

Viva Voce

Our Fall Donation Campaign is Underway!

Donate
On Line

Please make a tax-deductible contribution to the Opera Guild of Rochester to support our programs in opera education, outreach, and grants to opera performances.

Our Bravo Nights and Opera Meet-ups are now established and successful parts of our program and we want to continue expanding and attracting new opera fans with your help! **We have reached out to different audiences** this year by helping to sponsor *The Telephone* at the Fringe Festival and supporting Pegasus Early Music's opera production of *Acis and Galatea*. We continue to support Finger Lakes Opera and present our traditional programs.

You can donate securely via Pay Pal or mail a check to Opera Guild of Rochester, PO Box 25613, Rochester, NY 14625. Please include an email or other address for your tax receipt.

Levels start at \$50 for an individual and \$80 per couple, but donations in any amount are important and appreciated.

All donors receive an invitation to the Annual Donor Recital in May, and those who donate above the *Comprimario* level (\$100) may request extra tickets. See the Donations section for information on tax receipts.

For further information about our programs and activities, see [From Your Opera Guild](#).

Volunteering also makes a great contribution!

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Please also keep in mind that we are a volunteer organization!

You can enjoy the opportunity to meet and work with other opera fans and help sustain the programs you like. Currently we are looking for an assistant treasurer, event helpers, technical back-up and publicity committee volunteers. For information about these jobs or to speak with us about any volunteer interest, write to operaguildofrochester@gmail.com and the appropriate person will contact you.

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Edition *Viva Voce*, November 2019

The Opera Guild of Rochester, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization with a mission to support opera and opera education in the greater Rochester area.

The Guild presents free opera lectures at local libraries, tours to productions of local opera companies and the Metropolitan Opera in New York City, and our popular Beat-the-Blahs, Haskell Rosenberg Memorial Series, at Temple B'rith Kodesh in Brighton.

This newsletter is sent via eMail each month, currently to over 3,000 subscribers. For a free subscription send your contact details, including your eMail address, to operaguildofrochester@gmail.com.

Our Website and Facebook pages serve as a clearinghouse for local and regional opera, concert, and recital information, with links to other music organizations in our area. Please visit our Website at operaguildofrochester.org.

For up-to-date information on opera-related news and events, please visit us on [facebook.com/OperaGuildofRochester](https://www.facebook.com/OperaGuildofRochester).



Some events are now being recorded. Click the YouTube logo to visit us there.



Reader Article submission deadline for the next issue is the 15th of the previous month.

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November 3, 1 & 3 pm

Lyric Theater

Jack and the Beanstalk

November 7-10

Eastman Opera Theatre

Der Kaiser von Atlantis and *Mahagonny Singspiel*

November 9

Met HD

Madama Butterfly

November 10

TriCities Opera

We Shall Find Peace

November 12

The Little Theater Cafe

Bravo Night

November 17

The Little Theater

Don Giovanni

November 23

Met HD

Akhnaten

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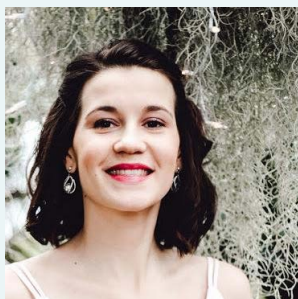
Bravo Nights

Join us for an unforgettable evening with husband and wife duo Joshua and L a Bouillon. Their performance promises to delight with duets from popular operas in addition to solo arias.

Where: Little Theatre Caf  - 240 East Ave, Rochester

When: Tuesday, November 12 from 7 - 9 pm

Bravo Nights are appreciated by both seasoned opera fans and newcomers who enjoy the casual atmosphere and the chance to see top local talent, free of charge. Refreshments are available for purchase at the Caf .



Born in Biarritz, France, soprano L a Bouillon began her early music studies at the Conservatoire de Caen in Normandy, and while a student there, met her husband, tenor Joshua Alain Bouillon who was visiting family in France. She came to Rochester to study voice with Constance Fee at Roberts Wesleyan College and graduated with her Bachelor of Science degree in vocal performance in May of 2019.

In March of this year, L a won first place in her division at the 2019 National Association of Teachers of Singing Eastern Regional Competition, which qualified her to compete at the national level. L a's repertoire includes Juliette (Gounod), Manon (Massenet), Mimi (Puccini), Julieta (Bellini) and Konstanze (Mozart).



