

THE FLORIDA GRAND OPERA NEWSLETTER VOL. 1. 2008

VOICES

Robert M. Heuer, General Director & C.E.O. Stewart Robertson, Music Director

OPENING NIGHT GALA

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ON OUR WEBSITE

JOHN KEENE
APPOINTED CHORUS MASTER

NEW BOARD MEMBERS

FLORIDA
GRAND
OPERA
SEASON 68





OPENING NIGHT GALA Bal à Paris Nov. 15, 2008

Celebrate Florida Grand Opera's 68th anniversary at what promises to be an unforgettable opening of the 2008 – 09 season, as the City of Light relocates to South Florida on November 15, 2008. It will be a spectacular evening of music, dining, dancing, and high fashion, combining the debut of FGO's magnificent new production of Giuseppe Verdi's *La traviata* at the Arsht Center's Ziff Ballet Opera House, followed immediately by a Bal à Paris, a lavish dinner-dance for 400 guests on the Lynn Wolfson Stage.

Inspired by the Verdi work, set in mid-nineteenth century Paris, the Opening Night Gala is a celebration of all things French – haute couture, fine food, jewelry, fragrances, fine wines and champagnes, intriguing travel destinations – and is under the patronage of His Excellency, Pierre Vimont, French Ambassador to the United States, and The Honorable Philippe Vinogradoff, Consul General of France in Miami.

Adding a special dimension to the evening, the Gala has invited five well-known area fashion designers to create unique ball gowns inspired by each of the season's five operas. The designers include Rafael Cennamo (*La traviata*); Nicolás Felizola (*La Cenerentola*); Ana Maria Guiulfo (*Lakmé*); Lisbeth Hazoury (*The Marriage of Figaro*); and Yoly Muñoz (*Madama Butterfly*). The ball gowns, and other exclusive, high-end luxury items, will be auctioned at the Gala for the benefit of Florida Grand Opera.

The Opening Night Gala is the Opera's major annual fundraiser, presided over by Ms. Lynn Wolfson, arts philanthropist and major donor to the Opera, as **Honorary International Chair**. Mr. Ralph Lutrin, representing the Audrey Love Charitable Foundation, which is funding the new production of *La traviata*, and Mr. A. Allan Lewis, serve as the Gala's **Honorary Chairs**.

Grand Benefactors include Audre and Donald Carlin; Mr. and Mrs. Charles Dascal; Mr. Stephen A. Keller and Ms. Lesleen Bolt; and Mr. and Mrs. Carlos Lopez-Cantera. **Co-Chairs** are Ms. Ruby Bacardi; Ms. Nancy Jean Davis; Mr. and Mrs. Laurans A. Mendelson; Mr. Charles E. Porter, BNY Mellon Wealth Management, and Ms. Rosie Pachon; Dr. and Mrs. Morton J. Robinson; and Mr. and Mrs. Alvaro Varela.

For information concerning tables, tickets, sponsorship and underwriting opportunities for the Gala, please contact Denise Courshon at 305.854.1643, Ext. 1202. (Website: www.fgo.org)

John Keene Appointed FGO Chorus Master

By Michael Lonergan, Director of Artistic Administration

John Keene has been appointed Florida Grand Opera's new Chorus Master and Head of Music Staff. Among his many accomplishments, he has served as Founder and Artistic Director of the Elysian Opera Group in New York City, and for the San Francisco Opera he has been a faculty member of the prestigious Merola Opera Program where he conducted Western Opera Theater's thirtieth anniversary national tour of *Il barbiere di Siviglia* in an acclaimed production by John Copley. Previously he was Director of the Apprentice Artist Program of the Sarasota Opera and for that company served as Chorus Master for sixteen productions.



A highly respected vocal coach and teacher, John Keene has been a member of the opera faculty at the Mannes College of Music, was Music Director of LSU Opera at Louisiana State University, and has presented master classes in vocal repertoire, opera, and accompanying nationwide. His performances as accompanist and chamber musician include appearances at Carnegie Hall, Weill Recital Hall, the Kennedy Center, Lincoln Center, Ambassador Auditorium in Los Angeles, and many performances for radio and television. Please join me in welcoming John Keene to Florida Grand Opera, where he will be a valuable addition to the staff.



LA TRAVIATA NOVEMBER 15-DECEMBER 6

CINDERELLA JANUARY 24 - FEBRUARY 7

LAKMÉ FEBRUARY 21- MARCH 7

THE MARRIAGE OF FIGARO APRIL 24-MAY 16

MADAMA BUTTERFLY APRIL 25-MAY 16

Florida Grand Opera & North Twin Lakes Elementary School

By Louise Harms



It was the beginning of the 1999-2000 school year, my first as Principal of North Twin lakes Elementary School, and I was facing the greatest challenges I had ever encountered in my career. As a result of FCAT 1999, the first year that schools received grades, North Twin Lakes received an "F." How does a leader motivate students, staff, and parents to believe that we can, and will, succeed? As an educator, I have always believed that developing cognitive learning skills has a close relationship with developing an appreciation for performing and visual arts. During my first year as Principal of North Twin Lakes, I realized that most of my students had never experienced a live performance of any genre. As an FGO ticket holder for many years, and knowing of the Opera's educational and outreach programs, and being the risk taker that I am, I encouraged three teachers and two parents to accompany over thirty students and me to the dress rehearsal of *The Tales of Hoffmann* in 1999.

