



News Briefs

🎵 OIO will host its annual **A Taste of Opera** dinner at the Crescent Hotel in Eureka Springs, Arkansas on Wednesday, **July 19 at 5:00 p.m.** The cost of A Taste of Opera is \$65, of which \$25 is tax deductible. Tickets can be purchased by calling the box office at (479) 253-8595 or visiting us online at [www.opera.org](http://www.opera.org).

A Taste of Opera will feature a reception, a dinner, and entertainment from some of our outstanding young singers from Opera in the Ozarks. It will whet your appetite for the wonderful music to come in the three full-length operas being presented by Opera in the Ozarks this summer.

Be sure to purchase your tickets and join us for A Taste of Opera on July 19.

🎵 Oio's summer family opera this year is **Jack and the Beanstalk**, an adaptation of music from operettas by Gilbert and Sullivan. The arrangement is by John Davies, the same talented arranger who created our *Pinocchio* last season.

You may have children or grandchildren who would enjoy being introduced to opera, or know of some little people who would enjoy the performance. If so, please note that there are a number of outreach performances of *Jack and the Beanstalk*. You can find an updated list by visiting [www.opera.org](http://www.opera.org).

One of your best opportunities to hear it will be on **Saturday, July 1 at 2:00 p.m.** at the **Eureka Springs Auditorium** at 36 S. Main Street in Eureka Springs. Children are admitted free; adults pay just \$10.

🎵 Did you know that one of the best ways you can contribute to Opera in the Ozarks is to **remember the Inspiration Point Fine Arts Colony in your estate plan**? For example, in 2016 OIO received a generous gift of over \$100,000 from the estate of Richard Hill, a wonderful opera fan and educator, whose gift is an outstanding example of how a generous donor can continue to bring joy and satisfaction to opera fans and opera performers lasting past the donor's lifetime.

🎵 This may be one of the best investments you will ever run across. You can purchase a **Life Membership to Opera in the Ozarks** for just \$1,000, and enjoy the benefits of membership for the rest of your life. IPFAC Life Memberships have been very important to the growth and development of Opera in the Ozarks and other programs at IPFAC. All dues are placed in the Henry and Ellen Hobart Endowment Fund along with any other contributions designated to go into that fund. The Hobart Endowment Fund must remain intact, but interest from it may be used for any purpose furthering the interests of IPFAC. Each year the Hobart Endowment provides approximately \$6,000 for Opera in the Ozarks.

Our most recent Life Members are **Judge Philip Johnson** and **Lynn McNew**, both of Texas; both memberships were gifts, the first from Carla Johnson and the second from the Texas State Federation of Music Clubs.

🎵 If you're not quite ready to step up to a Life Membership, you might consider **increasing your level of support to Opera in the Ozarks**. It does not take much to upgrade your membership from a \$25 membership to a \$50 membership, for example, and these extra funds are crucial to enable us to afford scholarships for our young singers. Please consider upgrading your membership today.

🎵 In the last issue of the *Good News Letter*, we published a list of contributors to the Annual Campaign. Since that publication, four more contributors have stepped up to the plate to help in a significant way, and we are deeply grateful. Those contributors are Ann Nicholson and Sara Peine (Performers level) and Steve Holifield and Cletis Williamson (Friends level).

The total amount raised in our annual fund drive was \$107,211. Inspiration Point thanks all of those who contributed to make our annual campaign a success.

🎵 The Opera in the Ozarks season is almost upon us, and you may want to take advantage of this last opportunity to get in on some of our special underwriting opportunities. You can **underwrite an opera** for only \$2,500, a fraction of what it would cost to underwrite an opera at most opera companies. To **sponsor a single Night of Opera** is only \$300. You can provide an OIO Young Artist Scholarship for \$200 and up.



News of Our Alumni

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In the fall he repeated Sharpless for the San Francisco Opera, then sang Lovec in *Rusalka* for the Metropolitan Opera. In June he competes in the famed BBC Singer of the World competition in Cardiff, Wales, and in February he takes on Sir Riccardo Forth in *I Puritani* with the Lyric Opera of Chicago.

Baritone **Gregory Wascoe** (OIO 1999) sang in *The Mikado* for the Mississippi Opera last year, where he also performed in Sondheim's *Into the Woods*. His career has mostly been in the musical theater, where in recent years he has performed Pontius Pilate in *Jesus Christ Superstar* and Emile



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## News of Our Alumni

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DeBeque in *South Pacific*, among other musical theater roles.