Franco-American tenor, [Joshua Alain Bouillon](#), is rapidly emerging as a diversified, in-demand singer. Giving commanding and powerful performances, Mr. Bouillon is growing in reputation as a recitalist as well as in concert and on the opera stage. This summer he sang the role of Alfredo in *La Traviata* with Summer Garden Opera in Virginia. Recent performances also include a concert of operatic works with Piedmont Symphony Orchestra, Verdi *Requiem* with Geneseo Symphony Orchestra, *Mass in E-flat* by Amy Beach with Rochester Oratorio Society and Handel's *Messiah* with the South Dakota Symphony Orchestra. Recent operatic roles include Rom o in Gounod's *Rom o et Juliette* with Maryland Lyric Opera and Gontran in *Une Education Manqu e* by Chabrier with Rochester Lyric Opera. He is currently working as a professor of voice at Nazareth College in Rochester, NY. [Hear Joshua's recordings](#) on his website. You can also watch Joshua perform on this [Facebook link](#).

L a and Joshua perform together regularly in concerts and recitals. In March of this year they performed arias and duets for WXXI's introduction of the PBS series, *Les Mis rables* at the Little Theatre; upcoming performances include a concert in Jacksonville, Florida this spring and concerts in France next summer.

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JACK & THE BEANSTALK

Presented in partnership by Finger Lakes Opera and The Lyric Theatre

SUN. NOV. 3 @ 1 PM & 3 PM
at The Lyric Theatre
440 East Ave, Rochester, NY

Tickets from \$5
available on fingerlakesopera.org
by calling us at 585-305-2340 or
visit a Rochester area Wegmans.

Enjoy this whimsical production featuring an adventuresome boy, a giant, his mother, a golden hen, and magical beans! Featuring the 2019 Young Artists of Finger Lakes Opera, this 45 minute program is ideal for families and children of all ages!!

Fancy! Faces
OF ROCHESTER
Face painting and other fun activities in the lobby before and after each performance!






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Metropolitan Opera HD Season 2019 - 2020

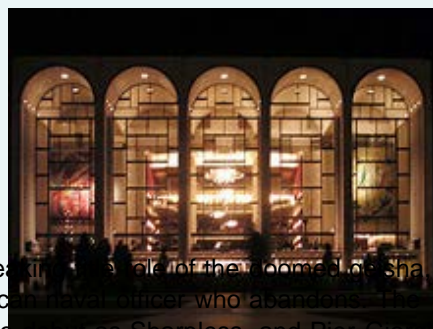
All showings at 12:55 pm

Puccini, *Madama Butterfly*

November 9

For more info, [click here](#)

Soprano Hui He takes on the heartbreaking role of the doomed Butterfly with tenor Andrea Carã as the American sailor Pinkerton who abandons her. The great Plácido Domingo makes his role debut as Sharpless, and Pier Giorgio Morandi is on the podium for Anthony Minghella's sweeping production, a perennial audience favorite. For an essay on *Madama Butterfly* [Click Here](#).



Glass, *Akhmaten*

November 23

For more info, [click here](#)

Director Phelim McDermott tackles another one of Philip Glass's modern masterpieces, with star countertenor Anthony Roth Costanzo as the revolutionary title ruler who transformed ancient Egypt. To match the opera's

hypnotic, ritualistic music, McDermott offers an arresting vision that includes a virtuosic company of acrobats and jugglers. Karen Kamensek conducts. For an essay on *Akhnaten* [Click Here](#).

Berg, *Wozzeck*

January 11

For more info, [click here](#)

After wowing audiences with his astounding production of *Lulu* in 2015, South African artist William Kentridge now focuses his extraordinary visual imagination on Berg's other operatic masterpiece, coming to cinemas for the first time. Met Music Director Yannick Nézet-Séguin is on the podium for this important event, with baritone Peter Mattei as the disturbed title character. Soprano Elza van den Heever is *Wozzeck's* unfaithful mate, alongside a commanding cast that also includes tenor Christopher Ventris, bass-baritone Christian Van Horn, and tenor Gerhard Siegel.

