



OPERA IN THE
OZARKS
AT INSPIRATION POINT

GOOD NEWS LETTER
Inspiration Point Fine Arts Colony
16311 Highway 62 West
Eureka Springs, Arkansas 72632

May 2017
Don Dagenais, Editor

Opera in the Ozarks Opens June 13 with a Season Featuring Powerful Women

The 67th season of Opera in the Ozarks at Inspiration Point will open on Friday, June 23 with a performance of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro*. On the following night, Opera in the Ozarks will perform Carlyle Floyd's American classic *Susannah*, and the third premiere will be on Tuesday, June 27, of George Bizet's *Carmen*. The three operas will play in repertory through Friday, July 21, when the season closes with the final performance of *Carmen*.

The three Sunday matinee performances, on July 2, 9 and 16 will be held at the Arend Arts Center in Bentonville, Arkansas. The Monday, July 3 performance will be an Opera

Sampler evening, and on Tuesday, July 18 there will be an Opera Scenes performance. In addition, the OiO orchestra will perform a chamber music concert on Monday, July 17 at the Eureka Springs Auditorium at 36 S. Main Street in Eureka Springs.

The three opening night evenings feature one-half price tickets for residents of Carroll, Benton, Washington and Madison Counties. Both season and single tickets are now on sale at www.opera.org or by calling (479) 253-8595. All curtain times are at 7:30 p.m. except for the three Sunday matinees which are at 3:00 p.m.

Open House for New Rehearsal Building is Set for July 20

The new Opera in the Ozarks rehearsal building is now complete and is ready for use by staffers and singers for the summer 2017 season. The official ribbon cutting will take place at 4:30 p.m. on Wednesday, June 20 in a ceremony with Eureka Springs mayor Butch Berry, his assistant Kim Staner, City Advertising and Promotion Commission director Mike Malony, and Chamber of Commerce president Tammy Thurow. Greetings will be given by Governing Board president Carole Langley, General Director Nancy Preis and Artistic Director Tom Cockrell. Other honored guests will be introduced and light refreshments will be provided by the Eureka Springs Opera Guild, whose president is Ronn Hearn. Come enjoy the day if you can.

Attendees of Inspiration Point performances will have an opportunity for a first-hand look at the new rehearsal building on Thursday, July 20 at 6:00 p.m. prior to the performance of *Susannah* that evening. This

occurs during Federation Days (see article on page 3). This will include a display of IPFAC historical photos and documents for viewing which will be prepared by Janet Parsch, librarian and professor of the special collections and archives at the University of Arkansas in Fayetteville. Refreshments will be provided by the IPFAC Governing Board.

The Inspiration Board expresses its thanks to Board members Dr. Alice Martinson and Steven Shogren for supervising the planning and construction for the new building.

One of the two rehearsal halls in the building is being named Duane and Carol Langley Hall in honor of longtime IPFAC Board president Carole Langley and IPFAC Treasurer Duane Langley. Other naming opportunities are also available for contributions to Inspiration Point: the entire building can be named for \$70,000, and a contribution of \$30,000 is still needed for the naming of the second rehearsal hall.

OIO at the Met



Several Opera in the Ozarks fans journeyed to New York last month to hear OIO alum Latonia Moore sing the title role in *Aida* at the Metropolitan Opera. The group also heard three other operas and enjoyed museums and touring in New York. Shown left to right in front of an *Aida* poster at the Met are Duane Langley, Carole Langley, Dr. Alice Martinson, Carole Sturgis and Don Dagenais.



News of Our Alumni

Soprano **Latonia Moore** (OIO 1999) has been singing the title role in *Aida* at the Metropolitan Opera, attended by several IPFAC supporters (see photo and caption on page 1). She is at least the second OIO graduate to sing the



role at the Metropolitan Opera, as one of her predecessors in *Aida* was **Leona Mitchell** (OIO 1970). Mitchell sang the role of Aida over 300 times in opera houses around the world during her extensive career.

Tenor **Nathan Granner** (OIO 1993) journeys to the Spoleto Festival USA in Charleston where he will perform Triquet in *Eugene Onegin* in May and June. Then, for the Charlottesville Opera



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From the General Director

It has been a busy spring with building construction, dorm renovation, hiring staff, scheduling the pre-season outreach programs, scheduling the children's opera, and a myriad of other tasks.

We have ten pre-season shows set up at senior centers and schools ranging from elementary to high schools, including the Arkansas Arts Academy in Rogers. There are eleven performances of *Jack and the Beanstalk*, beginning June 6 at 7:00 p.m. at the Botanical Garden of the Ozarks. Most of the rest of the *Jack* shows are at public libraries, including all three in Carroll County. We have one performance at the Eureka Springs Auditorium, on July 1 at 2:00 p.m.

We have been invited to attend the Arkansas Naturals game on May 28. If you are available, come out and cheer with us. Our Crystal Bridges Museum event is June 11, from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. This is an incredible afternoon of art and music, with performances in four galleries. There is free admission.

