickets for \$80

Tickets arriving soon in your mailbox

SNEAK PEAK AT WHAT'S COMING

Sweetheart Luncheon — February 14

Fashion Show — February 28

Spring Fling/Awards Luncheon — March 20

New Member Welcome Luncheon — April 17

SARASOTA OPERA EVENTS

Contact the SO Box Office for tickets to any of these events. Phone: 941-328-1300; sarasotaopera.org, or leave an email at boxoffice@sarasotaopera.org

Opera Performances

Carmen

February 20, 2024 7:30PM
February 22, 2024 7:30PM
February 25, 2024 1:30PM
February 28, 2024 7:30PM
March 2, 2024 1:30PM
March 5, 2024 7:30PM
March 8, 2024 7:30PM
March 13, 2024 7:30PM
March 17, 2024 7:30PM
March 19, 2024 1:30PM
March 22, 2024 7:30PM

Lucia di Lammermoor

February 27, 2024 7:30PM
February 29, 2024 7:30PM
March 3, 2024 1:30PM
March 6, 2024 7:30PM
March 10, 2024 1:30PM
March 16, 2024 7:30PM
March 23, 2024 7:30PM

Deceit Outwitted

March 17, 2024 1:30PM
March 19, 2024 7:30PM
March 21, 2024 7:30PM
March 23, 2024 1:30PM

Luisa Miller

March 12, 2024 7:30PM
March 14, 2024 7:30PM
March 16, 2024 1:30PM
March 20, 2024 7:30PM
March 24, 2024 1:30PM

Prices for operas vary according to seating choice.

Apprentice Artists at Noon

Sarasota Opera House, Peterson Great Room
\$10
March 15 and 21, 2024

Covers at 3 PM

Sarasota Opera House, Peterson Great Room
Understudies (Covers) perform arias from this season's opera season.
\$10
March 21, 2024

Opera Gala —A Masked Ball: Carnevale di Venezia

Ritz Carleton Grand Ballroom
Saturday, February 3, 2024
Reception: 6 PM
Program and Performances: 7 PM
Gala Dinner: 7:30 PM

RSVP Deadlines: December 31, 2023 for Platinum Sponsors, January 17, 2024 for all others.

Salute to the Stars Awards Luncheon

Sarasota Yacht Club
Friday March 22, 2024

11:30 AM, Wine reception

12 PM, Program and Performances by Award Winners

12:30 PM, Luncheon