Gershwin, *Porgy and Bess*

February 1

For more info, [click here](#)

One of America's favorite operas - James Robinson's stylish production transports audiences to Catfish Row on the Charleston waterfront, vibrant with the music, dancing, emotion, and heartbreak of its inhabitants. "If you're going to stage Gershwin's opera, this is how," raved the *Guardian* when the new production premiered in London in 2018. David Robertson conducts a dynamic cast, featuring the sympathetic duo of Eric Owens and Angel Blue in the title roles and an all-star ensemble that includes Golda Schultz, Latonia Moore, Denyce Graves, Frederick Ballentine, and Alfred Walker.

Handel, *Agrippina*

February 29

For more info, [click here](#)

Handel's tale of intrigue and impropriety is set in ancient Rome, with star mezzo-soprano Joyce DiDonato as the controlling, power-hungry Agrippina and Harry Bicket conducting. Sir David McVicar's production ingeniously reframes the action of this black comedy about the abuse of power to "the present," where it should loudly resonate. The all-star cast features mezzo-soprano Kate Lindsey as Agrippina's son and future emperor Nerone, soprano Brenda Rae as the seductive Poppea, countertenor Iestyn Davies as the ambitious officer Ottone, and bass Matthew Rose as the weary emperor Claudius.

Wagner, *Der Fliegende Holländer*

March 14

For more info, [click here](#)

The great bass-baritone Sir Bryn Terfel brings his acclaimed portrayal of the doomed sea captain of the title.. Valery Gergiev conducts a new production by François Girard, whose visionary 2013 take on *Parsifal* set the recent Met standard for Wagner stagings. With sweeping sets by John Macfarlane, Girard's new production turns the Met stage into a rich, layered tableau reminiscent of a vast oil painting. The gifted German soprano Anja Kampe, in her Met debut run, is the devoted Senta, whose selfless love is what the Dutchman seeks, with bass Franz-Josef Selig as her father, Daland, and tenor Sergej Skorokhodov as her deserted former lover, Erik.

Puccini, *Tosca*

April 11

For more info, [click here](#)

Soprano Anna Netrebko, whom the *New York Times* hailed as "magnificent" when she made her role debut as *Tosca* in 2018, returns as Puccini's explosive diva. Tenor Brian Jagde is the idealistic painter Cavaradossi, and baritone Michael Volle completes the opera's fatal love triangle as the sinister Scarpia. Bertrand de Billy conducts Sir David McVicar's stunning production.

Donizetti, *Maria Stuarda*

May 9

For more info, [click here](#)

Soprano Diana Damrau, following her triumph as Violetta in last season's new production of Verdi's *La Traviata*, returns as the martyred Mary, Queen of Scots, in Donizetti's bel canto showcase. Star mezzo-soprano Jamie Barton is her imperious rival Queen Elizabeth I, and the silken-voiced tenor Stephen Costello is the noble Earl of Leicester. Maurizio Benini conducts Sir David McVicar's handsome production.

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Hear it. See it. Feel it.

Leonard Bernstein's *Candide*

February 7 & 9, 2020

A sparkling adaptation of Voltaire's satirical novella, *Candide* melds European operetta, musicals, Latin American dance rhythms, and everything in between into its own eclectic style. Young Candide's tutor believes everything happens for the best. Through war, plague, earthquake, shipwreck, and the Spanish Inquisition, Candide tries to hold onto this optimism. Will he become disillusioned or will he find the best of all possible worlds?

[Click Here](#) to Buy Tickets

Giacomo Puccini's *Tosca*

May 1 & 3, 2020

Against a backdrop of intense political unrest, all of Rome is under control of the corrupt police chief Scarpia. When he becomes obsessed with the fiery diva Tosca, she takes a stand in the name of all she holds sacred-art, freedom, and love-in an attempt to free her lover and save herself. Experience the heartbreak, drama, and intrigue of Puccini's timeless masterpiece and enjoy its beloved music. Will love prevail? And at what cost?

