

# Viva Voce

## 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 [operaguilfrochester@gmail.com](mailto:operaguilfrochester@gmail.com) and the appropriate person will contact you.

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Edition *Viva Voce*, January 2020

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 [operaguilfrochester@gmail.com](mailto:operaguilfrochester@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 [operaguilfrochester.org](http://operaguilfrochester.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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# This Month

<a href="#">January 5</a>	<b>Beat the Blahs</b>	<i>Giordano's Andrea Chénier</i>
<a href="#">January 11</a>	<b>Met HD Simulcast</b>	<i>Berg's Wozzeck</i>
<a href="#">January 12</a>	<b>Beat the Blahs</b>	<i>Donizetti's Don Pasquale</i>
<a href="#">January 12</a>	<b>William Warfield Recital</b>	<b>Nicole Cabell</b>
<a href="#">January 16</a>	<b>Memorial Art Gallery</b>	"The Art of Fantasy"
<a href="#">January 19</a>	<b>Beat the Blahs</b>	<i>Massenet's Werther</i>
<a href="#">January 23-26</a>	<b>Eastman Opera Theatre</b>	<i>Salieri's Prima la musica, poi le parole</i> and
<a href="#">January 30-31</a>		<i>Mozart's The Impresario</i>
<a href="#">February 1-2</a>		
 <a href="#">January 26</a>	 <b>Beat the Blahs</b>	 <i>Mascagni's Cavalleria Rusticana</i> and <i>Leoncavallo's Pagliacci</i>
 <a href="#">February 1</a>	 <b>Met HD Simulcast</b>	 <i>Gershwin's Porgy and Bess</i>
<a href="#">February 2</a>	<b>Pegasus</b>	"Nevertheless, she persisted"

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## Beat the Blahs

*The Haskell Rosenberg Memorial Series*  
 Opera DVDs with introductions by guild docents  
[January 2020 - 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 Chénier*. 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](http://operaguildofrochester.org) or 585-385-6971.

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## Royal Opera House Film Series at The Little

LA BOHEME

Sunday Mar 29 (Noon)

Tuesday Mar 31 (6pm)

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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**Pegasus 2019-2020 Season**





## "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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## Third Thursdays at the MAG

On the third Thursday of each month, October through May, the Eastman School of Music and the Memorial Art Gallery present concert programs by the faculty, students, and guest artists featuring the Italian Baroque Organ. They take place in the Museum's Fountain Court and are free with Gallery admission, which is reduced on Thursday evenings. Concerts begin at 7:30 pm.



**January 16, *The Art of Fantasy***

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## William Warfield Annual Scholarship Recital

Ms. Nicole Cabell, internationally known artist who received a WWSF grant as a student at the Eastman School, returns to Rochester in January to present the Annual Scholarship Recital. This year the recital also celebrates the 100th Anniversary of William Warfield's birth.

The recital will take place on **January 12, 2020**, in Kilbourn Hall at 3 pm.

For tickets and more information, go to [williamwarfield.org](http://williamwarfield.org).



The William Warfield Scholarship Fund [WWSF] awarded three deserving young artists cash support to further their studies in classical vocal performance at the collegiate level during the **first annual** William Warfield Scholarship Fund Classical Vocal Competition for African American High School Students.

Twelve semi-finalists from Georgia to New York were selected by electronic audition. Of these, six advanced to the final round held Saturday, October 19, 2019, at the Hochstein School of Music and Dance in Rochester, NY. Finalists and a chaperone were provided round-trip transportation and lodging for the event.

**Kianna Kelly-Futch, of Washington, D.C.**, took top honors and \$2000 with her performance of "Elegy," by Jules Massenet. **Solomon Onyukwu, of Bowie, MD**, placed second (\$1500), singing the Spiritual "Give Me Jesus" in the Moses Hogan arrangement. In third place and winning \$500, **Jalynn Stewart, of Brooklyn, NY**, sang Benjamin Britten's challenging setting of "If Music Be the Food of Love."

