2013-14 looks like an exciting year for UNLV Opera. The opening production of the season is a duo of one-act nun operas, to be presented November 14-15 in Dr. Arturo Rando-Grillot Recital Hall. The double bill includes Puccini’s famous Suor Angelica, with Sheronda McKee and Cordelia Anderson alternating in the title role, and Hindemith’s rarely performed but fascinating Sancta Susanna, starring Lillian Roberts and Carrie Wachsberger. On December 5, the fall semester ends with an opera workshop presentation entitled Eat Pray Love, highlighting scenes about food, religion, and amor.

In the spring, UNLV Opera Theater joins forces with the UNLV Symphony Orchestra, returning to the Judy Bayley Theatre for Ariadne auf Naxos April 4-6. With luscious music by Richard Strauss, this opera is a show within a show, an operatic Kiss Me, Kate per se, in which opera seria singers and commedia dell’arte performers are forced to combine forces in colorful and comedic fashion. Finally, the season closes with a sequel to last year’s popular program dedicated to pants roles: She Wears the Pants, Part Deux on April 25. The talented undergraduate and graduate singers of UNLV will all be featured in this varied season of operatic standards and surprises.

In March, UNLV Opera Theater presented Donizetti’s The Elixir of Love. The production was updated from a 19th-century Italian village to a 21st-century Las Vegas casino. As the director’s note in the program shared, “Sin City is a place of great possibility, an elixir for one’s financial or physical desires, hopefully reminding us that Vegas can be a city of wonderful possibilities for us all.” Las Vegas has become a popular setting for a number of updated operatic productions. Earlier this year, the Metropolitan Opera presented a new version of Verdi’s Rigoletto, moving it from 16th-century Mantua to 1960s Las Vegas. Tony Award-winning director Michael Mayer (Spring Awakening) envisioned a “Rat Pack” Rigoletto with the Duke of Mantua as a Frank Sinatra-style singer, complete with his own showgirls, and court jester Rigoletto as a bartender on the Strip. Recently the University of Tennessee Opera Theatre also did a Vegas mafioso realization of Puccini’s Gianni Schicchi. No doubt the glitz and glamour of Las Vegas will continue to attract directors and designers looking to bring new light and insight into classic Italian operas.
UNLV Opera had a busy spring semester of off-campus performances. A definite highlight was our visit to Green Valley Christian School, where we presented excerpts from *The Elixir of Love*. It was a chance for some understudies to perform the roles they were covering in our big spring production. The energetic young audience especially loved the comedy of David’s Dr. Dulcamara aria, as well as Alfredo’s dancing.

An equally enthusiastic audience of a different age applauded our appearance at the annual luncheon for the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute. OLLI is comprised of well-informed opera fans, and they were captivated by arias from *Manon* and *Candide*. There was also a repeat performance of the aria that Dr. Linda Lister wrote for Isabella Ivy: “There is No Such Thing as a Natural Beauty,” based on Dolly Parton’s famous monologue from *Steel Magnolias*. Held at the Gold Coast Hotel, the luncheon was a packed house including UNLV President Neal Smatresk, who congratulated the students on their vocal talents.
**Diva (and Director) in Training: Cheyna Alexander**

Senior Cheyna Alexander has been an active performer at UNLV, singing in numerous choral ensembles and opera scenes programs. A voice student of Dr. Michelle Latour, she played Cowslip in UNLV Opera’s production of *The Fairy Queen* last fall. While Cheyna is a dynamic performer, she recently had a realization that she also wants to pursue opera directing. “I love the aspect of creating something and digging into characters, digging into relationships.” So besides continuing her degree in vocal performance at UNLV, Cheyna has plans to explore directing by doing a theatre minor. She’ll also be trying her hand at directing a scene from Rossini’s *L’italiana in Algieri* in opera workshop. A two-time 1st place winner in the Las Vegas NATS (National Association of Teachers of Singing) Study Awards, Cheyna is also a versatile pop and musical theatre singer. But she says, she always comes back to opera:

> Opera: it's just who I am.”

**Opera Quiz**

I. Which of these operas is not part of Puccini’s trio of one-acts, *Il trittico*?

a. *Il tabarro*  
b. *Gianni Schicchi*  
c. *La rondine*  
d. *Suor Angelica*

II. Which of the following adaptations of *Romeo and Juliet* was composed by Charles Gounod?

a. *I Capuletti e i Montecchi*  
b. *Roméo et Juliette*  
c. *West Side Story*  
d. *A Village Romeo and Juliet*

Answers:

1. a  
2. b  
3. c  
4. d

**If Music Be the Food of Love: Opera Workshop Fall Scenes**

*Eat Pray Love* is not just the title of Elizabeth Gilbert’s best-selling book about a divorcée’s travels to Italy, India, and Bali. It is also thematic title for our fall opera scenes program. Some people say that all opera is about desire for food or love, and indeed there are many arias and ensembles about the pleasures of eating and loving. But religion also plays a prominent part in a number of operas. Therefore, this three-part workshop presentation will feature scenes about food (such as the “Ice Cream Sextet” from *Street Scene* and “Abbondanzza” from *The Most Happy Fella*), religion (Dialogues of the *Carmelites*, *Hansel and Gretel’s “Evening Prayer*”), and, of course, love (duets about both friendship and romance from *Roméo et Juliette* and *Les pêcheurs de perles*, plus the climactic quintet from *West Side Story*.) Satisfy your appetites with our performance December 5 in Dr. Arturo Rando-Grillot Recital Hall at 7:30 pm. It will be a rare opportunity to see the operatic debut of many new UNLV freshmen singers, as well as the development of our talented upperclassmen.

**WHERE ARE UNLV OPERA STUDENTS AND ALUMS?**

Casey Gardner ('13) and Brian Myer ('12) are pursuing Master of Music degrees at the Cleveland Institute of Music.

Jonathan Mancheni and Cordelia Anderson performed in Sin City Opera’s Night of 1000 Lucias.

Bonita Bunt and Carrie Wachsberger are part of Nevada Opera Theatre’s Opera Outreach program, singing Alice and the Queen of Hearts in *Wonderland Escapades*.

Summer programs:

- Lindsay Cunningham and Cheyna Alexander attended the Druid City Opera Workshop in Tuscaloosa, Alabama.
- Isabella Ivy, Jonathan Mancheni, Jordan Madagame, and Nicole Thomas attended the American Institute of Musical Studies (AIMS) in Graz, Austria.
UNLV Opera Theater

Editor: Linda Lister
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UNLV Opera Rebels

Fall 2013 Performances

November 14-15
UNLV Opera Theater:
Puccini’s *Suor Angelica*
Hindemith’s *Sancta Susanna*

December 5
UNLV Opera Workshop:
*Eat Pray Love* (Music by Mozart, Rossini, Poulenc, Gounod, Bizet, Weill, Bernstein)

After UNLV Opera’s performance at the Gold Coast Hotel:
Xavier Brown, Linda Lister, Alfredo Martirena.
Karen McCann, Isabella Ivy, Casey Gardner