[Click Here](#) to Buy Tickets

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Rochester Academy of Medicine

2019-20 Salon Concert Schedule

September 22, 2019

October 20, 2019

February 2, 2020

March 1, 2020

March 29, 2020

All Performances begin at 2pm

Season Ticket: \$140

Single Ticket: \$30

At the door: \$35

Rebecca Penneys, piano

Mikhail Kopelman, violin

Stefan Reuss, cello

Rochester Academy of

Medicine

1441 East Avenue

(585) 271-1314

raom.org



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TRICITIES OPERA

Tickets, call 607-772-0400;

Box office information and to buy online, see tricitiesoera.com/box-office



We Shall Find Peace

Sunday, November 10th, 2019 at 3pm

Tri-Cities Opera Center
315 Clinton Street
Binghamton, NY

As part of the Binghamton Philharmonic's Beethoven project to commemorate the composer's 250th birthday, this concert will be in celebration of our veterans, those currently serving the military, and

Sunday, November 10th, 2019 at 3pm

Beethoven, including excerpts from *Fidelio*. More information coming soon.



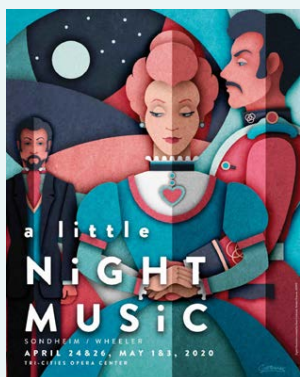
February 21 & 28, 2020 - 7:30pm
February 23 & March 1, 2020 - 3:00pm

Marie Begins

February 21 & 28, 2020 - 7:30pm
February 23 & March 1, 2020 - 3:00pm

Tri-Cities Opera Center
315 Clinton Street
Binghamton, NY 13905

Meet Marie, an overwhelmed and under-accomplished woman entering adulthood while mourning her deceased father. Today she realizes it's time to get her life together, and she needs you to help her figure out how she's going to do it. *Marie Begins* is an immersive "Operactive" experience in which you're transformed from passive consumer to active participant through the use of interactive technology - a world premiere! Performances will be accompanied by a jazz trio. The production is directed by Omer ben Seadia and conducted by Michelle Rofrano.



April 24 & May 1, 2020 - 7:30pm
April 26 & May 3, 2020 - 3:00pm

A Little Night Music

April 24 & May 1, 2020 - 7:30pm
April 26 & May 3, 2020 - 3:00pm

Tri-Cities Opera Center
315 Clinton Street
Binghamton, NY 13905

Sondheim creates a stunning tour de force when he takes Ingmar Bergman's film, *Smiles of a Summer Night*, and turns it into a musical of masterful execution and elegance. Winner of four Tony Awards, this is a musical work that has forever entranced the world of theatre, including the popular song "Send in the Clowns". The cast includes Kevin Bryant (Henrik), Emily Geller (Desiree), Chelsea Melamed (Charlotte), Gina Moscato (Anne), John Shelhart (Fredrik), and Heidi Weeks (Madame Armfeldt). The production is directed by James Kenon Mitchell, conducted by Joshua Horsch.

Preview Gala

Thursday, May 14, 2020, 7:30PM

Preview Gala

Thursday, May 14, 2020, 7:30PM
SAVOCA HIBBITT HALL
TRI-CITIES OPERA CENTER
315 Clinton Street.
Binghamton, NY 13905

Opera does Broadway in this musical review! Our top-notch Resident Artists sing their 'farewell' at this rollicking evening of Broadway favorites! ONE NIGHT ONLY!
\$29 & \$39 gets you a fantastic show with concessions available in the lobby.

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EASTMAN OPERA THEATRE 2019-2020 SEASON



November 7-10, Kilbourn Hall

Der Kaiser von Atlantis (The Emperor of Atlantis), music by Viktor Ullmann with lyrics by Peter Kien; and ***Mahagonny Songspiel***, music by Kurt Weill and lyrics by Bertolt Brecht-presented in the fall as a double-bill.

January 23-26, 30-31, and February 1-2, 804 Annex Blackbox Theatre

Prima La Musica, Poi le Parole (First the Music, Then the Words), music by Antonio Salieri with lyrics by Giovanni Basti; and ***Der Schauspieldirektor (The Impresario)***, music by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, lyrics by Gottlieb Stephanie, another double bill.

April 2-5, Kodak Hall

Sweeney Todd, The Demon Barber of Fleet Street, with music and lyrics by Stephen Sondheim and book by Hugh Wheeler.

Tickets are on sale now with **\$24 General Admission**. \$10 student tickets available. Tickets can be purchased at the Eastman Theatre Box Office, 26 Gibbs St.; by phone (585) 274-3000; or online at <http://eastmantheatre.org>.