The Florentine Opera of Milwaukee had **Katrina Thurman** (OIO 1997) in



its cast for *The Barber of Seville* last month, singing the role of Berta.

Marcellina in *The Marriage of Figaro* has become a specialty of **Catherine Cook** (OIO



1984), who has recently sung it in Houston and Kansas City. The mezzo was also in *Andrea Chenier* for the San Francisco Opera in September.

# Opera in the Ozarks Loses John Dolce, Gloria Thrasher

Opera in the Ozarks deeply regrets the loss of two close friends during the past few months.

On November 7, 2016, Gloria Jean Kalich Thrasher of Rockdale, Texas passed away. Gloria was a longtime member of the Texas Federation of Music Clubs and served as TFMC District 7 president and as president of the Texas Federation of Music Clubs from 2003-2005 and again from 2013-15. She was recognized with the Servant Leadership Award. Gloria was posthumously awarded the TFMC 2016 Distinguished Service Award.

She was a member of the Governing Board of the Inspiration Point Fine Arts Colony and was a Life Member of OIO as well as a Life Member of NFMC/TFMC, a Rose Fay Thomas Fellow and a member of the Yellow Rose Society.

Gloria was a graduate of Southwest Texas State University and enjoyed ten years of teaching music in public schools and also giving private music lessons. She was the church organist for St. Joseph Catholic Church for almost 40 years.

On January 2, 2017, OIO also lost Dr. John Dolce, a Trustee of the Inspiration Point

Fine Arts Colony. John was a retired oral and maxillofacial surgeon and a former professor at Loyola University in Chicago.

He and his wife Mary, a member of the Governing Board of IPFAC, learned their opera in Chicago and continued that interest as supporters of Opera in the Ozarks after they relocated to Arkansas following John's retirement.

John was an active member of the St. Elizabeth church and served on the Parish Council and St. Elizabeth Choir. He was Past President of the Holiday Island Rotary Club, a member of the Eureka Springs Hospital Guild, and was active in many projects of the Holiday Island Hospitality Association.

He was a Holiday Island Commissioner from 2008 through 2011. While serving as Commissioner, he was instrumental in developing the Holiday Island Handicapped Fishing Pier. He believed that everyone, regardless of their physical abilities, should be afforded the opportunities to enjoy the natural splendor of the Ozarks. Following his death, the fishing pier was dedicated as the Dr. John L. Dolce Handicapped Fishing Pier.

## OIO Acquires New Pianos for New Rehearsal Halls

Inspiration Point has purchased two new studio console pianos for the two rehearsal halls in the new Opera in the Ozarks rehearsal building (see article on page 1). We thank Governing Board member Bill Yick for locating two new Hailun studio console pianos. Dr. Carolann Martin and Don Dagenais provided the funds for these purchases.

In addition, Board member Tim Danielson has generously donated his beautiful Hardeman grand piano to Opera in the Ozarks. We need only pay the shipping expenses for that lovely piano. What a wonderful gift to IPFAC, which we deeply appreciate.

IPFAC is also in need of a quality electronic piano for its traveling performances, so if you have any suggestions for us, please advise our general director Nancy Preis or Board president Carole Langley.



*This scene is from the last time Opera in the Ozarks performed Mozart's The Marriage of Figaro, in 2011. Photo courtesy of David Bell.*

# *Carmen*: A Masterpiece for the Ages

by Don Dagenais

It is one of the paradoxes of musical history that the shy, bespectacled Frenchman Georges Bizet was creator of *Carmen*, the story of the sensuous and tempestuous gypsy woman whose life, full of crime and violence, ends in one of the most dramatic of all stage murders. But such are the curiosities of art.

Bizet was born in 1838 and, after showing prodigious musical talent at a tender age, entered the famed Paris Conservatoire when only nine. His teachers there included the grand opera masters Charles Gounod and Fromental Halévy (whose daughter Bizet later married), and upon his graduation he won France's coveted Prix de Rome.

From the beginning Bizet proved himself a master at invoking mood in music. His earlier operas *The Pearl Fishers* and *Djamileh* both brimmed with Oriental color, and with his famous *L'Arlesienne* suites he captured the spirit of Provençal. This talent found its final and most inspired outlet in the Spanish backdrop for *Carmen*.

Something about the Spanish gypsies entranced Bizet, like many of his contemporaries. At his request his librettists, the famed pair of Henri Meilhac and Ludovic Halévy (Fromental Halévy's nephew) based their *Carmen* upon the popular novelette of the same name by Prosper Mérimée, originally published in 1845.