At the Opera America convention in Dallas, I was invited to talk about our costume inventory project, for which Opera Volunteers International gave us a \$1,500 grant. As part of our goal to increase Opera in the Ozarks'

name recognition, we ran a small ad in *Opera Now*, an international magazine. The editorial staff wrote an article about us, so we actually appeared in several places in the magazine, which has a large circulation both in print and online. We also appeared in the special festival edition of *Musical America*.

As you drive around Northwest Arkansas, keep an eye out for our billboard on I-49. We have rented space on one of the electronic billboards. We hired a poster distributor who will put our posters up in about half the state. Together with our rack cards, there will be lots of chances for people to find out about us! Of course, we have also booked ads in a variety of publications and will do direct mail, radio ads, and a host of other promotions.

Plan to attend all three of our mainstage productions and invite your friends to join us. With this year's lineup of *The Marriage of Figaro*, *Carmen*, and *Susannah*, we have two of the world's most popular operas paired with the second most performed American opera and a gem of a composition. I had never heard of *Susannah* until just a few years ago and I have totally fallen in love with it. Its story is as relevant today as it was in the 1950s when it was written. Three strong women – three powerful operas. Don't miss a single one of them. See you at the opera,

Mary Steis

A Message From the President

Greetings Dear Friends,

As I begin to enjoy the coming spring,



I'm also thinking about the beautiful operas that will soon be presented for us at Opera in the Ozarks. Whether you are an "opera newbie" or attend regularly, this will be a season you won't want to miss.

With three such outstanding operas, Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro*, Bizet's *Carmen* and Carlisle Floyd's *Susannah*, what more could we wish for? We are thrilled to have you as an Opera in the Ozarks member

and hope that you will have a great experience out there on Rock Candy Mountain.

We are so proud of the educational and performance opportunities that Opera in the Ozarks offers to its outstanding young artists. Thank you for your help, as together we provide the necessary support for this amazing program.

The dedication and generous spirit of our audiences, donors, and volunteers help us bring the very best to all who visit or learn at "the Point." We hope you will return again and again to share in the joy and power of truly great opera in a truly beautiful setting.

Carole Langley

A Message From the Artistic Director

My seasonal allergies have come and gone, so I know that it is almost time to load the car in Tucson and head across New Mexico, Texas and Oklahoma during tornado season to Inspiration Point. For our 67th season, the company of 42 young vocalists is culled from nearly 250 singers who auditioned. I think that you will be as impressed, as always, with the talent and promise that greets you from under the lights on the stage at Inspiration Point.

We welcome a couple of new artist faculty members this season. Eiki Isomura, newly named artistic director of Houston's Opera in the Heights, will conduct *Le nozze di Figaro*. Many will remember him from 2012 when he served as our assistant conductor.

Elaine Rinaldi, a talented and seasoned vocal coach, formerly with Florida Grand Opera and founder/artistic director of Orchestra Miami, will be with us a principal vocal coach, joining Mark Ferrell in that position. I am pleased that directors Robert Swedberg and J.J. Hudson are returning to inspire our singing actors.

Our design, production and stage management team is largely the same as last year, so you will be assured of visual as well as aural beauty displayed in the artistry of Jaye Beetem, Maria Radeva-Nedyalkova and Richard Dunham.

The artistic staff and I are eager to work in the new rehearsal building! Our coaches and accompanists will appreciate playing on new pianos, generously donated to The Point. The entire company will have to find other ways to build biceps because they will no longer be stacking and resetting tables and chairs three times daily in the dining hall! We are all thankful for the great investment in improving the theater, housing and rehearsal facilities over the past several years. I want to thank everyone who has given so generously to invest in the special place we call Inspiration Point.



Starla Blair

Federation Days to be July 19-22

by Starla Blair

Make plans now to attend the OIO annual membership meeting and Federation Days this summer, from July 19 through 22, 2017. Federation Days will once again be held at the Best Western Inn of the Ozarks in Eureka Springs, Arkansas. Come and meet our national guest, Jeanne Hryniewicki (NFMC Recording Secretary) from Wisconsin.

The festivities will start on Wednesday evening at 5:00 p.m. with A Taste of Opera at the beautiful historic Crescent Hotel in Eureka Springs. After dinner, the van will pick you up (for a small charge) from the Crescent Hotel for the opera *The Marriage of Figaro*.

Thursday evening is the opera *Susannah* and on Friday you will enjoy *Carmen*.

Meanwhile, during the daytime, we will enjoy luncheons hosted by our South Central Region states, with entertainment provided by the OIO artists.

Thursday afternoon includes a performance of the newest family production, *Jack and the Beanstalk*. Also on Thursday,

plan to attend the open house at the newly constructed rehearsal building at The Point (see article on page 1). You won't want to miss Friday evening's banquet or Saturday's Federation Day events.

There is always a lot to see and do during Federation Days. So...come enjoy food, fellowship and opera! Call now for room reservations at Inn of the Ozarks at (479) 253-9768, and mention IPFAC to receive the group rate.

If you have questions, please contact South Central Region Vice President, Starla Blair, at blair.starla@sbcglobal.net or (417) 887-1207.