The students were awed as the bus pulled up to Miami-Dade County Auditorium, and the aura of excitement grew as we climbed the stairs to the mezzanine, as they saw the auditorium, and as the overture began. I observed mouths open wide, bodies moving with the music, and clasped hands. I realized, when Olympia had finished her aria, that the risk had paid off. At the first intermission, they exclaimed, "I love it!" "It is so beautiful!" And on the way home, they asked to come again. And come again they did, to dress rehearsals for nearly every production, and some actual performances, as well, where adults sitting nearby, worried at the beginning, were complimenting them for their perfect behavior during the intermissions.

Over the following years, Justin Moss brought sopranos Leah Partridge and Sarah Coburn to the school, where they sang and talked to the students. In 2003, Leah served as Principal-for-a-Day, and it was a wonderful experience for all of us, especially when the students and I saluted her with our rendition of "Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious," and she joined us in song and dance.

Opera became an important part of many students' lives, and they grew impressively as they realized that they could access and appreciate something as big, complex, and emotional as opera. I will be forever grateful for the support of Bob Heuer, Justin Moss, and Cecelia Schieve in partnering with North Twin Lakes over the years. Incidentally, FCAT 2001 saw North Twin Lakes receive an "A," which it has received for all but one of the past eight years.

New Board Members 2008-2009 Season



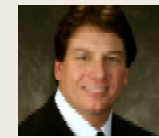
Siavosh Bozorgi, M.D. - Dr. Bozorgi is a retired cardiothoracic and vascular surgeon. Siavosh was born in Khoramabad Iran, and received his Undergraduate and Medical degrees from Teheran University. Siavosh has been a member of the Miami Performing Arts Center (Arsht Center) Foundation since 2005. Siavosh and his wife Diane are season ticket holders and Impresarios members.



Charlene Esserman - Mrs. Esserman is extremely active in the Miami community and has been a long-time supporter of Florida Grand Opera, Coconut Grove Playhouse, Zoological Society of Florida, Miami City Ballet, and Arsht Center for the Performing Arts of Miami-Dade County. Charlene and her husband Ron are season ticket holders and Grand Patron members.



Alberto G. Manrara - Mr. Manrara is a member of the Board of Directors and the Executive Vice President/Chief Financial Officer of TotalBank. Alberto is a Certified Public Accountant (CPA), and received his Bachelor's degree from the University of Florida and his Master's degree from the University of Miami. Alberto and his wife Maggie are season ticket holders and donors. In addition, TotalBank has been a major sponsor of Florida Grand Opera.



Robert M. Roselli, Esq. - Mr. Roselli is a personal injury attorney practicing in Broward County. Robert received his Bachelor's degree from University of South Florida and his Law degree from Stetson University School of Law. Robert and his wife Jennifer are season ticket holders and Diamond Horseshoe members.



William K. Hill, Esq. - William K. Hill is an attorney at Bilzin Sumberg Baena Price & Axelrod in Miami. He represents companies in disputes involving intellectual property, employment, securities, non-compete issues, non-disclosure issues, trade secrets, bankruptcy, and class actions. William and his wife Laurie reside in Coconut Grove with their two children and have been FGO patrons for many years.

NEW YOUNG ARTIST STUDIO MEMBERS

By Cecelia Schieve, Director Young Artist Studio & Education Programs

We are pleased to welcome the 08-09 Young Artists! After a quiet summer, the Doral Opera Center is alive with vocal warm-ups, coaching, and rehearsals. Hailing from Mexico and Hong Kong as well as the United States, this season's eight Young Artists will be featured in mainstage productions and community programs.

Tenor **René Barbera**, Curtis and Grace Panvini Rice and James Byrd Anderson Young Artist, was at the Merola Program this past summer, after graduating from North Carolina School of the Arts. He will sing Gastone in *La traviata* and Hadji in *Lakmé*.



Mezzo-soprano **Amanda Crider**, Lawrence Leibowitz and Tara Greenway Young Artist, was at Glimmerglass Opera this past summer. Her mainstage roles with FGO this season include Cherubino in *Le Nozze di Figaro* and Mallika in *Lakmé*.



Soprano **Julia Ebner**, Rose Miniaci Young Artist, sang First Lady in *The Magic Flute* at Opera North this summer, after making her Syracuse Opera debut as Monica in *The Medium*. Julia's mainstage roles will include Annina in *La traviata*, and Rose in *Lakmé*.



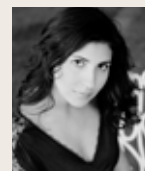
Ming Hay Kwong, Stephen Keller Young Artist, holds a Masters in Collaborative Piano from Manhattan School of Music.