Adjudicating the top contestants were internationally recognized artists and vocal music educators, including sopranos Kearstin Piper Brown and Paulette Gissendanner; Eastman School of Music faculty member Katherine Ciesinski; William Scott, chair of vocal studies at Hochstein; and baritone Fredrick Redd of New York City.

Founded in 1977, the William Warfield Scholarship Fund is dedicated to providing financial means for African American students to attain success in the field of classical vocal music and to fostering wider recognition of the life and legacy of the legendary American bass-baritone, educator, mentor and author, William Warfield. The WWSF has awarded scholarships to more than two dozen vocalists at the Eastman School of Music, including internationally renowned artists Julia Bullock and Nicole Cabell.

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# EASTMAN OPERA THEATRE 2019-2020 SEASON



**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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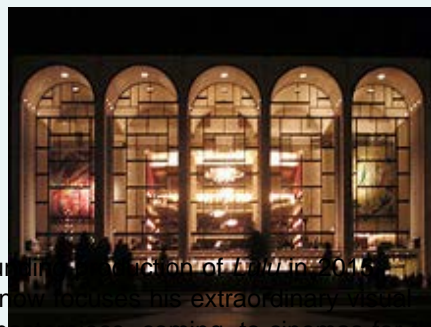
## Metropolitan Opera HD Season 2019 - 2020

All showings at 12:55 pm

**Berg, Wozzeck**

**January 11**

For more info, [click here](#)



After wowing audiences with his astounding production of *Wozzeck*, South African artist William Kentridge returns to the stage with his extraordinary musical 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. For an essay on *Wozzeck*, [Click Here](#).

**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. For an essay on *Porgy and Bess*, [Click Here](#).

**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 Sergey 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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**Bravo Nights**



Join us for some wonderful evenings of opera and musical theater with talented local artists! The dates for 2020, with program information to follow in future issues, are as follows:

**Wednesday, February 5**

**Wednesday, June 10**

**Tuesday, September 29**

**Monday, November 30**

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  .

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### **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

Rochester Academy of

Medicine

1441 East Avenue

(585) 271-1314

raum.org

Rebecca Penneys, piano

Mikhail Kopelman, violin

Stefan Reuss, cello



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# TRICITIES OPERA

Tickets, call 607-772-0400;

Box office information and to buy online, see [tricitiesoera.com/box-office](http://tricitiesoera.com/box-office)

### A Little Night Music

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

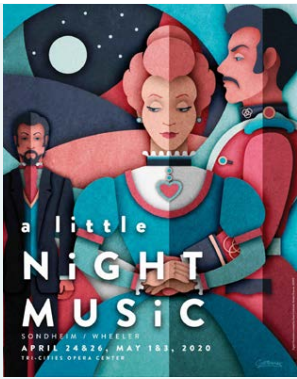
April 26 & May 3, 2020 - 3:00pm

Tri-Cities Opera Center

315 Clinton Street

Binghamton, NY 13905

Sondheim creates a stunning tour de force when he takes Ingmar



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

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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## 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 January 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 in this issue. 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 Café, live accompanied singers perform opera favorites in an informal atmosphere. See *Viva Voce* for next date.

**\$18** Opera performances from the Royal Opera House at Covent Garden are screened several times a year at **The Little Theatre**, as listed in *Viva Voce*.

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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 Memoriam

With sadness, we note the death of Chuck Lundeen on December 15th. Chuck, together with his husband John Williams, was a great patron of the arts in Rochester and a friend to all in the arts community. For years he shared his expertise with an annual course at the Oasis organization for mature adults, based on the presentation of the Metropolitan Opera's HD simulcasts in local theaters. He also participated in the Guild's lecture series for some time. He was an invaluable asset to the Friends of Eastman Opera, where he served on the Board, and also to the Gay Men's Chorus. I know that this does not by any means exhaust the many ways that Chuck gave of both his time and his treasure to the arts in Rochester and the Rochester community. He will be missed for the ways he enriched our lives by his knowledge, support and friendship.