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Pegasus 2019-2020 Season





A Baroque Noel

December 15, 2019 @ 4 pm
Hochstein Performance Hall,
50 N. Plymouth Street, Rochester

Charpentier's beloved *Messe de Minuit pour Noel*, French popular noels, and music by Vivaldi and more, with baroque orchestra.

[Paul O'Dette](#), Director & theorbo
[Laura Heimes](#), [Shari Alise Wilson](#), sopranos
[Debi Wong](#), mezzo-soprano
[Andrew Fuchs](#), [Jonas Budris](#), tenors
[Andrew Padgett](#), [Steven Hrycelak](#), basses

"Nevertheless, she persisted"

February 2, 2020 @ 4 pm
Downtown United Presbyterian Church,
121 N. Fitzhugh Street, Rochester

Music of strong women, with Laura Heimes, soprano, and chamber ensemble. Music by Elizabeth Jacquet de la Guerre, Antonia Bembo, and George Frideric Handel.

[Laura Heimes](#), soprano
[Naomi Gregory](#), harpsichord
[Boel Gidholm](#), violin
[Deborah Fox](#), theorbo

The Panther and the Rose

March 15, 2020 @ 4 pm
Downtown United Presbyterian Church,
121 N. Fitzhugh Street, Rochester

Medieval music from the Italian trecento: caccias, ballatas, and madrigales by Ciconia, Landini, and more.

[Andrew Rader](#), countertenor
[Jonas Budris](#), tenor
[Dongmyung Ahn](#), Vielle
[Christa Patton](#), harp & recorder
[Deborah Fox](#), lute

Diderot Quartet with Jesse Blumberg

May 17, 2020 @ 4 pm
Downtown United Presbyterian Church,
121 N. Fitzhugh St. Rochester

Haydn & Mendelssohn quartets plus song arrangements of Clara Schumann & Fanny Mendelssohn

[Jesse Blumberg](#), baritone
[Diderot String Quartet](#)
Johanna Novom,
Adriane Post, violins;
Kyle Miller, viola;
Paul Dwyer, cello

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Royal Opera House Film Series at The Little

DON GIOVANNI

Sunday Nov 17 (Noon)

Tuesday Nov 19 (6 pm)

DON PASQUALE

Sunday Dec 1 (Noon)

Tuesday Dec 3 (6 pm)

The Little Royal Opera House Series is sponsored in part by the Rochester Oratorio Society.

FREE: informal meet-ups after the Sunday showing in the Little Caf  . All welcome!

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GREAT OPERA-TUNITIES

(For those wishing to explore opera without spending a lot of money)

FREE - Friends of Eastman Opera Voice Competition. Look for listing in February 2020 *Viva Voce*. 8 pm, Kilbourn Hall, Gibbs Street, Rochester.

FREE - The Lotte Lenya Competition: young multi-talented singer/actors performing both opera and musical theater selections. See *Viva Voce* for more information about the event being held on Saturday, May 2nd, 2020.

FREE - Opera Guild Lectures in September at Fairport Library, February and March (with many video selections) at Brighton Memorial Library, 7 pm, 2300 Elmwood Ave, see elsewhere in this issue for more information.

\$9/10 suggested donation - Opera Guild "Beat the Blahs." Opera DVD presentations at Temple B'rith Kodesh. Four Sundays in January at 1 pm, see the 2020 schedule next year. Pre-performance talk, refreshments at intermission, children and students always FREE.

\$24; UR students \$10 with ID - **The Eastman Opera Season:** (Eastman voice students). Pre-performance talks; see full listing in *Viva Voce*.

\$25 per (senior) ticket - Metropolitan Opera simulcasts in HD of live performances on Saturdays usually at 1 pm. An encore performance, not live, is given on the Wednesday following for \$23. Theaters are at Tinseltown, Eastview, Webster and Henrietta. See full listing and essays in *Viva Voce*.

FREE - Opera Guild Bravo Nights at The Little Caf  , live accompanied singers perform opera favorites in an informal atmosphere. See *Viva Voce* for next date.

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Beat the Blahs

The Haskell Rosenberg Memorial Series
Opera DVDs with introductions by guild docents
January 2019 - 1 pm.
Temple B'rith Kodesh, 2131 Elmwood Ave.