When you attend Federation Days, be sure to shop at our silent auction, where all sorts of interesting treasures can be found. Some sale items are music related and some are of general interest. In the past, our silent auction has featured such items as jewelry, antiques, artwork, books, decorative items, crystal, quilts, recordings, music-related gifts and other treasures. Our auction chair is Connie Craig, whom you can contact at (573) 221-8490 with any questions. Please bring your items with you to Federation Days, or send them along with a friend who is coming. Don't forget your checkbook or cash! Bid early and often.



News of Our Alumni

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(Ash Lawn Opera) he plays Curly in *Oklahoma* before heading West for the Pacific Opera Project in Los Angeles to sing Edgardo in *Lucia di Lammermoor* in September. The Long Beach Opera has also signed him to perform in Menotti's opera *The Consul*.

The Dayton Opera featured soprano **Chelsea Friedlander** (OIO 2011) in her debut with the company as Blonde in Mozart's *Die*



Entführung aus dem Serail in February 2017. Also in the cast is **Robert Norman** (OIO 2009) as Pedrillo. This month Friedlander also appears with the company as Frasquita in *Carmen*.

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News of Our Alumni

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Soon she will make her Chautauqua Opera debut in Monteverdi's *Orfeo* singing Eurydice, and will also perform Soprano 1 in Phillip Glass's *Hydrogen Jukebox*. Other recent roles for Friedlander include *The Pirates of Penzance* with the Ohio Light Opera Company and Nannetta in *Falstaff* with the Martina Arroyo Prelude.

Sarah Tucker (OIO 2005) sang Zerlina in *Don Giovanni* for the Arizona Opera last spring, then



took on Jano in *Jenůfa* for the San Francisco Opera last summer. This coming fall she will sing in the new opera *I Have No Stories to Tell You* for the Philadelphia Opera.

Anthony Clark Evans, a baritone (OIO 2008) has been busy this past year. Last April he sang Sharpless in *Madama Butterfly* for the San Diego Opera, and then spent part of the summer with the Opera Theater of St. Louis as Marcello in *La bohème*.

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A Message From a Returning Director

by Robert Swedberg
Director of *Susannah*, OIO 2017

As a young stage director, then on the staff of Seattle Opera, and primarily focused on my duties as Assistant Director for Wagner's *Ring* cycle, it was a refreshing change of direction to have the opportunity to come to Eureka Springs in 1981 to direct Carlisle Floyd's signature opera, *Susannah*.

I was especially excited to know that Carlisle Floyd himself would be coming to Inspiration Point to offer Master classes and to see our production of his work. I had met him a few years prior to that in an audition for the Houston Grand Opera.

At that point, I had just played the role of George in his *Of Mice And Men*, and when he saw that on my resume, he spent extra time with me, in effect giving a coaching during the audition! He impressed me then as being a most generous, gracious, and amazingly talented musician.

So, getting to see him again in 1981, now as a director at Opera in the Ozarks, was an even more meaningful opportunity. I met him at the Crescent Hotel in Eureka Springs, where we sat out on the front porch drinking bourbon while he questioned me about my approach to the piece.

In addition to being our foremost living American composer, he also writes his own libretti and has often staged his operas, so I was especially touched by his approval. There was only one setback; during the performance he attended, just as *Susannah* was about to sing the plaintive "Ain't it a Pretty Night," we had the most horrific thunderstorm imaginable! Sometimes Mother Nature has her own operatic production in mind.

Fast forward to 2005 when, as general director of Orlando Opera, I was involved with producing *Susannah* again, this time in collaboration with Florida State University to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the opera's premiere. I went to Tallahassee to meet with the FSU opera staff to plan the design for the set that

we would share, and while walking to lunch together, we passed an old cottage, which was identified as the very place that Carlisle Floyd had written *Susannah* while he was on the faculty at FSU in 1955.

We worked our way through thick vegetation to get to the cottage (more of a cabin really) and as we stood on the front porch I got a sense of what it must have felt like for the young Carlisle Floyd to sit out under the stars and be inspired to write about that "pretty night".

As FSU was about to tear the cottage down, we got the idea that we should try to preserve that front porch, and maybe use it in our set. We were able to save some of the lumber, and did in fact use it on our production, which also featured Carlisle Floyd in attendance.

It will be a great honor for me to translate some of that legacy to our stage again as we bring *Susannah* back to Opera in the Ozarks this summer.

Opera in the Ozarks raised \$49,183.40 on April 7 on the final ArkansasGives day hosted by the Arkansas Community Foundation. In the category for medium-sized nonprofit organizations, Opera in the Ozarks finished 7th in the state out of 242 organizations. Among nonprofit organizations in Northwest Arkansas, Opera in the Ozarks finished with the second highest total.

In the first two years of the three-year ArkansasGives program, OIO raised \$26,000 and \$33,000, respectively. Opera in the Ozarks deeply thanks all who contributed on ArkansasGives day to make this event such a great success.



Scene from the Opera in the Ozarks production of *I Pagliacci* last summer. Photo by David Bell.