Carol Crocca  
President

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On [January 11](#) the Met in HD will broadcast a performance of Alban Berg's *Wozzeck*

## The World on Fire Franz Wozzeck's Ghastly Visions

"For some the world is as hot as hell, so hell will seem cold by comparison"  
--Wozzeck, Act 2, Scene 2

"You tear through the world like an open razor: we could cut ourselves on you"  
--The Captain, Act 2, scene 2

Red and black are the colors of Wozzeck's hallucinatory world. At times his inner landscape is drenched in blood. The sky at sunset becomes an apocalyptic vision: "A fire, a fire rising from earth to heaven." At other times Wozzeck is engulfed in utter darkness, stalked by malign beings only he can sense. He knows that at evening time a severed head rolls in the mushroom patch. The ground is hollow, and beneath it frightening things follow Wozzeck from the field to the

edge of town. To him, silence is full of menace and dread. He sees the skull beneath the flesh: life foreshadows death. "Man is an abyss: it makes you feel dizzy when you look down into it."

Sometimes *Wozzeck* switches from hot to cold, mania to paranoia, within the space of a single sentence. While the doctor examines him, *Wozzeck* explains that

"...when nature is at an end, when the world becomes so dark that you have to grope around it with your hands, until you feel that it's disintegrating like spiders' webs. Oh, when things are and yet aren't... when everything is dark... (*starts to move across the room with arms outstretched in front of him*) what can you hold on to? ...Doctor, when the sun is overhead at noon, and it's as though the world were bursting into flames, a terrible voice has spoken to me." (Act 1, Scene 4.)

*Wozzeck* is abused and betrayed, but it is his own demons that finally push him to murder and suicide. He cannot wash off his guilt: the pond where he drowns himself is a lake of blood.

*Wozzeck* is the chronicle of a life unraveling in fifteen short, staccato scenes. The longest lasts nine minutes, the shortest barely more than three. These scenes are strung together by brief musical interludes. It is immensely difficult music to perform and to endure: largely atonal, full of seemingly random outbursts, shouting and brass, and slithering, skittering strings, rapid diminuendo, a macabre xylophone. Often the vocal line is declaimed in "sprechstimme," an expressionist style of delivery partway between singing and speech. Interspersed in this atonal barrage are more conventional bits of music with recognizable key signatures: a march, lullaby, ländler peasant dance, and off-kilter waltz. The result is a feeling of unremitting anxiety until the aftermath of *Wozzeck's* suicide, when the orchestra bursts into the tragic key of D minor. It is one of the most heart wrenching moments in all of opera, a keening lamentation for this tormented man. The whole drama is over in 100 minutes.

Rachel Stuhlman

*Quotes are from the translation of Berg's libretto by Sarah E. Soulsby (Decca, 1988)*

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## [Gershwin's \*Porgy and Bess\*](#) Carol Crocca

George Gershwin (1898-1937) had attended no conservatory and was not trained in counterpoint, composition, or orchestration. The New York Herald Tribune had called *Rhapsody in Blue* "impaired by melodic and harmonic anemia of the most pernicious sort." Noted opera composer Virgil Thompson later wrote that composers such as Copland, Harris, Cowell and himself could never "compete with Gershwin for distribution, nor he with us for intellectual prestige."

Well, intellectual prestige may concern composers, but not the public. *Porgy and Bess* has toured the nation and the world, the first American opera to be staged at La Scala. Its first great success was in musical theater; then a movie version in 1959 with Sidney Poitier and Dorothy Dandridge, their singing dubbed, enchanted me as a young teenager. The opera was produced at Houston Grand Opera in 1976 with its original scoring and orchestration, and it was presented at the Met in 1985. By the terms of Gershwin's will, in English-speaking countries, it must be performed with an African-American cast. (Reference: Goulding, Phil, [Ticket to the Opera](#), pp.563-568.)