Social Hall (Rear Entrance of Temple)

4 Sunday afternoons

All performances start at 1pm

Refreshments will be served at the intermission

- Jan 5th** Umberto Giordano, *Andrea Chenier*. 1984 production of the Metropolitan Opera, Luciano Pavarotti as Chenier, conductor James Levine.
Opera Talk, David Dean
- Jan 12th** Gaetano Donizetti, *Don Pasquale* with John Del Carlo, Anna Netrebko, Marius Kwiecen, and Matthew Polanzanyi, Metropolitan Opera 2010, Conductor James Levine. Suitable for children.
Opera Talk, Carol Crocca
- Jan 19th** Jules Massenet, *Werther*. A private DVD recording from the Met telecast of February 18, 2014; Jonas Kaufman as Werther, Sophie Koch as Charlotte, Lisa Orapesa as Sophie, conductor Alain Antinoglu.
Opera Talk, Peter Dundas
- Jan 26th** Double Bill: Pietro Mascagni, *Cavalleria Rusticana* with Placido Domingo as Turridu and Elena Obraztsova as Santuzza, followed by Ruggiero Leoncavallo, *Pagliacci* with Placido Domingo as Canio and Teresa Stratas as Nedda. Teatro alla Scala 1982, Conductor Franco Zeffirelli.
Opera Talk: Art Axelrod

	Opera Guild Donors	General Admission	Temple
Series of 4 operas	\$32.00	\$36.00	none
Single performance	\$9.00	\$10.00	none

For further information contact the Opera Guild of Rochester at operaguildofrochester.org or 585-385-6971.

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**CANADIAN
OPERA
COMPANY**

THE BARBER OF SEVILLE January 19, 2020 to February 7, 2020

[Learn More](#)

HANSEL & GRETEL February 6, 2020 to February 21, 2020

[Learn More](#)

AIDA April 18, 2020 to May 8, 2020

[Learn More](#)

THE FLYING DUTCHMAN May 1, 2020 to May 16, 2020

[Learn More](#)

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News from your Opera Guild: In Memorium

It is with sadness that I report the death of Mort Bittker, husband of Maxine Bittker for 61 years, on September 29th. Mort, a retired attorney, was a great friend and supporter of the Opera Guild for many, many years. We all looked forward to seeing him at our events and lectures, where his enthusiasm for music and singing were always a pleasure. And back in the day, when the group which would evolve into today's Guild was just starting, Mort was one of its first members and served as President for some time. He will be missed.

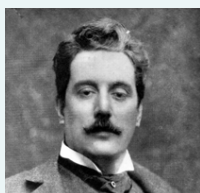
With a view to the future, I am looking forward to taking my almost three-year-old granddaughter to *Jack and the Beanstalk* on November 3rd at the Lyric Theater. I think she can appreciate it, and am very grateful for the opportunity to introduce her to my passion in an age-appropriate way. I'll let you know how it goes.

Carol Crocca
President

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Puccini's *Madama Butterfly*

Arthur Axelrod



Puccini wrote three operas with American connections: *Madama Butterfly's* protagonist, Lt. B.F. Pinkerton was an American Naval Officer; *La Fanciulla del West (Girl of the Golden West)* was set in California during the 1849 Gold Rush; and *Manon Lescaut* had its third act set in the "deserts of Louisiana." Here we'll talk a little about *Butterfly*.

In 1900, Puccini was in London where he attended a performance of the play *Madame Butterfly* by David Belasco. Although Puccini was not fluent in English, he was nevertheless very much taken with the play and applied to Belasco for the rights to use it as the source of an opera.

* * *



David Belasco was an American playwright, producer and impresario in New York's Broadway Theater world. Between 1884 and 1930, he wrote, directed or produced over 100 Broadway plays and was one of the most powerful people in the Broadway theater scene. Belasco was born in San Francisco in 1853 to a family of Sephardic Jews who had moved from London to San Francisco. He began his theater career in San Francisco and Nevada, working in a variety of theater-related jobs. Then, in 1882, he moved to New York working as a stage manager and then a playwright. His writing was so successful that by 1895 he was able to set himself up as an independent producer. He is remembered today by the

Belasco Theater on W44th Street that he founded in 1907 and remains today as one of the finest in the Broadway Theater District.

Belasco wrote his *Madame Butterfly: A Tragedy of Japan* as a one-act play. Belasco both wrote and produced the play and it eventually became one of his most famous works. It premiered in New York in March of 1900 and then played in London that same year, where Puccini saw it.