Bass-baritone **Carlos Monzón**, Marvin and Isabel Leibowitz Young Artist, spent the summer in the Merola Program at San Francisco Opera where he sang Leporello in *Don Giovanni*. Look for him on the mainstage as the Doctor in *La traviata*, Alidoro in *La Cenerentola*, Antonio in *Le Nozze di Figaro*, and the Bonze in *Madama Butterfly*.



Mezzo-soprano **Karin Mushegain**, Crescendo Circle Young Artist, sang Kate in *Pirates of Penzance* and Ciesca in *Gianni Schicchi* at Lake George Opera this past summer. Her roles for FGO include Flora in *La traviata* and Tisbe in *La Cenerentola*.



Soprano **Katrina Thurman**, James Doan and Ron Norwood Young Artist, comes to FGO after a successful career in Germany. Earlier this fall she made her debut as Musetta in *La bohème* at Lyric Opera of Kansas City. Her mainstage roles will include Ellen in *Lakmé* and Barbarina in *The Marriage of Figaro*.



Baritone **Sidney Outlaw**, Young Patronesses of the Opera Young Artist, returns to FGO for a second year. This past summer he performed Papageno in *The Magic Flute* for Opera North, and this season will be seen at FGO as the Marchese in *La traviata* and Yamadori in *Madama Butterfly*.



La traviata is Rewarding Experience.



Photo: Cincinnati Opera and Philip Groshong

Three years ago, when a decision was made to open the 2008-09 season with *La traviata*, it became clear that Florida Grand Opera would need a new production. General Director Robert Heuer turned to the team of stage director Bliss Hebert and designer Allen Charles Klein and asked them to create the concept for the production, along with designs for the sets and costumes. An outstanding new production of *La traviata* would at once provide south Florida opera audiences with a rewarding experience and Florida Grand Opera with an important asset, providing income through rentals to other opera companies.

The new production was made possible through a generous grant from the Audrey Love Charitable Foundation, in honor of the late Audrey Love, and Cincinnati Opera, sharing in the construction costs, became a co-producer. The new production was seen there this past July, receiving critical acclaim. Soprano Eglise Gutiérrez, who will share performances of Violetta with soprano Ailyn Pérez for Florida Grand Opera, was drafted at the eleventh hour to replace an indisposed soprano who had withdrawn, and enjoyed a resounding success in her first essay of the demanding title role. *Opera News* wrote, "It was impossible to believe these were Gutiérrez's first Violettas: hers was a radiantly assured interpretation that many a more seasoned soprano would envy. Her luxuriously warm soprano moved with ease through the coloratura of Act I, then adjusted to the lyric-dramatic outbursts demanded by the rest of the opera. Gutiérrez's death scene would have made a stone weep." Eglise Gutiérrez will open Florida Grand Opera's Season 68 on November 15, 2008.

Bliss Hebert and Allen Charles Klein have created many productions for Florida Grand Opera, including *La Gioconda*, *Salome*, *Werther*, *L'incoronazione di Poppea*, *Thaïs*, and *Turandot*. This new production of *La traviata* promises to be a spectacular opening to the season.

New Developments On The FGO Website Select-a-Seat Option

September marked the launch of Florida Grand Opera's "select-your-own-seat" capability for patrons who purchase individual tickets or flex-packages on-line. Just like the airlines, (except seeing an opera is a lot more fun than flying) you can now select specific seats based on availability for each performance, and for each of our venues. Over a year in development, we are pleased to finally be able to offer this ticket purchasing convenience on-line complete with full color-coded seat maps of the Sanford & Dolores Ziff Ballet Opera House and the John S. and James L. Knight Concert Hall at the Adrienne Arsht Center for the Performing Arts, and the Au-Rene Theater at the Broward Center for the Performing Arts. Check it out by going to www.fgo.org, selecting an opera and clicking on a specific performance date. Its functional, fun and fabulous! And coming soon, we will be offering select-your-own-seat to patrons who purchase full subscriptions as well.



Dr. Liinda Balent, Barbara Copanos and Barbara Parent.

09 Opera Society Diva Impresario Luncheon

Plans are underway for the Opera Society's 2009 Diva Impresario Luncheon to be held on February 17th at the Hyatt Regency Pier Sixty-Six Hotel in Fort Lauderdale. The luncheon, which this year will be chaired by Founder Barbara Copanos and Opera Society Vice President Linda Balent, will honor eleven people from Broward and Miami-Dade Counties for their support of Florida Grand Opera.

The 2009 honorees are: Grand Impresario Ben Harrison, Chairman Emeritus of FGO's Board of Directors; Grand Diva Jane Robinson, President of the FGO Board of Directors; and Divas and Impresarios Helena Caplan, Judy Drucker, Victor Mendelson, Rose Miniaci, Ann Rentoumis, Veronika and George Thorne, Ana Moran Varela, and Joyce Walker.

The Opera Society celebrates its 30th anniversary this year. "This is a special anniversary," said Society President Barbara Parent, "and we invite all friends of the Opera to join us in recognizing the Divas and Impresarios for their inspirational contributions to Florida Grand Opera."

Florida Grand Opera

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