Aside from initial criticism of its music, *Porgy and Bess* has never been without critics who regard it as the work of white men purporting to portray black experience. Charges of racist stereotyping and condescension have continued to the present. There was a revisionist Broadway revival a few years ago by Diane Paulus, Director of the American Repertory Theater in Cambridge, Mass., with changes in the libretto by playwright Suzan-Lori Parks. In an interview with Mervyn Rothstein, in [Playbill](#), August 13, 2011, Paulus explained that the revisions were designed to streamline the work and flesh out the characters. In explaining their approach was essentially respectful of the original, she also said

"It's one of the greatest American works of the 20th century. *Porgy and Bess* in its time was quite radical. When Gershwin," a son of Russian-Jewish immigrants, "wanted to write a folk opera using jazz and featuring an all-black cast, that was radical in 1935. Al Jolson at the time was vying to play *Porgy* in blackface, she notes. "And it was George Gershwin who said, 'No, I want an all

African-American cast." The show has been called racist. "That's part of its history. But you can't look at that without looking at the time period in which the show was written. To understand what the impulse was.... I know that Diedre [Murray, a composer, who worked on adapting the score] and Suzan-Lori say there's no question in their minds this show was born of love for black people. What might feel to some as racist, they consider a 'shortcoming of understanding.' That's a beautiful way to put it."



Ruby Elzy in the original *Porgy and Bess* photo by Carl van Vechten

What did inspire Dubose Heyward, author of the original novel *Porgy*, and the opera libretto (with Ira Gershwin), to tell this story of people outside his own class and race? In his article for the *New Yorker* of September 12, 2011, [A Man and a Woman](#) (at [newyorker.com](#), go to 'archive'), Hilton Als, on the occasion of Paulus' production, elucidated.

Born in Charleston, South Carolina, in 1885, Heyward belonged to the city's relatively impoverished aristocracy... His father, Edwin, a mill laborer and failed plantation owner, died when Heyward and his younger sister were toddlers, and his mother, Janie, hardworking and practical, took in boarders to support her children. Another source of income was the stories about Charleston's history that she sold to local newspapers. Eventually, Janie published two books that were inspired by the Gullahs of South Carolina, a community of blacks with strong ties to their African past.... At twenty, Heyward, who had been weakened by a bout of polio at eighteen, got a job as a customs worker among black stevedores on the Charleston waterfront and was awed by their strength. Robin Thompson, in his 2010 book, "The Gershwins' *Porgy and Bess*: A 75th Anniversary Celebration," says that the stevedores "took on a mythic quality" in Heyward's imagination: "DuBose didn't know what to make of their seemingly carefree and lively behavior. . . . They were 'alien and exotic.'" Heyward himself wrote, "I saw the primitive Negro as the inheritor of a source of delight that I would have given much to possess."

Heyward's first novel, "*Porgy*," was published in 1925 and became a bestseller. Als continues

A reviewer for the *Times* called the book "a sympathetic and convincing interpretation of Negro life by a member of an 'outside' race." The columnist Heywood Brown remarked on Heyward's apparent attraction to a "Negro life" that was more "colorful and spirited and vital than that of the white community." Even some black writers, such as Nella Larsen, commended Heyward on his efforts.

Of course there were those, both black and white, who saw the work as patronizing and full of racist stereotyping. But I think it important to distinguish the sort of malevolent racism that brutalizes the black race in order to justify the horrors of slavery and discrimination, from the (perhaps naïve) appreciation of a people's spirit in the face of oppression. "Old Man River" from *Showboat*, for example, has always moved me as an anguished expression of the pain of those, of whatever race or circumstance, who are forced to endure unremitting hard physical labor through economic or social tyranny. And I believe that *Porgy and Bess*, however it may be critiqued in the light of today's complicated parsing of the subtleties of prejudice, is a magnificent expression of universal human dilemmas and emotions.

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## Donations

**As an *Amici*, your contribution in any amount is greatly appreciated. All donation levels receive an invitation to the Annual Recital; those listed below will be given priority until a date specified on the invitation, and at the *Comprimario* level and above may request extra tickets.**

***Chorus*: \$50 per person, \$80 per couple.**

***Comprimario*: \$100-\$149.**

***Primo*: \$150-\$199.**

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