Belasco's play is derived from *Madame Butterfly*, a short story, by John Luther Long, published in 1898 in a monthly magazine called *Century Magazine*. In Long's story, unlike Belasco's and Puccini's version, our heroine (there spelled "Cho-Cho-San") survives her unsuccessful suicide attempt and leaves with her baby, presumably taking up Prince Yamadori's offer. The last words of Long's version are, "When Mrs. Pinkerton [Pinkerton's American wife] called next day at the little house on Higashi Hill it was quite empty."

Long's sister was married to a Methodist missionary who was serving in Japan. Long's short story was based on various accounts of Japan contained in letters from his sister. The story was also influenced by a novel of 1887, *Madame Chrysanthème*, by French author, Pierre Loti. It may be worth noting that *Century Magazine* was strongly oriented toward Evangelical Protestantism, and clearly the editors of the magazine considered the story appropriate to their outlook.

Long died in 1927 at the age of 66, having spent the last months of his life at the Clifton Springs Sanitarium in Clifton Springs, about 25 miles from Rochester. The Sanitarium has been long closed, but its remarkable building was preserved and is listed in the National Register of Historic Places. The structure now serves as a senior citizens apartment building.



Pierre Loti, pseudonym of Louis Marie-Julien Viaud, was a French naval officer and novelist, known for his exotic novels and short stories. He was born in 1859 in Rochefort in south-west France, and died in 1923. He joined the French Navy at age 17 and traveled to the South Seas as part of his naval training. After leaving the Navy, he began a literary career characterized by romantic stories set in exotic locations. In 1887 he published *Madame Chrysanthème*, a combination of narrative and travelogue. This novel of Japanese manners was a precursor to Long's *Madame Butterfly* and Puccini's *Madama*

Butterfly.

* * *

After Puccini saw Belasco's *Madame Butterfly* in London in 1900, while waiting for the rights from Belasco, he sent a copy of Long's short story to Luigi Illica, one of his frequent librettists. Illica and Giuseppe Giacosa, another frequent collaborator, proceeded to put together the libretto. Puccini completed the score in 1904 and the opera premiered at La Scala. The premiere was not a success and Puccini revised it five more times; the final version, the one that has become the standard today, premiered at the Teatro Carcano in Milan in 1920.

Madama Butterfly has gone on to become one of the favorite operas in the repertoire. According to OperaBase, it was the sixth most often performed title worldwide during the 2018-2019 season (tied with Puccini's *Tosca*), having been performed 522 times. The New York Metropolitan reports that it has been performed there 881 times since its US Premiere in 1907. It's always an audience favorite and any opera company can be sure of filling the house with *Butterfly*. *Madama Butterfly* was Puccini's sixth opera, written after *La Bohème* (1896) and *Tosca* (1900) and before *La Fanciulla del West* (1910).

Still, it has its faults and its critics. Sir Denis Forman, in his admirable guide, *A Night at the Opera*, remarks

"It has its weaknesses. In the first act, *Butterfly's* little-girlishness begins to get tiresome and indeed

one wonders whether she is not seriously mentally retarded . . . But the main drawback is that Puccini's Japan is seen as a tragicomic Third World Country where funny little people have quaint little customs. . . "

He adds,

"Musically *Butterfly* tends to move in fits and starts; gone are the long gloriously unfolding melodies of *Bohème* and *Tosca*, and although always easy on the ear, there is not much in *Butterfly* that is easy to whistle."

Nevertheless, Sir Denis ends up awarding *Butterfly* a rating of "alpha," his second highest (after "alpha plus"). And so shall we.

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Akhnaten

David Dean, MD

Akhnaten is an opera in three acts, the premier of which took place at Stuttgart, March 24, 1984; the composer is Philip Glass, with libretto by Shalom Goldman. In regard to his trilogy of historical-portrait operas, Philip Glass observed that he had been thinking of three areas of human endeavor: science, politics, and religion. He wanted to compose operas which portrayed men who had been responsible for social change non-violently. His first two choices of Einstein and Gandhi were from the twentieth century. For religion he went back to the 18th Egyptian dynasty, about 1370 BC, to Akhnaten, the pharaoh who overthrew the traditional polytheistic religion in favor of monotheism. Glass observed that he knew about the pharaoh Akhnaten from Immanuel Velikovsky's (1895-1979) work Oedipus and Akhnaten and had initially planned to do a double opera with Oedipus upstage and Akhnaten downstage.