In adapting Mérimée's novel for the stage, Meilhac and Halévy made numerous changes. In the novel the soldier Don José, the victim of Carmen's passion, is no reputable fellow: he has already killed two men as the action begins. For the opera he became an innocent, more sympathetic character, whose downfall is thus more tragic. The librettists introduced into the action the young girl Micaela, an entirely new figure, whose sweet and gentle nature offers a stark contrast to the amoral Carmen.

Finally, the librettists combined a number of Carmen's lovers in the novel into the one dashing figure of Escamillo the toreador, a powerful rival who steals Carmen from Don José.

Despite these transformations the directors of the Opera Comique, where *Carmen* was to be performed, begged the opera's creators to soften its tone. This, after all, was a theater

for respectable citizens. In particular the directors were opposed to the death scene. On the stage of the venerable Opéra Comique such a thing had never been seen.

Bizet and his librettists persisted, however, even after one director resigned in protest. They staged the opera in 1875, and the conclusion was met with shocked silence. The reviewers, sensing blood, were devastating in their critiques.

Bizet, succumbing to illness, died at home only a few months later, during the twenty-third performance of *Carmen*. The legend that he died of a broken heart over the failure of his finest work is morbidly appealing, but in fact untrue.

*Carmen* ran for 37 performances its first season and 15 the next, then achieved great success at other European houses.

Public clamor led to its return to Paris in 1883, and it was received with accolades and has been a repertory standard ever since.

Musically, as well as dramatically, *Carmen* is one of the richest of operas. Each measure is a gem, full of inspiration. There are no wasted moments – even the minor characters have delicious music to sing – and each figure is carefully portrayed.

As *Carmen* swept away all opposition with its universal popularity, many other great composers came to admire it. Tchaikovsky said that it was “one of those rare creations which expresses the efforts of a whole musical epoch.” Richard Strauss advised young composers that if they wished to learn orchestration, “don't study Wagner's scores, study the score of *Carmen*...what

wonderful economy, and how every note and every rest is in its proper place.”

Johannes Brahms went to hear *Carmen* twenty times, and remarked that he would have gone to the ends of the earth to embrace Bizet. Even Richard Wagner, usually no great admirer of others, exclaimed after hearing *Carmen*, “Here, thank God, at least for a change is someone with ideas in his head!”

Had he lived longer, Bizet might have written even more masterpieces. He could never have won greater fame, however, than that which is his through *Carmen*, justifiably one of the most acclaimed of all works for the lyric theater.







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## GOOD NEWS LETTER

### Youth Music Camps at Inspiration Point

The youth camps held at the Inspiration Point Fine Arts Colony have now been reorganized and are known as the Youth Music Camps at Inspiration Point. The youth camps are now a separate nonprofit organization with their own tax exempt status. The new entity has its own web set address, at [www.ipmusiccamps.com](http://www.ipmusiccamps.com).

Kathryn Hickman is the Camp Director and Larry Baldwin is the Assistant Camp Director.

The Vocal Camp will be held from July 23 through July 30, 2017, immediately following the conclusion of the Opera in the Ozarks season. The Piano/String Camp will be held the following week, July 30 through August 6. The Vocal Camp will conclude with a Musical Scenes concert on Saturday, July 29 at 8:00 p.m. The Piano/String Camp will end with an Orchestra "Gala" on Saturday, August 5 at 8:00 p.m. and a piano "Monster" concert on Sunday, August 6 at 11:00 a.m.

The Vocal Camp includes instruction on stage movement, music theory, singing techniques, choral/solo concert performances, boomwhackers and also includes private lessons. The Piano Camp encompasses lessons on keyboard skills, music theory, music history, choir, boomwhackers and composition, and also includes master classes and private lessons. The String Camp includes similar lessons, including ensemble groups, orchestra, conducting, bowing technique, and solo recitals.

The Youth Music Camps at Inspiration Point are happy to accept donations to help provide scholarships for students who would not otherwise be able to attend the camps. Checks made payable to Youth Music Camps at Inspiration Point can be sent to Kathryn Hickman, 513 N.W. Arlington, Lawton, Oklahoma 73507-6826.

### OPERA IN THE OZARKS at INSPIRATION POINT MEMBERSHIP FORM

My tax deductible membership and/or contribution of \$\_\_\_\_\_ is enclosed.

Check the Appropriate Box

- \$500 Patron
- \$100 Sustaining
- \$50 Contributing
- \$25 Active
- \$1,000 Life/Endowment

Please make checks payable to IPFAC and mail to:  
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 St. Louis, MO 63146

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Your membership or gift is important to IPFAC Thank you so much!