Glass had been an undergraduate at the University of Chicago, which employed James Breasted, America's first Egyptologist and a professor in the Oriental Institute. Glass admitted in his research that he found Akhnaten more interesting than Oedipus. The prominence of Akhnaten's breasts has induced some to suggest a hormonal disorder, regardless of Akhnaten's marriage to Nefertiti ('the Perfect one'), but he fathered at least six daughters as well as King Tut, his son.

The challenging libretto includes pieces sung in Egyptian, Hebrew, and Akkadian. These are woven together by a narrator speaking in the local language of the audience, to provide a commentary or summary of the action. Glass went on to say that he constructed his operas not as historical documents but rather as interpretations of the ideas the men exemplified. Some described the work as meditative, others as hypnotic or mesmerizing and magical.

The staging by the English National Opera featured the juggling of various-sized globes as metaphors for the ideas, orbiting planets, and ancient languages. The juggling action was synchronized with the repetitive phrases of Glass's score to increase its tension. Some have labeled Glass's arpeggiated phrases "obsessive;" his ostinatos in A minor and modulating instrumentation as simple and minimalist, but they are hardly "simple" to play. Glass also chose the part of Akhnaten to be sung by a counter-tenor to emphasize the differentness of the character and what he was doing. In one way, Glass observed, Akhnaten was a murderer of the ancient polytheism.

Some have criticized Glass as a cold, intellectual composer, but this work is in some ways the most conventional of his operas, as he discloses the love between Akhnaten and his queen Nefertiti. In Act II the slow hypnotic procession of each across the space, one step at a time, extending their fingers to each other until their lips meet is sculptural minimalism. He then chooses to portray the family of the six

daughters and his son in real emotional depth.

In the opening scene in Thebes (1370 BC) slow funeral music plays as the corpse of Akhnaten's father, Pharaoh Amenhotep III, is prepared for his voyage into the afterlife. This funeral music will be heard again as a leitmotif. Amenhotep's viscera are removed and placed into canopic jars. The test of weighing his heart against a feather, which is mentioned in the Egyptian Book of the Dead, is performed on a gigantic scale. At the end of the opera Akhnaten and his wife and family join the funeral procession as ghosts. The score was described by Peter Jacobi (Herald Times, Feb. 2, 2013, review of Indiana University production) as disclosing "infinite colors...discernible on close listening, but on the surface, the changes come slowly and in very subtle fashion, as the chosen rhythm of a moment drags along for minutes on end before giving way to the next, similarly treated.....taken as part of the dramatic whole, it becomes tantalizingly hypnotic and, as accomplished in the dazzling details of what happens on the MAC stage, a show of escalating power."

In scene two, Akhnaten is crowned the next Pharaoh. The narrator recites the list of the royal titles during the coronation ceremony and the funeral march is sung again by the chorus. In scene three, Aknahten, having been on the stage some twenty minutes, finally sings: his opening piece is a hymn to the creator, and he is joined by Queen Nefertiti and Queen Mother Tye.

In Act two, scene two, another noteworthy scene takes place, between Akhnaten and Nefertiti. Two solo celli introduce a love theme and a love poem is recited by Akhnaten for Nefertiti and then sung by her for him. Scene four is the central point of the opera, in which Akhnatan sings a long aria for the one god, Aten, praising the sun for giving life to everything. Off stage the chorus is singing Psalm 104 in Hebrew.

In Act Three, the love theme returns, as the family sings wordlessly, oblivious to the destruction which is taking place outside the palace walls by the enemies of Akhnaten and his innovations. The City of the Sun God which Ahknaten had built is destroyed. In scene three the ruins of the city are visited, and an inscription on Aye's tomb is read. The Narrator speaks a text from an actual present-day tour guide as scenes of the "modern" site are described: there is nothing left of the great city of temples and palaces. The Epilogue then displays the ghosts of Akhnaten, Nefertiti and Queen Tye in the funeral procession, accompanied by music from *Einstein on the Beach* as a musical bracket for the trilogy.

Reference: [Music by Phillip Glass](#), Jones, Robert, editor, Duvagen Music Publishers, Inc., New York, 1987.

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